

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXPLORING BIBLIOTHERAPY
FEATURES IN MALAYSIAN
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

RAFIDAH BT ABDUL AZIZ

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
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CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS

I certify that a Panel of Examiners has met on 2 May 2025 to conduct the final examination of Rafidah binti Abdul Aziz on her Doctors of Philosophy thesis entitled “Exploring Bibliotherapy Features in Malaysian Children’s Literature” in accordance with Universiti Teknologi MARA Act 1976 (Akta 173). The Panel of Examiners recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree. The Panel of Examiners was as follows:

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I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Research on bibliotherapy in Malaysia remains relatively underdeveloped, although it is gradually gaining scholarly attention in response to increasing awareness of children's emotional and psychological well-being. In contrast to Western contexts, where bibliotherapy has been widely researched and systematically implemented, studies in Malaysia are still largely exploratory, particularly in developing culturally grounded frameworks and practices. Existing local research has primarily focused on educational and clinical contexts, emphasising literacy enhancement, emotional support, and interventions for children with special needs. However, these studies rarely provide a systematic analysis of the specific literary elements that contribute to effective bibliotherapy for Malaysian children. Key gaps include the limited availability of locally grounded children's literature with bibliotherapy features, concerns regarding the overall quality of children's literature, insufficient empirical evidence on bibliotherapy outcomes in Malaysian settings, and the absence of a clearly defined taxonomy of therapeutic themes in Malaysian children's texts. Addressing these gaps, the present study examines the distinctive characteristics of bibliotherapy as embedded in Malaysian children's literature and explores its potential to support children's emotional and psychological development. The central aim is to investigate the current development and application of children's bibliotherapy in Malaysia. Specifically, the study seeks to (i) identify the required features of children's literature for bibliotherapy, (ii) examine the extent to which existing Malaysian children's books meet these features, and (iii) propose a bibliotherapy framework tailored to Malaysian children's literature. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study employs a two-stage approach using multiple data sources. The first stage involves a systematic literature analysis, supported by expert validation, to identify essential bibliotherapy features in children's books. The second stage consists of a document analysis of 56 Malaysian children's books selected from 13 libraries in the Klang Valley. These texts were chosen for their relevance to Malaysian cultural and literary contexts. Inter-rater reliability was established using Pooled Kappa analysis to ensure analytical rigor and consistency. The study identifies seven core bibliotherapy features in children's literature: characters, plots, illustrations, readability, themes, empathy, and safety. These features are aligned with children's linguistic abilities, cultural backgrounds, and developmental needs. Findings indicate that while many Malaysian children's books exhibit bibliotherapeutic elements, several critical aspects remain insufficiently developed. In particular, the intellectual depth of content often limits opportunities for meaningful reflection, and the use of expressive and engaging colours is frequently inadequate, reducing emotional engagement. Through triangulation of findings from both stages, the study proposes a comprehensive children's bibliotherapy framework suited to the Malaysian context. This framework provides both theoretical and practical guidance for educators, mental health practitioners, and researchers. Overall, the findings highlight the strong potential of bibliotherapy to promote self-reflection, emotional expression, and personal growth within a culturally resonant and psychologically safe literary environment. Nonetheless, the study underscores the need for further empirical research, structured implementation in schools and libraries, targeted professional training, and stronger collaboration among authors, educators, and psychologists to develop high-quality bibliotherapy resources for Malaysian children.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

CBT Cognitive Behavioural Theory

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Bibliotherapy, coined by Samuel Crothers in 1916, denotes employing literature as a therapeutic aid for individuals to navigate and manage emotional, psychological, and developmental hurdles. This pioneering approach was highlighted in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, marking the first use of the term "bibliotherapy." Though typically linked with adults, the utilization of bibliotherapy in children's literature has gained considerable recognition and praise. Myracle (1995) highlighted the longstanding use of books as a tool for instigating changes in the thoughts and behaviours of individuals. By selecting stories, characters, and themes with care, bibliotherapy in children's literature acts as a potent avenue for fostering emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-awareness in young readers. People need to be aware of how to deal with difficulties and be taught the appropriate technique to overcome issues in their lives. For example, difficulties associated with birth, separation, disease, and death often lack acknowledgement on the appropriate approaches to handle these challenges without negatively impacting the individual's mental health to an excessive degree. Children too are unable to redirect their attention away from these issues. Literature, on the other hand, has shown that it may help youngsters by guiding them through proper actions on how to cope with difficulties that might damage their mental health.

Brewster and McNicol (2018) noted that bibliotherapy has been available in UK public libraries since the early 2000s. This service entails the library granting patrons access to a thoughtfully selected collection of written materials with the aim of positively impacting the patron's mental well-being. The mentioned service is in accordance with Stanley's (1999) suggestion in "Reading to Heal," which advises individuals to enlist the help of a librarian when seeking bibliotherapy books. This underscores the important role librarians play in directing individuals toward literature that can positively impact their emotional and mental well-being. Thus, the library's service aligns with the expert recommendation to consult librarians for bibliotherapy guidance. Mc Caffrey (2016) brought up the manifesto of the Canadian Librarian

Association (CLA), the American Library Association (ALA), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), which led to the conclusion that the notion of bibliotherapy fits well within the framework of the policies of a normal public library, and that it should be applied in order to serve the community. bibliotherapy is increasingly acknowledged as an educational and developmental approach that makes purposeful use of literature and guided reading to help children make sense of their experiences, engage meaningfully with stories, and reflect on ideas presented in texts (Artushin, 2024). Beyond enjoyment, interaction with characters and narratives allows children to recognise familiar situations, gain reassurance, and develop social understanding through story contexts. Scholarly work from Abdul Aziz et al. (2025) highlights how children's literature can be effectively integrated into bibliotherapeutic practices by emphasizing key literary elements—such as empathetic characters, universal themes, and age-appropriate readability—that support engagement and personal reflection. Such elements ensure that the therapeutic potential of stories is maximized for each child's developmental stage.

Children may utilize the benefits of literature to help them overcome their challenges, and it can also play a significant role in children's learning that continues throughout their lives. Literature provides youngsters with the tools to help them realize that struggling with these difficulties does not make them social outcasts; rather, it helps them to look for the proper ways to overcome the challenges they face. The careful selection of reading materials is widely recognised as a critical factor in the effective use of bibliotherapy with children. Early scholars emphasised that books chosen for children should be developmentally appropriate, emotionally safe, and thematically relevant to children's lived experiences in order to support coping, reflection, and emotional growth. Although these foundational works are less frequently cited directly in recent literature, their principles continue to underpin contemporary bibliotherapy research. Recent studies reaffirm that thoughtfully selected children's literature can promote emotional wellbeing, self-understanding, and resilience, particularly when narratives feature relatable characters and meaningful themes (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Systematic reviews of bibliotherapy in children's literature further demonstrate that current frameworks still rely on long-established criteria related to character identification, emotional engagement, and therapeutic relevance, reflecting the enduring influence of earlier recommendations (Abdul Aziz et al., 2025; McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013). These findings indicate

that while bibliotherapy practices have evolved to address contemporary contexts, they remain firmly grounded in the foundational guidance provided by earlier scholars on the importance of appropriate book selection.

The quality of children's literature plays a crucial role in determining its effectiveness, particularly when books are used for therapeutic purposes such as bibliotherapy. Earlier scholars have outlined key characteristics of high-quality children's books, emphasising that effective literature should reflect the author's intent and authenticity, demonstrate strong literary value, incorporate engaging illustrations, and present rich themes, clear writing, well-developed characters, and vivid settings (Mitchell-Kamalie, 2002). In addition, the writing style itself has been shown to influence children's emotional responses to stories, as word choice and sentence structure contribute to the overall mood and tone of a narrative (Glazer & Giorgis, 2005). From a therapeutic perspective, Pehrson and McMillen (2005) further argued that books selected for bibliotherapy must be appropriate in terms of structure, subject matter, reading level, developmental suitability, contextual relevance, and therapeutic applicability. Recent research continues to support these foundational perspectives, with contemporary studies highlighting that carefully selected children's literature—featuring relatable characters, meaningful themes, clear language, and supportive illustrations—enhances emotional engagement, reflection, and wellbeing among young readers (Abdul Aziz et al., 2025; Pulimeno et al., 2020). Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of thoughtful book selection in bibliotherapy and provide a conceptual basis for examining the suitability of children's literature within specific cultural contexts.

In his 1992 publication, "The Pleasures of Children's Literature," Nodelman delineated six fundamental attributes of children's books, providing valuable insights into their distinctive qualities. Nodelman's identified characteristics establish a framework for comprehending the unique features of children's literature. The initial attribute highlights the significance of simplicity while avoiding excessive elementary elements. The second emphasizes action-driven storytelling rather than in-depth character examinations. The third underscores the direct delivery of messages without preamble, while the fourth promotes optimistic perspectives that lead to joyful resolutions. The fifth characteristic emphasizes didactic content, and the sixth advocates for the use of repetitious structural language. While these characteristics enhance the general appeal and impact of children's literature, it is argued that the

absence of bibliotherapeutic elements is evident. Bibliotherapy, as a therapeutic intervention, employs literature to address psychological and emotional concerns. Nodelman's identified characteristics, while valuable, do not inherently encompass the nuanced and purposeful therapeutic aspects integral to bibliotherapy. The argument asserts that Nodelman's characteristics, while valuable for understanding the essence of children's literature, do not explicitly address the psychological or emotional needs of readers. The lack of characteristics associated with bibliotherapy, such as the deliberate inclusion of therapeutic themes or the facilitation of emotional exploration, suggests that not all children's literature functions as an ideal platform for bibliotherapy sessions.

In the Malaysian context, recent scholarship continues to support Salam's (1989) underlying idea that children's texts are not merely for entertainment but function as vehicles for guidance, knowledge, and influence. Malaysian studies on traditional narratives emphasise that *cerita rakyat* carry positive moral values that can serve as practical guidance for good behaviour in daily life, making them valuable for shaping character and social conduct (Che Yaacob, 2021). This is important because local children's literature is repeatedly framed as a medium that can strengthen identity, cultural understanding, and positive development—yet the broader reading ecosystem still faces challenges, including limited interesting reading materials and the need to improve current reading programmes (Zulkifli et al., 2021). Taken together, these Malaysian findings reinforce the argument that strengthening the availability, quality, and cultural relevance of children's literature, both in print and digital spaces which is necessary to maximise its bibliotherapeutic potential. Authors of children's books bear the responsibility of not only creating stories but also of imparting cultural values to young impressionable minds. One important aspect that is emphasized is the existence of metaphorical representations in children's books, which often feature apparently simple characters, settings, and themes. For example, the portrayal of a pet character's death, such as a cat, bird, or dog, may seem straightforward, but it can symbolize the loss of a close family member, friend, or relative. This metaphorical layer adds depth to the storytelling, enabling children to interact with and comprehend profound aspects of life. Likewise, seemingly melancholic events affecting characters like trees or flowers in children's books may function as symbolic representations of the challenges associated with environmental pollution in today's world. The argument posits that these symbolic elements

contribute to cultivating a deeper understanding of complex real-world issues, aiding children in developing empathy, awareness, and a broader perspective on environmental concerns. The argument emphasized that authors of children's books bear the responsibility of crafting instructive and influential narratives that surpass superficial depictions. By incorporating metaphorical layers in seemingly uncomplicated stories, authors can convey cultural values and address complex issues in a manner that is accessible to young readers. Therefore, advocating for the acknowledgment and widespread availability of children's literature as a valuable guiding tool becomes crucial in fostering well-rounded individuals capable of comprehending and navigating life's complexities.

Kow (2002) noted that children's books fulfil multiple purposes, enabling children to enhance their reading abilities and imaginations. Literature aimed at children also imparts valuable lessons on navigating social, cultural, racial, and real-world challenges. Inculcating certain social attitudes that are seen to be acceptable in their group is another benefit of this kind of teaching. In addition, this statement does not provide a comprehensive explanation on the characteristics. According to Chew (2012), Malaysian children are acquiring more imported children's tale books from other countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States. In order to contribute to the existing body of knowledge about early childhood literature and teaching modules, as well as to the development of an early childhood curriculum for Malaysian children, there is a need for more research to be conducted on the role and influence of literature on Malaysian children.

1.2 Research Background

It is essential for parents to prioritize their children's mental health just as much as their children's physical health (Noruzi et al., 2025). Even while the policies on mental health are designed correctly, they are not adequately implemented to the point where the general public is fully aware of their contents (CLN, 2023). Unfortunately, it is common knowledge among the majority of the public in Malaysia that emotional neglect in children is viewed lightly as if it were merely regular stress that would ultimately go away within time. This is the case despite the fact that the majority of the community in Malaysia is aware of the issue (Suhaila et al., 2018). Many people are unaware that children's emotional health is an essential component in

the maintenance of a healthy environment for the evolution of children's mental, psychological, and cognitive development. Furthermore, children's emotional health is an important asset for the general maintenance of their physical health. Many adults have the unfortunate habit of ignoring the fact that emotional and mental diseases may have a significant impact on children and teenagers. If treatment is not sought, these "diseases" may fiercely destroy the victims' capacities to function effectively in social contexts, display many cognitive impairments, and inflict strain and stress that are likely to endure a lifetime.

A study by the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS,2019), reveals that an estimation of 424,000 children in Malaysia are afflicted with mental illness, and that one quarter of adults are struggling with functional issues. According to the findings of the poll, almost one in 10 children and adolescents between the ages of 10- and 15-years old struggle with mental health issues. The study also discloses that a proportion of one in every 8.4 female children suffers from a mental disease. Furthermore, 8.8% of people living in rural areas are affected by mental disease, while 9.2% of people in the income bracket comprising the lowest 40% (B40) of the population report feeling the negative impacts of psychological problems (NHMS, 2019).

The most common mental health conditions, such as sadness, anxiety, and stress, are presently at an alarming level that, if allowed to persist, might result in serious complications (Mental Disorders, 2022). It is estimated that around 12 children out of every 100,000 have attempted to self-harm, and based on the aforementioned data, it has been shown that twice as many female children are destined to physically damage themselves with non-analgesia ingestions than male children. On the other hand, it has been shown that depression is the leading cause of morbidity among adults in Malaysia, whilst suicide has ranked as the leading cause of mortality among younger people in the last 10 years (NHMS, 2019).

Recent studies highlight that bibliotherapy contributes not only to children's overall wellbeing, but also to their ability to understand experiences, manage everyday challenges, and develop constructive responses to difficult situations. Evidence from review studies indicates that engagement with carefully selected stories can support children in navigating experiences such as worry or loss, while fostering reassurance, resilience, and positive coping through relatable narratives (Lenzi et al., 2025). A

strength of bibliotherapy is that stories can communicate positive psychological themes in a form that feels safe and engaging (Redman et al., 2024).

Health is not merely the absence of illness or disability, but rather a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. When we speak of health, we encompass an individual's mindset, behaviour, and decision-making process, all of which can be influenced by mental illness. Such conditions can stem from various factors, including biological, situational, and familial elements (National Mental Health Services Survey (N-MHSS): Data on Mental Health Treatment Facilities, 2017). As a result of recent advancements in the science of psychology, there has been a resurgence of interest in the therapeutic advantages that may be derived from reading books. Stanley (1999) noted that this method has been in existence for a very long time, it has been put into practise on a regular basis, and it is not a freshly developed idea. Research indicates that books have emerged as a significant tool in the therapeutic treatment of individuals of various age groups, including children, grappling with mental health issues. This form of therapeutic intervention is often referred to as "bibliotherapy" (De Vries et al., 2017).

Brewster and McNicol (2018) noted that bibliotherapy has been available in UK public libraries since the early 2000s. This service entails the library granting patrons access to a thoughtfully selected collection of written materials with the aim of positively impacting the patron's mental well-being. The mentioned service is in accordance with Stanley's (1999) suggestion in "Reading to Heal," which advises individuals to enlist the help of a librarian when seeking bibliotherapy books. This underscores the important role librarians play in directing individuals toward literature that can positively impact their emotional and mental well-being. Thus, the library's service aligns with the expert recommendation to consult librarians for bibliotherapy guidance. Mc Caffrey (2016) brought up the manifesto of the Canadian Librarian Association (CLA), the American Library Association (ALA), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), which led to the conclusion that the notion of bibliotherapy fits well within the framework of the policies of a normal public library, and that it should be applied in order to serve the community.

Stanley (1999) defined bibliotherapy as the application of books for medical or psychotherapeutic purposes to alleviate illness or tackle psychological issues. To put it another way, it is the practice of using written materials to aid individuals in the

process of problem solving (Aix, 1993). Bibliotherapy has the potential to be an effective method for assisting students who are coping with challenging situations in their life (Ackerson et al., 1998). Youngsters can benefit from the experience as well, as it enables them to immerse themselves in the world depicted in a well-crafted book, engaging with the characters to gain valuable insights and new ideas. By reading carefully chosen works of children's literature that are based on comparable situations, bibliotherapy may assist children in overcoming the emotional tension that is connected with real-life challenges (CLN, 2023). In order for the children to conquer their issues, the process of bibliotherapy consists of three stages: identification, catharsis, and insight. Each stage is a step towards overcoming the children's issues. This suggests that the choice of literature has a crucial impact towards the experience of the child and adds to the therapeutic qualities of bibliotherapy (De Vries, 2017).

As noted by Pardeck and Pardeck (1993), catharsis necessitates an emotional release, which may be understood when a kid recognizes a character or circumstance as being comparable to their own, leading them to get emotionally invested in the book. Drawing from this, Gregory and Vessey (2004) further reinforced this perspective with evidence that when children perceive a character or situation in literature as relatable to their own experiences, a profound connection is established. This emotional connection, stemming from catharsis, not only captivates children within the storyline but also facilitates the release of emotions through their interaction with the literature. Hence, the convergence of viewpoints from both Pardeck and Pardeck (1993) and Gregory and Vessey (2004) underscores the crucial role catharsis plays in nurturing emotional engagement and expression in young readers. After the conclusion of the catharsis phase, children have the potential to have an insight, during which they would typically realize that issues may be discovered using ways that are comparable to those described in the book and begin implementing the same tactics as those described for dealing with them. As a consequence of this, they have shown that the components of bibliotherapy may be included in children's books in order to validate it as a kind of therapy.

The existence of the COVID-19 virus created a widespread "silent pandemic" in 2020. It has caused significant upheaval in modern life, as well as significant economic effects. To date, it is believed that over eight million individuals have been infected with the COVID-19 virus. Malaysia, too, has responded by enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) since 17th March 2020, which is now in Recovery

Control Order Movement (RMCO) from 10th June to 31st August 2020, and is now being followed by CMCO (Conditional Movement Control Order) in selected states beginning 14th October until 6th December 2020. As a result, the World Economic Forum (WEF) expects that COVID-19 and a lengthy "lockdown" in many nations would have serious mental health ramifications whenever these restrictions are lifted. Untreated mental health disorders in children and adolescents often lead to negative outcomes in adulthood compared to their peers with no mental health issues.

In typical circumstances, the provision of mental health treatment for children, adolescents, and young adults in Malaysia is already restricted. This is the case in both urban and rural settings (Noruzi et al., 2025). There are only a select few child psychiatrists and clinical psychologists that focus on children as their primary area of practice. In Malaysia, organizations that work for and with children, such as Mercy Malaysia, the Suara Kanak-Kanak Malaysia (SUKA) Society, The Early Childhood Care & Education Malaysia (ECCE), and the Malaysian Council for Child Welfare (MKKM), are dispersed, and many of these organizations are unknown to the necessary authorities. Because of this, a great number of youngsters are unable to get assistance in dealing with their mental difficulties and are therefore not treated for them. As a result, bibliotherapy is a type of intervention suitable for children that does not necessitate them to purchase books as part of the process. Children are given the choice to read either conventional printed books or digital books available online. The term for this approach is "web therapy" or "webotherapy."

It is of the utmost importance to provide children with literature that is appropriate for them so that they may interact with, participate in, anticipate, and communicate with the language and pictures included in the tales. The reading of wonderful books may provide children joy, inspiration, and even healing. Additionally, it may help individuals nurture positivism, respect their family, friends, and community, and live a life that is more rewarding overall. Rozalski (2010) defined bibliotherapy as a projective indirect approach that utilizes literature to educate children about the obstacles of life by encouraging them to connect with book characters, which in turn allows readers to analyse their own uniqueness.

When carrying out the process of bibliotherapy, book selection is an essential step. It has been shown that both fictional and nonfictional works may assist readers in overcoming challenging circumstances and achieving significant personal growth. Books, whether they are works of fiction or non-fiction, need to have specific

information (Pardeck, 1994). Sridhar and Vaughn (2000) suggested that in order to engage children facing diverse challenges, it is important for the main character in a book to be relatable to them in certain aspects. The book needs to be written at a reading level as well as a developmental level that is suitable for the learner (Pardeck, 1994). Prater et al. (2006) contended that bibliotherapy introduce students to excellent literature while also assisting them in coping with real-life scenarios, hence boosting the likelihood that students will be successful in both their academic and social endeavours. She also said that instructors have the ability to collaborate with other members of the education staff, such as a school psychologist, librarian, or guidance counsellor. It's possible that the school librarians can assist instructors in locating books that are suitable.

Merely labelling a book for children as a "bibliotherapy book" is insufficient; it must also embody specific essential characteristics to effectively serve as a bibliotherapeutic resource. The appropriate reading materials that may be utilized on children for therapeutic reasons need to be determined after thorough consideration and evaluation. Pehrsson and McMillen (2007) emphasized that selecting the wrong book could lead to ethical and adverse outcomes with potential impacts on the client. Consequently, the attributes should function as a framework for librarians, counsellors, authors of children's literature, and publishers in the selection and creation of children's books suitable for bibliotherapy (Noruzi et al., 2025).

1.3 Research Motivation

The understanding of the significant influence that literature may have on mental health and wellbeing serves as the driving force for bibliotherapy research (Noruzi et al., 2025). The primary aim of this study is to discern the bibliotherapy characteristics present in Malaysian children's books. The potential for bibliotherapy qualities to improve the efficacy, accessibility, and relevance of bibliotherapeutic interventions makes them important study motivators in bibliotherapy research. By providing chances to maximize the therapeutic potential of literature, improve the delivery of bibliotherapy therapies, and advance evidence-based practice in the field, bibliotherapy features play a significant role as research motivators. Through methodical examination of the effects of various bibliotherapy characteristics on therapeutic results, scholars can aid in the creation of individualized, efficient, and

easily available therapies that enhance mental health and overall well-being for both individuals and groups.

Research on children's mental health difficulties also gets less input compared to research on adult mental health concerns, which makes it more difficult to intervene and provide effective assistance (García-Carrión et al., 2019). There is little clarity on the situation during the epidemic itself. There have been reports of people being afraid of the COVID-19 virus; as a consequence of the prolonged MCO and lockdown, there has been a reduction in interaction, which has led to an increase in domestic abuse and also isolation; and the impact of prolonged closed schools has resulted in delayed learning for many students and even malnutrition for some of them. The implications for this population's mental health are speculated to be serious.

Bibliotherapy study is important for librarians because it can improve libraries' ability to serve as centres for lifelong learning, community participation, and mental health assistance. With the help of evidence-based tactics and resources from bibliotherapy research, librarians may offer more than just typical book lending and information services. Librarians can provide important resources and support to clients dealing with mental health issues like stress, anxiety, sadness, grief, or trauma by introducing bibliotherapeutic interventions into library programming. This strengthens the library's position as a hub for community resources that encourages resilience and holistic well-being. In addition, research on bibliotherapy emphasizes the therapeutic advantages of reading for wellbeing and mental health. Using this information, librarians can encourage reading as a means of emotional support, personal growth, and self-care. Librarians can encourage clients to explore literature as a way to cope with life's hardships, enhance self-awareness, and promote empathy and resilience by curating book collections, making reading lists, and organizing bibliotherapy activities. The researcher believes that research on bibliotherapy encourages partnerships and collaborations between libraries and community agencies, mental health groups, and medical professionals. Together with mental health specialists, librarians can create bibliotherapy programs, lead support groups, and encourage community-wide mental health literacy campaigns. Librarians can address the variety of needs of library users and advance a culture of wellbeing in the community by forming interdisciplinary relationships and utilizing the combined knowledge and resources of these groups.

In general, librarians embrace bibliotherapy research because it supports the fundamental principles of libraries as welcoming, approachable, and encouraging environments that foster personal development, lifelong learning, and the wellbeing of the community. Librarians can enhance their professional practice, fortify their relationships with patrons and communities, and leverage the transformational potential of literature to promote positive social change by adopting bibliotherapy research (Noruzi et al., 2025).

1.4 Problem Statement

Despite increasing interest in bibliotherapy, especially within children's literature, there remain significant gaps in the literature, particularly in the Malaysian context. First, although international studies highlight specific features that make children's literature effective for bibliotherapy—such as relatable characters, compelling plots, empathy, readability, and developmental appropriateness—much of this research is based on Western contexts and lacks systematic application to Malaysian children's literature. For example, a recent systematic review identifies key elements of bibliotherapy in children's literature but emphasizes the need for further research to examine how these features can be systematically applied for optimal therapeutic outcomes in culturally diverse settings.

1.4.1 Lack of Localized Bibliotherapy Content in Children's Literature

A significant gap in the field of bibliotherapy lies in the lack of culturally relevant and locally authored content within Malaysian children's literature. Most bibliotherapy studies and materials are based on Western contexts, both in literature and therapeutic models. Malaysian children's literature rarely integrates culturally relevant bibliotherapeutic themes. There is a dearth of Malaysian-authored children's books that explicitly address local social-emotional issues (e.g., bullying, grief, divorce, identity struggles) in a therapeutically guided manner. Most local children's literature focuses on moral or educational messages, often lacking the emotional depth and character-driven narratives necessary for effective affective bibliotherapy. Consequently, Malaysian children may find it difficult to identify with characters or scenarios that reflect their own challenges, which can reduce the therapeutic impact of

the literature used. Research supports the idea that culturally relevant texts enhance reader engagement, empathy, and therapeutic outcomes (Heath et al., 2005; Hull et al., 2025).

The lack of culturally grounded bibliotherapy content has affected the quality of Malaysian children's literature. Effective children's books should incorporate features that foster children's emotional resilience, including engaging plots and meaningful narratives.

1.4.2 Insufficient Research on the Impact of Bibliotherapy in the Malaysian Setting

Bibliotherapy has been extensively researched in countries such as the US and UK; however, there is limited empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness among Malaysian children. Only a small number of studies have examined the impact of reading Malaysian stories with therapeutic themes on children's mental health, emotional growth, or behavioral changes. One example is the study conducted by Ani Omar (2018), which investigated the benefits of Malaysian children's books in terms of emotional expression, instilling moral values, encouraging reading habits, and promoting positive family relationships, such as listening to parents. However, the study did not delve deeply into the bibliotherapy features that should be present in the books used in the research. This lack of focused inquiry means that there is still insufficient guidance for educators, librarians, school counselors, and psychologists on how to systematically select, evaluate, or use children's literature for therapeutic purposes in Malaysian schools. Furthermore, the absence of locally grounded empirical data makes it difficult to advocate for bibliotherapy as a viable intervention in national education and mental health policy. Therefore, it is hoped that more studies involving school counselors, psychologists, or educators will be conducted in Malaysia. Hence, this study addresses the lack of a structured bibliotherapy framework contextualized for Malaysian children's literature.

1.4.3 Undeveloped Taxonomy of Therapeutic Themes in Malaysian Children's Literature

A significant barrier to the effective implementation of bibliotherapy in Malaysian educational and counseling settings is the absence of a structured taxonomy

or categorization of therapeutic themes within existing Malaysian children's literature. While there is a growing body of locally authored children's books, these texts are not systematically classified or indexed based on the emotional or psychological issues they address—such as grief, anxiety, trauma, bullying, resilience, identity, or family conflict. In many countries where bibliotherapy is more established, educators, school counselors, and librarians often rely on annotated bibliographies, therapeutic booklists, or searchable databases that help match specific books to the developmental and emotional needs of children. Such tools aid practitioners in selecting appropriate titles for interventions, curriculum integration, or individualized support. However, in Malaysia, no centralized bibliographic resource or thematic index currently exists to guide professionals in identifying children's books that contain therapeutic or affective value. Bibliotherapy is also not systematically included in Malaysia's national curriculum or school counseling programs. While reading is encouraged through initiatives like the Nilam program, literature is not typically used for therapeutic purposes. Teachers and counselors often lack training in bibliotherapy techniques, including how to select and use appropriate texts for emotional and psychological support. This results in bibliotherapy being underutilized, despite international evidence (e.g., Heath et al., 2005) showing its effectiveness in promoting resilience and emotional growth. Local studies (e.g., Abdul Aziz et al., 2023; Zanal Abidin et al., 2022) highlight growing awareness, but also emphasize gaps in policy support, teacher education, and structured implementation.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study's objective is to evaluate the bibliotherapeutic elements that are present in Malaysian children's literature, with a focus on books. When it comes to developing books for children with bibliotherapy elements, there is not one particular standard or guideline that may be followed by writers of children's books, illustrators of children's books, or book publishers. Even librarians, counsellors, and book publishers in Malaysia were not aware that bibliotherapy books were available in the country. As a result, they were unaware that reading may cure children's mental illnesses and assist them in overcoming the challenges that they face in their daily lives. There are a lot of books out there with bibliotherapy as a central topic, but if the elements that make up such books don't align with the goals of therapy, then they

won't have any good effect on the children who read them. The books in a bibliotherapy collection are regarded to be unique collections since they are intended to assist youngsters in comprehending the nature of their challenges, enhancing their sense of well-being and reassuring them that they are not alone in their struggles and that they are capable of overcoming them. As a result, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the appropriate bibliotherapy aspects that have to be included in the literature that is geared towards Malaysian children. The special features is evaluated as a potential channel for connecting the reader with the literary work in an effort to lessen the reader's emotional effect. The current literature that is available for children in Malaysia is also analysed for this research to see whether or not it has any elements of bibliotherapy.

1.6 Research Questions

Children's literature serves as a potent medium that transcends the realms of entertainment to become a therapeutic tool, particularly within the framework of bibliotherapy. As the understanding of the profound impact of literature on emotional well-being continues to grow, a critical examination of the features essential for effective bibliotherapy in children's literature becomes imperative. This exploration not only delves into the requisites of children's literature for bibliotherapy but also scrutinizes the extent to which existing Malaysian children's literature aligns with these essential features. Moreover, it prompts the development of a bibliotherapy framework tailored to the Malaysian context. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children's literature by addressing the following research questions.

- i) What are the required features of children's literature for bibliotherapy?
- ii) How does the existing Malaysian children's literature meet the required bibliotherapy features?
- iii) How can a bibliotherapy framework be developed using Malaysian children's literature?

1.7 Research Objectives

Having highlighted the issues, this study is therefore focusing to assess the bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children's literature. The main objective is further support with the immediate objectives:

- i) To explore the required features of children's literature for bibliotherapy.
- ii) To examine the existing Malaysian children's literature in meeting the required features.
- iii) To propose a bibliotherapy framework on Malaysian children's literature.

1.8 Significance of Study

This research seems to be one of the first few efforts to determine the needed elements of children's literature towards bibliotherapy and to analyse the degree to which current Malaysian children's literature meets the essential features. Additionally, this study investigates the extent to which bibliotherapy may be applied to existing Malaysian children's literature. As a result, it's possible that this study serves as a helpful springboard for additional investigation into this area of interest. The results of this research might give some type of direction for libraries, book writers, and book publishers in choosing and developing children's literature with a concentrate on children's mental and emotional growth. This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between children's literature and children's mental and emotional development. According to the opinions of bibliotherapy authorities, the choice of books to read is the single most significant aspect of the practice.

With the increasing interest in bibliotherapy, scholars are investigating novel methods to improve its efficacy, comprehensibility, and significance in many settings. One such strategy is to use the Quadruple Helix model as a lens through which to comprehend and promote bibliotherapy research (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2017). The Quadruple Helix model is a conceptual framework that expands the classic Triple Helix model of innovation by encompassing academics, industry, government, and civil society (Schutz et al. 2019). This model emphasizes the interaction between these four stakeholders in advancing societal progress and sustainable development, while also acknowledging the growing significance of civil society in innovation processes.

The Quadruple Helix model can make a substantial contribution to the field of bibliotherapy research, especially in terms of improving the effectiveness, relevance, and accessibility of the practice in addressing a range of social issues. Each of the Quadruple Helix framework's elements can further bibliotherapy research in the following ways:

1. **Academia:** By undertaking studies that examine the effectiveness of bibliotherapeutic interventions across various demographics, age groups, and cultural contexts, academic institutions can make a valuable contribution to the field of bibliotherapy research. Scholars have the ability to investigate the psychological processes that underlie the therapeutic impacts of literature, recognize optimal approaches for choosing and executing bibliotherapy interventions, and formulate evidence-based protocols for professionals. Furthermore, academic institutions can be vital in preparing the next generation of bibliotherapists and incorporating bibliotherapy into the current mental health curricula.
2. **Industry:** One important source of a wide variety of literature suitable for use in bibliotherapy interventions is the publishing business. Publishers and academics, for example, can work together to find and market books that target particular therapeutic aims like managing anxiety, developing resilience, or helping people cope with sorrow. The distribution of bibliotherapeutic materials to a broader audience can be aided by digital platforms and online booksellers, guaranteeing accessible for people who might not have access to conventional therapy. Librarians can also make reference to these bibliotherapy elements while choosing and acquiring children's books with a focus on the mental and emotional development of children. Librarians play a vital role in curating collections that meet the varying needs of young readers. Guidelines for bibliotherapy features can offer them a valuable resource for choosing books that foster the mental and emotional growth of children. By taking these factors into account, librarians can build collections that are not only entertaining but also therapeutic, promoting the well-being of young library patrons.
3. **Government:** Funding efforts, grants, and policy lobbying are some of the ways that government organizations might assist bibliotherapy research.

Recognizing the value of bibliotherapy as an adjunctive mental health intervention, governments are able to fund research initiatives, educational initiatives, and public awareness campaigns. Furthermore, by incorporating bibliotherapy into mental health service delivery frameworks and healthcare regulations, legislators can raise the practice's profile and facilitate its inclusion into traditional healthcare systems. The government may make use of this guideline in the process of policymaking in order to increase the number of books that concentrate on bibliotherapy features. Government participation and backing in fostering children's literature incorporating bibliotherapy elements could be pivotal. Developing policies that promote the generation, dissemination, and availability of such literary works can contribute to cultivating a mentally healthier and emotionally resilient young demographic. This encompasses providing incentives for authors and publishers to create pertinent content, allocating resources for libraries to procure these books, and launching efforts to incorporate them into educational programs.

4. **Civil Society:** Libraries, community centres, and non-profit organizations are examples of civil society groups that can be extremely helpful in promoting bibliotherapy as an accessible and reasonably priced mental health intervention. To encourage social ties and emotional support among members, they can set up storytelling sessions, book clubs, and reading groups. In order to reach vulnerable groups who can benefit from these interventions, civil society organizations should also push for the implementation of bibliotherapy programs in jails, schools, hospitals, and other community settings. Society as a whole benefits if more children's books containing bibliotherapy features are borrowed or purchased. The presence and availability of children's books featuring bibliotherapy can significantly influence society. When more parents, caregivers, and educators opt to borrow or buy these books, it signals an acknowledgment of the significance of children's emotional and mental well-being. These books function as valuable tools to assist children in managing difficulties, comprehending their emotions, and cultivating resilience. Ultimately, the result is a generation of emotionally healthier and more resilient individuals capable of making positive contributions to society.

A wide range of societal issues, such as mental health inequities, social isolation, and emotional well-being, can be addressed by bibliotherapy research by strengthening and expanding it and by using the collective capacity of academia, industry, government, and civil society. Thus, The Quadruple Helix approach is a useful framework for developing bibliotherapy research and practice because it highlights the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and community involvement in driving innovation and social change. In summary, integrating bibliotherapy elements into children's literature has the capacity to enhance the overall well-being and resilience of children, thereby benefiting society as a whole. Government endorsement through policy implementation has the potential to magnify this influence, while librarians, equipped with these principles, can actively participate in the curation of books that support the mental and emotional growth of young readers. Collective engagement from all parties involved can cultivate a future generation that is emotionally robust and healthy. In terms of the theoretical ramifications, this research serves as the launching point for further bibliotherapy research in Malaysia since this field of inquiry is still in its infancy stage.

In essence, this study lays the groundwork for a more intentional, structured, and contextually relevant use of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature. It bridges theoretical insights with practical application and highlights the transformative potential of collaboration across sectors. By equipping stakeholders with the knowledge and tools to incorporate therapeutic themes into literature, this research envisions a future where children's books serve not only as windows into new worlds, but also as mirrors that reflect and heal their inner emotional landscapes. It is expected that new literature and knowledge will develop as a result of this study, and that other scholars will be able to investigate this notion.

1.9 Scope of the Study

This study explores the characteristics of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature, with a specific focus on books as the unit of analysis. Utilizing a blend of literature review and document analysis, the research examines children's books written in Bahasa Melayu and English, published between 2015 and 2020. The primary objective is to elucidate how these literary works address the emotional and psychological needs of young readers in Malaysia, particularly those aged 7 to 11. The

research scope has been carefully delineated to ensure both relevance and analytical rigor. Limiting the publication time frame to 2015–2020 grounds the analysis in a contemporary context, reflecting the evolving emotional and developmental landscape of Malaysian children. This deliberate constraint ensures that outdated or culturally misaligned materials are excluded, thereby enhancing the study’s current applicability.

The selection of books in Bahasa Melayu and English highlights Malaysia’s linguistic diversity and reinforces the importance of language in conveying emotional depth and therapeutic messages. This bilingual focus reflects the multicultural and multilingual nature of Malaysian society and underscores the role of literature in shaping emotional understanding across linguistic contexts. Books targeting children aged 7 to 11 were chosen based on developmental reading categories identified by the Author Learning Centre (2018), including “easy reader” (ages 7–9), “juvenile literature” (ages 7–12), and “middle grade” (ages 8–12). These categories align with the cognitive and emotional maturity of the target age group, ensuring the selected materials are both developmentally appropriate and engaging.

The methodology includes a structured document analysis of selected children’s books, wherein each text is examined for thematic content, narrative strategies, and potential therapeutic features. The result of the document analysis then is reviewed and validated by subject matter experts and subsequently rated by two appointed raters. By focusing on the books themselves as the central unit of analysis, the study enables a detailed exploration of how literary elements function within the therapeutic framework of bibliotherapy. This investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of children’s literature in supporting emotional resilience and psychological growth. By systematically analyzing the content and themes of books published within Malaysia’s dynamic cultural setting, the study provides valuable insights into how bibliotherapy is embedded in contemporary children’s literature and how it can serve as an effective tool for nurturing the emotional well-being of young readers.

In summary, the scope of this study encompasses three main components. First, a document analysis of existing literature to examine the presence of key bibliotherapy features. Second, a panel of experts—comprising specialists in children’s literature, psychology, and education—are engaged to validate the identified features and provide professional insights. Third, raters will systematically evaluate the books based on predetermined bibliotherapy criteria to ensure consistent and reliable

assessments. By including these elements, the study goes beyond document analysis to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Malaysian children's literature for bibliotherapy, which contributes to a development of a proposed framework.

1.10 Definition of Terms

This section describes a few main terminologies that is used in the context of this research.

1.10.1 Children's Literature

Children's literature can be characterised as material written and created for the knowledge or enjoyment of children and young adults, such as fiction, non-fiction, and poetry, in either digital or printed format, according to the Library of Congress Collections Policy Statements. Children's literature, in its broadest sense, refers to books chosen and read by children. Children's books can be categorized under fiction or nonfiction genres and based on target age of the reader and other details, such as the number of words or the subject matter (Author Learning Center, 2018). In the context of this study, children's literature refers to any material read by children that can provide meaning and lessons in life, as well as serve as a form of therapy for overcoming issues related to life, behavior, and minimal mental disorders, whether in printed or online format. In this research, children's literature specifically refers to reading materials such as storybooks, picture books, and light novels suitable for children aged 6-12 years. Compared to regular children's literature, which focuses solely on education, morals, values, religion, entertainment, and leisure reading, children's literature with bibliotherapy elements will have a greater and more positive impact on the children who read it. This impact can be in the form of increased awareness, better understanding in facing life challenges, or providing insights on how to make the right decisions.

1.10.2 Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is the therapeutic use of books in the treatment of illnesses or personal problems (Noormidin et al., 2017). Children may benefit from bibliotherapy

by reading stories about characters that have successfully overcome an issue similar to their own. Identification with a literary model will help people think about and solve problems like divorce, disease, death, poverty, disability, alienation, disasters, and war. Bibliotherapy is the use of literature to help people cope with emotional problems, mental illness, or changes in their lives. The fundamental principle of bibliotherapy is that story interpretation is a dynamic process in which children bring their own desires and experiences to the process (Pardeck 1994).

1.10.3 Bibliotherapy Features

Bibliotherapy features refer to the specific elements or characteristics within a book, story, or literary material that are intentionally designed or naturally serve to support emotional, psychological, or social healing and development (Pardeck, 1994). These features are used in bibliotherapy, which is the use of literature to help individuals understand and cope with personal problems, mental health challenges, or emotional struggles (Lukens et al., 2012).

1.10.4 Developmental Bibliotherapy

Developmental bibliotherapy is an approach that use books and other reading materials as therapeutic tools to help the emotional and psychological development of individuals, especially children and adolescents (Noordin et al., 2017). This kind of bibliotherapy is most often used with younger people. It entails making use of texts that have been carefully picked in order to address and investigate certain developmental difficulties, obstacles, or concerns (McCullis, 2012).

1.10.5 Affective Bibliotherapy

Affective bibliotherapy is recognising, exploring, and focusing on feelings as crucial parts of the healing process (Greenberg, 2010). Individuals are exposed to a broad variety of emotions by identification with literary characters, much of whom they recognise in themselves, allowing them to reconnect to their own emotional environment. The richness of human life, characters, circumstances, and issues presented in literature enriches the experience.

1.10.6 Cognitive Bibliotherapy

Cognitive bibliotherapy is a method that addresses and modifies cognitive processes and patterns of thinking by using books and other reading materials as therapeutic tools (Martinec et al., 2022). This method is also known as bibliotherapy. It entails utilizing books that have been carefully chosen in order to assist people in identifying, challenging, and reframing harmful or negative attitudes, beliefs, and cognitive habits (Shechtman, 2009).

1.10.7 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy that teaches people how to recognize and alter harmful or distressing thinking patterns that affect their actions and emotions. It focuses on modifying automatic negative thinking that can trigger emotional problems, depression, and anxiety (Hoffman et al., 2012).

1.11 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 sets the overall scene setting for this thesis including the needs of the study as well as related issues identification and discussion. In this chapter, the following information is presented: the background of the study, a statement of the problem, the aims of the study, the research questions, research objectives, the significance and justification of the study, scope of study and a list of definitions of terminology.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of bibliotherapy, including its historical evolution, the strategy associated with bibliotherapy, the school of thought associated with bibliotherapy, and the process of bibliotherapy. A discussion on children's literature is also included in this section, with a particular emphasis on Malaysian children's literature. Additionally, the literature that is related with all of the constructs that were explored in the study in order to develop the research questions is investigated and discussed in this chapter. In addition to this, the conceptual framework and the underlying theory that explains the framework of the study are presented.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the research approach and methodology. This chapter provides information regarding the research design, the source of the data,

the sampling techniques, the procedure for collecting the data, the process of validating the features of bibliotherapy, the process of document analysis, and the interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 4 focuses on results from data collection on bibliotherapy features. This chapter also provide the evaluation of the literature for children through the use of document analysis. The presentation and discussion of a comprehensive integration of bibliotherapy aspects are both included. This chapter presents a comprehensive validation method of the bibliotherapy elements in great detail and a set of Bibliotherapy Features is proposed.

Chapter 5 presented the findings and discussion of the research. It addresses the key findings and acts as the culmination of the current study, and it is here that the analysis and interpretation of the data that was obtained is provided. This chapter further delves into the conclusions drawn and recommendations made based on the research findings. It highlights the notable contributions of the present study and analyses their specific implications, particularly concerning bibliotherapy practices in Malaysia. Additionally, the chapter outlines a proposed framework and research propositions.

Chapter 6 presents the concluding discussion of the study by summarizing the key findings and offering recommendations grounded in the research outcomes. This chapter addresses several critical aspects: First, it explores the implications for the future of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature, highlighting how the findings contribute to the understanding and potential application of bibliotherapy within the local cultural and educational context. Second, the chapter outlines the study's research contributions, which are categorized into three areas: Theoretical contribution – offering insights into the conceptual development of bibliotherapy as applied to children's emotional and developmental needs; Methodological contribution – demonstrating a structured approach for evaluating children's literature through expert assessment and content analysis; Practical contribution – providing guidance for authors, educators, and policy makers on selecting or developing suitable texts for therapeutic or developmental purposes. Additionally, the chapter discusses the limitations of the study, acknowledging constraints such as the exclusion of child respondents and the limited selection of texts.

Building on these reflections, the chapter presents propositions for further research and recommendations for improving practice in related fields. Finally, the

chapter concludes by synthesizing the overall findings and reinforcing the significance of the study within the broader discourse of bibliotherapy and children's literature in Malaysia.

Following chapter describes intensively on a literature review regarding the study and provides an overview of the current state of knowledge on pertinent literature reviews for this study, with a focus on presenting the research problem associated with the current issue. The chapter commences with definitions of bibliotherapy and the process of bibliotherapy followed by a concise overview of children's literature in Malaysia, and subsequently the theoretical underpinnings of the present study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises pertinent literature reviews for this study, with a focus on presenting the research problem associated with the current issue. The chapter commences with definitions of bibliotherapy and the process of bibliotherapy followed by a concise overview of children's literature in Malaysia, and subsequently the theoretical underpinnings of the present study.

2.2 Bibliotherapy

The term "bibliotherapy" has encompassed various definitions over time, but it primarily pertains to the utilization of books or narratives as a form of therapy for individuals grappling with mental illness, addiction, or emotional distress. Bibliotherapy originates from two words: biblio, derived from the Greek word biblus (book), and therapy, denoting therapeutic support. Through imaginative engagement with text, bibliotherapy offers a unique form of psychological healing, often described as a "reading cure" due to its ability to reach the unconscious mind (Bijal Shah, 2024). Frequently cited in the literature, Caroline Shrodes' definition characterizes bibliotherapy as a "process of dynamic interactions between the reader's personality and literature as a psychological field which may be utilised for personality assessment, adjustment, and growth". In her notable 1949 thesis, she described the ongoing process of bibliotherapy, a concept that continues to be observed in modern literature, under the term she coined (Eich, 1999).

Akinola (2014) defined bibliotherapy as the use of books to help children understand, adapt to, and grow from social and emotional challenges. Reading can have a calming effect by allowing children to immerse themselves in the world of a captivating book and emotionally connect with the characters, leading to new insights and perspectives. Bibliotherapy harnesses reading as a tool to assist young individuals in managing emotional difficulties arising from real-life challenges. Children may develop connections with book characters and the genuine or fictional events in the

story. Rozalski et al. (2010) described bibliotherapy as a reflective and indirect approach that uses children's literature for developmental purposes, and it can be employed to educate children about life's challenges by encouraging empathy with book characters and allowing readers to evaluate their own characteristics.

Bibliotherapy is the act of reading (fiction, nonfiction, and poetry) or consuming audio-visual content, such as films, along with participating in discussions, artistic activities, or writing, with patients (Mc Cullis, 2012). Self-help books, computer-assisted therapies, and virtual reality therapy have all been integrated into the bibliotherapy toolkit as it evolves. The utilization of books to expedite the healing process as a therapeutic approach is a recurring theme in numerous psychological treatment methodologies. The approach referred to as bibliotherapy, or book therapy, is utilized for mental health support. Bibliotherapy involves the use of literature, such as poems, novels, and creative writing, to aid in addressing psychological, emotional, and social challenges. This method utilizes books to assist children in managing changes, emotional issues, and mental health concerns (Pardeck, 1994).

While bibliotherapy remains the most prevalent concept, literature has largely excluded discussions on bibliotherapy, poetry therapy, bibliocounseling, book therapy, and library therapeutics. Definitions for these terms range from the simple concept of "treatment by books" to the detailed description of "the process of specific interaction between the reader's character and literature under the supervision of a specialist helper" (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998). The distinction between "clinical bibliotherapy," utilized by professional counsellors or therapists, and "developmental bibliotherapy," which may be employed by educators, librarians, and other non-professional helpers to promote regular development and self-actualization in a generally healthy population, is often considered particularly valuable (Afolayan, 1992; Kramer & Smith, 1998; Rubin, 1998).

Bibliotherapy is the planned use of reading—especially storybooks, picture books, and other “creative texts”—to support children’s social-emotional growth and wellbeing through guided engagement with literature. In educational settings, bibliotherapy is commonly used to help children explore feelings safely, build empathy, and learn coping responses by connecting their own experiences to characters and story situations (Serafini, 2024). Current school-based work also frames creative bibliotherapy as a structured approach that combines reading plus

discussion of creative texts (e.g., fiction, picture books, poetry), often delivered in groups and designed to promote mental health and wellbeing (Redman et al., 2024).

Bibliotherapy as a method has demonstrated its effectiveness both in the classroom and in child therapy. Since students often encounter challenges in identifying and expressing their emotions, stories can serve as a tool to help them open up and gain a deeper understanding of themselves. Children who emotionally connect with characters in literature are better equipped to comprehend what they read. Hébert (1991) advises that simply reading a story does not constitute bibliotherapy; it is crucial to incorporate follow-up discussions to reinforce the subject at hand. While "bibliotherapy" may initially seem unfamiliar, it is a compelling concept that is supported by both historical and contemporary scientific evidence.

This study will utilize Hebert and Furner's (1997) definition of bibliotherapy due to its focus on children. Bibliotherapy involves using reading to facilitate emotional change, foster personal growth, and promote development. It aims to help young individuals comprehend themselves and navigate challenges by offering literature that relates to their specific situations and developmental needs at the appropriate times. This approach not only provides the benefits of reading skills but also offers the enjoyment of reading. Stories and literary experiences play a significant role in children's lives, yielding various positive outcomes, and educators can employ literature to connect with students facing difficulties by utilizing carefully selected thematic books. Bibliotherapy refers to a therapeutic strategy that aims to enhance emotional, psychological, and personal well-being by utilizing books and literary materials. This method acknowledges the significant impact that reading and engaging with written content can have on individuals, offering a distinctive avenue for self-reflection, insight, and healing. At its essence, bibliotherapy involves intentionally selecting and utilizing literature to confront a variety of emotional and psychological challenges.

Children's literature is especially useful for bibliotherapy because stories can "show" emotions and choices in concrete, age-friendly ways. A systematic review of bibliotherapy in education reports that outcomes frequently include improved emotional understanding and expression, empathy, resilience, and reductions in stress/anxiety-related difficulties—while also highlighting that effective implementation depends on appropriate text selection and purposeful facilitation (Serafini, 2024). Recent evidence also shows growing attention to what is inside the

books: for example, a systematic review and content analysis of children's anxiety books found that characters often model coping strategies, but the quality and completeness of evidence-based strategies can vary—meaning careful selection matters if books are used as an intervention (Crane et al., 2025).

The researcher believes that bibliotherapy is a form of supportive therapy under the broader umbrella of counseling, utilizing reading materials such as books, short stories, poems, motivational quotes, and storytelling to help individuals understand and overcome emotional, psychological, or social issues. The main goal of bibliotherapy is to provide awareness, lessons, and a shift from negative to positive thinking, as well as to give individuals the opportunity to solve problems and make decisions when facing difficult situations in life. Bibliotherapy won't work, nevertheless, if an individual has obstacles, constraints, or defense mechanisms and doesn't think that books can have a positive impact on their life. Therefore, the success of bibliotherapy depends on how stakeholders and libraries work to make it successful.

In summary, bibliotherapy harnesses the power of books to help individuals explore their identities, develop emotionally, and heal. Those who use books as therapeutic tools may find solace, gain insight, and adopt new perspectives on their lives. Reading and interacting with literature can be a transformative and enriching experience, supporting well-being and personal growth. This concept is integral to the practice of bibliotherapy.

2.2.1 History of Bibliotherapy

The concept of bibliotherapy boasts an extensive historical background, with various historical societies recognizing the therapeutic potential of literature. Although the term "bibliotherapy" was initially coined in the 20th century, the utilization of reading as a means of healing and personal development dates back to ancient times (Aiex, 1993). The roots of bibliotherapy can be traced back to ancient Greece, coinciding with the establishment of the earliest libraries (Aiex, 1993). Despite its historical significance, it wasn't until the early 1900s that the term was specifically used to denote the therapeutic application of books in aiding individuals (Miracle, 1995). Several sources (Afolayan, 1992; Bernstein, 1989; Miracle, 1995; Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998) attributed the coining of the term 'bibliotherapy' to Samuel Crothers

in 1916 (*Atlantic Monthly*, Aug 1916: 291). It wasn't until 1946 that bibliotherapy was implemented for the benefit of children (Myracle, 1995).

Troscianko et al. (2024) reference Pardeck (1994) as foundational in bibliotherapy research, showing how early work on using literature with adolescents laid groundwork for contemporary quantitative studies exploring bibliotherapy interventions and group outcomes.

Sigmund Freud's development of psychoanalysis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is often recognized as the catalyst for the formal establishment of bibliotherapy. Freud recognized the therapeutic potential of literature and advised his patients to engage in self-reflection through reading, using it as a tool to uncover their subconscious desires and conflicts. Bibliotherapy gained prominence as a distinct therapeutic strategy in the mid-20th century, with American preacher Samuel Crothers coining the term "bibliotherapy" in 1916 to describe the use of reading for promoting personal development (McNicol & Brewster, 2021).

Although Crothers is credited with popularizing the term "bibliotherapy," the therapeutic value of reading and books had already been acknowledged long before his time. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, advocates of more compassionate care for those with mental illnesses often incorporated reading into their treatment plans. Early American proponent Benjamin Rush recommended two categories of books for therapeutic reading: amusing books and those that impart knowledge (Rush, 1811 as cited in Brewster & McNicol, 2018). This approach bears resemblance to many modern bibliotherapy programs, despite the evolution of bibliotherapy applications in line with changing perspectives on mental health over the past two centuries.

During World War I and II, the use of books for therapeutic purposes became prevalent as many soldiers returned from battle with post-traumatic disorders. Hospitals and libraries collaborated to treat patients using the cost-effective method of bibliotherapy (Bourke, 2000; Shephard, 2002). Following this, mental hospitals in the United States of America started utilizing bibliotherapy for their patients with mental illnesses (Brewster, 2007). The concept of individuals breaking down under stress and the physiological origins of mental health challenges gained broader acceptance, leading to an expansion of psychotherapy's role as a suitable treatment. Nevertheless, occupational therapy interventions aimed at helping patients with daily tasks and restoring them to normal life were still in the early stages. Instead, hospitals relied on

non-medical personnel, frequently librarians, to engage patients in activities beyond the hospital setting (McNicol & Brewster, 2021). This frequently involved providing patients with books offering guidance on exploring new interests or talents.

During the 1920s, the concept of "reading therapy" gained traction, leading to the establishment of bibliotherapy training programs in universities across the United States. This term became increasingly prevalent in medical literature as it disseminated throughout academic circles. Carolyn Shrodes played a pivotal role in advancing the field of bibliotherapy by introducing a theoretical framework that emphasized the direct influence of story characters on readers. Her model not only provided insight into the potential success of bibliotherapy but also outlined practical methods for its implementation (Dovey, 2019).

Formally defined by the American Library Association in 1966, bibliotherapy led to the creation of the Association of Poetry Therapy, which specialized in this form of therapy. Towards the end of the 20th century, librarian Rhea Rubin introduced two variations of bibliotherapy: developmental bibliotherapy, designed for classroom use, and therapeutic bibliotherapy, intended for mental health care (Schutt et al., 2013). Rubin's classification and foundational texts continue to be referenced in contemporary bibliotherapy literature, demonstrating the enduring influence of her work on how bibliotherapy is understood and applied in educational and library settings (Partington, 2023).

Throughout the 20th century, bibliotherapy evolved into a recognized form of therapy, as it was recognized for its ability to cultivate empathy, encourage self-expression, and offer valuable insights into individual challenges and experiences. Mental health professionals have increasingly integrated literature into their therapeutic techniques, using books as a tool for promoting personal transformation, emotional development, and self-awareness.

While bibliotherapy continues to be utilized by psychologists and librarians, its application has extended to various other professions, including social work, healthcare, education, counselling, and parenting. Presently, bibliotherapy encompasses a broader spectrum of activities, including poetry writing, self-help books, movies, comic books, art, songs, journaling, dancing, and storytelling, in addition to traditional books (McKenna, et al., 2010). According to contemporary psychological theory, bibliotherapy is effective as it provides patients with a potent means of processing emotions through identification, catharsis, and insight. This

approach allows patients and therapists to analyse literature in the context of the patient's circumstances, relate to fictional characters, and address mental illness, emotional distress, and addiction in a constructive manner (Fanner & Urquhart, 2008). Bibliotherapy has been integrated into nearly every helping profession, serving individuals of all ages and diverse populations. It is now recognized as a valuable complementary therapy in numerous industries, including psychology, counselling, education, and healthcare. It is utilized to address various mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, trauma, grief, and personal development. Bibliotherapy can be implemented through one-on-one or group sessions, curated reading lists, book clubs, and selection of specific literature tailored to individual needs. The advancement of digital technology, the prevalence of e-books, and the availability of online resources have further expanded the accessibility and impact of bibliotherapy. Virtual platforms enable individuals to engage with online communities supporting reading for health and personal development and access a wide array of literary resources.

In summary, bibliotherapy boasts a rich historical tradition, as numerous cultures have acknowledged and leveraged the therapeutic advantages of literature over the ages. The use of books as a means for healing, introspection, and personal growth has evolved and gained recognition as an effective therapeutic approach from ancient civilizations to modern practices. By offering solace, insight, and a platform for self-discovery through written narratives, bibliotherapy continues to hold a significant role in supporting mental well-being.

2.2.2 Famous Theories in Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is a meaningful way to support healing and personal growth through literature. At its core, this approach is built on several well-known theories and models that help us understand how stories can touch emotions, inspire self-discovery, and guide positive change. Over time, psychologists, teachers, and librarians have developed different frameworks to make sense of how readers connect with texts on a deeper level. Each model offers a slightly different take, but all share a common belief in the power of words to make a difference. Exploring these foundational theories helps us see how bibliotherapy works in practice, especially when supporting children and young people through life's challenges.

Over the years, several foundational theories have helped shape the practice of bibliotherapy, each offering a unique lens through which literature can be used as a therapeutic tool. These models vary in their focus areas—ranging from psychology and social work to education and counseling—but they all share the belief that reading can facilitate emotional well-being, personal insight, and growth. Below are four influential models that continue to guide bibliotherapy practices today.

i) Carolyn Shrodes' Model (1950)

Carolyn Shrodes was one of the earliest pioneers to create a comprehensive model of bibliotherapy. Drawing from both psychological and literary perspectives, she outlined a process in which readers engage deeply with fictional characters and narratives. Her model involves three key stages: identification, where the reader sees themselves in the character's experiences; catharsis, where they release built-up emotions; and insight, where new understanding and personal reflection occur. This classic model is widely referenced and forms the foundation of many current bibliotherapy interventions, particularly in clinical psychology.

ii) Pardeck's Approach (1994)

Lawrence J. Pardeck focused on the use of bibliotherapy in social work and child development. His approach emphasizes that reading materials should be carefully chosen to match a child's cognitive and emotional level. In addition to simply reading, the inclusion of guided discussions enhances the therapeutic value by helping children understand emotions and develop coping strategies. Pardeck highlighted that well-selected literature can foster emotional resilience and help young readers face real-life challenges in a safe and supportive way.

iii) Riordan and Wilson's Model (1991)

In the field of counseling, Riordan and Wilson proposed two broad approaches to bibliotherapy: the prescriptive and the interactive models. The prescriptive approach involves assigning specific books—often self-help or problem-focused texts—to help readers tackle particular issues. The interactive model, on the other hand, is more reflective. It encourages readers to engage with literary works, explore their meanings, and participate in discussions, often under the guidance of a therapist,

teacher, or counselor. This dual framework allows bibliotherapy to be flexible and adaptable to different therapeutic goals and settings.

iv) Margaret Monroe’s Developmental Bibliotherapy (1970s)

Margaret E. Monroe advanced the concept of developmental bibliotherapy, which focuses on the proactive use of literature to support children's emotional and intellectual growth at different stages of development. Her model is grounded in educational psychology and library science, promoting the idea that books should not only respond to problems but also help children prepare for life’s challenges by fostering resilience, empathy, and values. Monroe’s approach aligns closely with child-centered education, and her work helped integrate bibliotherapy into school libraries and educational curricula.

In the context of this study, the researcher selected the theories proposed by Shrodes and Pardeck, as both provide a suitable foundation for implementing affective bibliotherapy through children’s literature. Table 2.1 summarizes the models discussed above.

Table 2.1
Famous Theories in Bibliotherapy

Theorist/Model	Focus Area	Core Features	Application Context
Carolyn Shrodes (1950)	Clinical Psychology	Affective model with stages: Identification → Catharsis → Insight	Individual therapy, emotional well-being
Lawrence Pardeck (1994)	Social Work, Child Development	Literature matched to developmental level, combined with guided discussion for coping and understanding	Child counseling, social work, special education
Riordan and Wilson (1991)	Counseling	Two approaches: Prescriptive (self-help) and Interactive (reflective reading + discussion)	Mental health counseling, school guidance
Margaret Monroe (1971)	Educational Development	Developmental model using literature to support emotional and cognitive growth in children	Schools, libraries, reading programs

2.2.3 Models of Bibliotherapy

Nazi et al. (2023) bibliotherapy model provides a structured way for libraries (or facilitators) to deliver bibliotherapy as a guided service. It outlines an eight-step process that begins with identifying the client’s needs and assessing their initial condition, then matching and preparing appropriate reading materials, arranging the

session setting, facilitating the intervention, and finally conducting follow-up and evaluation to determine its effectiveness.



Figure 2.1 Nazi and Ali's Bibliotherapy Model

Nazi and Ali's bibliotherapy model is a simple step-by-step guide for running bibliotherapy in an organised way (not just giving someone a book).

1. Identification – Find the client and understand their problem.
2. Pre-evaluation – Check their current condition (baseline).
3. Matching – Choose a book/material that fits their needs.
4. Prepare materials – Make a reading list or set of resources.
5. Place, people, time – Plan where, with whom (individual/group), and when.
6. Facilitate bibliotherapy – Run the reading session(s).
7. Follow-up – Ask what they learned and how they feel.
8. Evaluate efficacy – Check if there is improvement after the program.

By integrating these steps with the therapeutic features of literature, bibliotherapy can be systematically implemented in library settings to support emotional development, social skills, and coping mechanisms (Nazi et al., 2023).

Noordin et al. (2017) work presents a conceptual bibliotherapy framework for Malaysian public libraries, explaining how libraries can adopt bibliotherapy initiatives as part of their services to support children’s development and encourage reading habits. The framework is intended to guide research and practice by focusing on the bibliotherapeutic schemes used in public libraries and how these initiatives can nurture children’s reading behaviour within the broader goal of building a knowledge/literate society.



Figure 2.2 Noordin et al.'s Conceptual Framework

The framework integrates three principal elements, which are rationalized in this study: the library as a change agent, bibliotherapeutic schemes as initiatives, and the knowledge society as the overarching national aspiration to cultivate a literate population with strong reading habits.

The library component encompasses dimensions such as roles and functions, objectives, policies, and services (Noordin et al., 2023). The bibliotherapeutic schemes are structured around dimensions including bibliotherapy categories, processes, practices, and strategies. Finally, the reading habits component comprises dimensions of reading types, reading attitudes and behaviors, and reading skills. This integrative framework provides a foundation for systematically examining how bibliotherapy can effectively influence children’s reading development within library contexts.

Karagül’s (2019) bibliotherapy approach for children treats stories as a supportive resource that helps children manage emotional or behavioral challenges.

When an appropriate book is matched to the child’s needs, the story can help the child connect with characters, express emotions in a safe way, gain insight, and use the lessons in real-life situations. Figure 2.3 illustrates Karagül’s bibliotherapy approach for children, highlighting the key stages involved and the expected developmental outcomes.

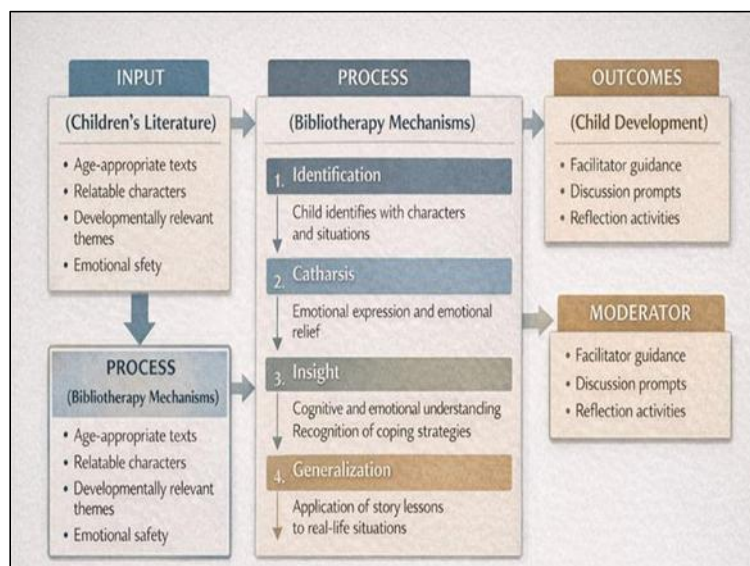


Figure 2.3 Karagül’s Bibliotherapy Approach for Children

A key part of this approach is choosing the right reading material. Karagül (2019) explains that bibliotherapy texts should be suitable for the child’s age, include relatable characters, and focus on themes that match the reader’s emotional or developmental needs. This helps children connect with the story, feel involved, and think about their own experiences.

Karagül’s bibliotherapy process can be simplified into three stages. First, select a suitable text based on the child’s needs. Second, guide the child while reading by encouraging them to reflect on the characters and relate the story to their own life. Third, support reflection and application by discussing the story’s message and helping the child use the lesson in real situations, often through activities like journaling or group discussion (Karagül, 2019). Overall, Karagül highlights that effective bibliotherapy depends on both choosing appropriate texts and engaging with them in a structured way.

Another model of bibliotherapy is by Bekircan (2025). Her structured approach uses reading as a therapeutic tool to help individuals explore their emotions, reflect on their experiences, and develop positive coping strategies. It follows a clear

four-step sequence—pre-reading, guided reading, post-reading discussion, and a related activity—so participants can connect with the text, make meaning from the story, and apply the lessons to real-life situations in a practical way. Figure 2.4 illustrates the framework as proposed by Bekircan.

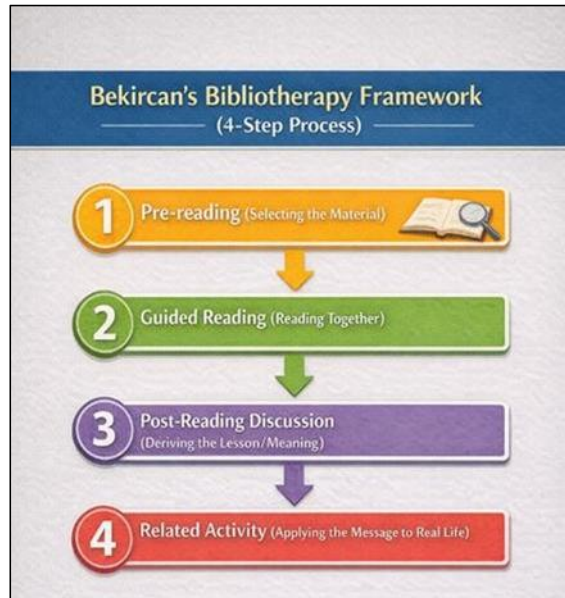


Figure 2.4 Bekircan Bibliotherapy Framework

Bekircan’s bibliotherapy framework is a structured, step-by-step process that guides how bibliotherapy is delivered from start to finish:

1. Pre-reading (selecting the material)
The facilitator carefully chooses a story/text that matches the participant’s needs, age, reading level, and the specific issue being addressed. The aim is to ensure the book is relevant and suitable so the reader can connect with it.
2. Guided reading (reading together)
The facilitator and participants read the text together (or with support). This stage ensures understanding, maintains engagement, and allows the facilitator to clarify vocabulary, plot, and key moments that relate to the targeted theme.
3. Post-reading discussion (deriving the lesson/meaning)
After reading, the facilitator leads a discussion to help participants reflect on the characters, events, and emotions in the story. Participants are guided to identify themes, relate the story to real-life experiences, and extract helpful lessons or coping ideas.

4. Related activity (applying the message to real life)
Finally, participants complete a follow-up activity (e.g., drawing, journaling, role-play, worksheets, or action planning). This step helps translate the story's message into practical understanding and real-life behavior, reinforcing learning and personal growth.

2.2.4 Types of Bibliotherapy

There are various forms of bibliotherapy that can be applied in clinical, educational, and domestic contexts. Lindberg (2021) delineated the various forms of bibliotherapy that may be utilised as follows:

- i) Creative bibliotherapy. This approach entails the gathering of individuals, including children, adolescents, and adults, to read, discuss, and analyse stories, poems, and fiction. The method fosters active engagement with literary works, as participants collaborate to explore their emotions and perspectives by sharing their thoughts and interpretations. Creative bibliotherapy cultivates a sense of community, allowing individuals to connect through the shared experience of literature. It can be particularly beneficial in group therapy sessions, educational settings, or book clubs, where participants can form connections over narratives and gain insights into their own emotions and experiences.
- ii) Developmental bibliotherapy, which utilized by parents, educators, and professionals, is a method that addresses developmental issues relevant to children and adolescents. These issues can include subjects such as puberty, identity, self-esteem, friendship, and emotional maturity. Typically integrated into educational environments, developmental bibliotherapy entails the utilization of age-appropriate literature by educators to foster conversations and provide support regarding these developmental obstacles. By carefully selecting books, young individuals can enhance their understanding of and navigate the changes and challenges associated with their growth and maturation.
- iii) Prescriptive bibliotherapy, which entails utilizing self-help books and resources to aid individuals in reshaping their thought patterns, emotional

responses, and behaviours. This form of bibliotherapy can be administered both in a domestic environment, where individuals pursue self-improvement, and in professional settings, where therapists or counsellors suggest specific books to clients as part of their treatment regimen. The suggested books are often personalized to the individual's particular needs and therapeutic objectives. Prescriptive bibliotherapy enables individuals to play an active role in their personal growth and well-being by equipping them with practical strategies and insights found in the recommended books.

- iv) Therapeutic bibliotherapy is used when integrating literature with other therapeutic modalities to address psychological and emotional challenges. In this approach, mental health professionals incorporate books, stories, or written materials as supplementary resources to support traditional therapeutic techniques. These materials can assist in promoting self-reflection, facilitating discussions, and providing coping strategies. Therapeutic bibliotherapy is particularly effective when integrated into psychotherapy, counselling, or rehabilitation programs, offering additional avenues for exploration and healing to complement the therapeutic process.

Some experts in the field of bibliotherapy recognize two distinct branches, although the boundary between them is not always clearly defined. Pehrsson and McMillen (2007) proposed two types of bibliotherapy: developmental bibliotherapy and clinical or therapeutic bibliotherapy. Developmental bibliotherapy is employed in community or educational settings to assist children or adults in addressing common life challenges, such as bullying. It acknowledges that addressing developmental issues and promoting healthy growth can be significantly supported through reading. This approach involves selecting reading materials that align with an individual's needs and developmental stages across various age groups. On the other hand, clinical or therapeutic bibliotherapy involves using books within a professional therapy context to treat a diagnosed disorder or alleviate the negative impacts of a diagnosed mental or physical disorder (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2007). It encompasses the purposeful and organized use of literature to address a range of psychological and emotional problems. Clinical bibliotherapy requires therapists or other mental health

experts to select specific books or reading materials that are relevant to the client's therapeutic needs and goals.

In Rubin's work from 1978, three categories of bibliotherapy were identified: clinical, developmental, and institutional. Clinical bibliotherapy involves the use of imaginative literature—such as memoirs, biographies, dramas, novels, poetry, and short stories—to assist individuals dealing with emotional and/or behavioural issues. The facilitator in this type of bibliotherapy is typically a doctor or librarian working in an institutional or community setting. Developmental bibliotherapy, on the other hand, utilizes books, poetry, short stories, films, and other literary media as a platform for individuals to come together and address life issues and personal challenges. Mitchell-Kamalie (2002) stated that this approach also helps individuals prepare for and cope with stressful situations. Rubin (1978) emphasized that through reading and discussing the experiences of others, individuals can gain insight into coping with life's challenges and realize that they are not alone in facing difficulties. Furthermore, the use of literature and media as a catalyst for problem-solving is a key benefit of bibliotherapy. Lastly, institutional bibliotherapy involves the use of didactic literature with institutionalized individuals, and often includes medical applications such as prescribing books on mental hygiene. According to Rubin (1978), librarians may only administer this type of bibliotherapy in conjunction with physicians or medical personnel. Table 2.2 provides a summary of the characteristics of the three types of bibliotherapy.

Mcculliss (2012) proposed three distinct types of bibliotherapy: clinical, developmental, and client-developed. These types differ in their approach to addressing emotional and behavioural issues, the nature of materials used, and the overall objectives of the practice, which include self-actualization, problem-solving, social acceptance, attitude adjustment, psycho-therapeutic goals, and educational outcomes. Clinical bibliotherapy is employed when clients present serious emotional or behavioural challenges. It involves the use of imaginative literature, such as fiction, poetry, short stories, theatre, biographies, autobiographies, prose excerpts, tales, and fables, to facilitate insights and promote behavioural changes. In contrast, developmental bibliotherapy utilizes self-help literature to support emotionally and mentally healthy individuals in maintaining their well-being or achieving self-actualization. Lastly, client-developed bibliotherapy encourages creativity through crafting original conclusions to narratives and exploring the implications of altering

plotlines. This method may involve clients composing letters from one character to another or assuming the role of a character in the story to address shared concerns.

Table 2.2
Characteristics of the Three Types of Bibliotherapy

	Institutional	Clinical	Developmental
Format	Individual or group; usually passive	Group – active; voluntary or involuntary	Group – active; voluntary
Client	Medical or psychiatric patient, prisoner, or client in private practice	Person with an emotional or behavioural problem	“normal” person, often in a crisis situation
Contractor	Society	Society or the individual	Individual
Therapist	Physician and librarian team	Physician, mental health worker, or librarian, often in consultation	Librarian, teacher, or other
Material used	Traditionally didactic	Imaginative literature	Imaginative literature and/or didactic
Technique	Discussion of material	Discussion of material, with emphasis on client’s reactions and insights	Discussion of material, with emphasis on client’s reactions and insights
Setting	Institution or private practice	Institution, private practice or community	Community
Goal	Usually informational, with some insight	Insight and/or behaviour change	Normal development and self-actualization

Source: Adopted from Rubin (1978)

Moreover, Brewster and McNicol (2018) introduced two core models for bibliotherapy, one centred on nonfiction and the other on fiction. Nonfiction bibliotherapy involves the use of creative literature such as novels, poetry, and short stories, focusing on educational and informational resources that address psychological, emotional, and personal growth needs. Within nonfiction bibliotherapy, individuals, therapists, or counsellors select nonfiction books tailored to their unique requirements, challenges, or aspirations. These books cover a wide range of subjects aligned with the reader’s therapeutic objectives, including anxiety, depression, self-esteem, communication skills, mindfulness, resilience, and various other topics. Likewise, fiction bibliotherapy is a therapeutic approach employing fictional writings, such as novels, short stories, or poems, to promote emotional well-being, self-reflection, and personal development. Because of this, many recent frameworks emphasize (1) selecting the right text, (2) guiding the reading/discussion process, and (3) linking insights to real-life practice. In the Malaysian context, a systematic literature review on “bibliotherapy features” in children’s literature highlights the importance of children connecting with relatable characters and situations and

engaging with issues that support emotional growth (Abdul Aziz et al., 2025). Related Malaysian work also identifies key affective features in children's books that make them more suitable for children's development and growth—again reinforcing that not all children's books are equally therapeutic (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023). In practice, educators and facilitators often align book choices with social-emotional learning goals (Parker & Cronin, 2025).

In summary, there is a wide array of techniques for utilizing literature as a therapeutic intervention, made available through various forms of bibliotherapy. Each approach recognizes the unique ability of books to facilitate individual growth, self-reflection, and children's development in diverse ways. By harnessing the therapeutic potential of books, these methods offer individuals opportunities for insight, connection, and empowerment, ultimately contributing to their psychological and emotional well-being. Although bibliotherapy encompasses various forms, the present study follows the typology proposed by Pehrsson and McMillen (2007), which distinguishes between developmental and clinical bibliotherapy. The most suitable typology will depend on the specific objectives, target audience, and resources available in a given context. Given that the current study primarily focuses on children's literature, it is appropriate to emphasize developmental bibliotherapy, which takes into consideration the age range or developmental stage of the audience. This approach ensures that the reading materials are relevant and appropriate for the particular needs and concerns of the target age group. It is evident that developmental bibliotherapy can be linked to the emotional and social development of students.

2.2.5 Bibliotherapy Approach

There are two recognized branches of bibliotherapy: clinical bibliotherapy and developmental bibliotherapy, although the distinction between them is not always clear. In community or school settings, developmental bibliotherapy is utilized to assist children or adults in addressing common issues such as bullying. The application of developmental bibliotherapy can help resolve conflicts and meet developmental needs. This method involves readers consciously altering their attitudes or beliefs after reflecting on major characters or events in a story. The use of this strategy has a positive impact on a child's emotional well-being, including their overall wellness (Lucas & Soares, 2013; Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989). On the other hand,

clinical or therapeutic bibliotherapy involves utilizing books in a professional therapeutic setting to treat diagnosed disorders or alleviate the negative effects of diagnosed mental or physical disorders. Only trained professionals employ clinical bibliotherapy in a therapeutic environment. This study is primarily concerned with how children's emotional well-being is connected to developmental bibliotherapy. The subsequent literature will provide an in-depth exploration of the topic of developmental bibliotherapy within the context of this study.

2.2.5.1 Developmental Bibliotherapy

As mentioned previously, bibliotherapy can be categorized into two types: clinical and developmental. Developmental bibliotherapy has evolved over time with input from numerous experts in the fields of psychology, counselling, and education, lacking a single clear originator. As a therapeutic method, developmental bibliotherapy utilizes books and other reading materials to encourage personal growth. The advancement of developmental bibliotherapy has been facilitated by several specialists, including Gail F. Melson, who focused on utilizing bibliotherapy with young people, and Nancy L. Wilson and Jane L. Curry, who expanded the scope of bibliotherapy to encompass various age groups and therapeutic environments. Margaret Monroe introduced the term "developmental bibliotherapy" to distinguish between bibliotherapy for adults and children (Monroe & Rubin, 1975). According to Schlachter (2005), Margaret played a key role in advancing reading guidance, particularly bibliotherapy, by providing resources to public librarians to help them realize the library's role as a community learning centre and supporter of non-traditional education. It is important to acknowledge that bibliotherapy is a multidisciplinary approach, with significant contributions to its development and application from experts across various fields.

Developmental bibliotherapy is now widely acknowledged as an effective method for supporting children in addressing their needs, and as a valuable approach that can be implemented in clinical settings (Afolayan, 1992; Jackson, 2006). This type of bibliotherapy is commonly utilized with children, often taking place at home or in educational environments, and involving parents, teachers, and librarians. By providing children with the tools and space to process and express their emotions, developmental bibliotherapy aims to facilitate the natural development of their social

skills. Through literature, children are taught about emotions and behaviours, as well as how to manage and process them as they undergo changes (Kerry-Moran & Aerila, 2019). McCullis (2012) has proposed that self-help literature is employed in developmental bibliotherapy to assist healthy individuals in achieving self-actualization or maintaining their emotional and mental well-being.

The current research is particularly focused on developmental bibliotherapy, which, despite its name, does not primarily aim to provide therapy. Its primary objective is to address conflicts and fulfil developmental needs in various contexts. Lucas and Soares (2013) noted that developmental bibliotherapy has a positive impact on a child's emotional growth and overall well-being. The process consists of four important components, which are viewed through the lens of developmental bibliotherapy. Given the complexity and emotional states experienced by bibliotherapy participants (Suvilehto et al., 2019), the four-phase procedure (Bašić, 2011; Jackson 2006; Milovac 2014) is discussed.

Identification – Identification is achieved through visualization. Children come to understand that they are not alone in experiencing frustrations and difficulties while engaging in interactive reading. The identification process commences with acknowledging the similarity between the character and the child, and progresses through the projection phase.

Projection – commences with introspection in a secure environment, encouraging children to explore their own and others' emotions through the lens of literary characters. This method fosters a sense of security by allowing children to express themselves in the third person or as an animal.

Catharsis – involves emotional expression, recognition, and relief. This phase is based on projection, as the children express their emotions through the role. According to Jackson (2006), "at this stage of the process, deep emotions are present, and there is an imitation of the character's behaviour."

Insight – Once the catharsis phase concludes, a clear solution to the problem becomes evident, leading the children to respond driven by internal motivation. Consequently, they gain insights into the impact of their actions on their emotions and mood, as well as the presence of unseen elements in their behaviour. As a result of their perception of individually resolving the issue, their sense of autonomy and self-confidence is heightened.

Developmental bibliotherapy has been widely implemented in educational environments to support children and adolescents who may have encountered traumatic experiences related to dealing with loss or death, accepting their sexual orientation, navigating parental divorce, managing math anxiety, overcoming fears and social anxiety, addressing addiction, dealing with bullying, poverty, abuse, negative body image, school anxiety, and eating disorders (Catalano, 2017). This approach provides insights into various problem-solving techniques and offers emotional support through the use of appropriate literature. Moreover, group or classroom developmental bibliotherapy fosters an environment where other students can understand and empathize with those who are undergoing trauma and distress (Martinec et al., 2022).

In summary, developmental bibliotherapy is a potent approach that recognizes the unique developmental needs and obstacles individuals face during different life stages. It serves to support, guide, and motivate individuals as they navigate various developmental phases, transitions, and challenges through the use of books as a therapeutic tool. This method assists individuals in manoeuvring the complexities and transitions associated with their developmental journeys by providing relevant reading materials tailored to their age and situation. Additionally, it offers guidance, validation, and valuable insights.

2.3 Bibliotherapy School of Thoughts

The previous section discussed various definitions of bibliotherapy, all of which share a common element: they involve reading. Affective bibliotherapy has its roots in Freud's psychodynamic theories and involves exploring suppressed ideas, emotions, and experiences through written materials. It is believed that as characters in the literature resolve their dilemmas, readers will become emotionally invested in the conflicts and thereby gain understanding of their own circumstances (Shrodes, 1957 as cited in Banas & Gershon, 2022). This approach places strong emphasis on developing emotional responses through the identification with literary characters' situations. It is essential that the fiction used has literary value, as it can reflect an individual's struggles and assist in connecting with emotions and distress with minimal anxiety (Gersie, 1997; Gladding, 2005). Affective bibliotherapy cannot be a

self-help treatment due to its dealings with intense emotions and experiences which the involvement of a therapist is necessary (Banas & Gershon, 2022).

2.3.1 Cognitive Bibliotherapy

The concept of cognitive bibliotherapy has roots in the early 20th century when psychiatrists and librarians collaborated to aid individuals with psychiatric concerns. They would suggest books to patients tailored to their specific issues, with the aim that the individuals would gain insights from the reading and apply them to their own lives. This approach could be used independently or in conjunction with medication. The recommended books could either be entirely self-help or supplemented with occasional group discussions. However, the focus remained on the content of the book and its relevance to the individual's problems or challenges (Shechtman, 2009). Cognitive-behavioural therapies are based on the idea that all behaviours are learned and can be relearned with appropriate support. Therefore, the primary catalyst for behaviour change according to these principles is learning.

The fundamental principle of cognitive bibliotherapy asserts that an individual's thoughts and beliefs exert a substantial influence on their emotions and actions. Engaging with carefully chosen literature can empower individuals to acquire fresh knowledge, perspectives, and thought processes that challenge and transform detrimental cognitive patterns. Consequently, this process involves active reading, self-reflection, and internalizing the ideas and concepts presented in the book. Within the context of cognitive bibliotherapy, books serve as therapeutic resources that provide exercises in cognitive restructuring, fostering healthy thinking, and presenting alternative viewpoints. The materials selected for cognitive bibliotherapy may encompass textbooks, self-help guides, fiction, and non-fiction books relevant to the individual's areas of concern, with the selection process being tailored to the person's specific cognitive obstacles and therapeutic objectives.

Cognitive bibliotherapy is a specific method within the broader field of bibliotherapy that concentrates on utilizing reading materials and books to address cognitive processes and encourage cognitive restructuring. Its goal is to help individuals recognize and tackle negative or unproductive thought patterns and replace them with more logical and practical ones. This approach can be beneficial for individuals struggling with cognitive distortions, unfavourable thought patterns, or

psychological conditions such as anxiety or depression (Shechtman, 2009). By actively employing cognitive restructuring techniques and engaging with reading materials focused on cognition, individuals can improve their cognitive functions, self-awareness, and emotional well-being.

According to Liu et al. (2009), cognitive bibliotherapy refers to a form of bibliotherapy that is rooted in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Its materials typically incorporate theoretical frameworks, practical exercises, and psychoeducational content aimed at addressing and potentially resolving various types of psychopathologies. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of CBT as a self-administered treatment for depression (Ackerson et al., 1998; Jamison & Scogin, 1995; Moldovan et al., 2013) and even subthreshold depression (Willemse et al., 2004). This approach focuses on facilitating cognitive and behavioural changes through literature that explicitly addresses fears, anxieties, and behavioural challenges. Within CBT, individuals (referred to as patients) engage in a process of "identifying unhelpful cognitions, challenging their meaning, and developing more realistic thoughts and assumptions" (Montgomery & Maunders, 2015, p. 38) in an effort to reframe negative thoughts and behaviours. Cognitive strategies, such as self-help books or manuals containing specific tasks for the client to complete, are employed to guide the patient through the process.

The primary application of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is often found in clinical bibliotherapy. Clinical bibliotherapy involves a certified professional psychologist or social worker utilizing psychoeducational materials, such as self-help books, as an additional intervention in therapeutic treatment (Rus-Makovec et al., 2015). This approach emphasizes the therapist's use of literature to guide interventions or recommend specific books to patients, particularly those experiencing emotional or behavioral challenges (McCulliss, 2012; Pehrsson et al., 2007). Specialized studies indicate that employing clinical bibliotherapy in a clinical context offers significant benefits, including cost efficiency (Romeyke & Stummer, 2012).

Cognitive bibliotherapy involves several stages. Initially, the patient and therapist collaborate to identify the issue at hand. The next step involves selecting relevant literature to address the identified problem. Subsequently, the individual reads the chosen material and engages in self-reflection, journaling, and discussion to comprehend their cognitive processes. The resulting insights are then compared with cognitive patterns outlined in the literature. The knowledge gained from the literature

offers diverse perspectives, aiding the individual in reframing negative thought patterns, identifying cognitive distortions, and fostering clearer and more productive thinking. Ultimately, this approach aims to enhance emotional well-being and promote adaptable behaviour. Known as cognitive bibliotherapy, this therapeutic method combines the benefits of reading with cognitive-behavioural therapy principles.

2.3.2 Affective Bibliotherapy

Affective bibliotherapy is a therapeutic approach that aims to manage and address emotions through the use of reading and literature. It focuses on utilizing literature to evoke and delve into emotional experiences, enhance emotional awareness and understanding, assist in emotional regulation, and promote overall well-being. Primarily, affective bibliotherapy techniques are employed in developmental bibliotherapy, which can support the normal development and self-actualization of a generally healthy population (Afolayan, 1992; Kramer & Smith, 1998). This approach can be utilized by educators and other non-professional caregivers. Rozalski et al. (2010) suggested that individuals are encouraged to establish personal connections with characters in the book, enabling readers to assess their own behaviour and emotions through the characters' experiences in the story. The characters, often fictional, help readers connect the narrative to their own emotions and struggles (Betzalel & Shechtman, 2010). This intervention has the potential to assist individuals in coping with life changes, emotional issues, and behavioural challenges through the dynamic interaction between the reader and the story (Heath et al., 2005; Pardeck, 1994; Pehrsson et al., 2007; Stewart & Ames, 2014; Walwyn & Rowley, 2011). Affective bibliotherapy can benefit those seeking to enhance their emotional regulation, awareness, understanding, or those who wish to explore and work through specific emotional difficulties. The use of carefully selected reading materials and guided emotional exploration can help individuals learn valuable lessons, refine their emotional intelligence, and foster emotional well-being.

The majority of the available literature concerning children's bibliotherapy focuses on affective bibliotherapy, as noted by Gladding (2005). Affective bibliotherapy, in the method of identification, utilizes fiction and other high-quality literature to help readers connect with emotional memories and human circumstances (Schechtman, 2009). Unlike cognitive bibliotherapy, affective bibliotherapy is rooted

in psychodynamic theories, some of which can be traced back to Sigmund and Anna Freud. The fundamental premise of affective bibliotherapy is that individuals employ defence mechanisms, such as repression, to shield themselves from pain. When these defences are frequently activated, people become disconnected from their thoughts, unaware of their true feelings, and consequently unable to address their issues constructively. Stories play a valuable role in providing insight into personal problems (Forgan, 2002) by creating a safe emotional distance, allowing children and adolescents to indirectly approach sensitive and potentially distressing issues.

Affective bibliotherapy also holds the belief that acknowledging, delving into, and pondering emotions are vital elements of the therapeutic journey (Greenberg, 2010). People encounter a wide range of emotions as they relate to fictional characters, many of which resonate with their own experiences, enabling them to re-engage with their own feelings. The richness of human experiences, personalities, events, and obstacles portrayed in literature enriches the overall experience. Affective bibliotherapy focuses on fiction or other high-quality reading and requires the presence of a therapist (Batzalel and Shechtman, 2010). In this approach, the therapist plays a crucial role in guiding clients through the various stages of bibliotherapy and assisting them in coping with challenging and conflicting emotions. It is the therapist's responsibility to ensure that clients comprehend diverse information effectively by addressing, modifying, and alleviating their challenging responses. When children, teenagers, or individuals with intellectual disabilities are part of a bibliotherapy session, the complexity of the case increases.

In summary, affective bibliotherapy utilizes literature to understand and address distortions in emotional well-being, facilitating emotional rehabilitation. Thoughtfully selected reading material can assist individuals in exploring, understanding, and validating their emotions, ultimately enhancing their emotional awareness and self-regulation. This therapeutic approach uniquely combines the art of storytelling with the transformative influence of emotions.

2.4 Process of Bibliotherapy

Although bibliotherapy is a creative process with respect to its methodology, some basic stages that typically arise from each other should be followed (Hebert &

Kent, 2000; Pardeck, 1993). Martinec et al. (2022) generally outlined that bibliotherapy encompasses the subsequent stages:

- i) Assessment of the client's particular needs and/or problems
- ii) Appropriate selection of the literary text
- iii) Incubation
- iv) Insight and interpretation (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of particular issues highlighted by the client)
- v) Discussion of the problem
- vi) Problem solving

The therapeutic process in bibliotherapy is typically guided by a series of recognized stages. These stages, as outlined by various sources, form a structured approach to facilitating therapeutic growth in children through literature. Stamps (2003) and Jackson (2006) proposed that children progress through stages of identification, catharsis, insight, and universalization. Initially, they are taught that connecting with characters in literature goes beyond real-life relationships to include both fictional human and animal characters, thus broadening the scope of relatability. As emphasized by Jackson (2006), the focus is on recognizing and identifying with the ideas and behaviours of others. Subsequently, children are taught to establish connections between the text they are reading and themselves, other texts, and the world around them. This approach aims to cultivate the habit of making connections while reading, which enhances their comprehension and interpretation of the material. The following stage, insight, encourages children to engage with specific topics and confront relevant issues, as highlighted by Jackson (2006). Furthermore, they are prompted to compare their experiences with those of the characters, fostering an understanding that attitudes and behaviours can be positively modified, as indicated by Stamps (2003). Finally, in the fourth phase, children come to realize that many others share similar experiences to the characters, encouraging a broader, more generalized perspective on the plot and characters. After engaging in this process, they understand that their experiences are not unique, as illustrated by Stamps (2003).

Pardeck (1993) delineated four fundamental stages in bibliotherapy: identification, selection, presentation, and follow-up. Throughout the initial two stages, it is imperative to ascertain the needs of the children, and to choose appropriate literature that addresses their specific concerns. The selection process necessitates a blend of skill and intuition, as the chosen books must accurately convey information about the pertinent issues without inducing false optimism in the readers. Subsequently, the carefully and strategically presented books enable the children to draw parallels between themselves and the fictional characters. At the core of bibliotherapy lies the concept that individuals can forge connections with fictional characters who mirror their experiences, thereby using this connection to explore new social dynamics, process emotions, and find new directions in life (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). Once the children can identify with the protagonist, they progress to the sharing phase during the follow-up process. Here, they employ nonverbal methods such as art (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000), role-playing, creative problem-solving, and self-selected activities to undergo catharsis, in addition to verbal channels such as discussion and writing. Post-catharsis, the children are guided to comprehend the issue at hand. Reflecting on how the characters in the literary works resolve their challenges aids in teaching them how to navigate their own difficulties (Hebert & Kent, 2000).

Sridhar and Vaughn (2000) proposed that in order to maximize the impact of character education, a bibliotherapy lesson should encompass the following elements: i) identification; ii) involvement; and iii) insight. In the identification phase, it is essential that the main character and the events in the plot are relatable to the reader. The main character should be of a similar age to the readers, exhibit familiar behaviours, and navigate situations that they can personally connect with. The involvement stage focuses on cultivating the readers' empathy towards the situation and fostering emotional connections with the main character after initially identifying with them. Literature holds the potential to reshape readers' perceptions of behaviour when they develop emotional investment. Lastly, the moment of insight occurs when readers recognize that their own challenges, akin to those faced by the characters in the story, are not insurmountable. Readers are provided with the opportunity to analyse the main character and the situation through insight, and subsequently form opinions on the behaviours or actions that the main character employs to resolve the problem. Additionally, by exploring alternative behaviours to outdated improper conduct, readers also learn problem-solving skills (Parker, 2005).

2.5 Goals of Bibliotherapy

The objectives of bibliotherapy encompass a range of purposes aimed at promoting self-awareness, emotional awareness, and personal development. The six goals of bibliotherapy, as outlined by Baruth and Burggraf (1984), are consistent with the commonly identified characteristics of bibliotherapy and correspond to the successful elements present in the analysed children's literature. These objectives include: (1) sharing knowledge, (2) fostering comprehension, (3) prompting discussion on issues, (4) presenting new ideals and perspectives, (5) cultivating awareness of shared challenges, and (6) providing practical resolutions to difficulties. Taking into account the commonalities and recommendations for integrating bibliotherapy with other therapeutic approaches (Heath et al., 2005; Pardeck, 1995), the subsequent sections underscore how bibliotherapy can effectively address the attributes of bibliotherapy in children's literature by conveying and reinforcing key elements of established bibliotherapy interventions.

The main objective of bibliotherapy within children's literature is to offer a thorough comprehension of particular issues that children may face (Schmidt, 2020). Thoughtfully chosen books act as a means for children to delve into and grasp complex emotions, interpersonal dynamics, and personal development. Through integrating bibliotherapy into educational methods, educators can establish a supportive and caring setting that promotes open discussions about emotional encounters. Children's literature, characterized by compelling storytelling and familiar characters, presents an exclusive opportunity for young readers to establish connections and absorb important life lessons (Leahy & Foley, 2018). Within skilfully constructed narratives, protagonists in children's literature frequently encounter hurdles, conquer obstacles, and undergo personal development, bestowing upon young readers invaluable opportunities for vicarious learning. This active absorption of stories encourages a profound comprehension of their own emotions and enables children to navigate the intricacies of their lives. Moreover, as pointed out by Martinec et al. (2022), the utilization of bibliotherapy in children's literature plays a crucial role in fostering empathy and promoting an understanding of diverse viewpoints. Engaging with characters from assorted backgrounds who encounter different obstacles enables children to expand their perspectives and cultivate a more empathetic mindset. This facet of bibliotherapy is in line with the overarching

objectives of education, which aim to nurture social and emotional learning, encourage tolerance, and foster inclusive communities. The incorporation of bibliotherapy in children's literature serves to impart valuable knowledge while also fostering emotional intelligence, resilience, and empathy (Heath et al., 2005). Through the utilization of stories, educators and caregivers significantly contribute to the comprehensive development of children, establishing a groundwork for their emotional well-being and providing them with crucial skills to confront life's obstacles with confidence and comprehension.

Bibliotherapy's secondary objective, in addition to its primary goal of providing insight into specific issues, is to enhance understanding of these issues through the perspective of children's literature. According to Pulimeno et al. (2020), utilizing literature as a tool for exploration and discussion is a powerful strategy for improving the emotional and psychological well-being of young readers. The promotion of meaningful discussions is a key component of this bibliotherapeutic approach. Educators and caregivers can facilitate conversations around the themes presented in children's literature, encouraging young readers to express their thoughts, feelings, and interpretations. These discussions not only enhance the comprehension of specific issues addressed in the books but also foster critical thinking skills and the ability to articulate emotions. In bibliotherapy, children's literature serves as a potent tool for offering nuanced insights into a wide range of topics (Heath et al., 2005). By incorporating astute content in the form of well-crafted stories and characters, young readers can grapple with complex issues in a relatable and age-appropriate manner. Thoughtfully chosen narratives enable children to indirectly undergo and contemplate situations, emotions, and challenges, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and the world. Integrating bibliotherapy using children's literature in educational environments plays a crucial role in fostering the emotional growth of young readers. Through interacting with stories that reflect their own experiences or expose them to various viewpoints, children develop the ability to navigate a wide range of emotions, from happiness and enthusiasm to fear and sorrow (Ulutaş et al., 2021). This exploration of emotions is vital for cultivating resilience, as it helps children comprehend that experiencing a diverse range of feelings is a natural aspect of life. Furthermore, Koopman and Hakemulder (2015) posited that the deeply engaging quality of children's literature fosters empathy. Through forming connections with characters who confront difficulties or prevail over adversity, young readers cultivate

a heightened awareness of the emotions and challenges of others. This empathetic comprehension contributes to the establishment of a more considerate and all-encompassing community, nurturing positive social interactions and relationships. The utilization of bibliotherapy in children's literature also plays a pivotal role in nurturing a positive self-image among young readers (Law, 2003). By encountering characters who surmount obstacles or embrace their individual qualities, children are motivated to value their own strengths and differences. This empowerment contributes to the development of a resilient mind-set, enabling them to confront challenges with assurance and a strong sense of self-esteem. This approach not only supports the emotional development of young readers, but also cultivates resilience, empathy, and a positive self-perception (GGI Insights, 2023).

The third aim of bibliotherapy involves actively encouraging discussions between educators and students to challenge social and behavioural norms. This objective underscores the power of meaningful dialogues to bring about transformation, with the goal of maximizing the therapeutic effects of bibliotherapy and promoting the emotional and psychological growth of young readers (Martinec et al., 2022). Bibliotherapy interventions, when evaluated with the objective of challenging societal and behavioural norms, emphasize the significance of establishing channels for open communication between educators and students. Through the utilization of bibliotherapy, caregivers and educators can actively facilitate meaningful dialogues surrounding the themes depicted in children's literature, providing a structured platform for the exploration and interrogation of established norms. McCulliss and Chamberlain (2013) pointed out that the integration of bibliotherapy into educational practices acts as a catalyst for nurturing emotional intelligence in young readers. Through facilitated discussions, students can contemplate the emotional experiences of characters and apply these insights to their own lives. This process promotes self-awareness, empathy, and a deeper comprehension of the emotional landscape, arming students with the abilities to navigate intricate social scenarios with emotional intelligence. Additionally, bibliotherapy interventions promote the cultivation of problem-solving abilities in young readers (Ludwig, 2002). Through discussing the challenges confronted by characters in children's literature, students are encouraged to critically analyse situations and consider alternative viewpoints. This cognitive engagement enhances their capacity for critical thinking, informed decision-making, and tackling problems

with creativity and resilience. Moreover, facilitating discussions on themes in children's literature prompts students to question societal norms and stereotypes (Kruger et al., 2020). By exploring diverse perspectives and narratives, young readers develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world, challenging preconceived notions and fostering inclusivity, tolerance, and cultural awareness. This process ultimately contributes to the development of socially conscious and empathetic individuals.

The fourth objective of bibliotherapy is focused on introducing young readers to new values and attitudes. By utilizing stories that communicate positive messages and offer moral lessons, children are able to develop important virtues and build a strong ethical groundwork (Rahim & Rahiem, 2013). As suggested by Thompson (2019), successfully instilling fresh values and attitudes through children's literature within the framework of bibliotherapy encompasses various essential strategies for educators, parents, and caregivers:

- i) **Fostering Meaningful Conversations:** Actively promoting meaningful discussions centred on the themes found in children's literature is fundamental to instilling new values. Through fostering open and inclusive dialogues, educators and caregivers establish an environment for children to articulate their perspectives, viewpoints, and analyses. These conversations enable young readers to thoughtfully interact with the ethical dimensions of the narratives, nurturing a more profound comprehension of the values being expressed.
- ii) **Forming Links with Real-Life Situations:** Connecting the narratives with real-life experiences enriches the practical implementation of moral values. Instructors and guardians can facilitate conversations that assist children in identifying similarities between the characters' challenges and their own experiences. This association strengthens the significance of the values conveyed in the literature, rendering them more tangible and relevant to the children's everyday lives.
- iii) **Encouraging Moral Reflection:** Encouraging children to actively reflect on morals prompts them to contemplate the ethical consequences of characters' choices and behaviours. By engaging in reflective thinking, young readers are

encouraged to internalize the moral values conveyed in the stories, fostering a sense of personal accountability and ethical reasoning. This process effectively contributes to the formation of a robust ethical framework.

- iv) **Modelling Positive Behaviour:** Demonstrating positive behaviour serves as an influential approach in cultivating moral principles. Teachers, parents, and caregivers can embody the principles advocated in children's literature, acting as real-life illustrations for young readers. Exhibiting empathy, kindness, and integrity underscores the significance of these principles and offers children tangible examples to follow.
- v) **Create a Values-Centred Environment:** Fostering an environment centred on values entails integrating principles from children's literature into different facets of learning and home environments. This may comprise classroom or home exhibits, activities that bolster values, and a steadfast focus on ethical considerations in everyday interactions. Such an environment underlines the ongoing importance of the values introduced through bibliotherapy.

The fifth objective of bibliotherapy focuses on nurturing an awareness among young readers that others have encountered similar challenges. This approach harnesses the power of children's literature as a potent tool to promote empathy, connection, and emotional reflection, thereby empowering young readers to realize that they are not alone in addressing difficulties (Martinec et al., 2022). Bibliotherapy effectively tackles this objective by deliberately choosing materials that convey the commonality of hardships and stimulating discussions on these subjects (Ludwig, 2002). This approach enhances children's understanding, reduces their sense of isolation, and reinforces their ability to navigate their own difficulties. Engaging young readers in conversations about the adversities depicted in children's literature is a crucial element of this bibliotherapeutic method. Through guided discussions, educators and caregivers can establish a secure and receptive environment for children to express their thoughts, experiences, and emotions related to the themes of the stories. This dialogue reinforces the notion that others have encountered similar challenges, thus fostering empathy and mutual understanding among young readers (Sedat 2018).

The final objective of bibliotherapy is to offer practical solutions to challenges, involving young readers and providing valuable guidance for effectively managing adversities. This method serves as a practical and beneficial tool for fostering problem-solving skills, resilience, and a sense of empowerment in young readers through the portrayal of practical solutions to issues encountered in children's literature (Cook et al., 2006). By not solely focusing on providing solutions but also equipping young individuals with essential skills, bibliotherapy becomes a comprehensive approach to navigating challenges in their lives. It captivates young readers by presenting realistic scenarios in children's literature that reflect the difficulties they may face. Through immersing themselves in the narratives, young readers are drawn into stories that resonate with their own experiences. This engagement establishes a critical connection between the characters and the readers, making the process of exploring and understanding challenges more relatable and meaningful. By addressing real-life issues in children's literature, bibliotherapy equips young individuals with the necessary skills to navigate difficulties (Vahidi, 2018), laying the groundwork for their emotional well-being and empowering them to confront life's complexities with confidence and resilience (May, 2023).

In summary, the aims of bibliotherapy in children's literature present a purposeful and impactful approach to nurturing the mental and emotional well-being of young readers. Bibliotherapy endeavours to achieve multiple objectives that support the holistic development of children through carefully curated reading materials. By immersing children in stories that explore a wide range of emotions, bibliotherapy aims to enhance emotional literacy, enabling them to empathize with characters and gain a deeper understanding of their own feelings (Zhou, 2022). Confronting relatable challenges and encountering practical solutions facilitates cognitive restructuring and the enhancement of coping skills. The primary goal of bibliotherapy is to empower young readers, inspiring them to actively engage in their personal growth. Through the presentation of positive role models and the emphasis on resilience, bibliotherapy instils a sense of agency in children and bolsters their self-esteem (Riordan, 1991). Additionally, bibliotherapy in children's literature strives to create a supportive and inclusive environment (Riordan, 1991). It broadens children's perspectives, fosters empathy and tolerance, and addresses common scenarios through narratives that embrace diversity and promote cultural understanding. Implemented in children's literature, bibliotherapy seeks to cultivate a lasting love for learning and

reading. This therapeutic approach encourages active participation, capturing children's interest and motivating them to see reading as an ongoing avenue for personal development and exploration (Wigfield & Tonks, 2004). As Tukhareli (2011) suggested, the objectives of bibliotherapy in children's books surpass storytelling, laying the groundwork for resilient, compassionate, and self-aware individuals. Leveraging the profound influence of literature, bibliotherapy enhances the emotional well-being of children, guiding them towards self-discovery, understanding, and continuous education.

2.6 Bibliotherapy Features

The absence of established standards or research to identify the essential attributes for effective bibliotherapy programs in Malaysian children's literature is a notable concern. It is argued that for bibliotherapy to function as a therapeutic intervention, a detailed understanding of the specific characteristics catering to the psychological and emotional needs of young readers is necessary. The lack of established criteria hinders the potential of children's literature to serve as a tool for emotional and psychological development. While Kassim et al.'s (2010) study on children's literature in Malaysia acknowledges the increasing emphasis on promoting a sense of Malaysian identity in reading materials, it does not explicitly address bibliotherapeutic criteria. Although fostering a national identity in children's literature is recognized as important, a focused examination of bibliotherapy elements is deemed crucial to fully utilize the therapeutic potential of these literary works. Additionally, the argument acknowledges the positive impact of advancements in publishing, information and communication technology (ICT), and multimedia production on children's literacy through books. However, it asserts that these advancements should not only improve the accessibility of children's literature but also incorporate bibliotherapeutic elements, ensuring that literature actively contributes to the holistic development of young readers (Bekircan 2025).

The lack of a universally accepted definition of 'bibliotherapy features' highlights the need for greater clarity in the field of therapeutic literature. The argument recognizes that discussions about bibliotherapy often centre around the characteristics or qualities of using books for therapeutic purposes. In this context, "features" may be construed as the specific attributes or components inherent to the

practice of bibliotherapy. In the context of this research, the argument defines bibliotherapy features as the distinct attributes or qualities of books that make them suitable for therapeutic use. These attributes, carefully evaluated during the selection process, play a crucial role in addressing an individual's emotional or psychological needs. The argument asserts that the primary objective is to select works that can deeply resonate with the reader, prompt self-reflection, and contribute to their overall well-being. The significance of bibliotherapy features lies in their potential to facilitate a meaningful therapeutic experience. The argument maintains that by identifying and comprehending these features, therapists and individuals can make well-informed choices about literature that aligns with the unique needs and experiences of the reader (Hynes-Berry, 2018).

Researchers such as Coleman and Ganong (1988), Rozalski et al. (2010), Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018), Karges-Bone (2015), and Ree (2012) proposed characteristics that might serve as broad guidelines for bibliotherapists.

2.7 Bibliotherapy Features in Children's Literature

Literature has gained a reputation as an effective intervention technique for addressing the social and emotional difficulties of children. This recognition has led to a widespread use of literature as a therapeutic tool. Through reading stories in which they can identify with the characters, children are able to connect with and find solutions to the challenges they face in their own lives. This type of intervention is frequently utilized in group counselling and psychotherapy sessions with children, providing them with a safe space to explore their emotions and develop coping strategies.

Utilizing children's literature in bibliotherapy requires the inclusion of various characteristics that collectively enhance the genre's effectiveness in addressing a wide range of emotional states and navigating diverse challenges (Adeyeye & Oboh, 2022). These characteristics encompass the use of relatable characters and situations, the incorporation of diverse perspectives and experiences, the dissemination of information and viewpoints on pertinent issues, the facilitation of discussions around problems, the promotion of new values and attitudes, the cultivation of awareness that others have faced similar challenges, and the provision of coping strategies and resolutions for these challenges (Adeyeye & Oboh, 2022; Akinola, 2014; Pulimeno et

al., 2020). Furthermore, bibliotherapy with children's literature aims to act as a tool for prevention and development, fostering the social and emotional growth of children.

The process of bibliotherapy with young children must differ from that utilized with older children and adults. The bibliotherapeutic process is impacted by children's low vocabulary, verbalization issues, wider range of experiences, and short attention span. Because younger children cannot be challenged as directly as adolescents or adults, the material chosen and the therapeutic techniques must be adjusted for them (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993). According to professionals in bibliotherapy, choosing the right books is the most crucial aspect of this type of therapy (Aziz et al., 2019). Burnett (1997) suggested the following elements in children's literature:

- i. Be well-written and suitable for the child's stage of development.
- ii. Tell children's stories in language they are comfortable with and that is accurate to their experiences.
- iii. Describe the characters' state and potential outcomes.
- iv. Problems should be depicted in illustrations in an honest and direct way.
- v. Include dimensional characters who display real, relatable emotions.

Although the use of written materials in bibliotherapy to enhance mental health and wellbeing is widely established, it is still unclear what kinds of books would be most helpful to suggest. In general, choosing high-quality literature is crucial (Halsted, 1988). Books that are both highlighted and pertinent to the plot, with outstanding writing, readable printing, and beautiful artwork, should be picked. The three advantages listed by Jalongo (1983) for using literature are acceptance, relevance, and information. These three can also be used as materials selection criterion. Examine whether the story or book a) promotes knowledge-sharing between adults and children, b) enables the child to apply the information to her/his own life, and c) finally supports the child's feelings and responses to the present emergency or situation. Jalongo (1983) further asserted that books with excellent writing, legible printing, and appealing artwork that is both featured and relevant to the plot should be considered.

According to Coleman and Ganong (1988), when choosing books for treatments, there are a number of factors that should be taken into account. The book

must first be appropriate for the client's reading level. If a book is too challenging, the reader will give up or become frustrated. The therapeutic connection may be harmed by a book that is too simplistic and offensive. The quantity of concerns and difficulties raised in the text is a second thing to take into account. A book's quality increases with the number of topics it covers (Coleman & Ganong, 1987). Children are more likely to read a book that relates to their own personal experiences. The quality and quantity of the guidance offered constitutes a third aspect. Ideally, a range of potential answers should be presented. If this is the case for a particular book, a client can come up with solutions to an issue they are facing with the help of the assisting person. The fourth factor to take into account is how accurately the problem is portrayed in the book. When using fiction as a resource for treatment, this idea is crucial. Additionally, the book must include practical solutions to issues. The book's tone is one more thing to take into account. For instance, Coleman and Ganong (1987) proposed that a book or books utilized in bibliotherapy should have the beneficial property of humour.

Altunbay (2018) proposed specific criteria for selecting books as the foundational materials for bibliotherapy. It is widely acknowledged that the process encompasses three key aspects: the advisee, book preferences, and the consultant. However, not all literary works are suitable for bibliotherapy. It is essential to utilize texts with a strong basis in reality, serving as a reflective mirror for the client's issues. Both books grounded in real-life experience and those fostering imaginative worlds are integral to this process. Altunbay (2018) recommended the selection of books with exceptional writing, clear printing, and relevant, visually engaging artwork.

There are a number of things to take into account while selecting the right book for a student facing a challenging situation. Rozalski et al. (2010) proposed the following characteristics:

- i. Readability level – The book is expected to cater to the individual reader's specific needs, challenges, or concerns. It should cover topics that resonate with their personal experiences and offer insight or solutions for their psychological or emotional issues.
- ii. Grade/interest level – When selecting books, consider the child's age and stage of development. The cognitive, emotional, and social requirements differ across various age groups. Choose books with appropriate complexity, themes, and substance that align with your child's age.

- iii. Presentation of characters – Consider selecting books from the child's preferred series or featuring familiar characters. Staying connected with characters they already love and admire can increase their engagement and enhance their reading journey.
- iv. Context – When choosing books, it is important to consider the individual needs, challenges, and goals of the child. Seek out books that specifically or indirectly encompass the child's circumstances, such as anxiety or grief, if these are areas of difficulty for them.
- v. Illustrations – If the book is intended for younger children, pay close attention to the visual components, such as the graphics or photographs. The reading experience can be improved and a child's interest can be piqued by colourful, interesting, and well-illustrated books.
- vi. Author's message – Seek out literature in which the underlying message remains coherent and understandable from start to finish. Focus on pieces where the message seamlessly integrates into the storyline, character development, and overall narrative framework, contributing to a compelling and impactful reading journey.

Despite the fact that books have helped instructors or therapists, they must decide whether the books are suitable for the kids depending on their requirements, reading levels, and interests. When evaluating books for potential usage in bibliotherapy session, teachers or therapists should consider the following questions as listed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3
Characteristics of Books for Review

Determining Appropriateness	Questions to Ask
Readability	Are the books readability formulas consisting of the following? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sentence length ▪ number of difficult words ▪ proper nouns ▪ syllables ▪ prepositional phrases

Determining Appropriateness	Questions to Ask
Grade/Interest Level	Are my students likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand the concepts in the book? ▪ understand the vocabulary in the book? ▪ take interest in the book? ▪ make connections between the book and other books, subject areas, and life experiences?
Presentation of Characters	Are the characters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ realistic? ▪ dynamic? (change and grow throughout the text) ▪ presented in a positive manner? ▪ developed without discriminatory language and negative stereotypes?
Context	Is the current _____ similar enough to the story's? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ setting ▪ age group ▪ presentation of the problem
Illustrations/Pictures	Do the illustrations/pictures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ help students to gain understanding of the text? ▪ portray children in ways to which students can relate? ▪ represent individuals and groups (e.g. ethnicity, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, and family structure) respectfully and free of stereotypes/discrimination? ▪ capture and maintain student engagement?
Author's Message	Does the author's message: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ encourage students to reflect and engage in discussion? ▪ empathize with the feelings and actions of children? ▪ provide hope for students? ▪ offer strategies to help students cope with or problem-solve difficult life situations rather than providing simple or unrealistic solutions? ▪ advocate for the acceptance and well-being of all children?

Source: Adopted from Rozalski et al. (2010)

These thematic and stylistic dimensions proposed by Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1986) can be used as general guides. The process of implementing bibliotherapy requires a careful and intentional method of utilizing books as a therapeutic instrument. The efficacy of bibliotherapy depends on meticulous evaluation of multiple parameters, and the subsequent discourse emphasizes crucial elements of implementing the criteria. Continuous assessment, individualization, and a dedication to creating a therapeutic space are necessary in order to utilize literature as a potent catalyst for personal discovery and growth.

Chesson (2023) proposed a set of elements that should be included in children's books.

i) Unique and Memorable Characters – The central emphasis of a children's book

lies in its characters, which hold utmost importance. When a young reader forms a deep connection with a specific character, their enjoyment of any storyline featuring this figure remains unchanged, regardless of its content.

- ii) Action and Suspense – Action and suspense are often associated with adult literature, but it's important to recognize that children are also deeply drawn to these elements in stories.
- iii) Believable Conversation – To achieve authenticity and consistency in conversation, it is crucial to ensure that spoken interactions reflect the characteristics, goals, and interpersonal relationships of the individuals involved. It is important to comprehend how individuals would express their thoughts, the substance of their speech, and the underlying reasons driving their communication.
- iv) Plot and Ending – In children's literature, stories frequently conclude with cheerful and predictable outcomes, effectively addressing the challenges presented within the plot. In this genre, it is generally recommended to avoid incorporating grim or dissatisfying endings. It is crucial for children's literature to demonstrate attributes of wholesomeness, emotional positivity, and overall satisfaction.

A Lasting Identity – is a term frequently used to describe themes and stories that explore a child's self-perception and the formation of identity. Children's literature frequently investigates the idea of changing identities as a way to help young readers understand and navigate this concept.

Karges-Bone (2015) further proposed the 7-Part Literary Model encompassing on the “what and why” of reading:

- i) Plot – The narrative of a story encompasses the sequence of events. Children's literature often incorporates elements of creativity, discovery, and ethical guidance. Characters and settings are meticulously crafted to engage a child's imagination and provide numerous opportunities for educational and personal growth. The plot structure in children's literature is intentionally tailored to capture the interest of young readers while simultaneously imparting crucial

moral lessons and stimulating their imaginative abilities.

- ii) **Setting** – The period, backdrop, or location(s) in which a story takes place. In children's literature, the setting plays a vital role in establishing a vibrant and captivating environment that fully engages young readers. A carefully developed setting can enhance the entire reading experience and contribute to the progression of the story. The choice of setting in children's literature is often influenced by the author's intended themes and messages. The setting should be meticulously crafted to captivate the imagination of young readers, spark their curiosity, and provide a compelling backdrop for the characters' adventures and personal growth.
- iii) **Characterization** – The qualities and traits that bring characters in a story to life and make them memorable are essential components of children's literature. Well-developed characters are crucial for engaging young readers and effectively conveying important themes and ideas. Characterization in children's literature goes beyond creating interesting individuals; it serves as a vehicle for imparting moral lessons, fostering empathy, and nurturing a love for reading. Expertly crafted characters elevate the impact of the narrative and enhance its appeal and longevity for young audiences.
- v) **Theme** – The main idea(s), lesson(s) or moral(s) that emerge from the story. Themes in children's literature encompass the fundamental concepts, ideas, or teachings that authors strive to communicate to young readers. These themes enhance the overall effect of the story and frequently offer useful insights about life, relationships, and personal development. High-quality children's literature frequently blends captivating narrative with significant motifs that deeply connect with the intended readership.
- vi) **Conflict** – The internal and external forces and struggles that drive the characters. Conflict is a common and necessary component in children's literature, playing a crucial role in generating suspense, excitement, and providing characters with chances to develop and acquire knowledge. Although the conflict shown in children's literature is suitable for their age, it remains essential in propelling the storyline. Resolving disagreements

frequently results in the development of one's character, comprehension, and the strengthening of positive principles.

- vii) Point of view – The angle from which the story is told or unfolds. The point of view (POV) is a crucial aspect in children's literature since it shapes the narrative style and impacts the reader's connection with the characters and plot. The selection of point of view influences the manner in which young readers establish a connection with the narrative. The selection of point of view (POV) in children's literature is determined by the author's objectives and the targeted age demographic. Younger readers may find it easier to understand and relate to the experiences of specific characters when the story is told from a first-person or third-person limited perspective. On the other hand, older readers may value the profoundness and intricacy provided by third-person omniscient or multiple viewpoints.
- viii) Style – The arrangement of words, images, tone, and all other elements that make the story unique. The style in children's literature refers to the author's individual manner of conveying ideas, constructing sentences, and establishing a distinct voice in the narrative. The style plays a substantial role in shaping the general tone, ambiance, and readability of a children's book.

Ree, (2012) proposed i) characters; ii) setting; iii) plot; iv) point of view; v) theme; vi) style; and vi) tone. In children's literature, character may refer to a person, an animal or an object that has been given human characteristics. The characters are developed by bringing a character to life via the cultivation of their inner and exterior attributes. The thoughts, dialogues, actions, and behaviours of a character, as well as the author's narration or the thoughts of other characters, may all provide light on a character's background and motivations. In works of literature for children, the term "setting" refers to the geographical, chronological, and social context in which the action of the story takes place. When it comes to stories for children, the atmosphere of the location is quite important since it helps to build the universe in which the characters and the action take place. Ree (2012) further elaborated that plot is a series of incidents that demonstrates how the characters behave. When discussing works written for children, the term "plot" refers to the

progression of events that constitute the story itself. It takes into account the progression of the story, the trials and tribulations that the characters go through, as well as the ways in which those problems are solved. When it comes to captivating young readers and assisting them in developing a connection with the tale, having a storyline that is well-structured is one of the most important elements.

As for point of view in children's literature, Ree (2012) postulated that it is the aspect of the story that is presented to the reader by the author from the viewpoint of one of the characters. As the story progresses, the reader is given a glimpse into the characters' thoughts and experiences via their points of view. When discussing works of literature for children, the term "point of view" refers to the vantage point from which the narrative is told. The choice of point of view has a considerable influence on how the reader perceives and understands the story as a whole, which is particularly true when the intended audience is composed of children.

Themes in children's literature are the overarching concepts or lessons that the author tries to impart to the reader during the course of the narrative. Themes often revolve on topics such as society, human nature, the human condition, societal difficulties, and the struggle between good and evil. These topics are often chosen because they are intended to strike a chord with young readers, teach them vital lessons about life, and inspire them to think critically and empathize with others. There are many topics that may be found in books written for children, and the author's choice of topic can have a significant effect not only on the reader's experience but also on the educational value of the book. Style in children's literature refers to word selection and placement by the author in order to develop the story's storyline, characters, and environment, as well as its overall theme. It refers to the unique and creative writing technique used by the author. This technique helps to establish the overall tone, mood, and effect of the narrative. The author's writing style has been thoughtfully developed to captivate the attention of young readers, properly communicate the story's events, and provide an immersive reading experience. Finally, the concept of tone in children's literature pertains to the affective ambiance or authorial disposition that is communicated via the written text. The aforementioned factor assumes a pivotal function in influencing the emotional reactions of adolescent readers towards the narrative and its cast of characters. The tone shown in children's literature may exhibit significant variation, contingent upon the author's intended purpose, the genre of the literary work, and the thematic elements being examined.

To summarize, bibliotherapy encompasses several key elements: a focused approach, clearly defined objectives, personalized treatment, a wide range of literature choices, considerations for accessibility, active engagement, a secure setting, group facilitation, ongoing assessment of progress, expert guidance as necessary, and consistent evaluation and introspection. The combination of these elements makes bibliotherapy a diverse and successful strategy for promoting positive emotional and psychological results by using literature in therapy.

2.8 The Integration of Bibliotherapy Features

The process of proposing a bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children's literature involved several stages. Firstly, a number of book features and requirements were examined within the literature. It was found that there was no standard bibliotherapy features proposed so far. Therefore, the aim of this section was to review the relevant features or elements from various literature and to consider the most important dimensions of each of these literatures for potential use within the Malaysian setting, and then modify, where appropriate, those dimensions that could be used to propose the bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children' literature. The examination of previous literature has concluded that there are a number of previously developed book features various dimensions within them that could be adopted to assist in producing a preliminary bibliotherapy features. The development process of bibliotherapy features involved the following four distinct stages:

- i) Stage 1: Terms and definitions and the explanation of the relevant dimensions.
- ii) Stage 2: Terminology and subheadings – In this section, those dimensions from book features and assessments are rewritten into common terminology.
- iii) Stage 3: Categorization of dimensions or features – In this stage, those features are categorized into dimensions of a preliminary model.
- iv) Stage 4: Refinement of the Preliminary model – In this, a proposed model was created. Panel of experts were contacted via email seeking for their assistance to validate the model.

Stage 1 – Terms and Definitions of Each Dimension

In this stage, literatures pertaining to bibliotherapy and books features were examined. Each dimension proposed by the researchers was presented and examined. This procedure was designed to explain and define each dimension as proposed in the literature. This procedure also helped to differentiate one dimension from another because different researcher came up with different terms for what is ultimately the same dimension. Next, each dimension is explained so that commonalities and differences are clear.

Stage 2 – Terminology and Subheadings

In stage 2, the dimensions or features of bibliotherapy that were examined thus far are presented using a common terminology. During this process, the researcher identified various features found in previous literature that are similar in definition and intent, but the terminology, in many cases differs. The next stage in the model development process was, therefore, to collapse those common dimensions into groups and cluster them under the appropriate subheadings.

Stage 3 – Categorization

In this stage, all dimensions from previous literature were classified into six categories. Each of these categories plays a crucial role in the bibliotherapeutic process, contributing to its effectiveness in promoting emotional well-being, self-awareness, and personal growth. The categorization helps therapists organize their approach and tailor bibliotherapy interventions to meet the specific needs of their clients, enhancing therapeutic outcomes.

Stage 4 – Validation by Panel of Experts

The panel is composed of experts in pertinent fields, including education, psychology, counseling, literature, and bibliotherapy. These professionals ought to be knowledgeable about both the theoretical underpinnings and real-world implementations of bibliotherapy. The suggested bibliotherapy features are independently reviewed and assessed by panel members in light of the predetermined standards. By following a systematic process of validation involving expert consensus,

the features of bibliotherapy can be rigorously validated and recommended for effective use in bibliotherapy.

An in-depth analysis of existing literature was undertaken to explore the characteristics and elements of children's literature that can potentially facilitate emotional transformation and support personal growth. It is evident that none of the criteria in the compilation were standardized, and the findings were not definitive enough to serve as a guideline for bibliotherapy. It is important to recognize that the use of children's literature in bibliotherapy is a multifaceted and complex practice, possibly lacking a definitive set of components for guidance. Bibliotherapy, which involves using books and reading as a therapeutic intervention to help individuals deal with emotional and psychological challenges, is highly customized and contingent on the specific context in which it is employed. The following characteristics or features have been suggested on the basis of the literature review: i) characters; ii) plot; iii) theme; iv) illustrations; v) readability, and vi) empathy. Table 2.4 below organizes the findings into key categories, each backed by illustrative statements from the literature that illustrates the features derived from the analysis of existing literature.

Table 2.4
Summary of Bibliotherapy Features

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Burnett (1997)	Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe the characters' state ▪ Describe the characters' potential outcomes 	Characters	Children's literature usually has vibrant, captivating characters that are endearing to young readers due to their exaggerated characteristics. The variety of characters encourages empathy and compassion in young readers by letting them investigate several viewpoints and experiences.
Jalongo (1983)	Character Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Characters should be relatable and well-developed ▪ Characters with distinct personalities and motivations 		
Coleman and Ganong (1988)	Realistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Books should be realistic enough ▪ Implying characters should be believable 		
Rozalski et al. (2010)	Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Featuring familiar characters ▪ Staying connected with characters 		
Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018)	Universal themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exploring broad concepts ▪ Address shared human experiences ▪ Offer deep insights into various aspects of life ▪ Characters are frequently used as means of exploring and communicating 		
Chesson (2023)	Unique and Memorable Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The central emphasis of a children's book lies in its characters ▪ Reader forms a deep connection with a specific character 		
Karges-Bone (2015)	Characterization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Characters are essential components of children's literature ▪ Crucial for engaging young readers and effectively conveying important themes and ideas ▪ Serves as a vehicle for imparting moral lessons, fostering empathy, and nurturing a love for reading ▪ Expertly crafted characters elevate the impact of the narrative 		

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Ree (2012)	Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characters are developed by bringing a character to life Various aspects of a character, including their thoughts, dialogues, actions, behaviors, and the author's narration or other characters' thoughts, can reveal their background and motivations. 		
Burnett (1997)	Engaging Storyline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fascinating and comprehensible plot The story should be age-appropriate Reflects young readers' experience and interests 	Plot	The storyline of children's literature is typically based on a simple narrative framework that draws young readers in with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The plot is typically tailored to keep young readers engaged, with exciting or suspenseful moments interspersed with quieter, more reflective scenes.
Jalongo (1983)	Plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story is entertaining, coherent, and appropriate for the target age group. It should have a defined beginning, middle, and end, with a problem or conflict addressed at the conclusion. 		
Coleman and Ganong (1988)	Issues and Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revolves around the sequence of events that unfold as characters encounter. As the plot progresses, the problem evolves and becomes more complex. The plot of a book is intricately woven around the problem or conflict portrayed in the narrative. 		
Rozalski et al. (2010)	Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting creates framework in which the plot moves. Provides the foundation upon which the plot is constructed. 		
Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018)	Powerful Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Themes mould the narrative and propelling it forward in important ways. Difficulties, conflicts and resolves are directly related to the theme. 		

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Chesson (2023)	Plot and Ending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stories frequently conclude with cheerful and predictable outcomes, effectively addressing the challenges presented within the plot. ▪ Recommended to avoid incorporating grim or dissatisfying endings. ▪ Demonstrate attributes of wholesomeness, emotional positivity, and overall satisfaction. 		
Karges-Bone (2015)	Plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The narrative of a story encompasses the sequence of events. ▪ To engage a child's imagination and provide numerous opportunities for educational and personal growth. ▪ The plot structure in children's literature is intentionally tailored to capture the interest of young readers 		
Ree (2012)	Plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Series of incidents that demonstrates how the characters behave. ▪ Progression of events that constitute the story itself. 		
Burnett (1997)	Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problems should be depicted in illustrations in an honest and direct way ▪ Children's books need visual components to improve understanding and interest. ▪ Illustrations should enhance comprehension and foster an emotional bond. 	Illustrations	Illustrations in children's literature contribute significantly to the whole reading experience. They can range from simple line drawings to rich, complex artwork, depending on the book's style and target demographic. Illustrations not only add visual appeal, but they also contribute to the overall narrative by expressing mood, tone, and
Jalongo (1983)	Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visual aspects have an important role in children's literature ▪ Should be lively, colourful and relevant to the content ▪ Help portray emotions and events. 		
Coleman & Ganong (1988)	N/A			

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Rozalski et al. (2010)	Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual components such as the graphics or photographs. Child's interest can be piqued by colourful, interesting and well-illustrated books. 		important visual cues that children of all ages can use to improve their reading experiences.
Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018)	Imagery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evoke mental pictures and sensory experiences for readers. Allowing readers to vividly visualize situations, characters, and emotions. Heighten the reader's connection to the text. 		
Chesson (2023)	N/A			
Karges-Bone (2015)	N/A			
Ree (2012)	N/A			
Burnett (1997)	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-written and suitable for the child's stage of development Should utilize language that is both approachable and sophisticated enough to increase young reader's vocabulary and linguistic abilities 	Readability	Readability in children's literature relates to how easily and comfortably young readers can grasp and interact with the text. It considers vocabulary, phrase structure, sentence length, and the general complexity of the language.
Jalongo (1983)	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language chosen should be age-appropriate and understandable. Should be fascinating and rich enough to expand children's vocabulary. 		
Coleman and Ganong (1988)	Reading Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate for the children's reading level. Optimal balance between challenge and simplicity. 		
Rozalski et al. (2010)	Readability Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cater to the individual reader's specific needs, challenges, or concerns. It should cover topics that resonate with their personal experiences and offer insight or solutions for their psychological or emotional issues. 		

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018)	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to the use of language and its components in literature as a means of therapeutic intervention. Uses language aspects such as vocabulary, expressions, syntax and literary techniques to convey ideas, elicit emotions, and engage readers in the healing process. 		
Chesson (2023)	Believable Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoken interactions reflect the personalities, goals, and interpersonal relationships of the people involved. Important to comprehend how individuals would express their thoughts, the substance of their speech, and the underlying reasons driving their communication. 		
Karges-Bone (2015)	Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The arrangement of words, images, tone, and all other elements that make the story unique. Refers to the author's individual manner of conveying ideas, constructing sentences, and establishing a distinct voice in the narrative. The style plays a substantial role in shaping the general tone, ambiance, and readability of a children's book. 		
Ree (2012)	Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to word selection and placement by the author in order to develop the story's storyline, characters, and environment, as well as its overall theme. Refers to the unique and creative writing technique used by the author. The author's writing style has been thoughtfully developed to captivate the attention of young readers, properly communicate the story's events, and provide an immersive reading experience. The concept of tone in children's literature pertains to the affective ambiance or authorial disposition that is communicated via the written text 		

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Burnett (1997)	N/A		Theme	Themes in children's literature refer to the key ideas or lessons that the story offers to young readers. These themes frequently revolve on universal concepts and values that children identify with and use to make sense of their surroundings.
Jalongo (1983)	Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should address important topics that are relevant to children's lives and experiences. Themes include friendship, family, overcoming obstacles, and experiencing new locations. 		
Coleman and Ganong (1988)	Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tone creates the emotional ambiance for the book, impacting how readers perceive and interpret the story. It can convey a sense of suspense, excitement, warmth, humor, or seriousness, depending on the author's language, style, and narrative voice. A well-crafted tone can interest readers by eliciting specific emotions and catching their attention. 		
Rozalski et al. (2010)	Interest Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to a critical aspect of children's literature that aims to engage young readers by capturing their curiosity and enthusiasm. Appropriate complexity, themes and substance that align with the children's age. The interest level in children's literature is increased when the themes are relevant, interesting, and emotionally resonant for young readers. 		
Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018)	Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the pace, progression, or organization of a storyline within a therapeutic framework. The goal is to utilize literature to support the therapeutic process and improve the overall well-being of the reader. 		
Chesson (2023)	Action and Suspense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closely intertwined with themes to create engaging and captivating stories for young readers. 		

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Karges-Bone (2015)	Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is critical to understand that youngsters are strongly drawn to these features in stories. These elements serve to drive the plot forward and keep readers eagerly turning pages to discover what happens next. Encompass the fundamental concepts, ideas, or teachings that authors strive to communicate to young readers. Enhance the overall effect of the story and frequently offer useful insights about life, relationships, and personal development. 		
Ree (2012)	Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overarching concepts or lessons that the author tries to impart to the reader during the course of the narrative. Often revolve on topics such as society, human nature, the human condition, societal difficulties, and the struggle between good and evil. 		
Burnett (1997)	Emotional Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include dimensional characters who display real, relatable emotions. Can arouse feelings like happiness, curiosity, excitement, empathy, or even melancholy. Children who are emotionally involved are more likely to have a memorable reading experience and form a deep emotional bond with the story and its characters. 	Empathy	Empathy in children's literature is the ability of stories and characters to elicit understanding and compassion in young readers for the experiences, feelings, and views of others. Empathy in children's books encourages young readers to develop social and emotional skills, improves their capacity to connect with others, and creates a sense of community and inclusion.
Jalongo (1983)	Emotional Resonance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An excellent children's book should provoke feelings of joy, grief, enthusiasm, or empathy. Emotional engagement can help children connect with the story and its characters. 		
Coleman and Ganong (1988)	Quality and Quantity of Guidance Offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflects the way in which authors and illustrators provide emotional support, understanding, and guidance to young readers through the stories they tell. 		

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Books that emphasize empathy often depict characters forming meaningful relationships based on understanding, kindness, and support. Empathetic children's literature acknowledges and validates the diverse range of emotions experienced by young readers. 		
Rozalski et al. (2010)	Author's Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The message seamlessly integrates into the storyline, character development, and overall narrative framework, contributing to a compelling and impactful reading journey. Stories are frequently used to communicate moral lessons, values, and emotional understanding. Emphasizing the characters' feelings and difficulties allows young readers to connect emotionally with the story's underlying message. 		
Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018)	Positive Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature featuring positive themes can enhance mood, build resilience, and cultivate a more optimistic perspective of life. Strives to stimulate, support, and empower readers, serving as a source of hope and resilience, and are important in forming young readers' understandings of compassion, generosity, and moral ideals. Inspires young readers to grow empathy in their own lives, resulting in a more sympathetic and caring society 		
Chesson (2023)	Lasting Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It encourages young readers to examine their own identities, value diversity, and build empathy for others. Children's literature stimulates empathy, promotes acceptance, and encourages personal growth and understanding by featuring characters who face identity difficulties while celebrating their uniqueness. 		

Researcher(s)	Dimension	Description	Proposed Bibliotherapy Features	Explanation
Karges-Bone (2015)	Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Playing an important role in generating tension, excitement, and giving characters opportunities to develop and acquire knowledge. ▪ It gives young readers the opportunity to comprehend other points of view, emotions, and moral difficulties. ▪ Conflict exploration teaches youngsters to empathize with different points of view and comprehend that people may have valid reasons for their actions or decisions. 		
Ree (2012)	Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It influences the young readers' emotional reactions to the story and its characters. ▪ It shapes the emotional environment of the story and the readers' connections to characters and topics. ▪ It influences how readers empathize with the characters' feelings and perspective 		

2.9 Literature Review Matrix: Bibliotherapy Features in Children's Literature

The Literature Review (LR) Matrix as depicted in Table 2.5 serves as an analytical framework that organizes and synthesizes scholarly perspectives on the core bibliotherapeutic features embedded in children's literature. Drawing from the works of established researchers—ranging from Jalongo (1983) to Chesson (2023), this matrix systematically maps the presence and emphasis of five critical bibliotherapeutic dimensions—Character, Plot, Illustrations, Readability, Theme, and Empathy. The LR Matrix aims to clarify how different researchers conceptualize the therapeutic potential of literature for children by dissecting their proposed criteria for selecting and analysing literary texts. By comparing the presence and treatment of each feature across the selected literature, the matrix not only captures the prevailing trends in bibliotherapy theory but also highlights gaps and variations in emphasis.

The analysis reveals a strong consensus on the centrality of Character and Theme, with all reviewed researchers recognizing their essential role in engaging young readers and facilitating emotional or psychological development. Plot is also widely emphasized, highlighting the importance of coherent, engaging narratives in capturing children's interest and reflecting real-life challenges. Readability is frequently acknowledged, underlining the need for language that balances simplicity with opportunities for vocabulary growth. Illustrations, though not universally covered, are deemed crucial by several researchers for enhancing comprehension and emotional connection, especially among early readers. Finally, the dimension of Empathy emerges as a foundational therapeutic component, supported by most scholars. It underscores literature's potential to help children understand diverse perspectives, process emotions, and develop interpersonal awareness.

The LR Matrix also highlights an evolution in bibliotherapy research, with more recent scholars integrating holistic and identity-based considerations (e.g., Chesson, 2023) alongside traditional literary elements. This signals a shift toward inclusive and emotionally intelligent storytelling in children's literature. The Literature Review Matrix functions as a conceptual tool that distills a wide body of research into a coherent structure. It affirms that effective bibliotherapy in children's literature is multidimensional, relying on the thoughtful integration of narrative, emotional, visual, and thematic elements. This matrix not only serves academic

analysis but can guide educators, therapists, and authors in selecting or creating literature that supports children's emotional growth and psychological resilience. Overall, this matrix demonstrates how children's literature, when carefully designed with these features, can serve as an effective tool for bibliotherapy—promoting emotional resilience, cognitive development, and social-emotional learning in young readers. Detailed descriptions of each bibliotherapy feature are discussed in the following section.

Table 2.5
Literature Review Matrix: Bibliotherapy Features in Children's Literature

Researcher(s)	Character	Plot	Illustrations	Readability	Theme	Empathy
Burnett (1997)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jalongo (1983)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coleman and Ganong (1988)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Rozalski et al. (2010)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chesson (2023)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Karges-Bone (2015)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Ree (2012)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓

The findings indicate that character, plot, readability, theme, and empathy have been consistently and extensively investigated across the literature. Almost all studies reviewed (Burnett, 1997; Chesson, 2023; Coleman & Ganong, 1988; Hynes & Hynes-Berry, 2018; Jalongo, 1983; Karges-Bone, 2015; Ree, 2012; Rozalski et al., 2010) highlight the importance of relatable characters and coherent plot structures in facilitating emotional identification and therapeutic engagement. These elements are widely acknowledged as central mechanisms through which children connect emotionally with narratives, enabling reflection, empathy development, and emotional processing.

Similarly, readability and thematic relevance emerge as highly investigated components. Most researchers emphasize that bibliotherapy materials must be developmentally appropriate, linguistically accessible, and thematically aligned with children's emotional and psychological needs. Themes such as coping with fear, loss, identity, and social relationships are frequently discussed as essential in supporting self-development and personal growth.

In contrast, illustrations appear to be the least explored feature within bibliotherapy research, particularly in studies by Coleman and Ganong (1988), Karges-Bone (2015), Chesson (2023), and Ree (2012), where this element is either minimally addressed or omitted entirely. This is notable given the established role of visual elements in supporting comprehension, emotional engagement, and meaning-making among young readers. The limited attention to illustrations suggests a significant gap in the literature, especially considering the importance of visual storytelling in children's books and its potential therapeutic value in bibliotherapy contexts.

Overall, the table demonstrates that while core narrative and emotional components of bibliotherapy have been well established, visual elements remain under-investigated. This imbalance highlights the need for more systematic and holistic examinations of bibliotherapy features, particularly those that integrate textual and visual dimensions of children's literature. Addressing this gap is especially relevant in culturally rich contexts such as Malaysian children's literature, where illustrations often carry symbolic, emotional, and cultural meanings. Consequently, this study seeks to extend existing scholarship by incorporating both well-established and underexplored elements into a comprehensive bibliotherapy framework for children's literature.

2.9.1 Characters

The previous part covered eight literatures on bibliotherapy aspects. Coleman and Ganong (1998) did not include "characters" as one of the elements to examine when selecting books for therapy. However, they urged that the book be realistic enough for children to understand the tale. In a manner, this implies that the characters should be believable. Burnett (1977), Jalongo (1983), Rozalski et al. (2010), Chesson (2023) Karges-Bone (2015) and Ree (2012) specifically mentioned characters to be one of the elements in children literature. However, the phrase "universal themes" was used by Hyne and Hynes-Berry (2018). Characters and universal themes are closely related in children's literature because characters are frequently used as means of exploring and communicating these issues to younger readers. Children's book characters represent and engage with universal themes like courage, friendship, empathy, and identity. Young readers can relate to and find these ideas tangible as a

result of their experiences and actions throughout the novel. Characters frequently experience personal growth and development as they overcome obstacles and pick up insightful knowledge about universal topics. Children learn about themes like resilience, moral quandaries, and self-discovery by following characters as they travel through difficulties, make choices, and change.

In children's literature, characters play a crucial role in captivating young readers and effectively conveying the story's key ideas and lessons. Whether they take the form of people, animals, legendary creatures, or even inanimate objects, characters come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Within the realm of literature and storytelling, the term "character" refers to an individual depicted within the narrative framework, displaying recognizable traits, actions, and underlying motivations (Jannidis, 2012). Careful selection of texts devoid of controversial elements is essential to enhance a child's comprehension of characters' emotions and perspectives in stories.

The following are some examples of popular sorts of characters that may often be found in works written for children according to Patterson (2020):

- i) Child or Teenage Protagonists – The main characters in works of children's literature and literature for young adults are often youngsters or teenagers. These youthful characters are able to connect with the audience because they are relatable and because they often experience considerable personal growth and development during their trips.
- ii) Adult Protagonists – Adult protagonists may be found in a variety of literary genres, including adult fiction and literary fiction. Protagonists who are children or teenagers are more popular in children's and young adult literature; however, adult protagonists can also be found in other types of writing.
- iii) Animal Protagonists – Animals in the role of the story's protagonist are a common and time-honoured literary device that may be found in a broad variety of works of literature, such as tales for children, fables, allegories, and even works of adult fiction. These characters often have human-like features, feelings, and goals, which allows readers to relate to them while also providing writers with the opportunity to explore a variety of issues and learn valuable lessons.

- iv) Supernatural or Fantasy Protagonists – The protagonists of tales that take place in realms rich with magic, mythological animals, and incredible abilities often include supernatural or fantasy protagonists as the main characters. The heroes of these stories often have special skills, must overcome tremendous obstacles, and start out on missions or adventures set in exotic places.
- v) Other Child and Teenage Characters – Characters in their teenage years feature prominently in written works and may be found in a variety of literary subgenres, including young adult fiction, coming-of-age stories, and even mainstream literature. The majority of the time, these characters are teenagers who are negotiating the obstacles, feelings, and experiences that come with the passage from childhood to maturity.
- vi) Parents and Other Adults – In works of fiction, the protagonists' parents and other adult figures play significant roles in the development of their lives and the opportunities and challenges they face. This is especially true of tales that focus on children, adolescents, and families. These adult characters appear in a variety of guises, and each of them contributes to the story in their own special manner.
- vii) Younger Characters – Younger characters in literature, often referred to as child or pre-adolescent characters, are essential for a well-rounded narrative. They bring a unique perspective, innocence, and vulnerability to the story. Depending on the genre and themes of the work, younger characters can serve various purposes and contribute to the overall depth of the narrative.

According to Landis (2022), the presence of characters is crucial for the development of a narrative. The use of landscape in narratives, even in the absence of explicit human or animal presence, often involves the personification of the location, so endowing it with distinct character-like qualities. The presence of a character is essential for effective storytelling, since it is very difficult to produce high-quality writing without a central figure to propel the narrative. There are seven types of characters in stories and literature as suggested by Landis (2022):

- i) Protagonist – The protagonist assumes the central role in a narrative, and it is

through their experiences that readers engage with the evolving storyline. In the realm of literature, it is customary for writers to allocate a significant amount of attention to the history and motives of a particular character, prioritizing them over all others. This deliberate emphasis stems from the fact that every event and occurrence within the narrative is intricately connected to this character in some manner. Certain literary works have a narrative structure that incorporates multiple protagonists, whereby the central character role is shared among two or more individuals.

- ii) **Antagonist** – In narratives, the presence of a protagonist necessitates the existence of an antagonist. The aforementioned character archetypes often assume the role of the antagonist within the narrative, but their true nature may not be immediately apparent. The protagonist-antagonist relationship may be best understood by examining the means through which the antagonist engenders conflict or disrupts the protagonist's trajectory within the narrative.
- iii) **Deuteragonist** – The deuteragonist might be conceptualized as a supporting character or companion to the main protagonist. Although the primary focus of the tale does not revolve on these characters, their presence is crucial in driving the narrative forward. The progression of the main character's journey heavily relies on their significant contributions.
- iv) **Tertiary Characters** – The supporting characters in the narrative serve as peripheral figures who sometimes engage with the primary protagonists, but without significantly advancing the storyline.
- v) **Romantic Interest** – The aforementioned people serve as the focal point of desire for another character, often the main protagonist, however it is worth noting that intriguing love triangles may also arise between a romantic interest, protagonist, and antagonist.
- vi) **Confidant** – These particular characters often assume the role of the deuteragonist, typically embodying the archetype of a confidant or loyal companion to the protagonist, such as a mentor or, on occasion, a romantic partner.

vii) Foil – The foil figure has significant intrigue within the realm of literature.

The major objective of these characters is to accentuate certain attributes of the protagonist's personality or character, but in a contrasting manner. While the foil may not assume the role of the primary adversary within the narrative, their characteristics often generate conflicts with the main character, so facilitating a clearer perception of the protagonist's identity and enhancing our comprehension of their nature.

In order to enhance a child's understanding of characters' feelings and sentiments in tales, it is essential to carefully choose texts that are devoid of provocative components in fostering a child's comprehension of the emotions and sentiments experienced by characters within narratives. These literary works have the potential to foster children's identification with characters and facilitate the acquisition of significant life lessons. The book titled "Bagaimana Acuan, Begitulah Kuhnya" written by Maslina Yusoff (2016) depicts the experiences of a young girl with curly hair as she navigates the process of embracing self-love and acceptance, while encountering derogatory remarks from her classmates. Another example is "Terlalu Istimewa" by Liza Shahida Ismail, which depicts touching moments that were shared with friends from a variety of different backgrounds. The story emphasizes the value of relationships and camaraderie above the pursuit of materialistic interests (Ismail, 2022).

The characters portrayed in children's books play a vital role in captivating the attention and interest of young readers (Domestika, 2023). Children's literature characters, from brave heroes inspiring courage to cunning villains sparking moral reflection, wield considerable influence in shaping the reading experiences of young individuals. These characters exhibit diverse personalities, confront various obstacles, and accomplish noteworthy triumphs. Beyond providing entertainment, they serve as valuable vessels for imparting moral teachings, fostering empathy, and nurturing emotional growth. Through children's literature, young readers are presented with a distinctive opportunity to explore diverse worlds, cultures, and perspectives, thus fuelling their inquisitiveness and enhancing their grasp of the complexities of the human experience.

The lasting influence of the diverse range of characters found in children's literature deserves recognition as we honour their impact on the development of young readers. The effects of characters on children's emotional and cognitive growth are significant, as they can serve as positive role models and thought-provoking figures (Goldstein & Bloom, 2015). Whether these characters are depicted as admirable heroes who teach the value of resilience or as compelling antagonists who encourage critical thinking, their presence in children's lives leaves enduring impressions on their emotions and intellectual abilities. In the field of bibliotherapy, it offers comfort, support, and a safe space for young readers to navigate the challenges of life (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2005). In children's literature, the characters go beyond their words on the page and become companions, embarking on imaginative journeys with young readers and aiding in the exploration of their own identities (Eisenman & Harper, 2016). They act as a reminder that within the pages of a book, one may find companions, role models, and reflections of their own experiences. Through these fictional figures, young individuals gain knowledge, grow intellectually, and discover the boundless magic of literature.

2.9.2 Plot

According to Jalongo (1983), Chesson (2023), Karges-Bone (2015), and Ree (2012), plot is unquestionably one of the components of children's literature. As previously noted, Chesson (2023) proposed that stories in children's literature typically end happily and predictably, which effectively resolves the problems in the story. It's often advised against using gloomy or disappointing endings in this genre. Children's books must exhibit qualities such as wholesomeness, emotional positivity, and general satisfaction. According to Karges-Bone (2015), the plot structure of children's books is purposefully designed to attract young readers' interest while also conveying important moral lessons and encouraging their ability to be creative. In a similar vein, Ree (2012) went on to clarify that the plot is a sequence of events that show the actions of the characters.

Burnett (1997) proposed “engaging storyline” as one of the book features where it should be fascinating and comprehensible plot. The story should be appropriate for the targeted age group and reflect the young readers’ experience and interests. Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018) on the other hand, did not use the word

"plot". Instead, they suggested "powerful themes". In children's literature, powerful themes and plot are inextricably linked, molding the narrative and propelling it forward in important ways. The plot of a children's book revolves around these powerful themes, with difficulties, conflicts, and resolves that are directly related to the theme. A story on friendship, for example, could include a plot in which people navigate misunderstandings or assist one another during difficult times, highlighting the idea of loyalty and friendship.

Rozalski et al. (2010) proposed that "context" be considered when selecting books. They suggested looking for books that directly or indirectly address the child's situation, such as worry or grief, if these are areas of difficulty for them. Context in children's literature acts as a dynamic backdrop that enhances the plot by adding complexity, relevance, and chances for theme and character analysis. Authors produce captivating stories for young readers by successfully integrating context, providing both enjoyment and vital insights into the world around them. Coleman and Ganong (1998) noted that the issues and problems raised in the book should be considered. They believe that the amount of topics covered in a book boosts its quality. Children are more inclined to read a book that is relevant to their own life experiences. The characteristic proposed by Coleman and Ganong (1998) can be converted into a plot. Issues and problems function as catalysts, propelling the plot forward. They generate conflicts, difficulties, or hurdles for the characters to navigate and overcome throughout the story. A bullying story, for example, could focus on how the protagonist copes with mistreatment and learns to stand up for themselves and others.

Children's literature serves as a treasure trove of captivating and educational narratives for young readers. At the heart of this phenomenon lies the art of storytelling, which brings narratives to life and allows children to embark on fantastical journeys, gain valuable moral insights, and nurture their creative abilities. The carefully constructed storylines in children's books act as pathways to adventure, discovery, and personal growth. A story's plot plays a crucial role in outlining the chronological progression of events within a narrative, shaping both the occurrences themselves and their sequential arrangement (Josselson, 2004).

When discussing a narrative's plot, it is traditional to consider the chronological succession of events resulting from specific causes, leading to the establishment of a coherent storyline. This interconnection of the various parts of the tale serves to construct significance and engage the intended audience. The plot can be

viewed as a narrative structure that steers young readers through the multiple narrative elements, including characters and settings, guiding them toward a central conflict and ultimate resolution (Glatch, 2023). The crafting of these stories considers the cognitive abilities of young individuals, aiming to achieve a harmonious integration of both entertaining and educational elements (Ginsburg, 2022). This analysis delves into the narrative structures employed in children's literature, with a focus on the fundamental components that evoke a strong response from young readers.

Furthermore, it delves into the thematic elements that strongly resonate with children and examines the lasting impact these stories can have on the cognitive growth of young individuals. The stories present in children's literature play a crucial role in shaping the literary experiences of young readers, capturing both the entertaining adventures of beloved characters and the valuable life lessons woven into their journeys (Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2019).

A compelling narrative is characterized by its ability to captivate children through maintaining their interest, enthralling them with unexpected twists and turns, and building toward an exhilarating climax (Allen et al., 2015). Such a narrative transcends a mere sequence of unrelated events, imparting a sense of purpose and direction. The plot stands out as arguably the most crucial element of a story and can be approached from two distinct perspectives: the traditional approach, emphasized in this guide, is referred to as a Plot-Driven Narrative (or simply a plot), while another prevalent approach, which revolves around the story's protagonist, is known as a Character-Driven Narrative (Rapp & Gerrig, 2002). Both of these approaches are further elaborated below.

Character-driven narratives typically highlight the key individuals within the storyline. These works place significant emphasis on delving into the inner experiences of the main characters and examining the psychological effects of external circumstances on them (Cavazza & Charles 2021). Character-driven narratives concentrate on the challenges and experiences encountered by the characters throughout the story, often leading to a pivotal event that triggers a substantial transformation in the protagonist's life or psychological well-being (Mariani & Ciancia, 2023). Character development is a crucial component inherent to this kind of narrative, often seen in the realm of literary fiction.

When analysing a traditional plot or a plot-driven storyline, it is important to consider a narrative propelled by the sequence of events and actions that unfold within

it. In this case, the story in question aligns with a plot-driven approach, where the progression of events drives the narrative forward, much like a boat propelled by powerful waves, while the characters play a more passive role in the unfolding events. Plot-driven narratives prioritize the sequence of events and actions within a story, focusing on advancing the plot rather than on the development of the characters involved (Tu & Brown, 2020). The narrative is driven by a series of unexpected events, plot twists, and dramatic turns, all aimed at captivating and entertaining the audience. For those drawn to mysterious tales or exhilarating adventures, choosing a plot-centric narrative may be a fitting approach when engaging in storytelling.

In conclusion, one can assert that the storylines present in children's literature specifically tailored for bibliotherapy serve a vital role in aiding young readers in navigating the complex landscape of their emotions and challenges. These carefully crafted narratives offer a safe and enthralling space for children to explore and comprehend topics such as anxiety, loss, self-esteem, friendship, and other related issues. By introducing familiar characters, significant themes, and realistic resolutions, these stories provide young readers with a sense of validation, empathy, and hope (Keen, 2011). Furthermore, the therapeutic impact of these narratives extends beyond the realm of literature (Padilla, 2022). They promote communication and reflection by encouraging open dialogue between children and their caregivers. The utilization of age-appropriate narratives in children's literature for bibliotherapy serves as a crucial method for addressing emotional and psychological concerns (Akinola, 2014), thus nurturing the emotional well-being and developmental progress of young individuals. In the context of bibliotherapy, these narratives are more than mere tales; rather, they function as empathetic companions throughout the journey of personal growth and recovery (Rüzgar, 2023). The aforementioned statement underscores the idea that young people can discover the necessary resources, perspectives, and motivation to overcome obstacles and thrive through the medium of books.

2.9.3 Theme

Jalongo (1983), Chesson (2023), Karges-Bone (2015), and Ree (2012) recommended theme as a component to incorporate in children's literature. Jalongo (1983) emphasized on important topics that are relevant to children's lives and experiences. Themes in children's books may include friendship, family, overcoming

obstacles and experiencing new locations. Chesson (2023) proposed that action and suspense are vital to recognize because youngsters are also strongly drawn to these qualities in stories. According to Karges-Bone (2015), themes improve the overall impact of a story and frequently provide important insights on life, relationships, and personal development. According to Ree (2012), themes frequently focus on society, human nature, the human condition, societal challenges, and the conflict between good and evil. Ree (2012) also mentioned that themes in children's literature are the underlying principles or lessons that the author wants to convey to the reader throughout the story.

Coleman and Ganong (1998) did not use the word "theme". They offered "tone" instead, which relates to the emotional character or mood of the writing. It affects how readers feel as they interact with the story. The tone in children's books can range from fun to humorous, adventurous, intriguing, or heartwarming, among others. In children's literature, tone and theme work together to create an emotional backdrop that supports and promotes the story's underlying messages and concepts. They work together to produce a narrative experience that appeals to young readers while also enriching their comprehension of vital issues and concepts. However, Rozalski et al. (2010) advocated using "interest level" to select books, taking into account the child's age and stage of development. Criteria such as complexity, themes, and substance should be age-appropriate. Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018) on the other hand proposed "rhythm" to describe the pace, progression, or organization of a storyline within a therapeutic framework. The goal is to utilize literature to support the therapeutic process and improve the overall well-being of the reader.

In the realm of children's literature, the term "theme" encompasses the fundamental and recurring idea, message, or conceptual framework that runs through a narrative or literary work (Gomez & Maker, 2011). This underlying and unifying concept imbues the narrative with depth and significance, fostering a meaningful connection between readers, especially young audiences, and the story (Clandinin & Conelly, 1991). This connection enables the extraction of valuable life lessons and insights. Themes commonly found in children's literature often revolve around universal or age-appropriate subjects that are relevant to the experiences and development of young readers. These themes serve as conduits for conveying important values, emotions, and ideas, thereby providing young audiences with

opportunities for introspection, the cultivation of empathy, and the nurturing of their own personal growth (Amos & Wisniewski, 1995).

The creation of stories has been acknowledged as a crucial factor in the social and emotional development of young children. This is because narratives empower them to construct and derive meaning from their past experiences (Engel, 1994). Children utilized narratives as a way to understand and interpret the world around them. These stories functioned as a tool for solving problems and expressing emotions related to their own experiences or immediate environment. As per Engel (1994), it was noted that young children frequently engaged in narrating about unfamiliar situations that they found intriguing, both from their own viewpoint and with the aim of captivating the audience.

Numerous themes in stories are conveyed through the thoughts, words, actions, emotions, conflicts, and desires of the characters. In children's literature, themes play a vital role in connecting various elements of a story, encompassing the plot, characters, and emotional aspects (Ismail, 2023). The underlying themes, values, and concepts emerging from the text significantly influence young readers, resonating with them at a profound level. Thoughtful selection of suitable themes is crucial in addressing a diverse range of emotional and psychological needs in children effectively. Introducing these concepts into stories aims to aid youngsters in understanding themselves and the world around them, including aspects such as coping with loss and sadness, fostering a positive self-image, building resilience, and nurturing empathy (Ismail, 2023). Essentially, the inclusion of themes in children's literature helps young readers comprehend the external environment, fostering empathy and understanding while also stimulating their critical thinking by encouraging them to explore the underlying significance and implications of the narratives they encounter (Harits & Chudy, 2017).

In today's digital age, where children's leisure activities are often dominated by digital technologies, it is important not to underestimate the importance of books in the practice of bibliotherapy (Kuijpers, 2018). These experiences provide a concrete and immersive encounter that actively involves the imagination and fosters a long-lasting affection for reading. In essence, the utilization of children's literature as a means of bibliotherapy holds significant merit as it serves as a beneficial asset in facilitating the emotional and cognitive development of children. This resource equips them with the necessary skills to effectively navigate the complexities inherent in the

stages of childhood and adolescence, all the while cultivating qualities such as empathy, comprehension, and a lasting affinity for reading.

2.9.4 Illustrations

Only four of the literary reviews particularly listed illustrations as a factor to consider while selecting books. Burnett (1997), Jalongo (1983) and Rozalski et al. (2010) used the term “illustrations” as one of the key features in children’s literature. As mentioned by Burnett (1997), problems highlighted in the books should be depicted in illustrations in an honest and direct way. Children’s books need visual components to improve understanding and interest so much so enhance comprehension and foster an emotional bond. Jalongo (1983) postulated that visual aspects have an important role in children’s literature since it helps portray emotions and events. It was suggested that illustrations should be lively, colourful and relevant to the content. Rozalski et al. (2010) shared the same notion as they noted that visual components such as graphics and photographs may gain the children’s interests through colourful, interesting and well-illustrated books. Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018) used the term “imagery” which depicts mental pictures and sensory experiences for young readers. According to them, image in the books allow readers to vividly visualize situations, characters and emotions and consequently heighten the readers’ connection to the text. Illustrations should be a crucial consideration when selecting children's books since they improve visual engagement, comprehension, inventiveness, emotional connections, accessibility, and the storytelling experience. Well-executed pictures help to create a good and impactful reading experience for young people. As a result, the researcher suggested illustrations as a significant feature in bibliotherapy.

The realm of children's literature serves as a junction where language and imagery unite to impart profound and transformative experiences to young individuals (Goddard, 2011). The potent influence of illustrations in children's books is indisputable, as they complement written narratives and assist children in comprehending tales of exploration, sentiment, and self-discovery (Arizpe & Styles, 2015). When incorporated into bibliotherapy, illustrations assume an even greater significance, acting as invaluable aids that facilitate the cognitive and emotional development of young minds by assisting them in navigating challenging emotions,

problems, and personal evolution (Vahidi, 2018). As noted by Strouse et al. (2018), the utilization of illustrations in children's literature fulfils a crucial role in addressing the emotional and psychological challenges encountered by children. Illustrations serve as sources of solace, motivation, and restoration, whether through their empathetic depiction of companionship, portrayal of resilience in the face of adversity, or representation of intricate emotions.

The role of illustrations in picture tale books is crucial. Moss (1990) referred to this as the "interweaving of text and pictures" (p. 21), while Lunn (2003) described it as a "marriage of pictures and story" (p. 189). Nodelman (1998) emphasized the intricate interaction between visuals and text, suggesting that their combined impact exceeds the individual contributions of each component (p. 199).

Nodelman (1988) suggested a reciprocal limitation between visuals and written text, where one medium influences the reader's perspective and interpretation of the other. Building on this perspective, Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) aligned with Nodelman's view and assert that verbal and visual texts establish mutual expectations, leading to the emergence of novel experiences and expectations, ultimately contributing to an ongoing expansion of comprehension. Furthermore, Fang's (1996) insights into the functions of illustrations in picture books are particularly relevant. Fang emphasized seven distinct functions served by illustrations, including establishing the setting, defining the mood, developing characters, advancing the plot, providing a different viewpoint, contributing to textual coherence, and reinforcing the text.

Scholars specializing in children's literature widely acknowledge the importance of images in picture books. These scholars consistently stress the fundamental role of illustrations in the narrative development of picture books, asserting that they are equally influential alongside the written text (Genette, 1997; Golden & Gerber, 1990; Higonnet, 1990). Illustrations not only immerse children in narratives but also provide them with a visual vocabulary to express and explore their innermost thoughts and emotions. The therapeutic value of these images lies in their ability to establish connections, offer reassurance, and inspire, thereby providing young readers with comfort and guidance during times of uncertainty and upheaval (Pulimeno et al., 2020).

2.9.5 Readability

Burnett (1997), Jalongo (1983), Coleman and Ganong (1988), Rozalski et al. (2010), and Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018) identified readability as a key element in children's literature. According to Burnett (1997), children books should be well written and suitable for the child's stage of development. Moreover, books should utilize language that is both approachable and sophisticated enough to increase children's vocabulary and linguistic abilities. On the same note, Jalongo (1983) suggested that language chosen should be age-appropriate, understandable and should be fascinating and rich enough to expand children's vocabulary. Coleman and Ganong (1988) stated that children's books should be appropriate for their reading ability. Young readers will be frustrated by books that are not appropriate for their age. As noted by Rozalski et al. (2010), books are intended to address the distinctive needs, challenges, and concerns of each individual reader. While Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018) stated that language is a form of therapeutic intervention used to convey ideas, elicit emotions, and engage readers in the healing process.

Interestingly, Chesson (2023) recommended "believable conversation" as a component that should be included in children's literature. The relationship between believable conversation and readability in children's literature guarantees that dialogues are genuine, interesting, and help young readers understand and connect with the tale. Authors use language skillfully to portray characters and advance the storyline, creating narratives that engage and inspire children, instilling a love of reading and storytelling. Karges-Bone (2015) used the term "style" to describe readability. According to him, style is the arrangement of words, visuals, tone, and all other components that distinguish the story. A children's book's overall tone, mood, and readability are all heavily influenced by its style. Ree (2012) also used the term "style" to refer to the author's word selection and placement in order to construct the story's storyline, characters, and atmosphere, as well as its overall theme. Using a distinctive and original writing method contributes to the overall tone, atmosphere, and influence of the plot.

The concept of readability concerns the ease or difficulty for readers to comprehend a text. One of the key benefits of readability in written communication is its ability to promote effective understanding. If a text surpasses the comprehension level of the readers, it may hinder communication (Ismail et al., 2016). The idea of

reading level focuses on identifying suitable reading materials for children to engage with independently, ensuring that they are neither overwhelmed nor uninterested. Children's literature covers a wide range of books with diverse characteristics, making it a dynamic and multifaceted field. These books are tailored to appeal to readers across different age groups, catering to their unique interests and accommodating their varying skills.

An important aspect of the literary landscape involves the concept of reading proficiency levels, which plays a crucial role in guiding young readers as they progress in their literacy development. Utilizing reading levels ensures that children have access to stories and texts that are appropriate for their growing reading skills. This approach not only supports comprehension but also fosters a long-lasting love for reading. Reading levels are fundamental in the journey towards developing literacy skills, as they guarantee that children receive books that are both understandable and engaging. Understanding reading levels is vital for parents, educators, and caregivers in promoting the enhancement of children's reading abilities, encompassing a variety of materials ranging from simple picture books designed for early readers to complex novels tailored for older children.

It is of utmost importance to ensure that children have access to books that are tailored to their individual reading abilities, enabling them to comprehend and derive enjoyment from the content. If the complexity of the material surpasses the child's capacity, they may face difficulties and feel disheartened. On the other hand, if the material is too basic for their cognitive skills, they may lose interest in the subject matter. The determination of the suitable reading level is pivotal for a child's reading development, and as such, it significantly influences the bibliotherapy process.

The concept of readability or reading level can be succinctly defined by examining the definitions provided by numerous researchers, Lin (1995) and Lv (2003). It primarily relates to the extent to which a written text or literary material is understood by the reader. Additionally, it functions as an indicator of the quality or nature of this textual content or literary material. Moreover, it aligns the text or reading material with the reader. The concept of "understanding" holds significant importance in the interpretation of readability.

The quality of children's books in Malaysia has raised concerns (Ismail et al., 2016). Research on these reading materials has been limited, with a specific focus on addressing dissatisfaction with Malaysian children's books. Samsuddin (2003)

suggested that the issues in the production of children's books in Malaysia may be due to a lack of quality and suitability for the intended readership, specifically children. Additionally, Chew and Ishak (2010) supported this claim by arguing that children's literature in Malaysia lacks appeal, exhibits quality deficiencies, lacks systematic organization, and lacks classification based on the targeted age group of children.

In conclusion, the role of readability in children's literature is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, which serves as a powerful tool for promoting emotional and psychological development in young readers. The ability to connect with and comprehend a story is crucial, as it allows children to actively engage with and relate to characters and situations that resonate with their own experiences and emotions (Ewing et al., 2016). By offering literature that is both engaging and age-appropriate, we can effectively harness the therapeutic potential of books to help children navigate the complexities of life, foster resilience, and develop essential coping mechanisms (Pulimeno et al., 2020). The act of reading, when used as a form of bibliotherapy, gives children the opportunity to explore a wide range of emotions, confront various challenges, and anticipate potential resolutions, all within the safe confines of a fictional world. Additionally, it is important to recognize the unique needs and preferences of each child when selecting books for bibliotherapeutic purposes. Tailoring the reading experience to align with a child's developmental stage, cultural background, and personal struggles enhances the therapeutic effectiveness and ensures that the literary material serves as a source of comfort, guidance, and healing (Children's Bureau, 2023).

2.9.6 Empathy

In general, no literary evaluations proposed or mentioned the term "empathy". However, rigorous analysis revealed that the literature has certain elements connected to emotion, positive values, guidance, conflict, and identity. Coleman and Ganong (1988) emphasized the quality and quantity of guidance provided. The quality and quantity of guidance provided in children's books, as well as the development of empathy, are critical for helping young readers grasp emotions, viewpoints, and relationships. It is critical for promoting emotional intelligence, social awareness, and moral development in young readers. Well-crafted narratives and characters who realistically depict empathy contribute to a meaningful reading experience that instills

empathy and compassion in children. Rozalski et al. (2010) identified the "author's message" as one of the book's attributes. Books should contain an underlying theme that is consistent and understandable from beginning to end. Children's literature has meaningful messages and empathy, since stories are frequently used to communicate moral lessons, values, and emotional understanding. Empathizing with the characters' feelings and difficulties allows young readers to connect emotionally with the story's underlying message.

Hynes and Hynes-Berry (2018) proposed "positive themes" that strive to stimulate, support, and empower readers, serving as a source of hope and resilience, and are important in forming young readers' understandings of compassion, generosity, and moral ideals. Positive themes in children's literature, such as friendship, courage, honesty, and forgiveness, are frequently expressed through characters' actions and decisions that reflect empathy. Engaging with characters who demonstrate empathy and positive values inspires young readers to grow empathy in their own lives, resulting in a more sympathetic and caring society. Chesson (2023), on the other hand, used the term "lasting identity" to describe themes and stories about a child's self-perception and identity development. It encourages young readers to examine their own identities, value diversity, and build empathy for others. Children's literature stimulates empathy, promotes acceptance, and encourages personal growth and understanding by featuring characters who face identity difficulties while celebrating their uniqueness.

Karges-Bone (2015) proposed that "conflict" is a common and necessary component in children's literature, playing an important role in generating tension, excitement, and giving characters opportunities to develop and acquire knowledge. It gives young readers the opportunity to comprehend other points of view, emotions, and moral difficulties. Conflict exploration teaches youngsters to empathize with different points of view and comprehend that people may have valid reasons for their actions or decisions. This fosters empathy by encouraging tolerance, understanding, and the ability to see problems from many perspectives. Ree (2012) proposed that the term "tone" relates to the affective ambiance or authorial disposition represented in written language. The aforementioned component has an important part in influencing adolescent readers' emotional reactions to the story and its characters. Tone shapes the emotional environment of the story and readers' connections to characters and topics. The tone of the story influences how readers empathize with the characters' feelings

and perspectives. A calm and empathic tone enables young readers to intimately relate with the characters' sentiments of joy, despair, fear, and hope. Children's literature fosters empathy and emotional connection by allowing readers to comprehend and partake in the emotional experiences of the characters.

The concept of empathy within the context of bibliotherapy involves readers' ability to form emotional connections with the characters and situations portrayed in a literary work. This process encompasses understanding and emotionally engaging with the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the characters within the narrative, often at a deep and personal level. Establishing emotional bonds with fictional characters has the potential to enhance individuals' self-awareness and deepen their understanding of their own emotional well-being and challenges. Bratitsis and Ziannas (2015) emphasized that empathy is a multifaceted concept that includes the capacity to emotionally recognize and cognitively understand the emotions and experiences of others. Both emotional and cognitive forms of empathy are crucial for engaging in empathetic or prosocial behaviors. According to Bertrand et al. (2018), empathy is recognized as a complex phenomenon comprising various intergroup, interpersonal, and intrapersonal processes and mechanisms. Its multidimensional nature enables a comprehensive examination of empathy across diverse fields, including natural sciences and humanities. Due to the multitude of perspectives and approaches within different disciplines, it is challenging to confine empathy to a singular definition.

The importance of empathy in addressing social inequalities has been widely acknowledged in contemporary global society (Krznic, 2014). This extends to its potential to counteract the negative effects of toxic masculinity (Zimbardo, 2017) and alleviate the feelings of isolation and envy stemming from social media usage (Borba, 2016). Numerous scholarly studies focus on the role of post-reading discussions in nurturing empathy in young individuals. For instance, Mar et al.'s (2010) study aimed to assess the influence of various media, such as storybooks, movies, and television, on children's development of theory of mind, defined as the cognitive ability to understand and interpret the mental states of others (p. 70). Cain (2015) further characterizes theory of mind as the cognitive capacity to comprehend one's own mental states while recognizing that others may have differing mental states (p. 69). Additionally, Maich and Kean (2004) elaborate on the benefits of bibliotherapy, including the development of problem-solving skills, empathy cultivation, expanding

personal interests beyond self-centeredness, and gaining a deeper understanding of human behavior, all contributing to the advancement of empathy.

The idea of empathy may be defined as an individual's psychological ability to understand and resonate with the emotions and views of others (Decety & Lamm, 2006; Szalavitz & Perry, 2010). The definition provided is associated with a widely acknowledged observation: empathic skills possess multiple dimensions (Davis, 1980, 1983). These dimensions consist of various emotional components, as indicated by a willingness to demonstrate concern and experience compassion for others (Israeashvili et al., 2020). Additionally, cognitive components are evident in the ability to comprehend perspectives that differ from one's own (Decety & Lamm, 2006). Empathy may be categorized into two distinct dimensions: affective and cognitive (Davis, 1983). Affective empathy refers to the capacity to comprehend and relate to another individual's emotions without personally experiencing any direct emotional stimulation. Alternatively, cognitive empathy pertains to the aptitude to identify and comprehend the mental state of another person (Davis, 1983). Moreover, it has been shown that empathy is linked to a wide array of intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities (Konrath & Grynberg, 2013), and it has a positive correlation with life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem (Eisenberg et al., 2006).

In conclusion, the role of empathy in children's literature for the purpose of bibliotherapy is undeniably essential and holds the potential to yield significant impacts. By involving young readers in the experiences and emotions of fictional characters, literature can promote empathy, a vital quality necessary for the development of emotional intelligence, understanding of diverse viewpoints, and the fostering of social harmony (Nikolajeva, 2013). Utilizing empathy enables children to explore various perspectives, cultures, and experiences, thereby broadening their understanding and nurturing an open and inclusive attitude towards the global community (James, n.d.). Bibliotherapy enables readers to empathetically engage with the viewpoints of literary figures as they confront a range of challenges, such as prejudice, bullying, grief, and fear. This process encourages a deeper understanding of complex emotions and situations.

Furthermore, establishing an emotional connection with characters in literature goes beyond the confines of the book's pages. This approach has the potential to initiate important conversations among children, caregivers, and educators, acting as a means to address challenging subjects and nurture vital life skills such as effective

communication, empathy, and critical thinking. The presence of empathy in children's literature serves as a pathway for self-discovery, allowing young readers to recognize aspects of their own experiences and emotions within the stories they engage with (Lenters, 2018). Building self-awareness, along with an improved ability to understand and relate to others, equips children with essential skills to navigate the challenges they encounter during childhood and adolescence. In today's society, where the development of empathy and emotional intelligence is widely regarded, children's literature plays a critical role as a source of inspiration and guidance (Tominey, et al., 2017). Not only does it enrich the lives of young readers, but it also has the potential to cultivate a generation characterized by compassion and empathy, gradually and through the medium of literature.

2.10 Challenges in Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy has emerged as a unique and effective method within the continually developing realm of mental health treatment. Utilizing books as a therapeutic tool, bibliotherapy has been recognized for its ability to encourage self-reflection, empathy, and emotional development. However, like other therapeutic modalities, bibliotherapy presents its own set of challenges. When considering the use of literature for healing, it is essential to acknowledge and address any barriers that may impede the efficacy of bibliotherapeutic interventions. Understanding the challenges associated with bibliotherapy is not merely an academic exercise; it is a critical step toward improving and optimizing the effectiveness of this therapeutic approach across various populations and clinical settings. Cultural fit is a key consideration in bibliotherapy. Research on culturally adapted bibliotherapy indicates that children are more engaged when stories reflect their cultural background and lived experiences (Hull et. al, 2025). The following are several prevalent challenges associated with implementing bibliotherapy in children's literature:

- i) **Content Suitable for the Appropriate Age Group:** Ensuring that literature used in bibliotherapy is suitable for the intended age group is crucial. It is essential to align the content with the developmental stage, cognitive ability, and emotional maturity of the target audience. Some literature exploring emotional or psychological topics may use complex language or address adult subjects beyond the understanding of younger children. Therefore, bibliotherapists

must carefully select and evaluate books to ensure they are appropriate for the child's age, comprehension level, and emotional development. They need to thoroughly assess book content to identify and exclude texts containing unsuitable language, visuals, or themes for the intended age group. It is important to select books that match the appropriate reading proficiency for a given age group, including picture books or simpler texts for younger children and gradually introducing more challenging materials as children progress.

- ii) **Diversity and Inclusion:** While diversity and inclusion are fundamental to bibliotherapy, their implementation can pose several challenges. The absence of books accurately representing a diverse array of experiences, cultures, identities, and backgrounds may limit the availability of materials that genuinely resonate with a varied audience (Adam, 2019). Conversely, publications perpetuating stereotypes or inaccurately portraying different groups can reinforce prejudices and contribute to misrepresentation (Beeghly, 2021). Selecting literature that inadvertently misrepresents or oversimplifies specific cultures may result in cultural insensitivity. As noted by Matthes (2016), books engaging in cultural appropriation, by incorporating elements from a culture without understanding or respecting its context, have the potential to cause unintended harm. The lack of awareness and sensitivity among educators, librarians, and caregivers regarding the importance of diversity and inclusion can impact the selection and management of bibliotherapy sessions. Addressing these issues requires the adoption of a proactive and intentional approach that involves collaborating with diverse populations, continual education, and a steadfast commitment to establishing inclusive environments for bibliotherapy. Stakeholders should actively endeavor to acquire and curate a comprehensive collection of books representing a wide range of perspectives, ensuring inclusivity in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, socio-economic background, and abilities.
- iii) **Limitations in Access to Resources:** Inadequate access to a diverse range of children's books, especially in disadvantaged or remote areas, can hinder the implementation of bibliotherapy programs. Adam (2019) highlighted the lack of varied literature catering to diverse identities, cultures, and experiences in

resource-poor areas. Consequently, children and readers from underrepresented groups may miss out on connecting with literature that reflects their own identities, thus reducing the effectiveness of bibliotherapy (Adam et al., 2019). Acquiring a wide array of books, especially newly published or specialized literature, may present financial challenges for schools, libraries, or community organizations. Furthermore, professionals in education, library science, and mental health may lack adequate training and resources to effectively conduct bibliotherapy (Goulding, 2006). Insufficient training may impede practitioners in selecting suitable books, facilitating discussions, or integrating bibliotherapy into educational and therapeutic settings. To address these challenges, it is crucial to advocate for increased financial resources for libraries, schools, and community groups, raise awareness about the importance of bibliotherapy, and explore innovative approaches such as mobile libraries or community book-sharing projects (James & Römhild, 2023). Successful implementation of bibliotherapy necessitates collaborative efforts from various stakeholders, including educators, librarians, community leaders, and policymakers, to overcome the barriers posed by limited resource availability.

- iv) **Stigma and Cultural Sensitivity:** The presence of stigma and the necessity of cultural sensitivity can pose challenges in effectively implementing bibliotherapy (Tukhareli, 2011), particularly in the context of addressing mental health issues and exploring diverse cultural perspectives. Social stigma related to discussions about mental health may discourage people, especially young individuals, from actively participating in bibliotherapy programs. This reluctance to engage in conversations about mental health may hinder the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in addressing emotional well-being. Additionally, individuals may be hesitant to openly share their experiences during bibliotherapy sessions due to fear of judgment or discrimination (Harwood & L'Abate, 2010). Limited disclosure may impede the thorough examination and exchange of information within the therapeutic environment, thereby diminishing the potential benefits of bibliotherapy. To tackle this challenge, it is imperative to prioritize cultural competence, effective communication, and a nuanced understanding of the cultural contexts in which

bibliotherapy is utilized. Facilitators should receive training in cultural sensitivity, and materials should be selected with careful consideration of diverse perspectives to ensure inclusivity and relevance. Building trust, promoting open communication, and fostering a secure and culturally sensitive environment are vital components in addressing stigma and advancing cultural sensitivity within bibliotherapy programs.

- v) **Assessment of Effectiveness:** Assessment of the effectiveness of bibliotherapy can be challenging due to the subjective and intricate nature of the treatment process. The impact of bibliotherapy, such as changes in emotional well-being or shifts in perspectives, is often subjective and may vary among individuals. Constructing standardized tests for bibliotherapy is difficult due to its diverse purposes, such as enhancing emotional awareness and fostering coping abilities (Martinec et al., 2022). Therefore, the customization of evaluation tools to align with specific goals and objectives is essential, recognizing that different bibliotherapy programs may have unique therapeutic aims (Fanner & Urquhart, 2008). Addressing these challenges necessitates a deliberate and comprehensive approach to evaluation, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, considering cultural nuances, and adhering to ethical guidelines. Collaboration among experts from various fields can facilitate the development of robust and culturally sensitive assessment frameworks for bibliotherapy.

- vi) **Parental Involvement:** According to Rapee et al. (2006), parents can play a crucial role in administering bibliotherapy to children. Their desire to initiate positive change in their children can be a strong motivator. While parental involvement can act as a catalyst for the implementation of bibliotherapy, it can also present challenges (Heath et al., 2005). Although involved parents can enhance the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, various obstacles may hinder their engagement. Some parents may lack familiarity with bibliotherapy as a treatment method, leading to a lack of understanding of its potential benefits (Ludwig, 2002). Additionally, the stigma surrounding discussions about mental health may discourage parental participation in bibliotherapy sessions and conversations about emotional well-being. Some parents may also be

hesitant about unfamiliar therapeutic approaches and may not fully grasp the potential advantages of bibliotherapy. To address these challenges, it is important to create an inclusive and supportive environment for parents, provide educational materials, and adapt program structures to meet the diverse needs of different families (Liz, 2023). Effective collaboration among educators, facilitators, and parents is essential for addressing these obstacles and promoting meaningful parental involvement in bibliotherapy initiatives.

- vii) **Professional Training:** Professional training plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of bibliotherapy (Lutovac & Kaasila, 2020) as it provides educators, librarians, and mental health professionals with the necessary skills and expertise. However, several challenges may arise in delivering and maintaining professional training for those involved in bibliotherapy programs. These challenges include limited awareness or understanding of bibliotherapy concepts and practices among professionals, as well as a scarcity of training programs or workshops on bibliotherapy, which hinders practitioners from acquiring the necessary expertise. Discrepancies in the quality of training programs can result in variations in the understanding and application of bibliotherapy concepts. Moreover, professionals may lack ongoing support and mentoring beyond their initial training, thereby impeding their ability to consistently apply bibliotherapy concepts. Additionally, constraints such as limited financial and time resources may hinder professionals from engaging in comprehensive or specialized bibliotherapy training (Skinner, 2016). These highlighted challenges call for a comprehensive and strategic approach, involving coordination among training providers, organizations, and professionals. Consistent evaluation, feedback mechanisms, and a commitment to creating a supportive educational environment are essential for addressing obstacles related to professional training in bibliotherapy.

- viii) **Ethical Considerations:** Ethical considerations play a crucial role in the implementation of bibliotherapy (Brewster et al., 2013) to protect the well-being, autonomy, and confidentiality of participants. However, ethical challenges may arise when navigating issues related to bibliotherapy.

Obtaining informed consent from participants, especially when working with children, can be complicated due to factors such as limited understanding, power dynamics, and cultural differences. Additionally, maintaining confidentiality and privacy may be challenging in group settings or when discussing personal and sensitive topics during bibliotherapy sessions. Engaging in conversations about difficult subjects in bibliotherapy may trigger emotional responses, potentially leading to emotional distress among participants. It is important to recognize that bibliotherapy has the potential to inadvertently cause harm, such as triggering emotional distress or reinforcing negative emotions. Developing clear and culturally sensitive informed consent processes is essential, involving the presentation of information in a manner easily understandable to participants and maintaining ongoing communication about the nature of the bibliotherapy program. The program should adopt a proactive approach that prioritizes the well-being of participants, promotes transparency, and continuously evaluates the ethical implications of bibliotherapy practices. Involving ethicists, mental health professionals, and educators can help establish ethical standards aligned with the principles of bibliotherapy.

In conclusion, while bibliotherapy presents a promising opportunity for nurturing emotional well-being and personal growth, it is not without its challenges. Successfully implementing bibliotherapy necessitates a thorough assessment of various factors to ensure ethically sound, culturally sensitive, and inclusive approaches. The obstacles in bibliotherapy encompass a spectrum of issues, including participant engagement, cultural sensitivity, access to resources, ethical considerations, and professional training. Despite these challenges, it is crucial to view them as opportunities for progress and improvement. Overcoming these challenges requires collaborative efforts involving educators, mental health professionals, libraries, and community leaders. Stakeholders can enhance the success and inclusivity of bibliotherapy initiatives by actively seeking solutions, promoting cultural competence, and advocating for resources. Ongoing research, discourse, and the development of best practices will improve the efficacy of bibliotherapy approaches, unlocking its full potential as a powerful tool for promoting mental health and well-being. Bibliotherapy

holds the potential to evolve into a beneficial and readily accessible therapeutic approach for individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities as they navigate these issues (Yuan et al., 2018).

2.11 Children's Literature

Children's literature encompasses a distinct category of literary works crafted specifically with the interests and needs of children in mind (Pulimeno et al., 2020). These books are carefully selected, read to, and deemed suitable for young readers, and are primarily marketed toward this audience. It plays a crucial role in shaping children's imaginations, enhancing their literacy skills, and nurturing a lifelong love of reading. The vast umbrella of children's literature includes picture books, fairy tales, folktales, fables, adventure stories, fantasy, science fiction, poetry, and more (Fadiman, 2023). Modern children's literature can be categorized based on genre or the age group of the intended readers. One of its primary aims is to entertain and captivate young audiences. With intriguing storytelling, vibrant illustrations, and relatable characters, children's books create captivating and enjoyable reading experiences. They transport children to imaginative worlds where they can explore diverse cultures, historical periods, and different perspectives, fostering a lifelong habit of reading with their charming and engaging nature.

Children's literature serves as an effective educational tool. Books aimed at younger readers often introduce fundamental concepts such as colours, shapes, numbers, and the alphabet. As children grow older, literature for them delves into more complex themes, including social issues, ethical dilemmas, and personal development. Children's books provide opportunities for young readers to enhance their overall literacy skills, expand their vocabulary, improve comprehension, and develop critical thinking abilities. Moreover, children's reading plays a vital role in nurturing social and emotional growth. Through the characters and narratives within books, children can relate to a wide range of emotions, relationships, and challenges that mirror their own experiences. Literary adventures allow them to explore concepts like empathy, resilience, friendship, and self-acceptance, providing a secure environment for them to understand and navigate their emotions while developing empathy and understanding for others.

The lineage of children's literature can be linked back to traditional stories like fairy tales, which were not formally acknowledged as such until the seventeenth century, and songs, which constituted a part of a broader oral tradition and were shared by adults with children in the absence of books. Prior to the invention of printing, it is challenging to chart the history of early children's literature. Even with the widespread availability of printing, many well-known "children's" stories were originally crafted for an adult audience before being reworked for younger readers (Lerer, 2008). Various pieces of literature, often conveying moral or religious teachings, have been specifically authored for children since the fifteenth century. Children's literature has been influenced by a range of philosophical and scientific perspectives, including those of Charles Darwin and John Locke, as well as by religious elements such as Puritan traditions. The "Golden Age of Children's Literature" encompassed the period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, during which numerous classic children's novels were brought to light.

Children's books hold a pivotal role, or more accurately, act as a driving force in the early development of a child's language and literacy skills, fostering an environment for the nourishment of a child's actively engaged imagination (Audsley, 2019). Reading is the finest means to acquire new information, and high-quality children's literature can play a crucial role in a child's early development of reading skills. Furthermore, children's literature plays a crucial part in instilling moral values and wisdom in young readers through alluring illustrations and captivating plots that are highly adaptable for comprehension at a foundational level, leaving a lasting impact on a child's mind for healthy mental development (Shwanam, 2020).

Children's literature, a cornerstone of literary works, delves into, categorizes, evaluates, and elucidates the spectrum of human experiences, encompassing its peaks and valleys, its sorrows and joys. Just as adults do, children engage with literature to gain insight into the vastness and vibrancy of life. Skilful authors of enduring children's books adeptly captivate readers through their expertise, language, original narratives, and multi-dimensional characters (Popova, 2012). Children connect with children's literature as it resonates with their diverse experiences and is conveyed in a manner they can comprehend. Literature holds a pivotal role in education by enriching readers' learning journeys, broadening and enriching their understanding while also fostering introspection. Through literature and language, individuals document, explicate, comprehend, and govern their experiences. Authors synthesize pivotal

events into a coherent sequence following contemplation of their experiences and occurrences.

Children who engage with stories cultivate foundational knowledge and construct meanings that underpin their response to literature, empowering them to comprehend more complex literary works as they mature (Al-Aufi, 2020).

The definition of "children's literature," which is a category of books whose existence entirely depends on presumed connections with a specific reading audience: children, forms the basis of its endeavour. Therefore, the concept of "children's literature" is supported by a purpose: it seeks to be something specific in order to establish a connection with the reading audience—"children"—with whom it overtly and consciously announces itself to be interested (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999).

There isn't a single, accepted definition of what constitutes children's literature (Hunt, 1996). The genre includes a wide range of works, such as well-known works of world literature, picture books and simple stories created specifically for children, as well as fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folk songs, and other primarily oral transmissions of literature. It can also be more specifically defined as literature intended for or used by children and young adults, such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or drama (Library of Congress, 2013). According to Anderson (2006), it includes "all children's literature, with the exception of comic books, joke books, cartoon books, and non-fiction works not meant to be read cover to cover, such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and other reference materials." Others, though, would contend that comics for children should also be included because "Children's Literature studies has traditionally treated comics fitfully and superficially despite the importance of comics as a global phenomenon associated with children" (Hatfield, 2006). Children's literature must reflect diversity and be diverse. Children's understanding of the world is enriched when books with varied characters, cultures, and perspectives are read to them. Children's literature encourages tolerance, respect, and acceptance for differences by highlighting a variety of backgrounds and experiences, leading to a more inclusive society.

In accordance with Fadiman's (2017) definition, children's literature encompasses picture books and all other texts specifically targeted at young readers. The Library of Congress, in its 2008 collections policy statements, offers an alternative definition, describing this genre as "content written and produced for children and young adults' education or amusement," covering all literary, artistic, and

nonfiction categories in physical mediums. Signes et al. (2017) presented a distinct definition, characterizing children's literature as "narratives that can be presented in an oral and/or written form and which the young find particularly interesting" (p. 19). Peter Hunt's critique contended that children's literature should encompass all texts, not solely those written for young readers, and that materials of no interest to contemporary librarians or children should not be classified as children's literature. This argument suggests that the modern conception of childhood may no longer align with what was once considered children's literature, and emphasizes the need for children's literature to mirror current ideas about childhood and their interests in order to be impactful for young readers.

In addition, Lynch-Brown (2005) has defined children's literature as "high-quality books aimed at children from infancy to adolescence, encompassing subjects that are relevant and interesting to children of those age groups, spanning across prose, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction."

Contemporary cultural focus on defining children's literature primarily centres on the intended audience, an emphasis underscored by numerous scholars (Galda & Cullinan, 2002; Hunt, 1996; Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999; Weinreich & Bartlett, 2000). This audience-centric perspective broadly characterizes children based on sociocultural and individual traits, forming the basis for conceptualizing literature for this demographic. Moreover, definitions of children's literature often revolve around its purpose. Some argued that entertainment, particularly within the narrative genre, is the defining aspect (Ghosn, 2002; Hollindale, 1997). Conversely, others acknowledged a dual purpose of information and entertainment (Norton, 1999; Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 1996; 2002; Winch et al., 2004). A less prevalent viewpoint placed significant importance on empathy, categorizing children's literature as a tool to help young readers understand and relate to the world views and experiences of others, including fellow children (Huck et al., 2001; Saxby, 1997; Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 1996; 2002). In contrast, a minority perspective posited that defining children's literature should be based on style and quality (Lukens, 1995), asserting that the aesthetic and literary merits should take precedence in crafting a comprehensive understanding. Scholars hold differing views on the intended purpose of children's literature, which spans from providing entertainment, imparting information, nurturing empathy, to maintaining stylistic excellence. This diversity of perspectives demonstrates the complex nature of children's literature, allowing for

various interpretive approaches and classifications by scholars. Recognizing and embracing this diversity is vital for cultivating a comprehensive grasp of the dynamic and evolving realm of children's literature.

In conclusion, children's literature exerts a significant influence on the development, imagination, and reading habits of young individuals. It is crucial to recognize that children's literature is not confined to traditional printed books. In the digital era, children's literature has expanded to encompass e-books, interactive apps, audiobooks, and multimedia adaptations. By integrating interactive elements, animations, and sound effects, these digital formats introduce innovative methods to engage young readers, offering them fresh perspectives and experiences. Children's literature serves to cultivate literacy skills, foster social-emotional growth, and promote a broader understanding of the world through its diverse genres, relatable characters, and captivating narratives. Furthermore, by championing empathy, tolerance, and appreciation for diversity, children's literature advocates for inclusivity and representation. Whether in print or digital form, children's literature continues to captivate and inspire young readers, enriching their lives and shaping their future.

2.11.1 Children's Literature Genres

Children's literature encompasses a wide array of genres tailored to diverse age groups, interests, and reading levels. The exploration of various literary genres by young readers not only nurtures their creativity, knowledge, and passion for books, but also plays a vital role in their language development when accompanied by discussions. Each genre provides exclusive experiences that enable young readers to delve into numerous subjects, engage with characters from diverse backgrounds, and foster a love for reading. By presenting a rich spectrum of genres, children's literature stimulates imagination, expands comprehension, and cultivates a lifelong affinity for reading. According to Mohamed (2007), children's literature comprises several distinct types, including traditional literature, picture books, fantasy literature, poetry, and nonfiction.

When considering writing for children, one might first think of traditional literature. This genre, focused on spoken word, developed from stories passed down orally through generations, often with unknown authors. Through traditional literature, children are taught values, beliefs, history, and customs through straightforward

stories featuring happy resolutions, stereotypical characters, and magical elements. Well-known tales in this genre include Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

Secondly, for very young children, picture books are highly suitable. Geared towards younger audiences, these books combine text and illustrations to create aesthetically appealing and intriguing stories that convey fundamental ideas and emotions. A well-balanced combination of text and illustrations is essential for telling the full tale. Classic examples of picture books include *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss, and *Peter Rabbit's Tale* by Beatrix Potter. Realistic literature, on the other hand, deals with true events, is set in actual places, and features true-to-life characters, providing children with diverse and recognizable concepts about life.

Thirdly, fantasy literature serves as a vehicle through which children are transported to enchanting realms, nurturing their imaginative and creative capacities. For centuries, children have been captivated by folktales featuring dragons, fairies, and witches. They embark on thrilling adventures through fantastical worlds brimming with magical elements, quests, and remarkable characters within the adventure and fantasy genres. These genres ignite children's imagination, whisking them away to realms where anything is possible. Quests, supernatural abilities, mythological creatures, and epic battles between good and evil are recurring themes in adventure and fantasy literature. Timeless classics such as Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland," Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows," and Roald Dahl's "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" continue to captivate children worldwide, while contemporary works like J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series exemplify the enduring appeal of this literary category. Young children find the imaginary worlds conjured by these authors to be almost commonplace and believable.

Fourthly, while poetry might not appear to be the most obvious choice for children, nursery rhymes and other accessible forms of poetry incorporating humour, rhyme, rhythm, and engaging sounds are appreciated by young readers. It is essential for children to enjoy poetry, just as they do with any other type of literature. Children's poetry often includes rhymes, rhythms, and wordplay, serving to introduce the musicality and creativity of language to young readers. The various forms of poetry cater to a wide range of emotions, from lively and entertaining to introspective

and heartfelt. Exposure to poetry equips children with a heightened awareness of language, rhythm, and sound patterns.

Fifthly, the category of literary works can encompass nonfiction content. Children's informational literature on specific subjects serves as an exceptional resource for language acquisition. These publications are accessible in various formats, covering an array of topics, such as dance, nature, individuals, crafts, and science. Specifically tailored children's literature about renowned or notorious individuals also serves as valuable reference material. It is essential for children's nonfiction to be infused with an engaging narrative to cultivate interest and satisfy their inherent intellectual, physical, and social inquisitiveness. Nonfiction literature offers factual insights across diverse subjects, including history, physics, the natural world, biographies, and more. The genres of nonfiction captivate children's curiosity by facilitating the exploration of new topics, broadening their knowledge, and enhancing their awareness of the world. Nonfiction publications often integrate captivating illustrations, charts, and photographs to enrich the learning experience.

Children's books are commonly categorized by publishers into distinct age groups, typically divided into 2 to 5 years old, 6 to 8 years old, and 9 to 12 years old. In addition to these formal classifications, there are other features that can be used to distinguish children's literature. While children's literature may encompass a variety of traits, it is not mandatory for it to contain all of these traits, similar to how a novel is not required to possess all characteristics. Children's stories share certain similarities with adult stories, such as being generally shorter in length, employing straightforward language, and utilizing illustrations to enhance the narrative. Furthermore, children's stories often centre on young protagonists facing adult antagonists, with themes such as death, sex, war, and violence being downplayed in favour of those addressing maturation or the child's transition into adulthood (Stakic, 2014). Cullinan and Galda (2002) classified children's literature into several categories: i) picture books, ii) poetry and verse, iii) folklore, iv) fantasy, v) science fiction, vi) realistic fiction, vii) historical fiction, viii) biography, and ix) nonfiction.

In "picture books," stories are conveyed through illustrations, with or without accompanying text, designed to engage and captivate young readers. They serve as a means to introduce young children to the pleasure of reading and storytelling by utilizing a combination of text and illustrations. Instead of being categorized as a genre, picture books are acknowledged as a format, as they have the capacity to

encompass various genres within their structure. This adaptability allows picture books to incorporate a wide range of genres, thereby making them a diverse and valuable category within children's literature. When text is present in a picture book, both the author and the illustrator share responsibility for the book's impact. "Poetry," on the other hand, is a literary genre that employs established forms to create a rhythmic and/or rhyming structure. Poetry and verse in children's literature are recognized for their succinct language and employment of imagery. They provide a concise and rhythmic portrayal of creative thoughts and perceptions. Poetry can be especially captivating for young readers due to its melodious and rhythmic attributes, making it pleasurable to recite. It stimulates children to investigate language and emotions in a distinctive manner.

According to Cullinan and Galda (2002), "folklore" consists of stories that have been orally passed down through generations before being recorded in written form. Folklore reflects the cultural values of the society in which it originated and encompasses universal experiences shaped by individual cultures. Additionally, Cullinan and Person (2001) described "fantasy" as encompassing various stories featuring talking animals, sentient toys, ghosts, magical powers, time travel, and imaginary lands. Fantasy literature carries readers to imaginative realms and fictitious settings, where stories unfold in locations that are non-existent, populated by characters and creatures that defy reality. It ignites the imagination of young readers, beckoning them to voyage into magical domains, embark on epic adventures, and encounter mythical entities. It provides the canvas for boundless and imaginative storytelling.

Cullinan and Galda's (2002) definition of "science fiction" denotes a literary genre dealing with futuristic ideas, space exploration, and other scientific aspects. Although technically a subgenre of fiction, science fiction is often regarded as a distinct genre due to its broad and diverse scope. When included in children's literature, science fiction can acquaint young readers with scientific concepts through engaging and intellectually stimulating narratives. "Realistic fiction" describes stories that could feasibly occur to people or animals, reflecting plausible responses to circumstances. Realistic fiction encompasses "what if" narratives that convey a sense of reality. These tales unfold in modern-day settings, featuring events and characters that appear authentic and relatable. Realistic fiction enables young readers to identify

with characters tackling everyday obstacles, thereby serving as a potent genre for fostering empathy and delving into genuine life concerns.

"Historical fiction" portrays events from the past, based on either documented occurrences or plausible scenarios, using real historical contexts to develop narratives and characters. These narratives reconstruct occurrences from bygone eras, providing insight into various time periods. Through engaging storytelling, historical fiction has the dual capacity to both educate and captivate young readers, effectively immersing them in historical contexts and animating history. A "biography" centre around the narrative and central ideas derived from a person's life. These literary works present a portrayal of an individual's life, typically drawing from sources such as letters, memoirs, diaries, journals, or autobiographies. They afford young readers the opportunity to gain understanding into the lives of influential figures, while also serving as an inspiration and educational resource about the accomplishments and impact of historical personalities. Lastly, "nonfiction" books offer factual information about the real world, serving as educational tools that expound on various subjects or concepts. Encompassing a broad spectrum of topics, from science and nature to history and culture, these books equip young readers with knowledge and comprehension of their surroundings. Cullinan and Galda's (2002) concluded that the genres in children's and young adult literature offer a diverse range of reading experiences, from the imaginative realms of fantasy to the informative world of nonfiction. Each genre has its unique characteristics and appeals to different interests and age groups, making children's literature a rich and varied field for young readers to explore and enjoy. Table 2.6 presents a summary of these genres following the suggestions of Cullinan and Galda (2002):

Table 2.6
Children's Literature Genres

Category	Genres in Children's and Young Adult Literature
Picture Books	Interdependence of art and text. Story of Concept presented through combination of text and illustration. Classification based on format, not genre. All genres appear in picture books.
Poetry & Verse	Condensed language, imagery. Distilled, rhythmic expression of imaginative thoughts and perceptions.
Folklore	Literary heritage of humankind. Traditional stories, myths, legends, nursery rhymes, and songs from the past. Oral tradition; no known author.

Category	Genres in Children's and Young Adult Literature
Fantasy	Imaginative worlds, make-believe. Stories set in places that do not exist, about people and creatures that could not exist, or events that could not happen.
Science Fiction	Based on extending physical laws and scientific principles to their logical outcomes. Stories about what might occur in the future.
Realistic Fiction	"What if" stories, illusion of reality. Events could happen in real world, characters seem real; contemporary setting.
Historical Fiction	Set in the past, could have happened. Story reconstructs events of past age, things that could have or did occur.
Biography	Plot and theme based on person's life. An account of a person's life, or part of a life history; letters, memoirs, diaries, journals, autobiographies.
Nonfiction	Facts about the real world. Informational books that explain a subject or concept.

Source: Adapted from Cullinan and Galda (2002)

Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002) proposed a set of evaluation standards related to (a) fictitious components, (b) visual elements, and (c) nonfictional materials. The evaluation standards are summarized in Table 2.7. In children's fiction, several essential components are critical for creating an engaging and relatable narrative. The plot should incorporate conflict to generate tension and capture the audience's interest. Characters need to be well-developed, undergoing realistic transformations that resonate with real-life experiences, thereby enabling young readers to form connections with them. The setting plays a crucial role, enriching the overall narrative by considering the time and place of the story. The themes explored in the narrative should be pertinent and ethically sound, yet carefully balanced so as not to overshadow the plot and characters. Finally, the storytelling style, encompassing language usage, sentence structure, and organization, needs to be suitable for the intended age group, ensuring accessibility and engagement for young readers.

According to Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002), the visual components found within picture books, such as line, colour, shape, texture, and composition, hold significant importance in conveying narratives. Lines serve to define objects and contribute to the message and emotional tone of the story, whereas colours complement the text by reflecting changes in the plot and characters' feelings. Shapes contribute to non-verbal communication through their sizes and intricacy, while texture imparts a sense of realism to the illustrations, rendering them more relatable and captivating. Lastly, composition, the arrangement of these visual elements, bolsters the text and ensures the overall cohesiveness of the narrative. Collectively,

these elements elevate the reading experience, rendering picture books a rich and immersive medium for young readers.

Finally, in nonfiction literature aimed at younger audiences, several essential elements contribute to effective communication and engagement. It is imperative that the writing style is clear and engaging, often incorporating direct questions to involve the reader. Furthermore, captions and labels play a crucial role in providing clear and informative context for visuals. Accuracy and currency of presented facts are paramount to ensure reliability. Personification is generally avoided to maintain a focus on reality. The presentation of the material should be visually appealing, with attractive covers and illustrations. Information should be structured in a way that progresses from simple to more complex concepts, catering to the developmental level of the reader. Additionally, it is crucial to promote inclusivity by avoiding sexist, racist language, and stereotypes. The format, particularly in visual elements like photography, should prioritize clarity and accuracy. Moreover, the complexity of the content should be appropriate for the age and developmental stage of the target audience to ensure that the material is both accessible and educational. Furthermore, captions and labels need to be informative and well-integrated with the visuals to enhance understanding. When combined, these elements make nonfiction engaging, educational, and respectful of the young reader's growing knowledge and awareness.

In conclusion, a wide range of genres are represented in children's literature to meet the varied requirements, interests, and developmental stages of young readers. Children can be engaged, educated, and entertained by the distinctive characteristics and narrative techniques found in each genre. The various subgenres of children's literature provide a rich tapestry of narrative that enthralls, instructs, and develops young readers. Every genre fosters the growth of a child's creativity, empathy, critical thinking, and knowledge. Children can embark on literary journeys that foster a love of reading, expand their horizons, and ignite a desire for learning for the rest of their lives by exploring the various genres of children's literature.

Table 2.7
Evaluative Criteria of Children’s Literature

Evaluation Standard	Element	Description
Fiction	Plot	A strong plot involves conflict to create the tension and suspense that can readily entice young readers.
	Characters	Characters must stand out. A superb piece of children's literature features fully realized main characters who experience transformation in reaction to circumstances that are relevant to real life.
	Setting	A story's setting, which takes into account time and place, is crucial. Although conventional children's literature frequently lacks specific setting details, doing so can be a good method to pique kids' interest.
	Theme	Children should be able to relate to and understand the themes of children's books. Additionally, themes must be founded on the highest moral and ethical principles. However, a message should not overshadow the story's plot and characters; kids read fiction for entertainment, not for moral instruction.
	Style	Style is an element of writing itself as opposed to content; it is the manner in which an author conveys the story. The style used should be acceptable for the topic. The components of style include sentence structure, word choice, and book organization. The language used should be appropriate for the story being told; sentences should be simple to read but melodic; and the length of the book as a whole should be chosen with consideration for the age and developmental stage of the target audience for the book's readers.
Visual	Line	The stroke marks that make up the picture are lines. The objects in an image are typically defined by their line. Lines might be thick or thin, heavy or light, solid or broken, dark or pale, heavy or light, wide or straight, curved, or any combination of these. The picture's lines ought to contribute to the creation and expression of the story's message and mood.
	Colour	It is possible to categorize colours according to their colour, brightness, and saturation. Text must be complemented with colour. For instance, peace and contentment are connected to soft, warm tones. The colours should alter accordingly in accordance with the plots. The colours should alter to indicate any alterations in the plot if the events or mood of the story change as it progresses.
	Shape	Sizes, stiffness, suppleness, definition, simplicity, and complexity of a shape are all considered when evaluating it. Negative or empty space, for instance, could be utilised to draw attention to a specific item or to convey loneliness or seclusion. Important components of non-verbal communication include the forms in a picture, the spaces around the shapes, and the proportion of things in relation to one another.
	Texture	Texture gives graphics a sense of reality by giving the impression of how an object feels. Textures might be smooth or jagged, firm or pliable, hard or soft, or any combination of these.

Evaluation Standard	Element	Description
Nonfiction	Composition	A picture's composition involves how its visual parts are arranged and how they interact with one another. Illustrations' compositional elements can support certain facets of textual meaning and contribute to the overall feeling of cohesiveness in the work.
	Style	A straightforward, easy to grasp writing style is essential. Reader interest and involvement can be piqued by stylistic elements like the use of questions with the second person pronoun (you), as in "Have you ever wondered how chameleons change colour?"
	Captions and Labels	Labels and captions must be legibly worded and informative. Even though they are brief, these texts play a crucial role in explaining the importance of visuals or calling the reader's attention to significant or fascinating elements.
	Facts	Facts must be true and up to date. There should be a clear line drawn between fact, hypothesis, and opinion in nonfiction.
	Personification	Avoid using personification when possible. Part of the appeal of traditional and contemporary fantasy literature is the ascription of human characteristics to creatures, things, or natural forces. But in nonfiction, it should be avoided.
	Presentation	Nonfiction publications must be nicely packaged and displayed. Children may find nonfiction more appealing if it has an engaging cover, stunning graphics, and a good text-to-illustration ratio.
	Information	The presentation of information should go from known to unknown, broad to specialised, and simple to more complicate in order to promote analytical thinking and enhance conceptual understanding.
	Stereotyping	The finest nonfiction books go above and beyond simply avoiding sexist or racist words and stereotypical images in the text and pictures. Additionally, it portrays a good view of ethnic variety.
	Format	In particular, the accuracy, clarity, and precision of photography make it a suitable medium for writers whose goal is to depict reality as it exists.
	Complexity	The level of subject complexity and depth must be suitable for the target audience. The notion or topic is improper given the age and/or conceptual development of the intended audience if an explanation must be made so simple that facts must be changed before a kid may begin to understand.
	Captions and Labels	Labels and captions must be legibly worded and informative. Even though they are brief, these texts play a crucial role in explaining the importance of visuals or calling the reader's attention to significant or fascinating elements.

Source: Adapted from Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002)

2.11.2 Children's Literature in Malaysia

Children's literature serves as the initial gateway to literary exploration for young readers, allowing them to develop an appreciation for language and familiarize themselves with its rhythms (Bayraktar, 2021). Engaging with children's books provides a unique platform for children to exercise their creativity, emotions, intellect, and moral sensitivity, shaping their understanding of both the positive and negative aspects of childhood (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2005). Extensive studies in Western nations, such as the United States, have examined various aspects of children's literature, including its role in promoting diversity awareness, enhancing emergent literacy skills, and aiding children in comprehending complex concepts like time, coping with losses, and understanding mortality (Green & Ooldendorf, 2005; Harlin et al., 2007; Marquette & Madison, 2009; McLain Harms & Lettow, 2007; Mercurio & McNamee, 2006; Trostle Brand, 2006). Consequently, the relevance of these literary experiences for today's children, whether in present or future contexts, remains a significant and enduring aspect of childhood development.

Most Malay language children's books are tailored to suit the preferences of adults and publishers, rather than being based on research aimed at promoting optimal child development (Chew, 2012). Consequently, these books may not effectively foster children's creativity, psychological well-being, or social growth. A study conducted by Mohd Sidin in 2005 revealed that children's books published in Malaysia during the 1990s lacked substantive content and engaging presentation. This deficiency encompassed physical appearance, design, quantity, illustrations, and print quality. The utilization of rigid and uninspiring language in these publications may have contributed to children in Malaysia finding them unappealing. Additionally, Mohd Sidin et al. (2002) highlighted that although the Malaysian Book Publishers Association (MABOPA) released the majority of children's books in Malaysia, a substantial portion of these publications constituted textbooks and workbooks, rather than focusing on children's literary works.

Malaysia's diverse literary landscape for children mirrors the nation's rich blend of heritage, traditional folklore, and contemporary issues. There is a crucial need to foster a love for reading among young readers, promoting an understanding of different cultures, and nurturing their imagination and creativity. Renowned for its portrayal of the country's multicultural society, Malaysian children's literature

showcases the amalgamation of Malays, Chinese, Indians, and indigenous communities, all of whom call Malaysia their home. Through the incorporation of various cultural contexts in plots, characters, and settings, children's novels exemplify this diversity. These literary works serve as a valuable resource for children to gain insight into and appreciation for the multicultural tapestry of Malaysian society, fostering empathy, tolerance, and respect for diverse cultures.

The Malay language's early children's literature, based on scientific study, has not been a focal point in Malaysian research on children's literature materials. A majority of children's books in Malaysia are unattractive, of low quality, not organized or categorized by age, and fail to reflect the country's trajectory (Rahmat, 2006). Malay children's literature has its origins in an oral culture that utilized stories about children to impart moral and religious values (Md Sidin, 2005). For instance, tales like *Angan Mat Jenin* and *Pak Pandir* convey important lessons. Malaysian children's literature heavily incorporates traditional mythology and legends. Picture books and story collections for young readers often integrate folktales, myths, and legends that have been passed down over the years. These stories frequently convey moral teachings, honor regional customs, and feature well-known figures such as Sang Kancil, a clever and intelligent mouse deer, or Puteri Gunung Ledang, the mystical princess of Mount Ledang. Children's literature in Malaysia plays a significant role in preserving and retelling classic tales, thereby contributing to the preservation of the nation's cultural history and instilling a sense of pride in young readers.

As observed by Kassim et al. (2010), an analysis of the literature indicates that the origin of Malay-language children's books in Malaysia predates that of English-language titles. Like the Western tradition, these early publications aimed to encourage literacy, specifically reading and writing skills. In the late 19th century, the English colonial government's involvement in local education led to an influx of official publishing houses releasing school texts and readers to support the education system. The content of these materials primarily comprised translations and adaptations of English classics, with some works sourced from renowned Malay hikayat and syair such as *Syair Siti Zubaidah* and *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (Md Sidin, 2005). Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), a local publishing house, significantly contributed to the advancement of children's and young adult literature in the Malay language. An evaluation of DBP's publications for children and young adults effectively demonstrates the support it has provided and continues to provide to local

authors (Kassim et al., 2010). This support has substantially enhanced the development of a more extensive collection of high-quality literature, establishing Malay children's and young adult literature as a fundamental component of the local literary canon.

During the early colonial era, children's books in the English language played a pivotal role in advancing the British government's colonization strategy in Malaya, serving as a means to promote the English language among the youth in Malaysia (Kassim et al, 2010). Despite the presence of local language-based schools, historical evidence suggests that the colonial administration sought to gradually replace the indigenous languages with English as the medium of instruction in government-funded schools, while simultaneously preserving the existing local educational framework. In the post-independence period, deliberate efforts were undertaken to expand young Malaysians' access to English literature, prompting local authors to create works that authentically reflect their cultural heritage. This emphasis has cultivated a fertile environment for the promotion of literacy through various printed materials, contributing to the evolution of Malaysian children's literature as a dynamic and vibrant domain that celebrates the nation's cultural multiplicity, traditional folklore, and contemporary subjects. Malaysian children's literature serves as a valuable instrument for advancing literacy, nurturing cultural awareness, and stimulating the imaginative and creative faculties of young readers. Ultimately, children's literature in Malaysia assumes a critical role in shaping the attitudes and principles of the younger generation by embracing local traditions, addressing present-day issues, and fostering an affinity for reading.

For the purpose of this study, children's literature pertains to written material encompassing any genre(s) and text type, whether accompanied by illustrations or not, with a focus on the lives, experiences, and interests of children in Malaysian society. This literature is designed to entertain and, at times, inform and educate, by creatively and imaginatively broadening children's linguistic, mental, and emotional horizons.

2.12 Bibliotherapy and Children

For a variety of reasons, bibliotherapy is a beneficial approach to use when working with children. It can be a valuable tool for children, as it provides an avenue for them to explore, understand, and process their thoughts and feelings in a safe and

supportive way. Pardeck (1990) emphasized three justifications why bibliotherapy is particularly beneficial when working with children:

- i) **Finding Problem-Solving Strategies:** Children's literature frequently features characters who face and conquer various challenges. When young readers interact with these stories, they are afforded the opportunity to observe how the characters tackle problem-solving. This involves recognizing issues, generating solutions, making decisions, and taking action. By witnessing these problem-solving processes, children can acquire valuable strategies that can be applied to their own lives. This not only improves their critical thinking skills but also enables them to address their own challenges more effectively.
- ii) **Identifying with Characters' Emotions:** Many children's literature explores the emotional journeys of its characters, delving into anxieties, frustrations, and disappointments. By connecting with these emotions, readers come to realize that they are not alone in their feelings. This connection fosters empathy and emotional intelligence, enabling children to comprehend and identify with the emotional fluctuations of real life, while also reassuring them that their feelings are valid and not unique, thus reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness; and
- iii) **Gaining Insight into Alternative Solutions:** Children's literature frequently delves into various paths characters might take when confronted with challenges or difficult circumstances. Through following these imaginary journeys, young readers can attain insight into alternative solutions or courses of action, contemplating the consequences and evaluating outcomes of characters' choices. This aids in cultivating children's decision-making skills and their capacity to critically analyse the decisions they encounter in their own lives, encouraging them to explore beyond their initial responses and expand their problem-solving abilities.

Pardeck (1990) emphasized that integrating these elements into children's literature not only enhances the allure of stories but also enhances the reading experience by imparting valuable life lessons. This equips young readers with essential skills for navigating the complexities of their own lives, fostering resilience,

empathy, and the ability to approach challenges with confidence and creativity. Ultimately, the potency of storytelling lies in its capacity to provide young readers with a reflection of their own experiences and a gateway to explore new perspectives and solutions, thus rendering reading a potent tool for personal growth and development

Bibliotherapy provides children with the opportunity to observe how characters in books adeptly handle challenges, thereby enhancing their own problem-solving skills (Kramer, 1999). Moreover, engaging in discussions about the books they are reading with educators, parents, or school professionals allows children to gain valuable insights into effective problem-solving techniques. The development and enhancement of imagination, social skills, and problem-solving abilities through bibliotherapy play a pivotal role in bringing about behavioural changes in children and adolescents (Doll & Doll, 1997). Additionally, bibliotherapy aids in influencing the behaviour and cognitive processes of children, facilitating a shift in their problematic thoughts and subsequent behaviours through the use of a variety of books (Heath & Cole, 2012).

In educational settings, bibliotherapy has been widely utilized to support children and adolescents who have encountered traumatic experiences related to various issues such as loss, acceptance, parental divorce, anxiety, addiction, poverty, abuse, and more (Catalano, 2017). By employing pertinent materials, bibliotherapy offers emotional support and equips individuals with knowledge on approaching challenging issues. Moreover, when implemented in classrooms or group settings, bibliotherapy encourages empathy and understanding among students for those facing distress. Furthermore, it fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and awareness of potential consequences, serving as an effective preventive strategy (Catalano, 2017; Silverberg, 2003).

Bibliotherapy serves as a valuable therapeutic approach for children by utilizing the influence of books and storytelling to foster emotional well-being, comprehension, and personal development. Research indicates that children and youth (ages 3–18) who have undergone trauma can benefit from bibliotherapy as a psychosocial intervention (Pola & Nelson, 2014). Traumatic events, defined as intense occurrences that threaten or cause harm to emotional or physical well-being (Kanewischer, 2013, p. 71), can lead to difficulties in emotional expression and an increased likelihood of developing psychiatric problems in children and young people

(Gangi & Barowsky, 2009; Pola & Nelson, 2014). Moreover, traumatic events can lead to emotional isolation, affecting children and teens at psychological, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, interpersonal, and social levels (Wheeler, 2007, p. 132). Post-traumatic symptoms, such as anxiety, sadness, interpersonal issues, sleep disruptions, withdrawal, and suicidal thoughts, are commonly observed in this demographic (Kanewischer, 2013; Salloum et al., 2013; Wheeler, 2007).

Bibliotherapy operates on the principle that children incorporate their own needs and experiences into the process of story interpretation, which continually evolves. Stories encourage open dialogue and self-understanding, particularly as students often struggle to recognize and articulate their emotions. Through an emotional connection with literary characters, children become more adept at expressing their innermost feelings verbally, physically, or visually. As highlighted by Davies (2010), the goals of bibliotherapy include helping children identify and validate their feelings, recognizing that others experience similar problems, promoting discussion, stimulating thought and self-awareness, learning potential coping mechanisms and solutions, and selecting a constructive course of action.

2.13 Bibliotherapy and Affective Engagement

From a reader-response perspective, bibliotherapy has been conceptualised as a text-centred approach that foregrounds the interaction between reader and narrative in shaping emotional and developmental understanding. Affective engagement refers to the emotional dimension of this interaction, wherein readers experience empathy, emotional resonance, and identification with characters and narrative situations. Prior studies suggest that such engagement enables reflective processes that support emotional awareness, emotional regulation, adaptive coping strategies, assertiveness, positive attitudes, and the cultivation of empathy, particularly within the context of children's literature.

Bibliotherapy promotes awareness, self-improvement, self-confidence, positive attitudes, emotional intelligence, coping abilities, assertiveness, and empathy (Betzael & Shechtman, 2010; Heath et al., 2005; Prater et al., 2006; Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000; Sullivan & Strang, 2003). Gualano et al. (2017) concluded that bibliotherapy appears to be successful in reducing depressive symptoms in the long term, providing a cost-effective and efficient treatment. Their findings suggest that

bibliotherapy may play a significant role in the management of severe mental health conditions. Khalik (2017) suggested that employing bibliotherapy as an intervention had a positive impact on addressing violent behaviour in school children with emotional and behavioural issues. Additionally, a study by Curry (2014) revealed that students with mental illnesses may benefit from learning practical coping mechanisms through bibliotherapy, utilizing the meditative properties of books. When utilized effectively in the classroom, teachers can provide therapeutic strategies for children with mental illnesses, creating a healthier learning environment for the students, their educators, and their peers. Bibliotherapy can serve as a form of expression, granting children the support and tools they require to navigate the path to coping and healing safely, thus facilitating their academic and emotional progress (Lowe, 2009).

The following are some indicators that an emotional wound has been healed, as summarized by A (2023):

- i) **Increased Self-Awareness:** As individuals progress through the stages of emotional development, they may undergo an increase in their self-awareness, leading to a more profound understanding of their emotions, cognitive processes, and actions. Those who attain greater self-acceptance and self-compassion due to this enhanced self-awareness are better equipped to identify and overcome undesirable behaviour patterns.
- ii) **Improved Relationships:** Enhancing emotional well-being can positively impact relationships by enabling individuals to more effectively communicate their needs and emotions and develop greater empathy and understanding for others. This, in turn, fosters improved communication within these relationships. As individuals heal from past emotional traumas, they may find that their current relationships become more enjoyable and fulfilling.
- iii) **Greater Resilience:** Engaging in the process of emotional awareness can support the development of increased resilience, enabling individuals to recover swiftly from challenges and adversities. As individuals navigate through previous emotional traumas, they may discover that this journey fosters enhanced coping skills and a heightened sense of inner strength and resilience.
- iv) **Improved Physical Health:** Improving emotional well-being can positively

impact an individual's physical health, leading to a reduction in stress and an overall improvement in well-being. This, in turn, may contribute to enhanced physical health.

In conclusion, ensuring good emotional health is imperative for children to lead happy, well-balanced lives. The cultivation of self-awareness, stress management, healthy connections, self-care practices, seeking assistance when needed, and fostering a positive mind-set are essential for their mental and emotional well-being. Utilizing bibliotherapy, which leverages literature to provide insight, comfort, and guidance, can be a beneficial method for promoting emotional wellness. This approach allows individuals to engage with stories, characters, and ideas, fostering emotional well-being, introspection, and personal growth. Embracing emotional health does not shield children from negative emotions or challenges, but it empowers them with the tools and resilience to confront these issues. It enables individuals to lead more fulfilling lives, form healthier relationships, and make wiser decisions.

2.14 Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical underpinning encompasses the fundamental concepts, structures, and principles that uphold and direct a specific strategy, methodology, or field of study. It serves as a theoretical groundwork for elucidating the underlying assumptions, perspectives, and mechanisms of the subject (Creswell, 2013). Theoretical foundations supply the structure for comprehending and conducting research, as well as guiding the development and application of practical interventions or techniques.

In the realm of bibliotherapy, the theoretical basis pertains to the psychological or therapeutic principles that direct and substantiate the utilization of literature as a therapeutic instrument. These concepts provide a conceptual framework for understanding the potential success of bibliotherapy in promoting psychological well-being, individual growth, and behavioural modification. The selection of books, design of interventions, and interpretation of the therapeutic process and outcomes are all informed by the theoretical foundation. Theoretical foundations are pivotal as they furnish a theoretical basis for practice, enhance the effectiveness and credibility of interventions, and facilitate the comprehension of underlying mechanisms and

processes at play. Additionally, within a specific field or discipline, they serve as a roadmap for future research and bolster knowledge and evidence-based practices.

It is important to note that bibliotherapy does not adhere to a single comprehensive theory but rather draws upon various theoretical frameworks and approaches. It is vital to recognize that therapists and practitioners may approach it from different frameworks based on their training and inclinations. The ultimate objective of bibliotherapy's theoretical foundation is to leverage the capacity of literature to stimulate psychological growth, self-awareness, and positive change. The primary theoretical basis for bibliotherapy lies within psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalytic theory, which explores unconscious processes and the symbolic significance of literature, can significantly influence bibliotherapy. It strongly emphasizes the use of literature to discern and address underlying issues, gain insight into one's emotions and experiences, and promote personal development and self-awareness (Pick, 2015). Within the current investigation, two theories are the central focus as the underlying framework: i) Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, and ii) Cognitive-Behavioural Theory (CBT).

2.14.1 Sigmund Freud Psychoanalysis Theory

The classical Freudian method, originating in Vienna in the late 19th century, formed the basis of much of modern psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, was born in Austria and spent the majority of his formative years and adulthood there (Gay, 2006). His research and concepts gave rise to a body of psychological theories and clinical approaches collectively known as psychoanalysis. Through his work with mentally ill patients, Freud formulated psychoanalytic theory. Many psychoanalytic theorists posit that behaviour is merely a superficial characteristic and to fully grasp it, one must delve into the symbolic significance and inner workings of a person's mind. Understanding how the unconscious mind influences conscious processes in ways that impede normal psychological functioning is the primary objective of the psychoanalytic approach. It is grounded in the fundamental belief that unconscious biological factors shape human behaviour, often stemming from early attempts to satisfy essential needs but persisting outside of conscious awareness (Pick, 2015). These early experiences lay the groundwork for

adult psychological functioning, and psychoanalysis examines adult defences against unacceptable unconscious desires derived from them (Frosh, 2016).

Freud developed a model of the human mind which consists of three areas or layers, namely; i) conscious; ii) preconscious and iii) unconscious. Conscious house the current perceptions, emotions and thoughts; while preconscious often known as the subconscious, is where all of the information we can recall or extract from memory is stored. Unconscious is when our subconscious minds include a storehouse of the mechanisms that govern our behaviour, including biologically based instincts (Pick, 2015). Later, Freud put forth a more organized mental model that more accurately represented his initial hypotheses on conscious and unconscious mental processes (Frosh, 2021).

The three mental entities, according to Freud, are constantly at odds with one another since they each have distinct objectives. The ego occasionally activates a variety of defence mechanisms to stop psychological breakdown when psychological conflict threatens psychological functioning (Burgo, 2012). These defence mechanisms include: i) repression; ii) denial; iii) projection; iv) displacement; v) regression; and vi) sublimation. In the realm of psychology, various defence mechanisms are acknowledged as methods through which the ego manages conflict and distress. Though these mechanisms operate in various ways, their overall purpose is to protect the individual from emotional distress or discomfort, as demonstrated by repression, a critical defence mechanism. In repression, the ego pushes distressing memories or thoughts into the unconscious mind, shielding the conscious mind from potential turmoil and maintaining psychological balance (Hock, 2013). This mechanism effectively shields the individual, blocking the entry of these troubling elements into conscious awareness. The primary purpose of repression is to address internal conflicts and distressing emotions, ensuring that they remain outside the realm of conscious thought in order to preserve psychological equilibrium.

Psychoanalysis serves as a therapeutic approach for psychological disorders, delving into the interaction between conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind to bring forth worries and anxieties. This theory has inspired the development of various treatments, including bibliotherapy. According to Shrodes (1949), bibliotherapy is founded on the notion that personality dynamics and aesthetic experiences are closely intertwined, particularly through the act of reading. Shrodes (1949) highlighted several processes akin to those observed in extensive psychoanalytic therapy.

Bibliotherapy comprises four key ideas identified by Caroline Shrodes (1949), including identification, projection, catharsis, and insight, and has garnered broad acknowledgment in the literature as a fundamental approach (Cornett et al., 1980; Pardeck & Pardeck, 1986; Rubin, 1978; Zaccaria, et al., 1978).

In the context of bibliotherapy, identification and projection occur when clients project their own needs onto fictional characters or the book's author. Identification reflects a person's attitude toward a character, irrespective of whether they identify with or reject the character's beliefs and preferences, thus establishing a genuine or imaginary connection. Clients who identify with characters often exhibit concern for the character's future and perceive similarities with the character. Similarly, projection involves interpreting connections between characters and their motivations.

Catharsis denotes an emotional release or reaction, manifesting through emotions such as guilt, grief, or anxiety. Characters may evoke memories in clients, leading to transference, hostility, and other negative emotions. Insight, both direct and indirect, represents an emotional understanding of one's own motivations and emotions, often arising from catharsis. Through insight, tolerance, acceptance, and understanding, individuals recognize themselves and others, integrating new values and objectives.

Psychoanalysis is based on the premise that everyone has unconscious thoughts, emotions, impulses, and memories. The theory holds that therapy should be utilized to uncover the mind's suppressed emotions and experiences and that everyone has unconscious thoughts, memories, emotions, and wants. Only after that will the patient's psyche begin to recover cathartically. An individual suffering from psychological distress may benefit from this process. As noted by Cherry et al. (2020), psychoanalysis also suggests that:

- i) **Unconscious Drives and Behaviour.** According to Freud, human behaviour is shaped not only by conscious thoughts and desires, but also by unconscious drives, desires, and instincts. These hidden elements, such as repressed emotions and unresolved conflicts, can impact behaviour, often without individuals being fully conscious of them. Phobias, compulsions, and specific personality traits can be attributed to these unconscious influences. Understanding these unconscious drives is vital in psychoanalysis and can

facilitate individuals in gaining insight into their behaviour and making positive changes.

- ii) Emotional and Psychological Conditions. Freudian theories also highlight the significance of unconscious conflicts in the progression of emotional and psychological ailments such as depression and anxiety. According to Freudian theory, unresolved conflicts between the conscious and unconscious mind can result in emotional distress.

Cherry et al. (2020) further pointed out that, the concepts related to the influence of the unconscious mind, as proposed by Sigmund Freud and expanded upon in psychoanalytic theory, offer insights into the complexities of human behaviour, emotions, and psychological conditions. They emphasize the importance of self-awareness, self-reflection, and therapeutic exploration to understand and address the unconscious factors that shape our lives. While Freud's theories have been subject to criticism and revision, they remain influential in the field of psychology and continue to inform discussions about the human psyche

Freud utilized the method of bibliotherapy to guide his patients from the unconscious to the conscious mind in alignment with his psychoanalytic theory (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2007). Sigmund Freud's influence on psychology persists to the present day. While talk therapy is commonly associated with psychoanalysis, it is also employed in bibliotherapy by therapists. Freud's establishment of psychoanalysis has profoundly impacted various fields, including psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy. Despite some of his theories being contested and modified over time, his ideas continue to shape our understanding of human behaviour, unconscious processes, and the effects of early experiences on personality and psychological well-being.

Psychoanalytic theory is a fitting foundation for bibliotherapy for various reasons. Shrodes (1960) underscored the significance of delving into unconscious thoughts, emotions, and drives within psychoanalytic theory, which examines the dynamics and root causes of emotional and behavioural issues. Incorporating literature in bibliotherapy allows patients to engage with symbolic, metaphorical, and allegorical elements that mirror unconscious processes, potentially leading to a deeper understanding of their experiences, conflicts, and emotions. Furthermore,

bibliotherapy may aid in calming patients in manic or excitable states, averting the development of neurotic tendencies, and assisting therapists in recognizing and bolstering a patient's defences. Incorporating literature into a patient's treatment may yield psychological effects similar to a therapist enacting a patient's fantasies (Shrodes, 1960).

In accordance with psychoanalytic theory, individuals assimilate the observable characteristics and values of those they love, admire, or fear, beginning in childhood and persisting into adulthood. This process, known as identification, involves crafting an internal self-representation that aligns with the externally perceived self, formed through interactions, observations, and playful engagements (Decety & Chaminade, 2003). Psychoanalytic theory underscores the significance of the therapeutic relationship and the dynamics of transference and countertransference (Newman & Newman, 2020). Analogous to psychotherapy, bibliotherapy offers individuals the opportunity to project their own experiences, emotions, and conflicts onto fictional characters. By facilitating the exploration of these transference and countertransference interactions, a therapist can foster therapeutic awareness and personal development.

Psychoanalysis aims to uncover and facilitate the resolution of unconscious conflicts. Individuals can gain insight into their unresolved concerns by delving into the experiences of literary characters who grapple with similar internal struggles. By identifying with fictional characters and following their journeys, individuals can explore and address their own unconscious issues in a secure and indirect manner. The psychoanalytic perspective recognizes the role of resistance and defence mechanisms in protecting individuals from distressing or hazardous emotions and ideas (Newman & Newman, 2020). Through bibliotherapy, individuals may encounter characters employing various defence strategies or exhibiting resistance to change. Exploring these mechanisms can assist individuals in recognizing their own emotional barriers to growth, defence mechanisms, and resistances, ultimately facilitating the therapeutic process.

Psychoanalytic theory recognizes the significance of metaphor and symbolism in human experiences. Complex characters, symbolic representations, and narrative structures commonly found in literary works often parallel psychological issues and conflicts (Ahrens, 2011). Bibliotherapy allows individuals to explore these symbols and metaphors through reading, enabling the examination of unconscious material and

fostering insight and self-reflection. Ultimately, psychoanalytic theory offers a valuable framework for understanding and enhancing the use of bibliotherapy. Its emphasis on the unconscious mind, exploration of internal tensions, and potential for catharsis align with the therapeutic benefits of reading. However, the approach must be adapted to meet each individual's specific needs and treatment objectives, while also remaining receptive to alternative theoretical perspectives.

2.14.2 Cognitive-Behavioural Theory (CBT)

Bibliotherapy draws from the substantial theoretical framework of cognitive-behavioural theory (CBT), a widely utilized therapeutic approach that examines the intricate interplay among thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. This theory is rooted in the idea that our emotions and behaviours are shaped by our thoughts, beliefs, and interpretations of events. Its primary focus is on identifying and modifying unproductive mental patterns and behaviours. Central to this approach is the conviction that our thoughts and construal of events significantly impact our emotional and behavioural reactions. CBT asserts that individuals can acquire the skills to recognize and challenge unconstructive or pessimistic thoughts, thus substituting them with more adaptive and realistic thinking patterns, ultimately resulting in enhanced emotional well-being and behavioural adjustment. According to CBT, an individual's beliefs about oneself, others, the world, and the future exert a profound influence on their emotions and actions. Utilizing reading materials such as books and articles in this approach serves to promote behavioural and cognitive transformation, confront cognitive biases, and present alternative perspectives.

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) integrates behavioural and cognitive principles in order to comprehend and address human behaviour, ideas, and emotions. It emphasizes the interplay between cognition, behaviour, and emotions, asserting that our perceptions of the world significantly influence our feelings and actions (Kuyken et al., 2008). Widely recognized for its strong empirical support, CBT has evolved from its origins in behaviour therapy, combining cognitive and behavioural theories into a complex set of therapeutic techniques (Hupp et al., 2008). Social workers and practitioners use CBT interventions to address various psychosocial issues, including depression, anxiety, chronic pain, substance misuse, violent trauma, and challenging family relationships (Thyer & Myers, 2011).

The incorporation of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) into bibliotherapy can enhance therapeutic outcomes. By engaging with the characters and narratives in books, individuals can use bibliotherapy to identify and challenge harmful views and beliefs. Exposure to stories involving characters dealing with cognitive distortions or problematic thinking habits can help individuals reframe their own negative ideas in a more realistic and adaptive manner (Nagel & Anthony, 2009). Bibliotherapy can also inspire behavioural activation, encouraging individuals to pursue activities that promote happiness and well-being. Characters in books can serve as examples of adopting positive behaviours, setting goals, and making behavioural changes, which individuals can apply to their own lives through bibliotherapy, leading to improved mood and overall functioning. Furthermore, bibliotherapy can facilitate the learning of cognitive coping mechanisms from CBT, such as thought-stopping, cognitive restructuring, and positive self-talk. Individuals can observe how characters in bibliotherapy books utilize these strategies to manage their own challenges, and then apply them in their own lives. Additionally, by reading about characters facing and resolving challenges, individuals can develop problem-solving skills, learning how to recognize problems, devise solutions, evaluate options, and implement action plans. This exposure can enable individuals to employ similar problem-solving techniques to address difficulties in their own lives.

Bibliotherapy might include self-monitoring and writing activities where clients consider their feelings, actions, and thoughts in relation to the book's themes. People who keep a journal of their experiences can spot trends, triggers, and the effects of their thoughts on their feelings and actions. This procedure encourages self-awareness and can direct the use of cognitive-behavioural methods. By giving people useful skills, insights, and techniques to address their ideas, feelings, and behaviours, the integration of cognitive-behavioural principles into bibliotherapy can increase the success of the intervention. It is crucial to remember that applying CBT principles to bibliotherapy should be done so under the supervision of qualified experts who can adapt the intervention to the client's unique needs and guarantee that it is used appropriately.

Cognitive-behavioural Theory (CBT) is highly suitable as the principal theory in bibliotherapy for several reasons. According to Arch and Craske (2009), CBT centres on thoughts and behaviours, highlighting the interconnectedness of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. Individuals undergoing bibliotherapy can engage with

literature featuring characters facing similar cognitive and behavioural challenges. Through reading about these characters' cognitive processes and observing their behaviours, individuals are able to gain insight into their own thought and behaviour patterns. This facilitates self-reflection and the identification of unhelpful cognitive and behavioural tendencies. Furthermore, Arch and Craske (2009) argued that CBT places a strong emphasis on behavioural change by recognizing and modifying maladaptive behaviours. In the context of bibliotherapy, individuals can witness characters in literature transforming their behaviour and implementing improved coping strategies. This can inspire individuals to explore alternative behaviours and motivate them to apply these changes in their own lives. Moreover, CBT aims to identify distorted or negative thoughts, challenge them, and replace them with more realistic and adaptive ones. In the practice of bibliotherapy, individuals may encounter fictional characters who engage in cognitive restructuring, offering examples of reframing problematic ideas and attitudes. This provides a supportive environment for individuals to experiment with cognitive restructuring techniques.

It should be noted that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is often goal-oriented and structured, particularly when specific objectives and organized therapies are employed. Hazlett-Stevens and Craske (2008) have observed that bibliotherapy, akin to CBT, can be guided by clear goals and structured reading regimens. Consequently, individuals can better focus on specific issues and work towards particular objectives, providing them with a sense of purpose and direction. Undeniably, a common aspect of CBT is the teaching of practical skills and strategies for managing thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. These skills, including stress management techniques, problem-solving approaches, and assertiveness training, may also be depicted by characters in bibliotherapy. Individuals may draw inspiration from these examples and develop their own set of coping mechanisms.

Keegan and Holas (2009) have noted that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) places emphasis on the collaborative partnership between the patient and the therapist. In the context of bibliotherapy, therapists have the opportunity to engage with patients in discussions about book selections, drawing connections to personal experiences, and advocating for the use of CBT techniques. This collaboration serves to enrich the therapeutic process by fostering a sense of partnership and mutual support. A key objective of CBT is to empower the client/patient to take on the role of their own therapist. Much of contemporary psychology is deeply rooted in CBT, and

substantial evidence attests to its effectiveness (Dattilio, 2000). Teaching individuals' practical skills and strategies to manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours is a fundamental aspect of CBT. These skills, such as stress management techniques, problem-solving methods, and assertiveness training, may be exemplified by characters in bibliotherapy. Individuals may draw inspiration from these portrayals and develop their own repertoire of coping mechanisms.

The principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be applied to enhance the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, a self-help approach based on reading. Through engaging with literature, individuals are provided with an opportunity to confront and restructure their negative thought patterns, acquire more adaptive cognitive techniques, and develop healthier perspectives concerning themselves and the world. Consequently, the cognitive-behavioural theory provides a solid and pragmatic basis for the integration of bibliotherapy. The objectives of self-help via reading align with its emphasis on cognitive restructuring and behaviour modification, empowering individuals to challenge unfavourable thoughts, establish flexible coping strategies, and foster personal development. By incorporating cognitive-behavioural strategies into bibliotherapy, professionals can amplify the therapeutic value of books and foster positive change among those seeking personal enhancement and emotional well-being.

2.15 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework, a type of theoretical structure, provides a foundation for understanding a particular event or problem. It provides a framework for investigation, evaluation, and interpretation and aids in the arrangement of ideas, connections, and variables related to a certain subject. As noted by Miles et al. (2018) and Saunders et al. (2009), conceptual framework is a set of ideas, presumptions, expectations, convictions, and theories that a study is based on and that guide it. It is a written or visual result that illustrates, either visually or narratively, the essential topics, variables, or components that will be studied as well as the assumed relationships between them (Miles et al., 2018). Many academics have made an effort to define and explain the concept of conceptual framework. In the end, a conceptual framework is what combining a number of related ideas to clarify and provide a more comprehensive knowledge of the subject being studied (Imenda, 2014). This suggests

that a conceptual framework is a summary of many findings from the literature sources regarding the research that have been examined, outlining the research agenda for better comprehension of the research aims. By giving the currents of thought that give an inquiry focus and direction a framework, knowledge is achieved (Rallis & Rossman, 2012).

A conceptual framework establishes a structured and methodical approach to examining a topic and gives scholars a direction for their research. It aids in identifying significant concepts, variables, and their relationships as well as in creating hypotheses or research questions that may be empirically tested. It reflects the organization of significant concepts and ideas from theories, important research findings, policy recommendations, and other expert knowledge that serve to direct the research effort. According to Thomas (2012), a conceptual framework emerges from thorough and in-depth reading of pertinent literature and connects research projects to ongoing discussions in the researcher's field by establishing the following parameters: firstly, it serves as a reminder of the research project's focus and its limitations; secondly, it offers guidance for the formulation of research questions, the research design, and the further search for the answers.

Several bibliotherapy frameworks guide how reading-based interventions can be designed and delivered for children, particularly in library and educational contexts. Nazi et al. (2023) propose an eight-step bibliotherapy model that positions bibliotherapy as a structured service rather than simply providing books. The model begins with identifying clients and assessing their baseline condition, followed by matching suitable materials, preparing a reading list, and planning delivery arrangements (place, people, and time). The process then moves to implementing the sessions, conducting follow-up to capture learning and emotional responses, and evaluating efficacy to determine whether improvement occurred. This systematic pathway supports consistent implementation and outcome monitoring in library-facilitated programmes.

In the Malaysian public library context, Noordin et al. (2017) introduce a conceptual bibliotherapy framework that explains how libraries can function as change agents by embedding bibliotherapy initiatives within library services to support children's development and strengthen reading habits. Their framework integrates three key components: (i) the library (roles, objectives, policies, and services), (ii) bibliotherapeutic schemes (categories, processes, practices, and

strategies), and (iii) reading habits (reading types, attitudes/behaviours, and skills). This framework provides a foundation for examining how library-based bibliotherapy can influence children's reading development while contributing to the broader goal of building a knowledgeable and literate society.

From a child-focused therapeutic lens, Karagül (2019) emphasizes bibliotherapy as a supportive approach where carefully selected stories help children manage emotional and behavioural challenges. Central to this approach is selecting texts that are age-appropriate, include relatable characters, and address themes aligned with the child's emotional or developmental needs. Karagül's process can be summarized into three stages: selecting a suitable text, guiding the child's engagement with the story, and supporting reflection and application through discussion or related activities (e.g., journaling or group discussion). This highlights that bibliotherapy effectiveness depends on both the quality of the text selection and structured facilitation.

Similarly, Bekircan (2025) proposes a four-step bibliotherapy framework that operationalises bibliotherapy into a clear intervention sequence: pre-reading, guided reading, post-reading discussion, and a related activity. The framework begins with selecting a relevant text, then supports children through shared/guided reading to ensure comprehension. Discussion follows to help children identify themes and connect story events to personal experiences, and the process concludes with an activity that helps children apply story lessons to real-life situations. Together, these models show that effective bibliotherapy for children is strengthened by structured stages, appropriate text matching, guided reflection, and follow-up activities that translate story meaning into practical coping and development outcomes.

Figure 2.5 presents the conceptual framework developed for this research, which integrates key ideas from the conceptual framework literature and selected bibliotherapy and children's literature perspectives. Guided by Thomas's (2012) view that a conceptual framework emerges from extensive engagement with relevant literature and helps define the study's focus, boundaries, and research direction, the present framework organises the main concepts and their relationships in a way that supports systematic investigation of bibliotherapy for children.

Building on established bibliotherapy models, the framework recognises bibliotherapy as a structured intervention that requires careful planning, appropriate material selection, guided engagement, and evaluation (Nazi et al., 2023). It also

reflects the role of institutions—particularly libraries—as change agents that can implement bibliotherapeutic schemes to strengthen children’s reading habits and developmental outcomes (Noordin et al., 2017). In addition, the framework incorporates child-focused perspectives emphasising that bibliotherapy effectiveness depends on selecting texts that match children’s developmental needs and guiding children to reflect on and apply story meanings to their own lives (Bekircan, 2025; Karagül, 2019).

Accordingly, Figure 2.5 synthesises these perspectives into a single model that links bibliotherapy features in children’s literature (e.g., text characteristics, thematic relevance, and supportive narrative elements) with the process of guided bibliotherapy implementation, and the expected outcomes of children’s development and growth. The framework therefore provides the basis for identifying the study variables, clarifying the proposed relationships among them, and directing the development of the research questions and methodology. The sources listed under Figure 2.5 represent the key scholarly works and professional references used to construct the framework and justify the selected constructs and pathways.

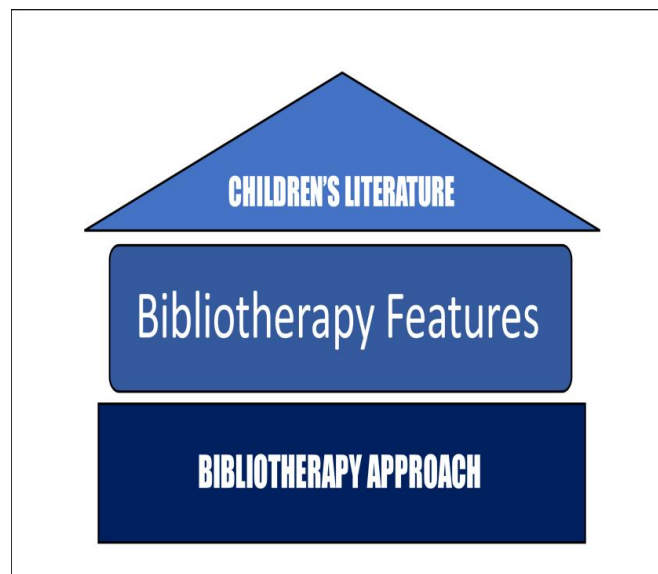


Figure 2.5 Conceptual Framework for the Bibliotherapy Features (Developed for this Research)

Source: Fadiman (2023), Library of Congress (2013), Shawanam (2020), Nel et al. (2021), Bayraktar (2021), Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002), Harlin, et al. (2007), Green and Ooldendorf (2005), Trostle (2006), Mohd. Sidin, et al. (2002), Abdul Aziz (2023), Rozalski, et al. (2010), Betzalel and Shechtman (2010), Greenberg (2010)

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.5 illustrates the systematic role of children’s literature as a therapeutic medium in supporting children’s

development and personal growth. Within this framework, children's literature is positioned not merely as a reading resource, but as an intentional therapeutic instrument that mediates emotional engagement, reflection, and psychological growth. Through carefully selected narratives, children are exposed to situations, characters, and emotional experiences that resonate with their own lived realities, thereby fostering emotional identification and personal connection.

Affective bibliotherapy, as represented in the framework, emphasizes the stimulation of children's emotional responses through interaction with literary texts. This process enables children to recognize, express, and make sense of complex emotions such as fear, sadness, anger, empathy, and hope in a safe and guided manner. By observing characters navigate emotional challenges, children are provided with indirect yet meaningful opportunities to explore their own emotional states, develop emotional vocabulary, and learn constructive coping strategies. The framework highlights the dynamic interaction between the child and the literary content, where emotional engagement serves as a catalyst for therapeutic outcomes.

Central to the framework is the deliberate selection of children's literature that incorporates bibliotherapeutic features such as relatable characters, age-appropriate themes, culturally relevant contexts, supportive illustrations, and narratives that promote empathy and emotional safety. These features are aligned with children's developmental stages and emotional needs, ensuring that the reading experience remains accessible, meaningful, and emotionally supportive. The framework also acknowledges that the method of engagement—whether through guided reading, discussion, reflection, or storytelling activities—plays a crucial role in maximizing the therapeutic potential of the literature.

Ultimately, the primary objective of the framework is to support children's emotional development and holistic growth through meaningful engagement with literary texts. By integrating appropriate literary content with intentional engagement strategies, the framework demonstrates how bibliotherapy can contribute to emotional resilience, self-awareness, and psychological well-being. This conceptualization underscores the importance of structured and culturally responsive bibliotherapy practices, positioning children's literature as a powerful tool for nurturing emotional growth and supporting mental health within educational and therapeutic contexts.

2.16 Conclusion

Malaysia is a diverse and multilingual country, where various communities coexist peacefully while preserving their unique characteristics. The population, consisting of Malays, Bumiputras, Chinese, Indians, and other nationals of mixed heritage, contributes to the rich cultural tapestry of Malaysia. In the context of this study, children's literature encompasses books written and published in Bahasa Melayu and English. The four main languages of Malaysia—Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil—are commonly utilized in literature, reflecting different aspects of Malaysian life and playing a vital role in Malaysian culture. The primary objective of this research is to incorporate elements of bibliotherapy and psychoanalytic theory, as evidenced in earlier studies, in order to better understand the characteristics of children's literature in Malaysia and the aspects of bibliotherapy relevant to the research participants. Furthermore, the research aims to explore how stakeholders perceive the qualities and process of bibliotherapy.

However, the researcher believes that the application of bibliotherapy using children's literature varies in each country. Therefore, the researcher suggests that children's literature in Malaysia that includes bibliotherapy features needs to be more transparent and straightforward to effectively serve as a form of therapy.

The next chapter describes the epistemological stance and the methodology undertaken in this research for an empirical study. The research paradigm, methodologies, and method are explained, followed by a description of the research design, the choice of data-gathering methods, the interpretation and analysis of collected data, and the methodological rigour of the research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The philosophical and methodological stance taken in this study is reviewed in this chapter. The basis for research in general can vary depending on the viewpoint and context in which it is held. As a result, different research methodologies is used. The research paradigm and the design approach, for example, are some fundamental principles and guidelines that direct a researcher's actions and techniques of completing a study. Hence, the paradigm, design, and research methods is covered in the opening sections of this chapter.

A research paradigm is a set of core presumptions and ideas about how the world is perceived, and it acts as a framework for thought that directs the researcher's work (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). The description of the research paradigm selected for the conduct of this study comes after that. The study design would come next after the research paradigm had been decided. A research design, according to Burns and Grove (2003), is a plan for carrying out a study with the most amount of control over variables that might affect the validity of the results. Following the discussion of the research design, the researcher addresses the methodology and research strategy used for this study. At its heart, bibliotherapy is grounded in the idea that individuals can relate to fictional characters who reflect their own experiences, enabling them to examine social relationships, work through emotional challenges, and discover new paths in life (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

3.2 Research Paradigm

Creswell (2013) defined a paradigm as a fundamental set of assumptions or beliefs that guide a researcher's investigation. It represents a particular perspective on research shared by a community of researchers, based on a set of common assumptions, concepts, standards, and methodologies for planning and executing research. The selection of the mode of inquiry and resulting paradigm should be guided by the research's objectives. Research paradigms in the social and behavioural

sciences are commonly categorized as positivist and interpretivist approaches, each representing a distinct perspective within the paradigm.

Positivism necessitates quantifiable observations that lead to statistical analysis. It has historically been dominant in business and management research. It aligns with the empiricist theory that emphasizes knowledge derived from human experience. Positivism holds an atomistic, ontological view of the universe, perceiving it as composed of distinct, observable elements and events that interact in an observable, predictable, and orderly manner (Collins, 2010).

On the other hand, interpretivism is founded on the notion that reality is subjective, contradictory, and socially constructed. According to this perspective, we can only understand another person's reality through their own experience of it, which may differ from that of others and is influenced by their historical and social context. Inquiry-based methods emphasize observation and questioning to reveal or construct a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the topic under study, and are closely tied to qualitative data collection techniques. Therefore, the term "interpretivism" is adopted for the purposes of the current study.

The choice of a research paradigm is influenced by the focus of the investigation, which in turn determines the course of action chosen by the researcher. This, in turn, guides the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological approach of the research. The epistemological approach concerns the interaction between the researcher and the participants, while the ontological approach pertains to the nature of reality. Axiology refers to the role of values and bias in conducting the research, while the methodological approach relates to the research process (Creswell, 2013).

In the context of this study, before selecting the preferred research paradigm, it is crucial to carefully consider the research problem and the most effective approach to finding a solution. In this case, the goal is to evaluate the elements of bibliotherapy in the main form of children's literature in Malaysia, which are books. An interpretative approach is favoured for this research, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of bibliotherapy components and their potential to contribute to the emotional development and healing of children. Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm focuses on subjectivity, meaning, and understanding, aiming to delve into the complexities of human behaviour, beliefs, and experiences while acknowledging the significance of context and social interactions. Qualitative methods like interviews,

observations, and textual analysis is utilized to capture the rich and nuanced aspects of the research topic. It is worth noting that this paradigm is commonly employed in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and the humanities, where human subjectivity plays a central role.

According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), the interpretivist paradigm asserts that multiple realities exist in the social world. Interpretivism is rooted in the belief that reality is subjective, intricate, and shaped by social factors. This means that we can only understand another person's reality through their own lived experiences, which may differ from those of others and be influenced by historical and social contexts. The interpretivist research method takes an exploratory approach, using fieldwork data as the foundation for expertise and direction. Researchers actively participate in the study, drawing heavily on their individual experiences for prior knowledge of the subject matter (Gummesson, 2000). According to Lincoln and Cannella (2004), the strength of qualitative research lies in its focus on participants' circumstances and experiences, making qualitative techniques common in interpretivist research.

In this study, the approach would involve document analysis to investigate the bibliotherapy features of children's books. Data from document analysis, such as quotes or entire passages, are arranged into major topics, categories, and case studies (Labuschangne, 2003). After gathering document analysis data, the researcher would measure the data and look for any patterns that could help assess the bibliotherapy aspects in children's literature. Following this, the researcher would create a general conclusion regarding the characteristics of bibliotherapy and assess if Malaysian children's literature possesses the necessary characteristics. This approach is based on the empiricism concept, which pursues an open, unrestricted, and adaptable line of inquiry. The idea that all knowledge comes from sensory experience is known as empiricism. Empiricism, as its name and philosophy suggest, is the belief that all evidence for facts and phenomena must be empirical, or based on empirical findings. The senses or their extensions should be able to observe the evidence (Hannes et al., 2018). This approach places more emphasis on describing the measurable outcome than it does on quantifying variety.

3.3 Research Design

The research direction encompasses the central theme or focus that steers a specific area of investigation or study within the wider realm of research. It offers a guide for researchers, delineating the particular questions, objectives, and goals they seek to tackle. A research direction serves as blueprint for carrying out inquiries and plays a role in the progression of knowledge within a specific field.

Table 3.1 presents the alignment between the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, and methodological approaches adopted in this study. Each research objective is addressed using qualitative methods appropriate to its exploratory nature. Document analysis serve as the primary methods, while expert input is incorporated for validation and refinement purposes. Data are analysed thematically and descriptively to ensure coherence between the research design and the reported findings.

Table 3.1

Mapping of Problem Statement (PS), Research Objectives (RO), Research Questions (RQ), Methodology, and Analysis

Problem Statement (PS)	Research Objective (RO)	Research Question (RQ)	Methodology	Data Analysis
There is lack of a clear and systematic understanding of the features required in children's literature for effective bibliotherapy, particularly within the Malaysian context.	RO1: To explore the required features of children's literature for bibliotherapy.	RQ1: What are the required features of children's literature for bibliotherapy?	To address RO1, the study employed a literature analysis of relevant bibliotherapy and children's literature studies. Key features required for bibliotherapy were identified through review of the literature, resulting in the identification of core elements such as characters, plot, themes, empathy, readability, and emotional safety.	Literature Review to identify features of children's literature for bibliotherapy.
It is unclear to what extent existing Malaysian children's literature incorporates the identified bibliotherapy features.	RO2: To examine the extent to which existing Malaysian children's literature meets the required bibliotherapy features.	RQ2: How does existing Malaysian children's literature meet the required bibliotherapy features?	Qualitative document analysis of 56 Malaysian children's books; expert feedback to support interpretation	Comparative document analysis between identified bibliotherapy features and current literary works followed by inter-rater reliability analysis to determine the level of agreement between raters.
There is no established bibliotherapy framework specifically tailored to Malaysian children's literature and cultural context.	RO3: To propose a bibliotherapy framework based on Malaysian children's literature.	RQ3: How can a bibliotherapy framework be developed using Malaysian children's literature?	Synthesis of findings from RO1 and RO2; expert review for refinement.	Triangulation of findings from RO1 and RO2 was undertaken to guide the development of a structured bibliotherapy framework.

3.3.1 Qualitative Research

The term qualitative is used to "define research method and strategies which utilize and give rise to qualitative rather than quantitative information," according to Veal (2006: p. 193). On the other hand, according to Kumar (2014: p. 379), qualitative research is a technique that "... follows an open, flexible and unstructured approach to enquiry, aims to explore diversity rather than to quantify; emphasizes description and narration of feelings, perceptions, and experiences rather than their measurement; and communicates findings in descriptive and narrative rather than analytical manner, placing no or less emphasis on generalizations."

Understanding, exploring, explaining, discovering, and clarifying events, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people are the key focuses of a qualitative research design. As a result, this strategy would take a more inductive than a deductive approach. This strategy tends to be more fluid, unstructured, open, and individualized. Different researchers are able to view the truth differently in this form of investigation. Because of this, qualitative research is frequently described as using a meaning-driven methodology (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Okoko et al. 2023; Parker, 2017; Taylor et al. 2015).

The focus of qualitative research on how people view their life is an important factor. Different people have varied experiences, views, and values in this regard, and these is reflected in their research designs and analyses of the data gathered. This kind of research is referred to as a systematic subjective approach that uses the researcher's perspective to describe life experiences. In light of this, qualitative researchers typically assert that "reality is socially perceived" (Guba & Lincon, 1988; Parker, 2017; Okoko et al. 2023). So, this research employs a qualitative research methodology.

The majority of qualitative research aims to learn more about people or circumstances that are not often examined and to offer knowledge that can be applied to gradual social change. The goal of the methodology used by qualitative researchers is to assemble comprehensive data on a constrained set of topics. It is not possible to show the information gathered in a numerical style. This design is committed to gathering the value of a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the circumstances and experiences of a selected group of individuals. For instance, the

goal of the current study is to evaluate the bibliotherapy features included in Malaysian children's books that support emotional development and healing.

The initial goal of this study is to incorporate bibliotherapy components from earlier literature and studies. By compiling the perspectives, characteristics, plots and contents of the documents analysed, the bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children's literature are eventually identified. As such, using a qualitative research methodology would be the most effective way to get high-quality data in order to achieve the necessary goal. The justification for adopting qualitative research lies in its ability to explore, understand, and interpret complex human phenomena through rich, contextually embedded data. The use of qualitative research is justified by its capacity to provide rich, contextually embedded data for the investigation, understanding, and interpretation of complex phenomena. By embracing qualitative methods, researchers can uncover unique insights, generate theories, and contribute meaningfully to knowledge advancement and application in diverse academic and practical domains. Compared to quantitative research, Holliday (2007) asserted that qualitative research methods often call for a more adaptable approach to overall research design. With this method, the development of topics changes over the course of the investigation. Furthermore, the processes of data analysis and writing are conducted concurrently.

3.4 Research Procedure

This study employs a qualitative research design. As described by Patton (2002), qualitative research is a research process which attempts to understand the unique interactions of a particular situation. The process of this type of research is intended to understand the in-depth meaning of human experiences. This involves circumstances of how people are affected by things that happen around them, inquiry about opinions and attitudes formed by people and other human behaviour related issues as well.

Primary data are unprocessed data that has never been collected before. Secondary data, on the other hand, is information that has been gathered and tested previously. The data collection method is determined by the type of research being performed. There are many ways to collect data, depending on the researcher's research strategy and design. Some examples of qualitative data collection and

research include; observations, surveys, focus groups, interviews and secondary data collection through document analysis.

Data collection is a technique for gathering and analysing information from numerous sources in order to answer important issues. Researchers can predict potential phenomena and patterns using an appropriate interpretation of the data that has been acquired. The two types of data collecting are primary and secondary data collection. Primary data are raw data that has never been processed, before being collected. On the other hand, secondary data is information that has already been obtained and put to the test (Taherdoost, 2021). The sort of research being done affects the data collection strategy. Depending on the research method and design chosen by the researcher, there are numerous ways to collect data. Surveys, focus groups, interviews, and secondary data collection through document analysis are a few examples of qualitative data collection and research methods.

The main goal of observational approaches is to observe objects and get information about them. This may entail observing specific animals or humans in their native habitats. Results can be more accurate if there are no direct interactions between the researchers and the persons they are studying. Contrarily, survey methods concentrate on obtaining written or multiple-choice responses about a range of topics from respondents. The majority of the time, people respond to these questions online, with little to no interaction taking place between survey distributors and survey respondents (Jackson, 2012). Focus group techniques concentrate on learning directly from users. This approach frequently emphasizes sentiments, opinions, or emotions over numbers (Hennink, 2014).

Last but not least, document analysis is a technique for gathering data that entails examining the content of written documents in order to draw conclusions based on the objectives of the research (Bowen, 2009). Two approaches of gathering data are used for the current research, namely literature review and document analysis. Table 3.1 depicts the research process adopted for the current study.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the overall research process in this study. It begins with the identification of bibliotherapy features through a review of relevant literature, followed by the integration of these features into a coherent set. Expert validation is then conducted to review and refine the identified features. Document analysis of selected Malaysian children's books is subsequently carried out to examine the

presence of these features. The findings from these stages inform the development of a structured bibliotherapy framework tailored to the Malaysian context.

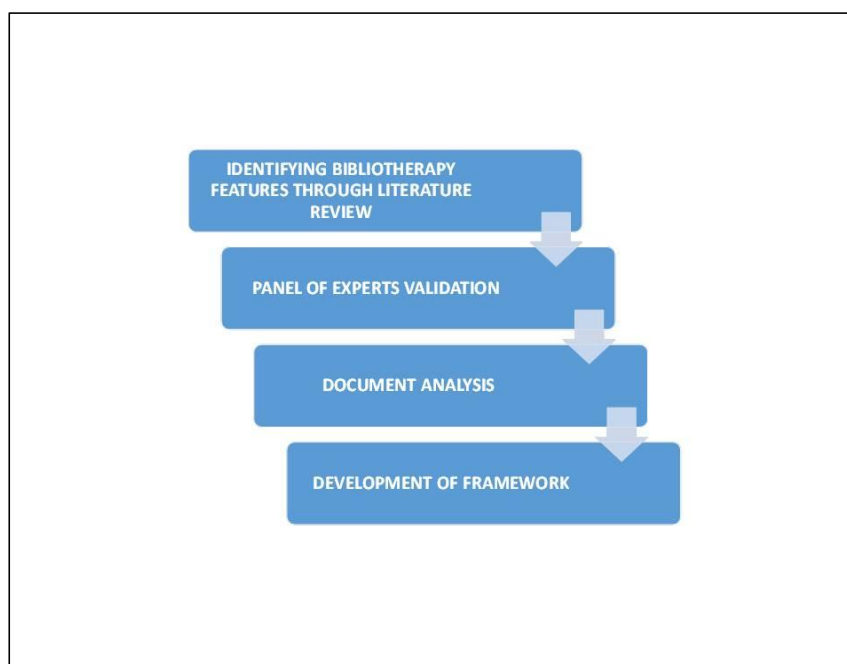


Figure 3.1 Process

3.4.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative research is a sort of study that collects data through the use of words while attempting to comprehend the meanings of those words through analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Quantitative research, in contrast, collects data via the use of numbers, which are then analysed through the use of statistical methods. Many methods, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, textual analysis, focus groups using the biographical approach, and even ethnography, can be used to perform qualitative research (Veal, 2006). The research question and purpose that the researcher proposes would ultimately determine the research methodology.

In the context of this study, the researcher assumes the key position in the qualitative research as the instrument for data collection, and as a result, she takes the surrounding environment's whole context into account. The researcher in this instance keep her independence and forbid her opinions on bibliotherapy-related concerns from influencing the data collection process. Also, the researcher's professional experience as an educator in the field of library management also have an impact on the research. The researcher also has an extensive past experience and opinion as a librarian. So, in such situations, the researcher's viewpoint and experiences may have also improved

her grasp of the setting and role. The researcher trained herself by critically reflecting on her own views, feelings, convictions, and expectations in order to deal with the prior information and potential for personal bias that could result from it. This was a crucial component of overcoming selective perception and attention. It is expected that by being aware of the potential for bias and personal influence, the researcher is able to actively avoid letting these factors affect her research.

3.4.2 Research Ethics

The observance of ethical standards is crucial to research. Since the researcher may interact and collaborate with many different persons from different disciplines and organizations when performing a research project, research can generally be referred to as a collaborative work. As a result, ethical standards would probably encourage the virtues necessary for such collaborative work in this situation, such as trust, accountability, respect for one another, and fairness in the research process. The method of gathering data and ethical dilemmas are two connected problems. Many research organizations have created their own codes of ethics and behaviour for research (Kumar, 2014). As diverse topics may be of concern, various study fields may call for various standards of ethics. Some typical ethical issues in qualitative research may appear throughout the study design phase, during the data gathering process, during the analysis phase, and during the reporting phase of the results gathered. Nonetheless, depending on the method used to acquire the research data, these issues can give rise to a variety of concerns.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to take into account the basics of morally acceptable research that uses human subjects. The researcher is responsible for the majority of the data collecting in a qualitative study; hence the researcher is crucial to the study's success. If the researcher can maintain an impartial stance and avoid allowing the participants' or the data's influence on his or her view, then this engagement may have an impact on the quality of the data gathered. The selection of the participants, issues of confidentiality in many elements of the participation, as well as the information disclosed, is all crucial.

An essential component of ethics in qualitative research is consent. Informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The process through which a person can decide whether or not to engage in the research is at the

heart of the consent issue. Consent is made up of two key components: "informed" and "consent," each of which must be carefully considered. Participants must be thoroughly informed of the requirements, the intended use of the data, and any potential negative effects. The participants must give clear, active, and signed consent to participate in the study, as well as acknowledge that they are aware of their right to view their information and their right to withdraw at any time. The procedure for obtaining informed permission can be seen of as a contract between the researcher and the subjects.

At this stage, the researcher ensured that every participant comprehended the study's objectives, methodology, associated risks, and the expectations placed on them as volunteers (Best & Kahn, 2006). Clear explanations regarding the following were key components of being "informed":

- i) The identity of the researcher(s)
- ii) The research purposes
- iii) The type of information to be collected from participants
- iv) The method of gathering information from participants
- v) The expected level of participation
- vi) The utilization and reporting of gathered information
- vii) The potential risks associated with participation in the study

In this study, a concise and well-designed information sheet was utilized to convey consent information, written in a style appropriate for the participants without the use of complex academic language. The following encompassed key factors related to consent in the present study:

- i) Explanation of the right to withdraw at any time, including the withdrawal of previously provided data
- ii) Assurances regarding the confidentiality of participant identities
- iii) Clear delineation of data ownership (participants own raw data, researchers own analysed data)
- iv) Declaration of the right for participants to access their data

- v) Statement of the participants' right to request additional information
- vi) Inclusion of guidance on how to file a complaint, including contact information for the researcher, line manager, or ethics committee chair.

The information sheet and consent form were thorough, understandable, and well-written. The information sheet and consent form produce a weak consent agreement if they are unclear, which is not adequately safeguard the participant or the researcher and may damage the quality of the data that is obtained owing to mistrust (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Hence, there were no participants or respondents in this study that were under the age of 18. In addition, the participant was required to read and understand a consent form before being included in the study.

The confidentiality of the participants is another ethical concern related to consent, in addition to the consent problem. It is crucial that participant identities remain anonymous or secure, and the assurances go beyond simply safeguarding their names to also cover refraining from utilizing self-identifying language and material. The research may reveal the participants' positions when publishing the data, but the participants' identities were kept secret. A crucial element in shielding the participants from potential damage is maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality. Contrary to popular belief, participant confidentiality and participant anonymity are not the same thing. When a participant is anonymous, the researcher is unaware of their identity (e.g., when using anonymous surveys, the participant identity is truly unknown to the researchers). When gathering data for this study, the researcher adopted an independent stance. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the conduct of the data collecting and analysis process was not hampered by the influence of any personal experiences or perceptions due to the independent stance taken.

3.4.3 Validation of Bibliotherapy Features

The process of expert validation, also known as expert review, is a critical stage in various domains, such as research, product development, and decision-making. This involves seeking input and feedback from individuals with specific expertise, abilities, and relevant experience. The process of expert validation plays a crucial role in guaranteeing the precision, dependability, and excellence of a project,

product, or study outcomes. This validation study is the initial phase of the research aimed at determining the characteristics of bibliotherapy in children's books in Malaysia.

Validation can be defined as the act of verifying that the model being constructed is accurate enough for its intended purpose (Carson, 1986) or determining whether the appropriate model is being developed (Robinson, 1997). At this juncture of the research, the investigator is not seeking to validate if the model directly fulfils the requirements of particular users. Rather, she is examining whether the predominantly generic bibliotherapy elements satisfy the basic criteria for constructing the model in its whole. The validation procedure encompassed multiple stages:

- i) A thorough review of the literature was conducted to identify the diverse elements of bibliotherapy proposed by various scholars.
- ii) Drawing from the findings of an extensive literature review, the researcher proceeded to integrate these elements and subsequently identify any emerging features.
- iii) The researcher assembled a panel of experts to provide feedback and validation on the proposed bibliotherapy elements, selecting individuals widely recognized as authorities in the relevant field. These experts possess relevant knowledge, practical experience, and specialized expertise. In an effort to ensure inclusivity and representation, a diverse range of opinions and backgrounds was considered in the selection process.
- iv) Defining the objectives - The researcher explicitly outlined the aims and rationale of the expert validation process. The research objectives were clearly articulated to the panel, with the researcher explicitly outlining the aspects to be validated and the specific type of feedback sought.
- v) Material Preparation - Subsequently, the researcher developed materials or documents with the aim of seeking expert evaluation. The data collection method employed in this study involved the use of assessment question.
- vi) The expert review process began with the distribution of assessment question to the designated panel of experts via email.

- vii) The experts were encouraged to provide comprehensive and constructive criticism. The researcher sought input from experts on the strengths, limitations, and potential enhancements of the materials.
- viii) The feedback from the expert group was collected and consolidated in two rounds. The researcher then conducted a comprehensive analysis of the received input to identify prevailing themes, proposals, and areas of consensus or divergence among the experts.
- ix) The proposed implementation of the recommended bibliotherapy elements has been suggested for the subsequent phase of the research endeavour.

In this study, during this phase of development, the researcher's objective is not to ascertain the model's direct alignment with the requirements of individual users. Rather, the researcher aims to evaluate if this mostly generic model satisfies the basic criteria for its construction. The evaluation of the model's "quality, usability, and utility" (Gass, 1983) is not conducted directly by the author. This is because, at the first stage of development, the model has not been enough customized to enable such evaluation (Robinson, 1997). The model is validated in order to provide evidence that the components exhibit an acceptable level of accuracy that aligns with the intended use of the model (Sargent, 2000).

Ensuring content validity is of utmost importance in the development of bibliotherapy features, especially when considering their impact on children's results. However, it is important to note that the study literature on bibliotherapy treatments has not yet examined or documented the concept of content validity. In order to demonstrate content validity, it is important to have a well-defined set of definitions and criteria that researchers may use to assess the legitimacy of the suggested constructs. It is crucial to acknowledge that the establishment of content validity plays a significant role in substantiating the overall validity of an assessment instrument, particularly in the context of research. Haynes et al. (1995) highlighted the importance of content validity in assessment instruments. They said that if the content validity of an assessment instrument is bad, any inferences drawn from it should be viewed with suspicion, even if other measures of validity are deemed good. According to Yusoff (2019), the constituents of an assessment instrument include all components of the measuring procedure that have the potential to influence the data collected, including

questions, answer forms, and instructions. The term "construct" refers to the theoretical notion, characteristic, domain, or variable that is the focal point of measurement. The goal of evaluation pertains to the anticipated functions of the measuring instrument. In the present research, the evaluation technique used involves the distribution of a validation form to a chosen panel of experts.

3.4.4 Selection of Panel of Experts

The process of selecting individuals to examine and criticize an assessment instrument, such as a question, often relies on their knowledge in the specific area of study. Yusoff (2019) asserted that in the context of content validation, it is generally seen necessary to have a minimum of two experts in order to ensure the acceptability of the validation process. The first stage is the formation of a panel of individuals who possess a wide range of experiences and skills that are pertinent to the field of bibliotherapy. The individuals that may be involved in this endeavour include a range of professionals, such as psychologists, therapists, educators, literary scholars, librarians, and writers who possess a comprehensive understanding of the topic at hand. The careful selection of an expert panel is crucial in order to guarantee the trustworthiness and validity of the produced findings.

The first step in the formation of an expert panel is the identification of the criteria that is used to choose the individuals who are included. The aforementioned characteristics should include the requisite level of competence, trustworthiness, and diversity essential for effectively addressing the diverse array of stakeholders' interests. After the establishment of the criteria for inclusion, the subsequent task is the identification of possible experts who satisfy these defined criteria. There are several approaches that might be used to ascertain possible experts in a certain field (Hadjigeorgiou, 2022):

- i) Literature review – The process of doing a thorough literature study is a valuable approach for identifying authoritative figures within a certain academic domain. This examination needs to include scholarly papers, industry reports, conference proceedings, and any other relevant sources that provide valuable perspectives on the knowledge and trustworthiness of possible panelists.

- ii) Personal contacts and recommendations – Utilizing personal connections and soliciting suggestions from others within the relevant profession might be a helpful strategy for identifying possible experts. Engaging in networking activities and establishing connections with colleagues, mentors, and other professionals helps facilitate the process of locating persons who possess the requisite expertise and reputation.
- iii) Surveying professional organizations and societies – Numerous professional organizations and organisations maintain directories or databases containing information about specialists specializing in certain subjects. These resources may be used to ascertain possible panel members who satisfy the requirements for participation.
- iv) Call for nominations – One successful method for identifying possible experts is to issue a call for nominations. This may be achieved via several mediums, including professional newsletters, internet forums, and social media platforms.

In this study, the selection of the expert panel was guided by purposive sampling, drawing upon the researcher's professional network and recommendations from colleagues within relevant academic and professional domains. This approach was adopted to ensure that the experts possessed substantive knowledge, experience, and practical engagement related to children's literature, bibliotherapy, education, psychology, or related fields. The use of professional referrals further enhanced the credibility of the selection process by identifying individuals with recognised expertise and relevant scholarly or professional contributions.

Once potential experts were identified, formal invitations were issued through customised communication that clearly outlined the purpose of the study, its academic significance, the role and expectations of expert participation, and the voluntary nature of involvement. Experts were also informed of confidentiality measures and ethical considerations prior to their consent to participate. Participation was based on informed consent, and experts were given the autonomy to withdraw at any stage of the study without penalty.

The identification, invitation, and recruitment of panel members relied on established professional relationships within the field, enabling access to suitably

qualified experts while maintaining academic integrity. Although this approach facilitated the efficient recruitment of knowledgeable participants, the researcher acknowledges the potential limitations associated with network-based sampling and has taken steps to ensure transparency in reporting. To minimise bias, experts were selected from diverse professional backgrounds and institutions, and their roles were clearly defined within the research process.

To address potential bias arising from network-based expert selection, the researcher ensured that the validation panel comprised experts from diverse professional backgrounds, disciplinary specialisations, and institutional affiliations. Each expert was assigned a clearly defined role within the validation process, guided by structured validation criteria and standardized feedback instruments. This approach was intended to enhance methodological transparency and ensure that evaluations were grounded in professional expertise and scholarly judgement, thereby reducing the influence of personal familiarity or affiliation.

Table 3.2
List of Panel of Experts

Name	Origin Country	Expertise	Social Media
Karen Hyelim Koh	South Korea	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bibliotherapist 2. EFT Therapy Course, Korea 3. Youth Counseling Association 4. EMDR therapy course, Korea 5. Youth Counseling Association 6. TAP (Transactional Analysis for Parents) Course, Korea TA Center 	
Bijal Shah	London, United Kingdom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bibliotherapist 2. Book Curator 3. Bibliotherapy Book Author 4. Founder of Book Therapy Organization London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ https://www.instagram.com/booktherapy_by_bijal/ ▪ https://linktr.ee/booktherapy_by_bijal
Dr Murti Bunanta	Indonesia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children's Literature Specialist 2. Children's Folklorist 3. Children's Book Writer 4. President of SACL/INABBY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ http://kpba-murti.org/ ▪ FB: Kelompok Pencinta Bacaan Anak ▪ IG: kpba_murtibunanta ▪ Youtube: bit.ly/KPBAyoutube
Dr Susanti Agustina	Indonesia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bibliotherapist 2. Lecturer at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia 	Bibliotherapist Founder @bibliotherapy.id Indonesia

The final panel comprised experts with varied specialisations relevant to the study, ensuring a breadth of perspectives to support the validation and refinement of the bibliotherapy features and framework. The list of experts selected for this investigation is presented below to provide transparency regarding their areas of expertise and professional affiliations.

3.4.5 Conducting Content Validation

Content validation may be carried out using either a face-to-face or non-face-to-face methodology. The primary considerations that need attention are cost, time, and response rate. The expense and time associated with implementing a face-to-face strategy may provide challenges due to the logistical complexity of gathering all specialists in one location. The response rate achieved is suitable for the study's objectives. Yusoff (2019) proposed that the use of non-face-to-face methods may be very effective, particularly when accompanied by a well-structured follow-up system aimed at enhancing both the rate and timeliness of responses. Therefore, for the purpose of the current study, the validation form was emailed to the panel of experts to be reviewed.

3.4.6 Reviewing Bibliotherapy Features

The content validation form provides a clear description of the bibliotherapy features and presents the items that reflect the features to the experts, as seen in Table 3.1. The experts are required to conduct a thorough evaluation of the features and its components prior to assigning a score to each individual item. Experts are urged to provide verbal or written feedback in order to enhance the pertinence of items to the specific topic being addressed. All comments are carefully considered in order to improve the features and its components. Following a thorough assessment, the panel of experts furnished opinions and suggestions. To such an extent, it is more advantageous to link it with therapeutic aims. The panel conducted an analysis of the attributes of bibliotherapy features as described in the validation form, with the aim of assessing their effectiveness in attaining therapeutic objectives. The evaluation included an examination of whether the suggested elements of bibliotherapy

effectively support the processes of emotional exploration, self-reflection, empathy development, and learning of coping skills.

Table 3.3
Validation of Bibliotherapy Features

Tested Item	Relevance	Score
Characters		
1 Presentation of characters	1 2 3 4	
2 Strong characters	1 2 3 4	
3 Memorable characters	1 2 3 4	
4 Characters exhibiting traits like judgment, responsibility and empathy	1 2 3 4	
5 Characters represent individuals from different cultural backgrounds	1 2 3 4	
6 Characters serve as valuable instruments for imparting moral lessons	1 2 3 4	
Plot		
1 Storylines include a wide array of settings	1 2 3 4	
2 Maintain the children's interest by holding their attention	1 2 3 4	
3 Story is interesting, clear, relevant, and easy to understand.	1 2 3 4	
4 Lessons or moral values learnt from the plot	1 2 3 4	
5 Challenges and encounters faced by the characters	1 2 3 4	
Illustrations		
1 Text and illustrations coherent and pertinent	1 2 3 4	
2 The colours in the illustration are appealing enough	1 2 3 4	
3 Enables the children to articulate and investigate their deepest ideas and emotions.	1 2 3 4	
4 Book's appeal to its target age group	1 2 3 4	
Readability		
1 Well written	1 2 3 4	
2 Chance to connect with the text by asking questions, giving them ideas, and getting them to take part.	1 2 3 4	
3 Ensuring that children are provided with tales and texts that are suitable for their evolving reading abilities	1 2 3 4	
4 Vocabulary and language used in the book is suitable for the target age range.	1 2 3 4	
Theme		
1 Values being discussed	1 2 3 4	
2 Lessons be drawn from the book	1 2 3 4	
3 Stimulating critical thinking abilities	1 2 3 4	
4 Offer coping techniques	1 2 3 4	
Empathy		
1 Exhibition of empathy in the characters	1 2 3 4	
2 Self-reflection	1 2 3 4	
3 Engaging with the emotions	1 2 3 4	
4 Facilitate heightened self-awareness	1 2 3 4	
5 Development of emotional intelligence	1 2 3 4	
6 Source of inspiration and direction	1 2 3 4	

Tested Item	Relevance				Score
7 Encourage discussions about empathy	1	2	3	4	

As previously stated, the assessment of the efficacy of bibliotherapy in children's literature necessitates the evaluation of various elements such as characters, plot, illustrations, readability, themes, and empathy. Each of these elements plays a significant role in shaping the therapeutic effectiveness of bibliotherapy. The subsequent section provides a detailed explanation of the elements encompassed in the validation form.

- i) Characters: In children's literature, the role of characters is pivotal for the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, especially within the culturally diverse landscape of Malaysia. Every character element serves a distinct purpose in influencing the reader's journey and contributing to their emotional and psychological growth.
 - a. Presentation of Characters: This aspect explores the techniques used to introduce and develop characters within the storylines. The effectiveness of bibliotherapy hinges significantly on the readers' ability to connect with these characters. It is essential for characters to be created in a manner that makes them both relatable and captivating, particularly for young readers. Their introduction should be compelling, drawing readers in to emotionally invest in their journeys. Development involves portraying characters in a variety of situations, illustrating their growth, and depicting their responses to challenges, which closely mirrors real-life experiences for children.
 - b. Strong Characters: The depiction of resilient, multifaceted characters is essential. Strength in this context encompasses not only physical or superficial attributes but also the richness and intricacy of the character's personality and growth. Resilient characters frequently demonstrate fortitude, confront challenges courageously, and evolve through their experiences, serving as valuable role models for children's emotional and ethical development.

- c. **Memorable Characters:** Memorable characters can have a profound impact on young readers, particularly if they are well-crafted. Through their actions, decisions, and personal journeys, these characters can leave a lasting impression on readers, thereby enhancing the absorption of lessons and fostering the development of empathy. Such characters often possess distinct personalities, relatable struggles, or unique traits that resonate with readers long after the book is finished.
 - d. **Characters Exhibiting Traits:** Ideally, characters in children's literature should exemplify crucial traits such as judgment, responsibility, and empathy, among others. These traits play a vital role in children's moral and social development. By observing these qualities in characters, children can learn to model them in their own lives. This facet of character development is especially significant in bibliotherapy, as it plays a key role in imparting values and imparting essential life skills.
 - e. **Cultural Representation:** The rich cultural mosaic of Malaysia necessitates those characters in children's books portray a wide range of cultural heritages. This inclusivity in characters serves to foster understanding and respect for diverse cultures, thereby enabling children to acknowledge and embrace diversity, a vital trait in today's interconnected world.
 - f. **Moral Lessons:** Characters frequently act as conduits for conveying moral principles, which are seamlessly integrated into the narrative through their actions, decisions, and experiences. Because children learn by example, witnessing characters confront moral dilemmas or make ethical choices can be highly instructive. It is crucial that these lessons are organically woven into the story, enabling children to draw their own conclusions and insights in a meaningful manner.
- ii) **Plot:** The plot plays a pivotal role in children's literature, particularly within the framework of bibliotherapy. A skilfully constructed plot has the potential to profoundly impact a child's emotional and psychological growth.

- a. **Variety in Settings:** It is essential to incorporate a wide range of settings in a narrative to enhance a child's reading experience. Various settings introduce young readers to diverse environments, cultures, and social contexts, thereby expanding their worldly comprehension. These settings can vary from realistic to imaginative, each providing distinct experiences and educational prospects. For example, a story situated in a rural village in Malaysia presents a different viewpoint from one set in a bustling city, each contributing to a more comprehensive worldview for the reader.
- b. **Engagement:** To maintain a child's interest and attention, a plot must be captivating and engaging, featuring elements of suspense, humour, or adventure as suitable. It is essential to craft a storyline that unfolds at an engaging pace, leaving readers curious about what happens next. This level of engagement is vital in bibliotherapy to keep the reader connected to the story and the lessons it conveys.
- c. **Clarity and Relevance:** It is crucial for children to be able to easily follow and comprehend the story, which necessitates a clear and straightforward plot devoid of overly complex structures or confusing subplots. Equally important is the relevance of the narrative, as it should resonate with the reader's experiences or aspirations, thereby imbuing it with greater meaning and impact. When stories reflect a child's own life or the challenges they may encounter, it fosters empathy and understanding, thus enhancing the effectiveness of bibliotherapy.
- d. **Moral Values:** The plot frequently serves as a means of imparting moral principles. As the narrative unfolds, children absorb lessons about integrity, compassion, bravery, and other virtues. These teachings hold the greatest influence when seamlessly integrated into the plot, enabling children to glean insights from the characters' experiences and decisions. This facet of the storyline is pivotal for nurturing character growth and delivering valuable life lessons in a subtle yet impactful manner.

- e. **Character Challenges:** The challenges that characters encounter in the narrative play a crucial role in educating children about resilience, problem-solving, and coping strategies. It is important that these challenges are suitable for the child's age and comprehension. They can encompass typical scenarios such as addressing a school bully, as well as more extraordinary situations. The manner in which characters confront these challenges offers children models for addressing similar circumstances in their own lives, rendering the storyline a potent tool for instruction and emotional recovery.
- iii) **Illustrations:** Illustrations in children's literature serve as more than just decorative elements; they play a crucial role in enriching the reading experience and the effectiveness of bibliotherapy.
- a. **Coherence with Text:** The assessment of this factor considers the manner in which illustrations enhance and correspond with the text. Well-executed illustrations ought to not only mirror the narrative but also contribute depth and context to it. They should clarify or elaborate on the story, simplifying intricate concepts for readers and enriching their comprehension. For example, in a tale about cultural diversity, illustrations featuring different cultural attire and settings can offer a more comprehensive context and understanding for young readers.
 - b. **Appeal of Colours:** The selection of colours in illustrations is pivotal in captivating and maintaining the interest of youthful readers. Colours are capable of eliciting diverse emotions and establishing the narrative's atmosphere. Energetic and vibrant colours may be employed for lively, cheerful tales, while subdued and gentle tones may be preferred for more solemn storylines. The application of colours should be suitable for the intended age group and mindful of the themes and ambiance of the publication. Within bibliotherapy, employing colours effectively can significantly enrich the therapeutic journey.
 - c. **Depth of Exploration:** Illustrations are powerful instruments for assisting children in verbalizing and delving into their innermost thoughts and emotions. They can function as visual symbols for

intricate feelings or circumstances that children may struggle to convey verbally. For example, an illustration depicting a character in a dark, knotted forest can symbolically represent feelings of bewilderment or apprehension. Through interaction with such illustrations, children can enhance their comprehension and verbalization of their emotions.

- d. **Appeal to the Target Age Group:** The illustrations should be customized to suit the age group targeted by the book, considering style, complexity, and content. For younger children, illustrations may be simpler and more whimsical, while for older children, they may be more intricate and nuanced. It is essential to ensure that the illustrations are age-appropriate, captivating, and relatable to the intended audience, as this is crucial in bibliotherapy to effectively support the therapeutic goals of the literature.
- iv) **Readability:** The ease of reading and comprehension is fundamental in children's literature, particularly within the realm of bibliotherapy, as the accessibility and level of engagement in the text are pivotal in the therapeutic journey.
- a. **Quality of Writing:** This encompasses several essential elements of the text, including clarity, coherence, and the ability to captivate the reader. Clarity ensures that the language is comprehensible and the narrative is easy to follow, which is especially crucial for younger readers or those with varying reading abilities. Coherence pertains to how smoothly the story progresses, encompassing the transition between scenes and chapters, which sustains reader interest and prevents confusion. Captivation involves engaging and maintaining the reader's attention, achieved through compelling storytelling, relatable characters, and an intriguing plot. High-quality writing can immerse readers in the story, creating an enjoyable and therapeutically beneficial experience.
 - b. **Interaction with Text:** This aspect evaluates how the text promotes active involvement from the reader. It pertains to the text's capability to stimulate thoughts, inquiries, and a deeper level of engagement. This

can be accomplished through interactive elements such as inquiries directed at the reader, scenarios that encourage reflection, or activities woven into the narrative. Fostering critical thinking and engagement not only enriches reading comprehension but also empowers children to apply the concepts and lessons learned to their own lives, a crucial aspect of bibliotherapy.

- c. **Age-Appropriate Texts:** It is vital to ensure that the text is suitable for the intended age group. This encompasses the complexity of the narrative, the themes it explores, and the maturity of the content. Age-appropriate texts are tailored to the cognitive and emotional development stages of their readers. For younger children, simpler, more direct stories are suitable, while older children can engage with more intricate narratives and themes. This synchronization guarantees that the content is both understandable and pertinent to the readers, thus enhancing its therapeutic impact.
- d. **Appropriate Vocabulary:** This aspect encompasses utilizing language and vocabulary that align with the reading and comprehension level of the intended age group. It is imperative that the terminology employed strikes a balance between being neither too rudimentary nor excessively intricate. Employing suitable vocabulary aids in sustaining the reader's engagement and comprehension, while averting any feelings of frustration or bewilderment. In the context of bibliotherapy, the careful selection of words can significantly impact the reader's emotional response and their connection to the narrative.
- v) **Theme:** The theme of a children's book, especially in bibliotherapy, is crucial for directing the emotional and psychological growth of the reader.
 - a. **Values Discussion:** This aspect concerns the kinds of values and lessons that are integrated into the book. Successful bibliotherapeutic literature often encompasses themes that are fundamental to fostering moral and ethical comprehension in children. These values may encompass honesty, empathy, resilience, kindness, and respect for diversity. The method in which these values are portrayed and

discussed in the narrative is essential. They should be integrated seamlessly into the story, enabling children to naturally assimilate these lessons rather than feeling like they are being instructed.

- b. **Lesson Drawing:** The book's significance extends beyond simply discussing values and includes its ability to assist children in deriving meaningful lessons. This requires the reader's capacity to grasp and internalize the morals or messages conveyed through the story. Books ought to prompt children to contemplate the narrative and apply it to their own lives, thereby fostering a deeper comprehension of the lessons being imparted. This process of introspection and lesson absorption is crucial for the enduring impact of bibliotherapy, as it contributes to shaping children's perspectives and behaviours.
- c. **Critical Thinking Stimulation:** Therapeutic literature plays a noteworthy role in fostering critical thinking skills in children. Through engaging narratives, young readers are encouraged to challenge their understanding, question concepts, and formulate their own perspectives. This can be accomplished by introducing complex characters, morally ambiguous scenarios, and open-ended storylines that prompt readers to contemplate alternative outcomes or viewpoints. The promotion of critical thinking not only enhances cognitive abilities but also contributes to the development of a nuanced perception of the world for children.
- d. **Coping Techniques:** Bibliotherapy's primary goal is to impart children with effective strategies for managing various life situations. Consequently, the literature's themes should incorporate depictions of characters overcoming challenges or conflicts in positive ways. These scenarios offer practical coping mechanisms for dealing with loss, confronting fears, handling peer pressure, and navigating family issues. Through observing these strategies in the narrative, children can acquire valuable tools for managing their emotions and reactions in real-life scenarios.

- vi) Empathy: Empathy plays a vital role in children's literature, particularly within the framework of bibliotherapy, as it actively contributes to nurturing emotional development and encouraging social comprehension in young readers.
- a. Self-reflection: This criterion evaluates how a book fosters children's involvement in introspection. Effective bibliotherapeutic literature often stimulates young readers to contemplate their own emotions, beliefs, and responses in connection with the narrative. This can be accomplished through relatable characters, true-to-life situations, or thought-provoking stories that resonate with the child's own experiences or difficulties. By promoting self-reflection, children are guided to gain a better understanding of their emotions, acknowledge their personal strengths and weaknesses, and cultivate a heightened self-awareness.
 - b. Emotional Engagement: This aspect examines how effectively the book establishes an emotional connection with its readers. The aim is for children to not only read a story, but to emotionally resonate with it. This connection can be instigated by compelling storytelling, well-developed characters, or situations that evoke feelings of joy, sadness, fear, or excitement. Emotional engagement plays a crucial role in bibliotherapy as it provides children with an opportunity to experience and comprehend various emotions in a secure and controlled setting, thereby contributing to their emotional development.
 - c. Emotional Intelligence Development: This aspect examines the book's role in fostering the growth of emotional intelligence in children. Emotional intelligence encompasses self-awareness, empathy, and the adept management of emotions. Books can facilitate this by portraying characters who exemplify emotional awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. For example, a character who exhibits how to control anger or uplift a friend can impart crucial emotional competencies.
 - d. Inspiration and Direction: This criterion evaluates a book's ability to motivate children and help them comprehend and demonstrate empathy. Literature holds significant potential as a means of illustrating empathetic conduct, including demonstrating kindness, understanding

diverse viewpoints, and aiding those in distress. Books that motivate and steer children toward empathy can impact their inclination to act with compassion in actuality, nurturing a more empathetic and insightful generation.

- e. Empathy Discussions: The last aspect evaluates whether the book fosters discussions about empathy, a vital element of social learning. This can be achieved through end-of-book discussion questions, scenarios featuring moral dilemmas, or characters representing diverse viewpoints. By promoting dialogue, whether in a classroom, among peers, or within families, children develop the ability to express their comprehension of empathy, garner insights from differing perspectives, and employ empathetic reasoning in a range of situations.

Each of these components plays a vital role in the overall effectiveness of bibliotherapy. The scoring system (1-4) enables a thorough evaluation of how well each element is portrayed in the literature, yielding a comprehensive insight into its therapeutic potential.

3.4.7 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a type of data collection and analysis for qualitative research in which the researcher interprets documents to give them voice and meaning in relation to a research topic (Bowen, 2009). The systematic analysis of documents, including printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material, is known as document analysis. Like all qualitative research methods, it requires data analysis and interpretation in order to derive meaning, gain comprehension, and develop scientific knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Data from document analysis, such as quotes or entire passages, are arranged into major topics, categories, and case studies (Labuschagne, 2003). Merriam (1988, p.118) pointed that, 'different sorts of material may benefit the researcher in understanding meaning, acquiring comprehension, and revealing pertinent insights to the research subject'. Documents that might be used for a study's systematic evaluation can take a variety of forms. Before doing document analysis, the researcher must go through a thorough preparation procedure to guarantee accurate results.

There are many other types of texts that can be used for research, but written materials are probably the most common (O'Leary, 2014). According to Bowen (2009), having a broad collection of documents is beneficial, but the emphasis should be on the content of the documents rather than their quantity. He continued by saying that the researcher must take into account the document's stated objectives, such as the target audience. The researcher should also consider if the author relied on primary materials or was a first-hand observer. It is also crucial to determine whether the material was requested, changed, or anonymous (Bowen, 2009). He continued by saying that records should be assessed for completeness, as well as for how little or in-depth the data is.

Researchers employ document analysis for a variety of goals. Document analysis is an effective and dependable form of data collection since records are controllable and useful tools. Documents are a very accessible and reliable source of information because they are frequently utilized and available in a variety of formats. When compared to conducting your own analysis or experiments, accessing and analysing records is frequently significantly less expensive and time-consuming. Documents are frequently safe, "non-reactive" data sources, which allows for several readings and analyses without being impacted by the researcher's study approach (Bowen, 2009, p. 31).

As a component of a research project, documents can have many different functions. Bowen (2009) focused on five distinct purposes for documentary content. To start, documents can offer information on the setting in which study participants function. Documents offer both historical context and background information. Researchers can better grasp the historical roots of certain problems with the aid of such knowledge and insight, which can also help them identify the circumstances that have an impact on the phenomenon they are now studying. Second, information found in documents can identify some issues that should be investigated and circumstances that should be examined. Third, documents offer more research information. Document-derived information and insights can be useful contributions to a knowledge base. In order to find documents to analyse as part of their research, researchers should investigate library catalogues. Fourth, documents offer a way to monitor development and change. If there are available drafts of a certain document, the researcher can contrast them to see what has changed. Substantive developments in a project, for instance, might be reflected in even minor modifications to a draft

(Yin, 2003). To acquire a good sense of how an organization or a program fared over time, the researcher may also look at periodic and final reports (where accessible). Fifth, document analysis can be used to confirm findings or support data from other sources. The researcher is expected to conduct more investigation if the documentary evidence is inconclusive rather than corroborative. Readers of the study report typically have more faith in the reliability (credibility) of the conclusions when there is convergence of data from several sources.

3.4.8 Book Selection

By including children's literature into document analysis, we can deepen our comprehension of the cultural, educational, and societal factors that shape the thoughts and beliefs of young individuals. Through careful examination of the topics, language, and images found in children's books, scholars are able to obtain valuable knowledge about the underlying values, variety, and educational goals that are included into these texts. The analysis can reveal emerging patterns over time, provide insight into the development of identity, and investigate the psychological influence of literature on young readers. Furthermore, the incorporation of children's literature into the examination of documents enhances conversations around gender roles, societal norms, and ethical considerations.

According to Author Learning Center's article (2018), the classification of books is based on age ranges for easy readers (ages 7-9), young adult books (ages 7–12), and middle grade books (8-12 years old). Books in the easy reader category have characters, settings, and themes appropriate for readers between the ages of 7-9. The stories typically focus on difficulties a youngster could encounter, including feeling excluded or establishing friends. The stories in the books are brief and straightforward, and they are delivered in both words and pictures; nevertheless, the pictures serve only as a supporting element and are not necessary to comprehend the narrative. There is a lot of dialogue and action, and the words used are straightforward (Author Learning Center, 2018). Juvenile books can be either fiction or nonfiction. These books typically address issues related to children's feelings and thinking. Children a little older and younger than the target age can be interested in the topics since they are pertinent to their daily lives and interesting. Sex, drugs, alcohol, and family life are common topics. The novels for 7 to 9-year-olds often have 2,000 to 10,000 words

(Clark & Foster, 2005). Books for middle grade readers range in age from 8 to 12. Usually, the main character's age and the reader's age are related. Sibling rivalry, blending in with friends, developing feelings for other people, the death and separation of family members, and many other themes are all common plot threads. This genre's books often have between 20,000 and 40,000 words (Aydin & Avranci, 2018). Since picture books are popular among kids between the ages of 3 and 8 years old, they are also included in this study.

Only children's books, which may be found in Public Libraries in Klang Valley, were the subject of this study. The selection was based on several key factors relevant to the scope and objectives of this research. Firstly, the Klang Valley represents a highly urbanised and diverse demographic, making it an ideal setting to explore the accessibility and relevance of children's literature for a broad audience. Secondly, public libraries in this region tend to have more extensive and up-to-date collections of children's books, which provides a richer and more representative sample for analysis. Lastly, these libraries are frequently visited by families, educators, and children, making them suitable platforms for evaluating the potential of bibliotherapy features within real-world reading environments. In this study, only books for readers between the ages of 6 and 12 were used. The chosen age is based on the children's proficiency in reading and linguistic comprehension as well as their continued interest in children's fiction, omitting comic books, non-fiction books, and novels. Because the content is more novel-like and the children's tastes differ from those of younger children, children's literature for readers aged 13 and up was not chosen.

For the aim of this study's analysis, only carefully chosen local books published in both Bahasa Melayu and English with a publication year between 2015 and 2020 were employed. A search of the books available for evaluation was performed at Public Libraries in Klang Valley. In this study, books were chosen by the use of purposive sampling, which was guided by selection criteria mentioned earlier. The chosen books were then subjected to document analysis to identify the characteristics included based on the key features of bibliotherapy proposed. Emerging themes serve as the categories for the analysis in thematic analysis, which is a method of pattern recognition within the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The procedure entails rereading and reviewing the data with greater care. The researcher carefully examined the chosen data and used coding and category

development based on the qualities of the data to identify themes relevant to a phenomenon. Data collected through document analysis is integrated and analysed using Cohen's test. The researcher must exhibit objectivity (seeking to represent the research material fairly) and sensitivity (responding to even subtle cues to meaning) when choosing and analysing data from documents.

Sixty-five books were identified as a result of the original online search. A total of 56 books were chosen for inclusion in this project. The exclusion of nine books from the document analysis process is attributable to i) restricted availability or lack of access to an extensive assortment of children's literature, and ii) the linguistic and intricacy of children's literature, specifically comic books, may not correspond with the necessary level of examination. The books that were chosen for this study (refer to Appendix 1) were readily accessible at the Public Library in the Klang Valley region.

3.4.9 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Children's books that are considered to be appropriate for children between the ages of six and twelve were chosen to be analyzed for this project because the target audience for this endeavor is young people in their early elementary years. Reviewing each book's description allowed us to determine the age range that the authors had in mind for their readers. In addition, books that were described as being appropriate for ages that were beyond the upper end of the target age range (for example, books for ages 13 and above) were considered for exclusion from the project because of concerns regarding the level of difficulty and the ability of the stories to be related to by children who were at the younger end of the target age range for this particular project. Books written for younger children were thought to have a higher potential for conveying information in a manner that is more concrete and understandable than books written for older youth. As a result, children's books that exceeded the lower end of the target age range were included in the analysis. For example, books for ages 4 to 8 were included.

3.4.10 Development of a Coding System to Evaluate Selected Books

In the subsequent stage of the project, an evaluation form was drafted in order to conduct an analysis of the contents of the various children's books that were chosen in order to provide an answer to Research Question 1 (see Appendix 3). This form is divided into two parts. The first element, which was referred to as "Book Information," was utilized in order to determine general information regarding each of the selected books. The following information was gathered: the title of the book, the total number of pages, the typical number of words contained on each page, and the kinds of illustrations provided. The second element, which was labeled "Literature Information," was utilized for the purpose of gathering information about the characters that were identified in the story. This material included demographics, characters, the storyline, and art visuals.

3.4.11 Children's Books Checklist Form

As previously indicated in the preceding chapter, the validation of bibliotherapy features and traits was conducted by a panel of experts designated by the researcher. A checklist form was derived using the aforementioned information. The previously validated traits or attributes were converted into interrogative statements to facilitate the raters' analysis of the books. Table 3.2 depicts the checklist form used by the raters.

Table 3.4
Children's Books Checklist Form

Characters			
1	Is a specific main character/protagonist identified in the book?	Yes	No
2	Are there any notable literary characters that are particularly memorable?	Yes	No
3	Do characters exhibit traits like judgment, responsibility, and empathy?	Yes	No
4	Are the characters show their true natures, their strengths, and weaknesses?	Yes	No
Plot			
5	Does the story give kids a range of things to ponder, inquire about, and take into account?	Yes	No
6	Are there any major surprises or twists in the story that catch the reader's attention?	Yes	No
7	Is the story interesting, simple, relevant, and easy to comprehend?	Yes	No
8	Are there challenges and encounters faced by the characters depicted in a genuine and realistic manner?	Yes	No
Illustrations			
9	Are the text and illustrations coherent and pertinent?	Yes	No

Characters			
10	Are the colours in the illustration appealing enough?	Yes	No
11	Did the illustrations in the book enhance the children's knowledge about the issues of concern?	Yes	No
12	Do the illustrations contribute to the book's appeal to its target age group?	Yes	No
Readability			
13	Is the book well written for the targeted age group?	Yes	No
14	Are there opportunities for young readers to interact with the text, such as through questions, prompts, or participation?	Yes	No
15	Does the book give kids stories and texts that are right for their level of reading development?	Yes	No
16	Is the vocabulary and language used in the book suitable for the target age range?	Yes	No
Theme			
17	Are there specific values being discussed or emphasized?	Yes	No
18	Can any lessons or moral values be drawn from this story?	Yes	No
19	Does the book enhance the development of critical thinking skills?	Yes	No
20	Does the book provide some coping techniques and responses to the crisis or issue at hand?	Yes	No
Empathy			
21	Do the characters in the story demonstrate empathy towards one another or other characters?	Yes	No
22	Are there lessons or messages about understanding and considering others' feelings?	Yes	No
23	Does the book encourage readers to put themselves in the shoes of the characters and understand their perspectives?	Yes	No
24	Are there moral dilemmas or conflicts in the story that encourage discussions about empathy?	Yes	No
Safety			
25	Is the vocabulary used in the book aligns with the child's proficiency?	Yes	No
26	Does the book include positive role models and characters that demonstrate characteristics such as kindness, empathy, and resilience?	Yes	No
27	Is the book's main characters close to the children's age?	Yes	No
28	Are young readers shielded from any potential injury or exposure to content that may elicit feelings of threat or distress?	Yes	No

The final checklist was modified as a component of the content validity assessment. Prior to its utilization as a definitive tool in document analysis, it was imperative to authenticate this checklist. Content validity refers to the degree to which a measure adequately encompasses the subject matter being investigated (Cooper et al., 2006). The process entails ensuring that respondents provide correct responses and possess a solid understanding of the concepts being assessed. Hambrick (1983) posited that the establishment of content validity can be achieved by employing expert panels consisting of scholars and executives.

3.4.12 Raters

The chosen books were sent to two independent raters, so that they could provide their ratings on a voluntary basis. As a way to eliminate the possibility of bias, we chose individuals to act as raters who were not familiar with the overall purpose of the study. Raters are introduced to ensure objectivity, consistency, and reliability in evaluating qualitative elements—such as therapeutic themes, character development, or emotional resonance in children’s books. Raters help reduce bias that may result from a single researcher’s subjective interpretation.

In research that involves qualitative analysis, content coding, or the use of structured rubrics, raters play a pivotal role. These individuals are responsible for interpreting and scoring data—often text, behavior, or performance—based on predefined criteria. The reliability and objectivity of a study’s findings often depend heavily on the competence and consistency of the raters involved. Thus, understanding who raters typically are, what qualifications they bring, and how they are prepared is essential for maintaining the rigor and validity of any systematic research. The role of a rater is not merely clerical; rather, it requires a clear understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of the framework being used and the capacity to interpret content without introducing personal bias. In essence, raters act as neutral evaluators who ensure that the subjective elements of qualitative data are assessed using standardized methods.

While one might assume that only subject-matter experts or experienced professionals can serve as raters, the reality is more flexible. Raters typically come from various professional backgrounds. Educators, such as teachers and librarians, are often selected for studies involving children’s literature or pedagogy due to their familiarity with educational content and developmental norms. Mental health professionals may serve as raters in studies examining emotional or psychological themes, particularly when bibliotherapy or behavior analysis is involved. Researchers and graduate assistants—especially those with training in research methodology—are frequently employed as raters in academic settings. Their advantage lies in their exposure to coding techniques and their ability to meet the requirements of interrater reliability.

For the current study, raters play a crucial role in evaluating and interpreting data based on predefined criteria. These individuals are tasked with applying coding

rubrics and assessment frameworks consistently to ensure the reliability and validity of the research outcomes. While it may seem intuitive to involve teachers or parents due to their familiarity with children, there are several compelling reasons to exclude them from the rater pool.

i) Need for Objective, Trained Evaluation

Although teachers and parents are familiar with children's experiences, they are not always trained to apply structured evaluation criteria reliably. The rater training process requires familiarity with research coding protocols and consistency in scoring, which may not be the focus of their expertise (Erlam et al., 2013).

ii) Risk of Bias

Teachers and parents inherently possess emotional connections and personal experiences with children that can introduce bias into their evaluations. A teacher may unconsciously favor certain pedagogical methods or interpret content through the lens of their classroom experience. Similarly, parents might project their own expectations or cultural values onto the assessment process. These subjective viewpoints can compromise the objectivity required for reliable research, leading to skewed results that reflect personal beliefs rather than standardized criteria (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2013).

iii) Lack of Standardized Training.

Although teachers and parents have practical experience with children, they often lack the specialized training necessary to apply research coding schemes consistently. Trained raters, such as research assistants or graduate students, undergo rigorous instruction to understand and apply evaluation rubrics accurately. This standardized training is essential to ensure interrater reliability, where multiple raters produce consistent scores for the same content (Jönsson & Svingby, 2007). Without such training, the variability in ratings could threaten the validity of the research findings.

iv) Variability in Backgrounds and Interpretations

Teachers and parents come from diverse educational, cultural, and professional backgrounds, each potentially influencing how they interpret materials. This diversity, while valuable in other contexts, introduces inconsistency when

evaluating data that requires uniform application of coding rules. In contrast, trained raters operate within a shared methodological framework that minimizes interpretive discrepancies and enhances the comparability of results across different raters (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

v) **Research Rigor and Objectivity**

The credibility of any research study depends heavily on its methodological rigor and the objectivity of its data collection and analysis processes. Involving individuals with vested interests or emotional involvement, such as parents or teachers, can undermine this objectivity. Trained raters, selected specifically for their neutrality and adherence to research protocols, contribute to the scientific integrity of the study (Science Europe, 2015). By excluding potentially biased parties, researchers uphold high standards of reliability and replicability.

In conclusion, while teachers and parents offer valuable insights into children's development and behavior, their involvement as raters in research presents significant challenges related to bias, training, interpretive consistency, and methodological rigor. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of research outcomes, it is imperative to rely on trained, neutral individuals who can apply assessment frameworks objectively and consistently. This approach enhances the validity of the study and contributes to the advancement of knowledge based on sound scientific principles. The systematic training and evaluation of raters, therefore, is not just a procedural step but a foundational requirement for high-quality, reliable research (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2013).

3.4.13 Evaluating the Selected Books

A critical element in the use of raters is training. Regardless of professional background, all raters must undergo standardized training to ensure they interpret and apply the rubric or coding scheme in the same way. This training typically includes practice coding sessions, calibration exercises, and regular checks for consistency. One key metric in assessing rater effectiveness is interrater reliability, which measures the degree of agreement between different raters. High interrater reliability signifies

that the coding framework is being applied uniformly, thereby increasing the credibility of the research findings. Before rating the books, each rater was taught definitions of children's literature and instructed through a training session on how to accurately complete the rating form. Afterwards, they were given the books to evaluate. The raters each gave their own opinion on a single book after making a random selection from among the available titles. During the process of completing the coding sheet for this book, the raters were not given feedback in order to evaluate any areas of ambiguity or uncertainty that required further explanation. Following the rating process, this researcher and the two raters participated in a short conversation in which they addressed any questions raised by the raters and attempted to reach a conclusion upon which all three could agree.

3.4.14 Establishing Interrater Reliability

The concept of reliability in a document analysis study pertains to the degree of consistency observed among raters in their interpretation and coding of the data (Nock, et al., 1982). The establishment of reliability through the utilization of interrater reliability is a crucial element in document analysis research (Ahuvia, 2001; Artstein & Poesio, 2008; Freelon, 2010; Gravois et al., 1992; Hayes & Kippendorff, 2007; Kippendorff, 2013). The kappa statistic (κ), commonly known as Cohen's kappa, is a quantitative measure of inter-rater reliability. It evaluates the extent of agreement among two or more raters or observers when classifying items or topics. It considers the possibility of chance agreement and offers a more resilient evaluation of reliability compared to just percentage agreement. The kappa value is calculated using the formula in Equation 3.1:

$$K = \frac{Po - Pe}{1 - Pe} \quad (3.1)$$

Where:

- Po is the observed agreement (the proportion of agreement actually observed).
- Pe is the expected agreement (the agreement expected by chance).

The interpretation of kappa values might be subject to variation, however, there are commonly employed general guidelines:

- i) < 0 : Indicates less agreement that is lower than what would be expected by random chance alone. This indicates a systematic disagreement or a worrisome level of discrepancy among raters.
- ii) $0 - 0.20$: Slight agreement. This amount of agreement suggests a lack of reliability or a low level of reliability.
- iii) $0.21 - 0.40$: Fair agreement. The reliability is satisfactory, while there is potential for enhancement.
- iv) $0.41 - 0.60$: Moderate agreement. The dependability is satisfactory, showing a significant level of consensus among raters.
- v) $0.61 - 0.80$: Substantial agreement. This indicates a strong degree of dependability, since raters demonstrate significant uniformity.
- vi) $0.81 - 1.00$: Almost perfect agreement. The raters exhibit a high level of agreement, indicating outstanding reliability.

As noted by De Vries et al. (2008), the kappa statistic is employed by researchers to evaluate the consistency of categorical data, such as categorizing replies in surveys, or grading performances. It quantifies the likelihood of chance agreement and enhances the comprehension of the raters' judgments' dependability, rendering it a significant instrument in domains where subjective evaluations are prevalent. However, in certain instances, the value of kappa (κ) is undefined due to the absence of a definition for at least one of the individual-level kappas. This situation arises when there is a complete agreement expected among all parties involved. De Vries et al. (2008) further contended that computing individual kappa values for each item would result in numerous, somewhat unreliable measurements of interrater agreement, without offering a significant evaluation of the overall agreement amongst coders. In such circumstances, it would be highly advantageous to possess a set of accurately computed summary kappa statistics for multiple domains. Therefore, they suggested using a pooled estimator of kappa to summarize the reliability of categorizing qualitative data. They additionally proved that this estimator more often defined and more accurate for a given sample size compared to simply averaging kappa values at the item level. The pooled kappa statistic considers the level of agreement across numerous raters and presents a single summary measure. It is noted that pooled kappa

(κpooled) is undefined only when there is complete agreement expected for all individual item-level kappas. To summarize, pooled kappa (κpooled) is a thorough metric for evaluating agreement that takes into account all potential combinations of raters, allowing researchers to evaluate the overall dependability of the rating procedure.

For the purpose of the current study, the researcher employed interrater reliability as a means to establish the consistency of coding within the scope of this study. The researcher conducted training sessions for the raters to clarify the research study, discuss research issues, and explain the coding frame. The team responsible for assessing interrater reliability underwent a series of four training sessions conducted through the Google Meet platform. These meetings aimed to facilitate discussions on the use of the coding frame and provide opportunities for the team members to practice employing the coding sheet. The primary objective of this training was to ensure the establishment of consistency across all variables examined in the present study. The raters were provided with the chance to examine the material and utilize the coding frame throughout the training session. The raters conducted an analysis of the textual content present in the selected children's books, and afterwards classified the text according to the coding framework.

After analysing the books, each rater was provided with a chance to articulate their rationale for their answers. In the event of any disputes, raters provided explanations for their reasoning in order to foster consensus and enhance comprehension. The checklist sheet was employed to enable the comparison of replies among raters and to identify units for further discussion in instances of dispute among raters. The raters engaged in discussions to address discrepancies and ascertain whether errors occurred throughout the process. These discussions aimed to resolve any potential misunderstandings and resolve any disagreements pertaining to interpretation. The researcher has the opportunity to utilize the discussion in order to make revisions to the responses, if necessary. Schreier (2012) recommended to conduct trial coding sessions on two separate occasions. The duration of each session was determined based on the requirement to achieve consistency. After the completion of the document analysis, the data were processed using SPSS version 29. Although this study is primarily qualitative in nature, quantitative analysis was employed to support and strengthen the qualitative findings in addressing the research objectives. As previously stated, inter-rater reliability was assessed using the pooled kappa value.

Using quantity data is for quality assurance in qualitative data analysis. This study adopts a qualitative research design. Quantitative indices, namely pooled Kappa and mean scores, were applied only to assess inter-coder agreement and validation of expert judgments. Such use aligns with established qualitative research practices, where numerical measures support rigor and transparency without altering the qualitative nature of the study (Taylor, 2017).

After participating in the practice rating session, each rater conducted their own assessment of the first 10 books that were chosen. After that, the level of interrater reliability for these 10 books was determined with the use of Cohen's Pooled kappa (Cohen, 1960). There was a short discussion with both raters to discuss any issues or concerns that may have arisen. On the other hand, due to the high degree of general agreement that existed between raters (κ pooled = 0.682), it was determined that thorough retraining was not required after the coding sheet was finished being filled out. The raters, on the other hand, were given the opportunity to ask any questions they might have regarding the rating procedure and were given additional training on the items in question. Responding to raters' requests for clarification regarding questions about identifying major features in the stories, we instructed them to complete the questions on demographic information for any features that were relevant to the text. The raters' feedback indicated that this direction was clear and helpful.

3.5 The Process of Analysing Qualitative Data

Previously, the methodology employed for doing the document analysis was deliberated. To evaluate qualitative data, the researcher employed a generalized inductive approach as previously specified. This method was chosen for its ability to comprehensively investigate the research questions formulated earlier in the study through a series of procedures and phases. When employing a general inductive method for analysis, it is essential to adhere to several critical stages. These were emphasized by Thomas (2006) in the following way:

- i) Condense diverse raw text data into a concise, summary-focused format.
- ii) Establish transparent and justifiable links between research objectives and summary findings obtained from the raw data.

- iii) Formulate a model or theory regarding the underlying structure of the experiences or processes evident in the text data.
- iv) Analyse the connections between research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data.

Thomas (2006, p.240) further explained that a category of data can be developed from a coding process that involves:

- i) **Category Label:** This refers to a word or concise phrase used to denote a specific category. Additionally, it is important to note that the label often carries implied meanings that may or may not accurately represent the particular features of the category. These have been outlined as headings in this analysis, categorized into both expected and emerging themes.
- ii) **Category Description:** This entails a detailed exposition of the significance of the category, encompassing its defining characteristics, scope, and constraints.
- iii) **Category-Associated Text or Data:** This comprises instances of text that have been coded under the respective category, serving to exemplify the meanings, associations, and perspectives relevant to the category.
- iv) **Interconnections:** Each category may possess links or correlations with other categories.
- v) **Incorporation in Model Type:** This pertains to the type of model in which the category system may be integrated, such as a model, theory, or framework.

Furthermore, Thomas (2006) recommended that possessing a thorough comprehension of the inductive coding process is essential as the results of qualitative data analysis rely on these procedures and the on-going revision and enhancement of categories to accommodate emerging themes.

3.6 Plan for Data Analysis

Interpretive or narrative analysis was employed to interpret the data in this study, as it utilized a qualitative research approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013;

Czarniawska, 2004). To simplify the development and organization of themes, Cohen's kappa test was used throughout the document analysis process.

3.7 Data Interpretation

Data interpretation in document analysis entails the extraction of significant ideas, patterns, and information from textual or visual materials. This procedure is essential for comprehending the substance, circumstances, and ramifications of documents (Bowen, 2009). Yin (2009) defined data analysis as the systematic examination, classification, tabulation, testing, and recombination of materials to draw conclusions based on empirical research. Throughout this process, interpretations and conclusions are derived, leading to the development of specific theories or models (O'Brien et al., 2014). As noted by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Baskarada (2014), prior theory should serve as a guidance during the data analysis process. The method used to examine the data should also represent the researcher's underlying theoretical position in addition to clearly stating the theoretical assumptions (Avenier & Thomas, 2015). Therefore, in order to analyse the data that was acquired, the researcher in this case used Creswell's (2013) data analysis process as a guide. Data analysis is a connected, ongoing process, as his study has shown. As a result, using Creswell's (2013) methodology to demonstrate the various processes would be suitable.

The initial phase of data interpretation for the researcher involved reviewing acquired data through literature. This process was iterated multiple times to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the gathered information. By repeatedly reviewing the data, the researcher aimed to delve deeper into its intricacies and identify emerging patterns. There are two rounds of analysis for the current study. First, data gathered from literature review is carefully analysed and potential bibliotherapy features emerge. Subsequent document analysis provides data for a further examination, thereby confirming the presence of bibliotherapy elements in Malaysian children's literature.

To summarize, the interpretation of data in document analysis is a multifaceted process that involves understanding the context, identifying patterns, examining textual and visual elements, and drawing meaningful conclusions. It is essential to strike a balance between qualitative and quantitative techniques, while also critically acknowledging potential limitations and biases that may impact the interpretation

process. Chapter 5 provides detailed explanations of the document analysis procedures utilized in this study.

3.7.1 Validity and Reliability

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) stated that in qualitative research, “the use of tests or measures to assess reliability and validity is completely unsuitable” (p.270). With qualitative research, Braun and Clarke (2013) note that: ‘A first requirement is to have a clear understanding of what features of qualitative data might be expected to be consistent, dependable or replicable... a secondary consideration is whether the constructions placed on the data by the researcher have been consistently and rigorously derived’ (p.271).

According to Perakyla (2011), "the validity of research concerns the interpretation of observations: whether or not the inferences that the researcher makes are supported by the data, and sensible in relation to earlier research" (p.265). This is a similar statement to the one made above. In their 1998 article, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber introduced the concepts of "width" and "coherence" as key considerations in evaluating qualitative research.

Furthermore, in addressing this requirement, qualitative research should be capable of elucidating its role in the advancement of scientific knowledge. According to Cohen et al. (2007), conducting entirely legitimate research is exceedingly rare, therefore complete assurance of validity is unattainable. However, the management of validity is attainable through the gathering of reliable data and the elimination of bias. Additionally, Cohen et al. (2007) suggested that concerns regarding the validity of qualitative research may be alleviated by adhering to the methods outlined in the subsequent sections.

- i) Choosing an appropriate time scale.
- ii) Ensuring that there are adequate resources for the required research to be undertaken.
- iii) Selecting an appropriate methodology for answering the research questions.
- iv) Selecting appropriate instrumentation for gathering the type of data required.
- v) Using an appropriate sample

- vi) Demonstrating internal, external, content, concurrent and construct validity and 'operationalizing' the construct fairly.
- vii) Ensuring reliability in terms of stability
- viii) Selecting appropriate foci to answer the research questions.
- ix) Devising and use appropriate instruments.
- x) Avoiding a biased choice of researcher or research team (p.144).

Validity and reliability are two ideas that every researcher in a qualitative study should take into account when planning the investigation, assessing the findings, and evaluating the study's quality (Patton, 2002). While in a quantitative study, each term is taken into account separately. In spite of this, both expressions are regularly used together in qualitative research. According to Creswell (2007), both validity and reliability are phrases that have a positive meaning that make it easier for a qualitative study to be accepted in the same manner as quantitative research. This is because both validity and reliability are terms that have a positive connotation that make it easier for a qualitative study to be accepted. When referring to qualitative research, the term "validity" describes the extent to which the results truly represent the phenomenon that is being investigated. It is concerned with ensuring that the data gathered and the interpretations that are formed from those data are trustworthy, reliable, and relevant to the research goals. Specifically, it is concerned with ensuring that the data obtained are accurate. The term "reliability" refers to the dependability and consistency of both the research method and the results within the framework of subjective interpretations. Researchers have the opportunity to improve the dependability of their qualitative research and add to the overall rigor and credibility of their results if they utilize these tactics in their work.

As per Elo et al. (2014), a key objective of qualitative research is to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. Trustworthiness serves as the primary means for researchers to convince themselves and their readers that their research findings deserve attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers are required to demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted with precision, consistency, and thoroughness in order to instil trust. This can be accomplished by thoroughly documenting, organizing, and sharing the analysis methodologies to enable readers to

evaluate the process's credibility. In the context of the present research, there exist numerous means to assess reliability and validity, namely:

- a. Inter-rater reliability – Assessing inter-rater reliability involves measuring the level of consensus among multiple raters when analysing the same set of documents. Enforcing clear coding guidelines and conducting thorough reliability checks enhances the uniformity of ratings across different raters.
- b. Test-retest reliability – This element concerns the long-term sustainability of results. When evaluating the same set of documents at different points in time, the results should be comparable.
- c. Content validity – Assessing content validity involves determining whether the selected documents effectively capture the broader subject matter or target population. Improving content validity is accomplished by verifying that the chosen publications are relevant to the research inquiry.
- d. Face validity – The concept of face validity relates to the document analysis' initial impression accurately reflecting its intended measurement. This involves utilizing subjective judgment and ensuring that the analysis methodology is considered relevant by experts and stakeholders.
- e. Training and Calibration – The researcher conducted training sessions for raters to ensure their understanding of the coding requirements and maintain consistency in their approach. Regularly scheduled meetings and discussions can help preserve consistency. In cases involving multiple analysts, it is advantageous to have multiple raters independently review the same set of documents and assess the reliability of their coding. This process can enhance the accuracy and dependability of the analysis.

Guba and Lincoln (1991) presented four standards by which qualitative research should be evaluated, namely: i) Credibility, ii) Transferability, iii) Dependability, and iv) Confirmability. Credibility and Transferability were the two criteria employed in this study to examine reliability and validity.

3.7.2 Credibility

When referring to qualitative research, "credibility" refers to the extent to which the conclusions of the study may be believed and trusted. Establishing the trustworthiness of the data acquired, the interpretations made, and the entire research process are all aspects of this step. Credibility is essential for maintaining the validity and reliability of the study since qualitative research often includes subjective interpretations and is founded on the interaction between the researcher and participants, as well as the participants' points of view. Numerous strategies, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, data collection triangulation, and researcher triangulation, can be utilized to establish credibility in research studies (Guba & Lincoln, 1991). The method known as prolonged engagement involves the researcher analysing the data up until data saturation. In qualitative research, the idea of saturation is crucial to lowering estimation error and preventing the respondents from providing the same information repeatedly. Data saturation in document analysis is the stage where researchers determine that they have gathered sufficient information from the documents being studied, and additional analysis is unlikely to produce significantly novel insights or data.

3.7.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the amount to which the results, interpretations, and conclusions of a study may be applied to or moved to other contexts or settings that are not the same as the environment in which the study was conducted. It entails determining if the results of the research may be generalized or applied to groups of people, circumstances, or environments that were not the subject of the original study. Thus, it is the same as or a substitute for the concepts of generalizability and external validity. Transferability aims to generalize study results and apply them to different contexts and circumstances (Elo et al., 2014). Transferability is a process performed by readers of research. Readers take note of the particulars of the study situation and contrast them with the particulars of a setting or circumstance that they are familiar with. Readers may be able to deduce that the research's findings would apply to their own situation if there are enough similarities between the two scenarios. To put it another way, they "transfer" the findings of a study to a different situation. Readers

must have as much information about the original research circumstance as possible in order to assess whether it is comparable to their own in order to do this effectively. As a result, researchers must provide a thorough explanation of their research design and methodology. Any research method's findings can be used in various contexts, but qualitative research techniques like ethnography and case studies are the most relevant for transferability (Yin, 2009). The reports produced using these research techniques are thorough and precise. Researchers that carry out these studies, however, seldom generalize the findings to other populations because they frequently only take one person or one group into account. The results, however, are suitable for transferability due to their level of detail.

A researcher must give a thorough explanation of the research phenomenon and sufficient data to help other researchers decide whether the research's conclusions are reliable and appropriate for application in other contexts. When writing up the results of the current study, the researcher provided specific information about and a detailed description of her subject(s), location, methods, role in the study, etc. This is referred to be a "thick description" of the research techniques and conclusions. It is crucial because it enables readers to decide for themselves whether they can apply the findings to their own circumstances. A comparison of the characteristics of the similarities or differences between the circumstances of the previous and present scenario of the study helps other researchers comprehend the situation and phenomena of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The researcher collected data using a case study approach, which yields rich information. In addition, the sample technique can support raising the research study's reputation. Purposive sampling, which takes into account sample subjects' qualities that are directly connected to the research objectives, was utilized in this study (Elo et al., 2014).

3.7.4 Sampling

In qualitative research, the process of choosing participants or cases to be included in the study from a wider population is referred to as "sampling." In contrast to quantitative research, which often makes use of random sampling as a strategy for ensuring representativeness, qualitative research generally makes use of planned or purposive sampling procedures. These techniques have as their goal the selection of participants or instances that may give information that is both comprehensive and

insightful in relation to the aims of the study. According to Hair and Page (2015), to finalize the sample design process, the following questions must be addressed: i) should a representative sample be taken or should a census be conducted instead? ii) If a sample is to be taken, what is the most effective sampling method? iii) What is the required sample size? When attempting to provide answers to these issues, the researcher should constantly keep in mind the many ways in which they might reduce the amount of inaccuracy brought on by the sampling procedure. In qualitative research, the design of the sampling process needs careful consideration of the research goals, the nature of the phenomena that is being examined, and the resources that are available. In order to strengthen the study's validity and reliability, the researchers have to provide a crystal-clear reason for the sample design they use and explain the sampling techniques in an open and honest manner (Bell et al., 2022).

3.7.5 Sampling Design

The researcher utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling strategy, to achieve the required sample and make sampling more data-oriented. In qualitative research, the strategy of "purposive sampling" is frequently employed to identify the information-rich examples of resource limitations (Patton, 2002). Judgment sampling is another name for the purposive sampling technique, in which the researcher uses his or her own discretion to select respondents who takes part in the study. Participants should be assessed for eligibility in addition to deciding on the number of participants to recruit, the study's location, and its methods.

This study includes children's books. Only locally published children's books released in both Bahasa Melayu and English between the years of 2015 and 2020 that are available in Public Libraries in Klang Valley were considered for the population. In qualitative research, there are no rules for calculating sample size. According to Malterud et al. (2015), the sample size has no bearing on the study's quality. Theoretical saturation is frequently used to calculate the size of purposeful samples. When data gathering reaches a certain point known as saturation, new data are no longer able to shed new light on the study issues. In this study, 56 children's books were analysed for the data because the data at this point was already saturated.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher defined the direction and procedures for the investigation. The researcher opted for the interpretivist paradigm after providing justification. This approach is rooted in the empiricism principle, allowing for an open, unrestricted, and adaptable line of inquiry. It aligns the study with a qualitative research approach. Since qualitative research aims to uncover multiple realities, the primary focus of this research design is to comprehend, analyse, uncover, and categorize situations. Through this line of inquiry, different scholars may perceive the truth in varying ways. The researcher reiterated her decision to utilize the case study research methodology and provided an explanation for this choice. The well-established theory of bibliotherapy motivated the researcher to employ the case study methodology. Considering that bibliotherapy acceptance in Malaysia is still in its early stages, the study aims to develop a conceptual model of the characteristics of bibliotherapy. Furthermore, using a concrete example and illustration from the specific case provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the issue. In conclusion, this chapter has laid out the framework for conducting this research. The researcher meticulously elucidated her study methodology, commencing with the research paradigm stage and culminating with the proposed method for data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher delineated her recommended actions during this process to uphold ethical practices in conducting the research and to ensure the validity and reliability of the work. The empirical data obtained from the document analysis played a crucial role in this study, offering diverse perspectives on the bibliotherapy aspects of children's literature in Malaysia, which are individually expounded upon in Chapters 5.

The next chapter provides the results of this case study to highlight common themes and concepts that examines the potential bibliotherapy features that can be implemented. As previously noted, there are no universally standardized features of bibliotherapy. The next section explores the characteristics identified through expert validation and document analysis that may be adopted as potential bibliotherapy features.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Within the realm of therapeutic interventions, bibliotherapy arises as a sophisticated and compelling method, integrating the transformative influence of literature into the framework of healing and self-exploration. Grounded in the belief that books have the capacity to serve as both reflections of and guides to the human experience, bibliotherapy involves individuals in an intentional reading journey. A fundamental aspect of bibliotherapy involves the precise and thoughtful selection of reading materials, customized to meet specific emotional, psychological, or developmental requirements. Biblio-therapists and professionals assume the role of literary facilitators, handpicking works that act as compassionate companions along an individual's path. This personalized method ensures that the therapeutic influence of the chosen texts resonates with the distinctive experiences and obstacles encountered by each reader. This chapter examines the potential bibliotherapy features that can be implemented. As previously noted, there are no universally standardized features of bibliotherapy. This section explores the characteristics identified through expert validation and document analysis that may be adopted as potential bibliotherapy features. At its core, bibliotherapy is based on the notion that individuals identify with fictional characters who parallel their own experiences, allowing them to reflect on social interactions, process emotions, and explore new possibilities in their lives (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

4.2 The Proposed Bibliotherapy Features

Following a comprehensive validation procedure conducted by a panel of experts, the suggested features of bibliotherapy have undergone refinement and validation to ascertain their efficacy and suitability for therapeutic applications. The purpose of this validation was to evaluate the fundamental components and characteristics of bibliotherapy when implemented with children's literature. Presented

here is a comprehensive summary of the bibliotherapy aspects that have been substantiated by professional validation.

4.2.1 Characters

Table 4.1 presented assesses various aspects of character portrayal, providing average ratings for each item under examination. The analysis reveals that character depiction, on average, receives a favourable rating of 3.25, indicating effective character development. However, the item "strong character" is rated at 2.75, indicating room for improvement. The characters in question demonstrate "memorable characters" with a notable average score of 3.75, signifying significant relevance in children's books. Characters embodying traits such as insight, responsibility, and empathy garner a modest average score of 3, suggesting a relatively comprehensive representation. Conversely, the portrayal of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds is assigned a score of 1.75, suggesting its lack of relevance. "Characters serve as valuable instruments for imparting moral lessons" achieve a positive average score of 3.25, demonstrating their relevance in conveying ethical concepts within the story.

Table 4.1
Mean Score for Character

	Tested Item	Mean
Characters		
1	Presentation of characters	3.25
2	Strong characters	2.75
3	Memorable characters	3.75
4	Characters exhibiting traits like judgment, responsibility and empathy	3
5	Characters represent individuals from different cultural backgrounds	1.75
6	Characters serve as valuable instruments for imparting moral lessons	3.25

Scale: 1 = strongly not relevant, 2= somewhat not relevant, 3 = relevant, 4 = strongly relevant

The consensus among the panel of expert is that the presence of well-developed and sympathetic characters is of utmost importance in the context of bibliotherapy for children. It is imperative for characters to experience authentic development and transformation over the course of the narrative, so enabling young readers to establish a connection with their challenges and accomplishments. The significance of positive role models and diverse representation in children's books is

widely acknowledged in academic discourse due to their potential to enhance inclusivity and cultivate empathy.

When used in bibliotherapy for children, the characters in children's books play an important part in assisting young readers in relating to, comprehending, and overcoming emotional, social, or psychological issues. These characters frequently overcome the obstacles that children may encounter or serve as an example of how to do so. The second panel highlighted how effectively using characters in children's literature for bibliotherapy allows kids to see and learn from the experiences of these characters. By reflecting the children's own challenges and offering new perspectives, these characters help young readers find comfort, inspiration, or guidance as mentioned by one of the panel that when children's literature cleverly uses characters for bibliotherapy, it lets kids see themselves in the characters' experiences and learn from them. These characters can both reflect the children's own challenges and offer new perspectives, helping the young readers find comfort, inspiration, or guidance in the story's resolutions.

Building on this, Panel 3 emphasized the importance of relatable protagonists and characters. It pointed out that characters who are perceived as inaccessible or 'boring' might lead to a disconnect, hindering the bibliotherapeutic process. The panel further noted that characters are crucial in enriching children's literature, with the best books utilizing a variety of character types to teach important lessons, foster empathy and creativity, and engage young readers in adventures that are both entertaining and educational. Panel 3 went on to underline that protagonists and characters must be relatable – books with characters that seem inaccessible or 'boring' might lead to disconnection, which does not open up the space for bibliotherapeutic work to take place. Characters contribute to the enrichment of children's literature, and that the greatest books make use of various character types in order to teach vital lessons, encourage empathy and creativity, and include young readers in adventures that both amuse and instruct them.

In line with this perspective, Panel 1 concluded that children often connect with the main character and follow their adventures closely. Characters play a vital role in exploring various themes, emotions, and the complexities of the human experience. Panel 1 reached the conclusion that, children can frequently identify with the main character and can follow his or her exploits and experiences. Characters have a crucial role in facilitating the examination of many themes, emotions, and the

intricacies of the human condition. The presence of a well-developed protagonist is necessary in both children's literature and narratives intended for adult audiences in order to create a captivating storyline.

In general, the panel reached a consensus that out of the six criteria offered, only four should be retained in the construction of the checklist item for document analysis. Item 2, “strong character?” is seen as an integral component of Item 1. To a significant extent, the relevance of Item 5, “Characters represent individuals from different cultural backgrounds” is considered irrelevant.

4.2.2 Plot

Table 4.2 depicts the evaluation of various components related to the plot and it reveals noteworthy insights into the effectiveness of storytelling in children's literature. One crucial aspect under scrutiny is the inclusion of a diverse array of settings in the narratives, which received an average rating of 3. This indicates that, on average, stories should showcase a commendable variety of locations, enriching the overall depth of the storytelling experience. The incorporation of diverse settings enhances the appeal and engagement of the storylines, providing young readers with a broader imaginative landscape to explore. Ensuring children's interest by holding their attention is a critical aspect of successful storytelling. With an average score of 3.5, it is evident that the storyline plays a highly relevant role in children's books for the purpose of bibliotherapy. The mean score of 3.25 for the story suggests that it should be clear, relevant, and easily comprehensible. This implies that, on average, the storylines should be intriguing and accessible to children. The favourable evaluation underscores the efficacy of the storytelling techniques employed, rendering the storylines engaging and easily comprehensible for children.

Table 4.2
Mean Score for Plot

	Tested Item	Mean
Plot		
1	Storylines include a wide array of settings	3
2	Maintain the children's interest by holding their attention	3.5
3	Story is interesting, clear, relevant, and easy to understand.	3.25
4	Challenges and encounters faced by the characters	4
5	Lessons or moral values learnt from the plot	1.50

Scale: 1 = strongly not relevant, 2 = somewhat not relevant, 3 = relevant, 4 = strongly relevant

Findings from the assessment noted a high average rating of 4 for the challenges and conflicts faced by the characters. This indicates that the plots should feature well-crafted obstacles, which heighten the focus on character development and intricate plot dynamics. The complexity of these challenges amplifies the overall narrative intricacy and captivates readers in the protagonists' journeys. However, the analysis unveils a significantly low average score of 1.5 for the inclusion of teachings or moral values in the storyline. This suggests a potential dearth of relevance in integrating ethical or moral aspects into the narrative within the context of the storyline.

The consensus among the panel of experts is that the start of the plot effectively engages young readers in a mysterious world full of exciting possibilities. The story's central themes of uniqueness and appreciation for the beauty of nature resonate with children and motivate them to delve further into the narrative. The underlying concept has the capacity to capture the reader's interest in subject matters pertaining to the environment. Panel 4 emphasized that in developing stories for bibliotherapy in children's books, it is essential to acknowledge and respond to the diverse emotional, social, and psychological challenges faced by children. The narrative should be designed to provide comfort, understanding, and guidance, with the plot offering young readers clear and practical ways to cope with the issues they encounter.

In keeping with this, the third panel makes the argument that the plot's premise proves to be both original and inventive, and has strong potential to resonate with children. The concept of embracing one's uniqueness and turning what some might view as a "defect" into a valuable gift is not only accessible but also empowering. It is imperative for children's literature to encourage self-acceptance and celebrate differences.

The panels indicated the presence of a redundancy between item 4 in Plot "Lessons or moral values learnt from the plot" and Item 1 in Theme "Values being discussed." The panels recommended the removal of item 4, resulting in the finalization of only four items in the bibliotherapy checklist.

4.2.3 Illustration

Table 4.3 below displays the mean score for illustrations. Evaluation of illustration-related aspects in children's literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the significance of visual elements in children's books. The first aspect under consideration is the coherence and relevance of text and illustrations, which received an impressive mean score of 4. This high score indicates a strong integration of visual and textual elements within the storytelling, where illustrations not only complement the narrative but also enhance its relevance, creating a seamless and immersive reading experience. Such coherence is vital for children to easily connect with and comprehend the story, fostering a more enjoyable and enriching reading experience. The appeal of colours in the illustrations was examined through a mean score of 3. The aesthetic quality of illustrations plays a crucial role in capturing the attention and interest of children. Further exploration and refinement of colour palettes could contribute to a more captivating and visually stimulating experience.

Table 4.3
Mean Score for Illustrations

	Tested Item	Mean
Illustration		
1	Text and illustrations coherent and pertinent	4
2	The colours in the illustration are appealing enough	3
3	Enables the children to articulate and investigate their deepest ideas and emotions.	3
4	Book's appeal to its target age group	3.75

Scale: 1 = strongly not relevant, 2= somewhat not relevant, 3 = relevant, 4 = strongly relevant

The third aspect considers the illustrations' ability to enable children to articulate and investigate their deepest ideas and emotions, receiving a mean score of 3, suggesting a moderate relevancy of creating a visual narrative that encourages emotional and intellectual exploration among children. A high mean score of 3.75 for the book's appeal to its target age group indicates that the illustrations, collectively with other elements, should resonate well with the intended readership. The visual components should contribute significantly to the overall appeal of the book, aligning with the preferences and interests of the target age group, which is crucial in ensuring that the illustrations effectively enhance the reading experience for young audiences.

The panel of experts reached a consensus that the utilization of illustrations in children's literature for the purpose of bibliotherapy is a highly influential mechanism

that effectively communicates emotions, enriches the narrative, and facilitates a meaningful connection between young readers and the text. The utilization of illustrations holds significant importance in the context of addressing emotional, social, or psychological difficulties and providing assistance. Panel 1 thought that in a picturebook aimed at children, children can get sufficient insight through the act of adults reading, even if they do not have the ability to read directly through the harmony of pictures and writings. It is believed that insights that are more sympathetic can be achieved through picture books with regional characteristics from the works of representative artists who form the roots of picture books, and through this, we can learn the elements that make up self-identity along with a priori knowledge.

It is posited by Panel 4 that in terms of illustrations, children can learn a lot from pictures made for them, even if they can't read yet. When adults read to them and combine the words with the visuals, it helps children understand and enjoy the story.

In conclusion, the evaluation emphasizes the importance of coherence, visual appeal, emotional engagement, and alignment with the target age group. The strong integration of text and illustrations, coupled with an appealing colour palette, contributes to a visually rich and engaging storytelling experience. While there is room for improvement in certain visual aspects and opportunities for deeper emotional engagement, the overall success in appealing to the target age group positions the illustrations as a valuable and effective component in children's literature. The four items presented to the panels underwent a process of validation and subsequently approved.

4.2.4 Readability

The evaluation of readability in children's literature delves into the effectiveness of the written content in facilitating comprehension, engagement, and alignment with the target age group. First and foremost, the assessment of being well-written yields a high mean score of 4. This signifies a commendable quality of writing that is likely to be clear, engaging, and age-appropriate are highly significant in children's literature. A well-written text is fundamental in capturing the attention of young readers, facilitating comprehension, and fostering a positive reading experience. The chance for children to connect with the text through asking questions, generating ideas, and active participation is examined with a mean score of 3.25 (see Table 4.4).

While this score suggests a positive but moderate level of interactivity, it should be noted that this element is important for enhancing engagement in reading. Further incorporation of interactive elements in the text could contribute to a more immersive and participatory reading experience, encouraging a deeper connection with the material. Table 4.4 illustrates the mean score:

Table 4.4
Mean Score for Readability

	Tested Item	Mean
Readability		
1	Well written	4
2	Chance to connect with the text by asking questions, giving them ideas, and getting them to take part.	3.25
3	Ensuring that children are provided with tales and texts that are suitable for their evolving reading abilities	3.25
4	Vocabulary and language used in the book is suitable for the target age range.	3.75

Scale: 1 = strongly not relevant, 2 = somewhat not relevant, 3 = relevant, 4 = strongly relevant

Ensuring that children are provided with tales and texts suitable for their evolving reading abilities is a vital consideration, receiving a mean score of 3.25. This indicates a moderate relevancy in tailoring content to meet the developmental needs of children. However, there may be potential for refining strategies to better address the diverse reading abilities within the target age group, ensuring a more inclusive and supportive reading experience for all. The vocabulary and language used in the book being suitable for the target age range receive a high mean score of 3.75. This suggests a strong alignment between the language complexity and the reading proficiency of the intended audience. The appropriateness of vocabulary contributes significantly to readability, ensuring that the text neither overwhelms nor under stimulates children, thereby fostering an environment conducive to learning and comprehension.

Assessing the readability of literature intended for children is a critical factor in determining the book's ability to be easily understood and engaging for its designated age group. This process takes into account various factors that influence how well young readers can comprehend and enjoy a literary work. These factors often include the child's age, reading proficiency, and developmental stage. The discussion emphasized the importance of ensuring that children's literature is age-appropriate for bibliotherapy. It is essential for the content of a book to align with the

cognitive and emotional development of the target age group to ensure that readers can comprehend and connect with the material.

The first panel put forth the contention that certain factors pertaining to these characteristics revolve around comprehending and obtaining a comprehensive understanding of child development. Panel 4 further suggested that children's literature should feature a diverse range of characters representing different backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities, and life experiences. He noted that the inclusion of such diversity helps children feel a sense of connection and fosters empathy, particularly when they encounter characters whose identities and experiences differ from their own.

According to second panel when picking children's books for bibliotherapy, it's important to select ones that suit the child's age and relate to what they're going through. Talking with the child about the book's themes and how they connect to their own experiences can be really helpful. Reading and discussing these books with someone the child trusts, like an adult or counsellor, can play a big part in helping them heal.

In conclusion, the evaluation of readability in children's literature underscores the critical importance of well-crafted writing, interactive potential, consideration for evolving reading abilities, and suitable vocabulary. The importance of readability in children's literature lies in its capacity to ensure that books are suitably adapted to the cognitive abilities and developmental stage of the intended readers, finding a middle ground between being overly intricate and excessively straightforward. Books that are appropriate for the age of the readers are more likely to foster a love for reading, improve literacy skills, and effectively convey important narratives or messages to young individuals. Following the validation process, it was determined that all four items provided were acceptable and relevant to the current study.

4.2.5 Themes

An analysis of themes in children's literature entails exploring the portrayal of values, lessons, promotion of critical thinking, and coping strategies depicted in the stories. The average scores assigned to each aspect provide valuable insights into the relevancy of these themes in shaping the understanding and development of young children. Table 4.5 displays the result of the analysis:

Table 4.5
Mean Score for Theme

	Tested Item	Mean
Theme		
1	Values being discussed	3
2	Lessons be drawn from the book	3.25
3	Stimulating critical thinking abilities	3
4	Offer coping techniques	3.25

Scale: 1 = strongly not relevant, 2= somewhat not relevant, 3 = relevant, 4 = strongly relevant

Analysis of the values addressed in the literature reveals an average score of 3, indicating that the literature should consistently present and develop values within its thematic framework. These values play a pivotal role in shaping a child's character and understanding of morality, and the moderate score suggests that the literature should serve as a foundation for discussing these fundamental aspects. The assessment of lessons derived from the literature yields an average score of 3.25, indicating a relatively higher effectiveness in providing valuable ideas. This suggests that children's literature offers significant insights and ethical teachings, potentially impacting the educational and moral development of young readers.

An average score of 3 suggests a moderate degree of relevance in promoting active and analytical engagement with the material, thus enhancing critical thinking skills. Fostering critical thinking is essential for young individuals, as it cultivates a deeper level of cognitive engagement and investigation. The literature's presentation of coping mechanisms receives an average score of 3.25, indicating its strong relevance in providing solutions for effectively managing challenges and emotions. This score suggests that children's literature should actively focus on the emotional and social growth of children by providing effective strategies for overcoming obstacles.

The expert panel emphasized the importance of using age-appropriate and thematically relevant story themes in children's bibliotherapy. Themes such as companionship, empathy, resilience, and emotional control were seen as crucial for addressing common childhood challenges. Experts recommend presenting these topics in a compassionate and non-didactic manner to effectively engage children without overwhelming them. Panel 1 noted that the use of children's literature as a form of bibliotherapy—a therapeutic approach that employs books to support children and adolescents in addressing emotional, social, and psychological challenges—can be

highly effective. He emphasized that careful consideration should be given to themes and narratives that are capable of providing comfort, understanding, and guidance.

In addition, Panel 2 stated that books that provide strategies for dealing with tough situations like managing anger, solving conflicts, handling bullying, and coping with anxiety, fear, grief, and loss can be really helpful for children who are struggling with these issues.

In summary, the assessment of subject matter in children's literature highlights the presence of values, lessons, stimulation of critical thinking, and strategies for dealing with challenges within the material being reviewed. Literature serves as a platform for introducing and reinforcing critical elements of character development, ethical understanding, analytical reasoning, and emotional resilience, thereby fostering the comprehensive development of young readers. The expert panel unanimously agreed that all four items under discussion are considered suitable.

4.2.6 Empathy

The evaluation of empathy in children's literature involves analysing how characters are depicted, including their self-reflection, self-awareness, emotional engagement, development of emotional intelligence, inspirational elements, and promotion of discussions about empathy; and the result is depicted in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6
Mean Score for Empathy

	Tested Item	Mean
Empathy		
1	Exhibition of empathy in the characters	3.5
2	Self-reflection	3.75
3	Facilitate heightened self-awareness	1.5
4	Engaging with the emotions	3.5
5	Development of emotional intelligence	1.75
6	Source of inspiration and direction	1.25
7	Encourage discussions about empathy	3

Scale: 1 = strongly not relevant, 2= somewhat not relevant, 3 = relevant, 4 = strongly relevant

The demonstration of empathy by the characters, with an average score of 3.5, indicates a notably significant presence of empathetic behaviours in the narratives. This suggests that the characters actively display understanding and compassion, serving as positive role models for children. The moderate to high score indicates that

the literature should effectively incorporate empathy into character development, thereby positively influencing the perceptions and attitudes of the readers. With a mean score of 3.75, the encouragement of self-reflection reflects strong success in fostering introspection among young readers. The literature should offer opportunities for self-reflection, allowing children to relate to the characters and their experiences on a personal level. This high score implies that the narratives are able to skilfully prompt readers to consider their own emotions and perspectives, contributing to a more immersive and reflective reading experience.

On the contrary, the facilitation of heightened self-awareness receives a lower mean score of 1.5, suggesting that it primarily measures self-reflection. Consequently, the panel of experts gave it a lower rating due to this repetition. Conversely, engaging with emotions, with a mean score of 3.5, demonstrates a positive impact on eliciting emotional responses from young readers. Literature should effectively delve into the emotional experiences of characters, fostering a strong sense of connection and empathy. The moderate to high score indicates that the narratives can effectively evoke emotional reactions, contributing to a more emotionally resonant reading experience. Contrarily, the development of emotional intelligence, with a mean score of 1.75, is not relevant to measuring empathy in children's reading. While children's literature can indeed contribute to empathy development by portraying characters' emotions and experiences, evaluating emotional intelligence necessitates a more comprehensive assessment of various emotional and social skills. Emotional intelligence encompasses more than just empathy, including components such as emotional self-awareness, emotional regulation, social skills, and motivation. These qualities are not typically developed in children aged 6 to 12.

The mean score of 1.25 for the source of inspiration and direction suggests a lower relevancy in inspiring young readers. The literature may not effectively deliver motivational or aspirational elements. Conversely, the mean score of 3 for encouraging discussions about empathy indicates a positive impact in promoting conversations around empathetic behaviours. The literature successfully fosters discussions among young readers, offering a platform for exploring and understanding empathy in a social context.

The panel of experts emphasized the significance of empathy within the context of bibliotherapy for children. The inclusion of empathy in children's literature is a highly significant and indispensable component that can facilitate the cultivation

of a more profound comprehension of the emotions, encounters, and viewpoints of individuals in young readers. Literary works that foster empathy possess the potential to significantly influence children, instilling within them the virtues of compassion, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness. Panel 3 emphasized the importance of incorporating follow-up discussions to reinforce the issues addressed in the story. He suggested that questions and reflective prompts could be included either at the end of the book or within the narrative itself. Such discussions provide children with opportunities to better understand the message of the story and to relate it meaningfully to their own experiences.

Panel 3 also suggested that children's books should have the following elements:

- i) the ability to invite a child to empathise and connect with an emotion through a character or the writing in the book
- ii) identify with the character or the issue at hand as something that's also relevant for them
- iii) the text should offer insight/cathartic relief/a solution/coping techniques that allows the child to exercise agency and greater autonomy over the issue at hand.

Panel 4 additionally proposed the inclusion of a comprehensive array of characters from all backgrounds, ethnicities, skills, and life circumstances in Children's literature as he mentioned that when books include a variety of characters from different backgrounds or identities, it helps children feel connected and empathetic, especially when they meet characters who are unlike themselves.

The portrayal of empathy in children's literature extends beyond mere exhortations for children to cultivate empathy; rather, it serves as a guiding example for them to follow. As described by Panel 1 that through engaging with a variety of literary characters who exhibit a wide array of emotions and confront various obstacles, young individuals acquire the ability to perceive the world from other perspectives and cultivate empathy in an organic and significant manner.

In summary, the assessment of empathy in children's literature highlights strengths in depicting characters, promoting self-reflection, and fostering discussions about empathy. By centring on these aspects, children's literature can play a pivotal

role in shaping empathetic attitudes and emotional growth in its audience. This, in turn, can contribute to the development of empathy and conscientiousness, thereby enriching personal development and relationships. The expert panel concluded that only four of the seven proposed elements were deemed significant. The third element, "facilitate heightened self-awareness," was considered redundant due to its overlap with self-reflection. The fifth element, "Development of emotional intelligence," was found to not directly assess empathy. Similarly, the inclusion of Item 6, "Source of inspiration and direction," was seen as potentially duplicative in relation to the story plot.

4.2.7 Safety

The Validation Form provided to the panel of experts was previously observed to lack the concept of "safety". The group of experts recommended incorporating the element of safety. Subsequently, a revised set of validation items, focusing specifically on safety criteria, was submitted to the panel of experts. The consideration of safety in children's literature is of utmost importance due to the significant impact that books have on moulding a child's perception of the world and their sense of emotional well-being. The establishment of a secure environment for children during the act of reading is crucial in promoting their emotional welfare and cognitive growth. The panel of experts highlighted this feature that was not included in the proposed bibliotherapy features. Therefore, the researcher generated a comprehensive set of attributes to be incorporated into the safety criterion. The panel of experts was once again summoned to undertake an evaluation of the proposed attributes. Consensus was reached on all four attributes that were presented.

Table 4.7
Mean Score for Safety

	Tested Item	Mean
Safety		
1	Vocabulary is appropriate and matches the child's language skills.	3.75
2	Features positive role models and characters	3.25
3	Characters closely match the age of the children	3.5
4	Readers protected from potential harm or exposure to content that could trigger feelings of danger or distress.	3.75

Scale: 1 = strongly not relevant, 2= somewhat not relevant, 3 = relevant, 4 = strongly relevant

Safety assessment in children's literature encompasses essential elements to ensure a secure and age-appropriate reading experience. The use of vocabulary tailored to children's language skills, receiving a mean score of 3.75, indicates a high level of relevance in matching language to readers' developmental stage. This underscores the importance of considering children's linguistic abilities to create an accessible and comfortable reading experience. The elevated score suggests that the literature effectively employs language that aligns with the target audience's comprehension and language proficiency. Additionally, positive role models and characters, with a mean score of 3.25, signify a generally positive portrayal of characters within the literature, which is crucial for shaping children's values and behaviours. Continued efforts to diversify and strengthen these representations can contribute to a more impactful and enriching reading experience.

The correlation between the characters' attributes and the age of the children, as indicated by the average score of 3.5, demonstrates a deliberate effort to create characters in literature that are relatable and suitable for their age group. This ensures that young readers can relate to the experiences and challenges depicted in the story, thereby fostering a stronger connection between the characters and the audience. The high average score of 3.75 for protecting readers from potential harm or exposure to distressing content suggests a strong commitment to ensuring that literature is mindful of sensitive material, shielding young readers from potentially distressing or harmful content. The literature should actively contribute to a safe and secure reading environment by thoughtfully selecting content that aligns with the emotional and psychological well-being of the target audience. Overall, the evaluation of safety in children's literature highlights strengths in vocabulary appropriateness, positive character representation, alignment with the readers' age, and protection from potentially distressing content. It is important that the children's literature prioritizes safety, ensuring that young readers are provided with a nurturing and secure environment for their literary exploration.

The matter of safety holds significant importance within the context of the healing process. As noted by Panel 3, it is important to ensure that the text is appropriate for children who may have limited triggers, which refers to experiences that are psychologically traumatic or anxiety provoking and can cause a child to disconnect from a book. For bibliotherapy to be successful, children need to feel safe to explore their issues while still being able to maintain their curiosity, openness, and

hopefulness. In addition, individuals should possess the capacity to relinquish any defensive barriers, so fostering receptiveness towards the text and its concepts.

Panel 2 emphasized that safety in children's literature entails the cultivation of a nurturing environment that promotes feelings of security, comprehension, and psychological welfare among children. It is important to note that children's issues may be related to physical changes, emotional impulse control, interpersonal relationships, academics, and so forth. It is crucial to underscore those children should not be shielded from problems, as they may lack the skills to handle issues independently.

When children experience a sense of security during the act of reading, it is more probable that they cultivate an affinity for literature and foster a robust sense of well-being in their day-to-day existence. It is imperative for authors, educators, and parents to carefully choose and develop material that fosters a sense of security and solace in youngsters.

The process of validation, conducted with a panel of experts, provided insights into the essential components of bibliotherapy characteristics. The findings underscore the need of meticulous book curation, active reader involvement, and the possible involvement of therapists in the practice of bibliotherapy. Furthermore, it was emphasized that there is a requirement for quantifiable results and the capacity to adjust according to individual tastes and requirements. The results of this study can provide significant insights for professionals and therapists who aim to integrate bibliotherapy into their therapeutic practices in a meaningful and effective manner. By doing so, they can ensure that bibliotherapy continues to be a pertinent and influential instrument for facilitating personal development and the process of healing. Practitioners may make certain that bibliotherapy in children's books continues to be an effective means of addressing the emotional and developmental needs of children as effectively as it has in the past. Table 4.8 depicts the final bibliotherapy features used in the current study.

Essentially, the incorporation of bibliotherapy characteristics establishes a comprehensive and flexible structure that acknowledges the potency of literature to motivate, cure, and change. Bibliotherapy is a dynamic and individualized strategy that combines many aspects to invite people to engage in a journey of self-discovery, emotional exploration, and positive growth. This chapter examines the existing

literature on bibliotherapy and compiles the elements suggested by different authors. These recommended bibliotherapy features to be integrated into the current research.

Table 4.8
Final Bibliotherapy Features

Tested Item		Relevance				Score
Characters						
1	Presentation of characters	1	2	3	4	
2	Memorable characters	1	2	3	4	
3	Characters exhibiting traits like judgment, responsibility and empathy	1	2	3	4	
4	Characters serve as valuable instruments for imparting moral lessons	1	2	3	4	
Plot						
1	Storylines include a wide array of settings	1	2	3	4	
2	Maintain the children's interest by holding their attention	1	2	3	4	
3	Story is interesting, clear, relevant, and easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	
4	Challenges and encounters faced by the characters	1	2	3	4	
Illustrations						
1	Text and illustrations coherent and pertinent	1	2	3	4	
2	The colours in the illustration are appealing enough	1	2	3	4	
3	Enables the children to articulate and investigate their deepest ideas and emotions.	1	2	3	4	
4	Book's appeal to its target age group	1	2	3	4	
Readability						
1	Well written	1	2	3	4	
2	Chance to connect with the text by asking questions, giving them ideas, and getting them to take part.	1	2	3	4	
3	Ensuring that children are provided with tales and texts that are suitable for their evolving reading abilities	1	2	3	4	
4	Vocabulary and language used in the book is suitable for the target age range.	1	2	3	4	
Theme						
1	Values being discussed	1	2	3	4	
2	Lessons be drawn from the book	1	2	3	4	
3	Stimulating critical thinking abilities	1	2	3	4	
4	Offer coping techniques	1	2	3	4	
Empathy						
1	Exhibition of empathy in the characters	1	2	3	4	
2	Self-reflection	1	2	3	4	
3	Engaging with the emotions	1	2	3	4	
4	Encourage discussions about empathy	1	2	3	4	
Safety						
1	Vocabulary is appropriate and matches the child's language skills.	1	2	3	4	
2	Features positive role models and characters	1	2	3	4	
3	Characters closely match the age of the children	1	2	3	4	
4	Readers protected from potential harm or exposure to content that could trigger feelings of danger or distress.	1	2	3	4	

The next section focuses on the analysis of documents related to children's literature in Malaysia.

4.3 An Evaluation of Children's Literature through Document Analysis

Document analysis is a methodical and all-encompassing approach to the examination of written materials, with the aim of extracting valuable information, acquiring insights, and revealing concealed patterns (Bowen, 2009). This methodology has the potential to be utilized across a diverse array of written materials. However, the present investigation specifically focuses on the domain of books, which serve as a valuable and diversified reservoir of knowledge and comprehension. Books have long been considered the foundation of human civilization, acting as stores of knowledge, culture, ideas, and history. This section presents the findings of the qualitative document analysis.

4.3.1 Book Information

Research findings is presented through two areas: 1) book information, and 2) bibliotherapy features. For this study, book information includes names of the author(s) and illustrator(s), publication year, target age, and number of pages. Appendix 1 displays the bibliographic details of the books that were employed in this research. Table 4.9 depicts the summary of the bibliographic details.

A total of 17 books, accounting for 30.4%, were released in the year 2015. In contrast, seven books, representing 12.5%, were published in the subsequent year of 2016. A total of four books, representing 7.1% of the total, were selected for inclusion in this study, based on their publication in 2017. A total of 10 books, which accounted for 17.9% of the total, were included in the list in the year 2018, and the same figures were entailed for the year 2019. Lastly, a total of eight books, representing 14.3% of the publications released in 2020, were utilized.

Children's literature encompasses a diverse range of age cohorts, each characterized by distinct requirements, preferences, and phases of growth and maturation. The inclusion of certain age groups aids in guaranteeing that books cater to the needs of young readers by being both captivating and instructive. The books chosen for inclusion in this study are specifically intended for readers within the age

range of 6 to 12 years. The selection of an appropriate age range for children's books is essential to ensuring that each book is congruent with the cognitive, emotional, and social maturation of its intended readers. These categories serve as valuable tools for parents, educators, and librarians in the process of book selection, ensuring that the chosen books are not only suitable for the intended age group but also captivating, so promoting the development of a lasting passion for reading and learning. A total of 32 books, which accounted for 57% of the total, were intended for children between the ages of 6 and 9 years old. The remaining 24 books, which is 43% of the total, were intended for children between the ages of 10 and 12 years old.

Table 4.9
Summary of Bibliographic Details

		Quantity	Percent
Publication Year	2015	17	30.4
	2016	7	12.5
	2017	4	7.1
	2018	10	17.9
	2019	10	17.9
	2020	8	14.3
Language	Bahasa Melayu	32	57
	English	24	43
Target Age	6 – 9 years	32	57
	10 – 12 years	24	43
Number of pages	10 – 20 pages	16	28.6
	21 – 30 pages	26	46.4
	31 – 40 pages	11	19.6
	41 – 50 pages	1	1.8
	51 pages and above	2	3.6

In terms of the language, there were 32 books written in Bahasa Melayu, which accounted for 57% of the total number of books. In total, 24 books were written in the English language which made 43% of total. There is a wide variety of book formats and lengths available for children, each of which is designed to cater to a particular age range and level of reading ability. Readability and interest in a children's book are both significantly impacted by the total quantity of words contained inside the text. The reading abilities of the intended audience as well as the length of their attention span are taken into consideration when determining the total quantity of words contained in a children's book. Within the range of 10 to 20 pages,

there were a total of 16 books, which accounted for 28.6% of the total. Books that were between 21 and 30 pages in length accounted for 46.4% of the total. A total of 29.6% were found to be between 30 - 40 pages in length. Among the books that were between 41 and 50 pages, there is just one book that accounted for 1.8 %. Last but not least, there were two books, which constitute 3.6% of the total, that were longer than 51 pages.

4.3.2 Bibliotherapy Features

Bowen (2009) asserted that document analysis, as a method for scrutinizing and elucidating the diverse elements of bibliotherapy, offers a means to explore the intricacies of this evolving and dynamic field. This document analysis is going to take a deep dive into the characteristics that constitute bibliotherapy. This study analysed its fundamental components and investigate how it has adapted to the requirements of the therapeutic process.

4.3.2.1 Characters

The following patterns were discovered by conducting a document analysis of the character information contained in the books that were evaluated (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10
Interrater Reliability for Character

Item	R1 X R2 (%)				% Agree	κ	κ Classification
	NN	NY	YN	YY			
Is a specific main character/ protagonist identified in the book?	0	0	0	100	100		
Are there any notable literary characters that are particularly memorable?	1.8	3.6	8.9	85.7	87.5		
Do characters exhibit traits like judgment, responsibility, and empathy?	12.5	14.3	3.6	69.9	82.1		
Are the characters show their true natures, their strengths, and weaknesses?	14.3	14.3	5.4	66.0	80.3		
Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)						0.419	Moderate

Note. Based on n = 56. p < = Cohen's kappa. NN = No (R1), No (R2); NY = No (R1), Yes (R2); YN = Yes (R1), No (R2); YY = Yes (R1), Yes (R2). N/A = Cohen's kappa could not be reported. κ ≤ 0 = poor, 0.01–0.20 = slight, 0.21–0.40 = fair, 0.41– 0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = substantial, 0.81–1.00 = almost perfect

Table 4.10 provided can be further elaborated as follows:

- i) Is a specific main character/protagonist identified in the book?
This item received a perfect score of 100%. Both of the raters are in agreement that each of the 56 books that were examined has a major character, and that character was distinguishable.
- ii) Are there any notable literary characters that are particularly memorable?
This item exhibits a substantial level of agreement, amounting to 87.5%. Both raters determined that 85.7% of the works that were examined featured characters that were memorable. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the majority of the children's books that are being investigated meet this criterion. In the field of bibliotherapy, the practice of using literature to help individuals cope with emotional, psychological, or developmental issues, young readers often encounter characters that resonate with them and provide insights or consolation. In the case of bibliotherapy for children, characters and their stories can serve as valuable tools to help children navigate emotions, build resilience, and learn important life lessons in an engaging and relatable manner.
- iii) Do characters exhibit traits like judgment, responsibility, and empathy?
This item demonstrates a significant degree of consensus, with a rate of agreement reaching 82.1%. It should be noted, however, that only 69.9% of the books met this condition. Children's literature effectively imparts crucial life lessons, including empathy, responsibility, and judgment, thereby serving as a valuable teaching tool. When young readers encounter characters demonstrating qualities such as discernment, responsibility, and compassion, they not only immerse themselves in compelling narratives, but also absorb important values and behavioural patterns. This exposure to literature holds significant potential for enhancing the academic, social, and emotional growth of children.
- iv) Are the characters showing their true natures, their strengths, and weaknesses?
The level of agreement on this item is quite high, at 80.3%. On the other hand, only 66 % of the books concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses aspects of the character. Characters in children's literature, who openly display their genuine qualities, abilities, and limitations, have a significant impact on the

narrative and convey important teachings to young readers. Children's literature fosters a more profound comprehension of human nature, promotes introspection, empathy, and the formation of a moral compass in young readers by presenting characters in a subtle and genuine manner (Yarova, 2021). The analysis showed that out of all the books examined in this study, only 66% focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the characters. It may indicate a pattern in literature where writers and narrators acknowledge the educational and developmental significance of delving into the complex and diverse aspects of characters. The emphasis on the complexity of characters can enhance readers' comprehension of the moral, emotional, and psychological dimensions of human action.

v) Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)

All of the items have a pooled kappa value of 0.419, which indicates that there is a moderate level of agreement among all of the items. To summarize, while some individual items show high agreement (e.g., memorable literary characters), the general level of agreement, as indicated by the combined kappa value, is deemed moderate. The kappa values indicate a satisfactory level of consensus among the raters, while there is some variability in their assessments of various aspects of character identification and qualities in the book.

4.3.2.2 Plot

In the area pertaining to the story plot, evaluators directed their attention towards the chronological arrangement of events that constitute the primary narrative in literary works. The development of a meticulously structured storyline is crucial in creating a narrative that successfully captures the audience's attention and maintains their involvement from beginning to end. The structure of storytelling enables the author to develop characters, explore themes, and establish an emotional connection between the audience and the narrative. Table 4.11 displays the results of the analysis conducted.

Table 4.11
Interrater Reliability for Plot

Item	R1 X R2 (%)				% Agree	κ	κ Classification
	NN	NY	YN	YY			
Does the story give kids a range of things to ponder, inquire about, and take into account?	57.1	14.3	5.4	23.2	80.3		
Are there any major surprises or twists in the story that catch the reader's attention?	71.4	3.6	3.6	21.4	92.8		
Is the story interesting, simple, relevant, and easy to comprehend?	0	1.8	0	98.2	98.2		
Are there challenges and encounters faced by the characters depicted in a genuine and realistic manner?	12.5	8.9	1.8	76.8	89.3		
Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)						0.653	Substantial

Note. Based on $n = 56$. $p < =$ Cohen's kappa. NN = No (R1), No (R2); NY = No (R1), Yes (R2); YN = Yes (R1), No (R2); YY = Yes (R1), Yes (R2). N/A = Cohen's kappa could not be reported. $\kappa \leq 0$ = poor, 0.01–0.20 = slight, 0.21–0.40 = fair, 0.41–0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = substantial, 0.81–1.00 = almost perfect

The provided table can be expanded upon in the following manner:

- i) Does the story give kids a range of things to ponder, inquire about, and take into account?

The data indicate an agreement level of approximately 80.3% among the raters, suggesting that a significant majority of them agreed that the narrative provides young people with a range of issues to think about, explore, and ponder. However, a mere 23.2% of the books being investigated include this particular element. When examining the role of a story in bibliotherapy for children, it frequently involves the depth and complexity of the story, which provides them with several topics to ponder, inquire, and take into account a broad range of themes and emotions. Bibliotherapy can be highly helpful when stories provide substantial material for contemplation and investigation. Through the incorporation of these components into the structure of a narrative, authors have the ability to craft stories that function as powerful instruments in bibliotherapy, stimulating children to contemplate, investigate, and consider a wide array of subjects and feelings. An in-depth examination of these factors can enhance a child's emotional intelligence, resilience, and overall well-being. The data indicated that the existing children's literature is lacking in this regard.

- ii) Are there any major surprises or twists in the story that catch the reader's attention?

Regarding this feature, there was a remarkably high level of agreement among the raters, reaching 92.8%. However, a mere 21.4% of the evaluated works provide significant surprises or plot twists that captivate the reader. Incorporating surprise elements or plot turns in children's literature not only enhances the pleasure of reading but also enhances cognitive and emotional growth. Authors may cultivate a captivating and ever-changing reading experience that nurtures a lasting passion for literature by constantly engaging readers (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). The examination of the literature in this investigation revealed a lack in this particular area. If a book lacks significant surprises or plot twists, it struggles to capture children's interest and promote their involvement with reading.

- iii) Is the story interesting, simple, relevant, and easy to comprehend?

For this particular issue, the level of agreement is 98.2%. The raters reached a consensus that 98.2% of the books that were examined contain this particular component. Within the framework of bibliotherapy, the qualities of a story being interesting, simple, relevant, and easy to comprehend assume a pivotal significance. When engaging in bibliotherapy, it is crucial to choose stories that possess these specific traits. It guarantees that the therapeutic components of the literature are easily understood and have a strong effect, enabling readers to obtain the utmost advantage from the emotional and psychological parts of the story. The simplicity, relevance, and ease of comprehension foster a conducive environment for children to interact with the therapeutic material and enhance their well-being (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

- iv) Are there challenges and encounters faced by the characters depicted in a genuine and realistic manner?

The raters reached a level of agreement of approximately 89.3%, indicating that the challenges and encounters experienced by the characters are portrayed in an authentic and realistic manner. The raters unanimously agreed that 76.8% of the examined books addressed this matter. Literature depicting characters' challenges enhances the depth of the reading experience. Bibliotherapy uses authentic portrayals of difficulties to provide readers, especially those facing

personal challenges, with an opportunity for reflection, understanding, and potential healing (Heath et al., 2015).

v) Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)

The calculated Kappa value of 0.653 indicates a significant level of agreement among the participants. Kappa is a statistical metric used to assess the degree of agreement between raters, indicating the extent to which their agreement exceeds what would be expected by chance alone. A value of 0.653 is deemed significant, suggesting a relatively high degree of consensus among the evaluators. On the whole, the data suggests a positive reception to the narratives, with a significant agreement among the participants regarding various aspects of storytelling. These encompass the delivery of meaningful and pertinent content for children, the integration of unexpected components, the preservation of simplicity and relevance, and the realistic portrayal of challenges.

4.3.2.3 Illustrations

The existence of images or illustrations in each of the studied books was appraised using content analysis, taking into account the information and themes acquired from the literature review. Table 4.12 relates to the assessment of certain aspects in children's literature, particularly focusing on the relationship between text and illustrations, the appeal of colours, the educational impact of illustrations, and the overall appeal to the target age group. Table 4.12 can be further elaborated in the following way:

i) Are the text and illustrations coherent and pertinent?

The inter-rater agreement on this item is 96.4%. The raters reached a consensus that 92.8% of the assessed books depict text and illustrations that are both coherent and relevant. This indicates a significant consensus regarding the efficacy of the visual components in enhancing the text. The cohesion and relevance of text and visuals in children's literature are essential factors that greatly enhance the overall efficacy of the storytelling experience (Das, 2023). Precisely designed and strategically linked graphics can amplify the therapeutic influence of the story, offering more dimensions for emotional

exploration and expression (Pulimeno et al., 2020).

- ii) Are the colors in the illustration appealing enough?

The raters' degree of agreement in this case is 73.2%, suggesting that the colours in the pictures are sufficiently appealing. Although the proportion is smaller compared to the previous item, it still implies a significant level of agreement. Nevertheless, the raters reached a consensus that a mere 48.2% of the analysed books had drawings that possess visually pleasing colours. Books that have unattractive or dull colours can greatly affect children's reading activity and general involvement. The aesthetic appeal of a book is vital, particularly for young readers (Leddy, 2002), as it enhances their motivation, understanding, and pleasure derived from the act of reading.

- iii) Did the illustrations in the book enhance the children's knowledge about the issues of concern?

The consensus on this matter stands at 92.8%. According to the raters, 60.7% of the assessed books were found to have illustrations that improve children's understanding of the relevant subjects. It demonstrates a significant degree of effectiveness in communicating educational material through visual means. Carefully crafted illustrations in children's literature play a crucial role in enhancing young readers' grasp of important subjects. When thoughtfully produced, images serve as powerful tools for conveying information, sparking curiosity, and supporting comprehension. When implementing bibliotherapy or in educational settings, the deliberate utilization of drawings guarantees that children not only comprehend through reading, but also visually assimilate and integrate information on significant matters (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). The combination of written text and visual elements improves the overall learning process and contributes to a comprehensive comprehension of diverse topics.

- iv) Do the illustrations contribute to the book's appeal to its target age group?

This item demonstrates an exceptionally strong degree of consensus (98.2%) on the positive impact of the pictures on the book's appeal to its intended audience. The raters agreed that 87.5% of the examined books address this issue. This implies that the graphics effectively captivate the target audience. The visual features not only make the book look better, but they are also very

effective at getting young readers interested. Illustrations in children's books serve as a powerful tool to enhance visual appeal, sustain attentiveness, and forge a significant connection with young readers. Accomplished by authors and artists, this immersive medium cultivates an early love for literature through age-appropriate, engaging imagery, fostering a lifelong appreciation for books in the hearts of the youth.

v) Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)

The pooled Kappa value of 0.689 suggests substantial agreement among the respondents. A value of 0.689 is considered substantial, indicating a reasonably high level of agreement among the raters. Overall, these results indicate a significant consensus among respondents about the efficacy of drawings. This consensus pertains to the images' alignment with the text, their attractiveness to the intended age range, and their educational influence. These aspects contribute to the overall quality and success of the children's book in question.

Table 4.12
Interrater Reliability for Illustrations

Item	R1 X R2 (%)				% Agree	κ	κ Classification
	NN	NY	YN	YY			
Are the text and illustrations coherent and pertinent?	3.6	3.6	0	92.8	96.4		
Are the colours in the illustration appealing enough?	25.0	25.0	1.8	48.2	73.2		
Did the illustrations in the book enhance the children's knowledge about the issues of concern?	32.1	5.4	1.8	60.7	92.8		
Do the illustrations contribute to the book's appeal to its target age group?	10.7	1.8	0	87.5	98.2		
Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)						0.689	Substantial

Note. Based on $n = 56$. $p \leq$ Cohen's kappa. NN = No (R1), No (R2); NY = No (R1), Yes (R2); YN = Yes (R1), No (R2); YY = Yes (R1), Yes (R2). N/A = Cohen's kappa could not be reported. $\kappa \leq 0$ = poor, 0.01–0.20 = slight, 0.21–0.40 = fair, 0.41–0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = substantial, 0.81–1.00 = almost perfect

4.3.2.4 Readability

The importance of readability in children's literature lies in its direct impact on a child's reading proficiency, comprehension, and overall engagement with the content (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13
Interrater Reliability for Readability

Item	R1 X R2 (%)				% Agree	κ	κ Classification
	NN	NY	YN	YY			
Is the book well written for the targeted age group?	0	0	3.6	96.4	96.4		
Are there opportunities for young readers to interact with the text, such as through questions, prompts, or participation?	60.7	25.0	3.6	10.7	71.4		
Does the book give kids stories and texts that are right for their level of reading development?	0	0	0	100	100		
Is the vocabulary and language used in the book suitable for the target age range?	0	0	1.8	98.2	98.2		
Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)						0.888	Almost perfect

Note. Based on $n = 56$. $p \leq$ Cohen's kappa. NN = No (R1), No (R2); NY = No (R1), Yes (R2); YN = Yes (R1), No (R2); YY = Yes (R1), Yes (R2). N/A = Cohen's kappa could not be reported. $\kappa \leq 0$ = poor, 0.01–0.20 = slight, 0.21–0.40 = fair, 0.41–0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = substantial, 0.81–1.00 = almost perfect

The assessment of readability encompasses various elements, such as the intricacy of language, sentence construction, lexicon, and subject matter. The provided table presents percentages and statistics related to the assessment of certain aspects in children's books, particularly focusing on the writing quality, interactive elements, appropriateness for the target age group, and suitability of vocabulary and language.

The table provided can be further elaborated as follows:

i) Is the book well written for the targeted age group?

This indicates that a substantial majority (96.4%) agree that the book is well written for the targeted age group. The high percentage suggests a consensus among assessors regarding the quality of writing for the intended audience. The quality of writing tailored to a specific age group is a crucial element in children's literature (Wittkopp, 2016). Proficient writing not only captivates young readers but also enhances their cognitive, linguistic, and emotional growth. A well-crafted children's book, customized for a specific age group, considers linguistic, cognitive, and emotional elements to create an engaging and age-appropriate reading experience.

ii) Are there opportunities for young readers to interact with the text, such as through questions, prompts, or participation?

The raters' agreement level in this case is 71.4%, indicating that there are chances for young readers to engage with the material. Although the proportion is smaller compared to the previous item, it still indicates a significant level of consensus recognizing the existence of interactive features. However, the evaluators determined that only 10.7% of the books examined met this criterion. Facilitating opportunities for young readers to engage with the text is a fundamental element of producing captivating and instructive children's books (Bayraktar, 2021). Interactive elements enhance the reading experience, foster active participation, and facilitate a deeper understanding of the content. The absence of textual interaction in children's literature could impact the overall reading experience and the potential educational benefits. Interactivity enhances both the pleasure of reading and the educational and emotional growth of young readers (Baker, et al., 2000).

- iii) Does the book give kids stories and texts that are right for their level of reading development?

The result indicates unanimous agreement (100%) among raters that the book provides stories and texts suitable for the target age group's level of reading development. This suggests a strong consensus on the appropriateness of content. It is essential to ensure that a book offers stories and texts that align with a child's reading proficiency in order to promote literacy skills and create a favourable reading encounter. Authors, publishers, and educators have the ability to collaborate in order to produce books that are appropriately tailored to a child's reading proficiency. Consequently, this encourages the development of literacy abilities, nurtures a passion for reading, and aids in the general cognitive and emotional advancement of young individuals who read (Osorio, 2023)

- iv) Is the vocabulary and language used in the book suitable for the target age range?

Similarly, a significant majority (98.2%) agree that the vocabulary and language used in the book are suitable for the target age range. This reflects a high level of consensus on the appropriateness of language choices. The appropriateness of vocabulary and language of a children's book for the intended age group is vital for promoting language acquisition, understanding,

and general involvement (Amc, 2020). The selection of vocabulary and language in a children's book should be carefully designed to cater to the cognitive and linguistic requirements of the specific age group it is intended for. Authors enhance the linguistic development and pleasure of young readers by offering them a reading experience that is both rich in language and captivating.

v) Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)

The pooled Kappa value of 0.888 indicates almost perfect agreement among the respondents. Kappa is a measure of inter-rater reliability, suggesting a high level of consensus in the assessments made by different individuals. Overall, these statistics suggest a strong and consistent agreement among assessors regarding the writing quality, interactive elements, appropriateness for the target age group, and suitability of vocabulary and language in the children's book. The high percentages and the almost perfect Kappa value reflect a robust consensus on the positive attributes of the book in these aspects.

4.3.2.5 Theme

Themes are essential in children's literature as they significantly contribute to the overall effect and educational worth of the story. Themes in children's literature go beyond mere storytelling (Maria et al., 2011) and serve as powerful tools for communicating important values, fostering emotional and social development, and enriching the educational experience (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Table 4.14 presents percentages and statistics related to the assessment of specific aspects in children's books, particularly focusing on values, moral lessons, critical thinking skills, and coping techniques. Table 4.14 elaborated as follows:

i) Are there specific values being discussed or emphasized?

The raters' consensus stands at 80.4%, suggesting that the book focuses on particular values. The significant proportion indicates a considerable level of agreement among evaluators regarding the existence of values in the book. Just 66.1% of the books examined met this criterion. This percentage reflects a moderate degree of importance placed on values in children's reading. Analysing and emphasizing particular principles in children's literature is

crucial, as it significantly influences the cognitive, emotional, and social development of young readers. These principles contribute to the formation of character, social skills, empathy, and critical thinking, thereby establishing a strong foundation for ethical decision-making and positive growth in the lives of children (Chowdhury, 2016).

ii) Can any lessons or moral values be drawn from this story?

In this instance, a remarkably high level of consensus among the raters (98.2%) was documented. The elevated percentage signifies a robust consensus among evaluators regarding the educational and ethical dimensions of the book. Notably, 83.9% of the books examined met this condition. Children's literature often presents crucial lessons and moral values that can shape a child's character and outlook on the world. These lessons and moral principles contribute to the overall development of children, fostering positive personality traits, interpersonal skills, and ethical standards. Through engaging and accessible narratives, children's literature has the ability to convey important life lessons to young readers (Reimer, 2019).

iii) Does the book enhance the development of critical thinking skills?

This indicates a 91% agreement rate, suggesting that the book effectively improves the development of critical thinking skills. Although the proportion is smaller, the agreement remains significant, suggesting a consensus regarding the book's capacity to foster critical thinking. Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize that only 19.6% of the books examined satisfied this criterion. Children's literature can have a substantial impact on the advancement of critical thinking abilities in young readers. Literature provides a rich environment for young readers to develop important analytical and evaluative abilities essential for critical thinking. This is achieved through the presentation of engaging narratives, diverse characters, and thought-provoking concepts (Reimer, 2019). It is important to recognize that not all children's literature lacks in these aspects, as many authors and publishers actively strive to offer content that fosters critical thinking skills.

iv) Does the book provide some coping techniques and responses to the crisis or issue at hand?

The raters exhibit an impressive level of agreement, reaching 94.6%. Furthermore, the raters unanimously agreed that 75% of the assessed books satisfied this criterion, indicating that the book offers coping strategies and solutions to the crisis or issue. The substantial proportion indicates a robust agreement with the book's capacity to provide practical strategies for readers to effectively handle difficulties. It is possible that children can benefit tremendously from reading books that offer strategies for coping with difficult situations and solutions to problems (All4kids, 2023). Books like this help young readers develop emotional resilience and a sense of well-being by providing them with plots that are captivating and characters that they can relate to.

v) Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)

The pooled Kappa value of 0.733 indicates substantial agreement among the respondents. Kappa is a measure of inter-rater reliability, suggesting a high level of consensus in the assessments made by different individuals. Overall, these statistics suggest a strong and consistent agreement among assessors regarding the presence of specific values, moral lessons, critical thinking skills development, and coping techniques in the children's book. The high percentages and substantial Kappa value reflect a robust consensus on the positive attributes of the book in these aspects.

Table 4.14
Interrater Reliability for Theme

Item	R1 X R2 (%)				% Agree	κ	κ Classification
	NN	NY	YN	YY			
Are there specific values being discussed or emphasized?	14.3	12.5	7.1	66.1	80.4		
Can any lessons or moral values be drawn from this story?	14.3	1.8	0	83.9	98.2		
Does the book enhance the development of critical thinking skills?	71.4	7.1	1.8	19.6	91.0		
Does the book provide some coping techniques and responses to the crisis or issue at hand?	19.6	3.6	1.8	75.0	94.6		
Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)						0.733	Substantial

Note. Based on $n = 56$. $p < =$ Cohen's kappa. NN = No (R1), No (R2); NY = No (R1), Yes (R2); YN = Yes (R1), No (R2); YY = Yes (R1), Yes (R2). N/A = Cohen's kappa could not be reported. $\kappa \leq 0$ = poor, 0.01–0.20 = slight, 0.21–0.40 = fair, 0.41–0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = substantial, 0.81–1.00 = almost perfect

4.3.2.6 Empathy

Empathy plays a powerful role in children's literature, particularly within the context of bibliotherapy. This approach involves using books as a therapeutic tool to help children understand and cope with emotional or psychological challenges. Integrating empathy into children's literature for bibliotherapy involves thoughtfully selecting books, facilitating purposeful discussions, and organizing activities that support the emotional and social development of young readers (Reimer, 2019). Meadows (2023) emphasized that utilizing the power of literature to evoke empathy enables bibliotherapy to serve as a potent tool for enhancing children's emotional well-being and fostering positive social interactions. Table 4.15 presents percentages and statistics related to the assessment of aspects related to empathy in children's books. Table 4.15 elaborated as follows:

- i) Do the characters in the story demonstrate empathy towards one another or other characters?

The high percentage of agreement (85.7%) suggests substantial consensus among respondents that characters in the story demonstrate empathy towards one another or other characters. In their evaluation, the raters concluded that 51.8% of the works under consideration satisfied this criterion. It may be deduced from this that the depiction of empathy in the book is somewhere in the middle and commonly accepted. Priske (2018) emphasized the significance of demonstrating empathy by characters in children's literature in fostering the development of emotional intelligence and social awareness among young readers. According to Reynolds (2019), the representation of sympathetic characters and their activities in literature provides young readers with valuable opportunities to learn about and internalize empathetic behaviours, thus contributing to the enhancement of their emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills.

- ii) Are there lessons or messages about understanding and considering others' feelings?

Similarly, a significant proportion of agreement (85.7%) suggests a broad consensus that the book has teachings or messages pertaining to comprehending and taking into account the emotions of others. It was

unanimously agreed upon by the raters that this criterion is present in 62.5% of the books that were evaluated. This supports the idea that the book's content is considered to convey important messages about empathy. Promoting an understanding of and consideration for the emotions of others through lessons and messages in children's literature is of significant relevance, and offers substantial educational and developmental advantages. When integrated into captivating narratives that engage students, literature serves as a powerful tool for imparting emotional intelligence, empathy, social skills, and positive values to young readers (Kucirkova, 2019).

- iii) Does the book encourage readers to put themselves in the shoes of the characters and understand their perspectives?

The majority agreement (91.0%) indicates a substantial consensus that the book encourages readers to put themselves in the shoes of the characters and understand their perspectives. There was a conclusion reached by the raters that 64.3% of the books that were evaluated satisfied this criterion. This reflects a strong acknowledgment of the book's capacity to promote empathy through reader engagement. Evaluating the potential influence of the book on readers' empathy and perspective-taking skills depends on this crucial criterion which holds great significance. A book that utilizes a variety of narrative techniques, character development methods, and storytelling elements (Keen, 2011) fosters an immersive and empathetic reading experience, prompting readers to empathize with the characters and grasp their perspectives (Schmidt, 2020). This technique not only enhances the reading experience but also fosters readers' personal and emotional development.

- iv) Are there moral dilemmas or conflicts in the story that encourage discussions about empathy?

While slightly lower than the other items, there was a significant 76.7% level of agreement among the raters on this item. The raters, on the other hand, were in agreement that just 44.6% of the books that were examined satisfied this criterion. The therapeutic process in bibliotherapy might be affected by the lack of moral difficulties or conflicts in a story (Vries et al., 2017). Therapists and educators should be cautious when choosing material that provides enough chances for emotional involvement, identification, and examination of values.

Furthermore, Wrenn and Wrenn (2009) noted that integrating supplemental activities or guided conversations might amplify the therapeutic advantages of the selected literature.

v) Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)

The pooled Kappa value of 0.669 indicates substantial agreement among the respondents. Kappa is a measure of inter-rater reliability, suggesting a high level of consensus in the assessments made by different raters regarding empathy-related aspects in the book. Overall, these statistics suggest a strong consensus among raters regarding the presence and effectiveness of empathy-related elements in the children's book. The high percentages and substantial Kappa value reflect a robust agreement on the portrayal and encouragement of empathy in the assessed aspects of the book.

Table 4.15
Interrater Reliability for Empathy

Item	R1 X R2 (%)				% Agree	κ	κ Classification
	NN	NY	YN	YY			
Do the characters in the story demonstrate empathy towards one another or other characters?	33.9	10.7	3.6	51.8	85.7		
Are there lessons or messages about understanding and considering others' feelings?	23.2	7.1	7.1	62.5	85.7		
Does the book encourage readers to put themselves in the shoes of the characters and understand their perspectives?	26.7	5.4	3.6	64.3	91.0		
Are there moral dilemmas or conflicts in the story that encourage discussions about empathy?	32.1	17.8	5.4	44.6	76.7		
Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)						0.669	Substantial

Note. Based on $n = 56$. $p < =$ Cohen's kappa. NN = No (R1), No (R2); NY = No (R1), Yes (R2); YN = Yes (R1), No (R2); YY = Yes (R1), Yes (R2). N/A = Cohen's kappa could not be reported. $\kappa \leq 0$ = poor, 0.01–0.20 = slight, 0.21–0.40 = fair, 0.41–0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = substantial, 0.81–1.00 = almost perfect

4.3.2.7 Safety

It is crucial to have safety measures in place in children's bibliotherapy to guarantee a positive, supportive, and age-appropriate therapeutic experience. When utilizing books as a therapeutic tool for children, it is imperative to take into account

multiple safety elements in order to establish a secure and efficient therapeutic setting. Table 4.16 presents the percentages and statistics on the evaluation of safety aspects in children's books. Table 4.16 elaborated as follows:

- i) Is the vocabulary used in the book aligning with the child's proficiency?
The consensus for this item is 100%. The results also reveal a 100% agreement (YY), signifying that both raters unanimously agreed that all books being assessed meet this condition. These findings indicate a strong agreement that the language used in the book matches the child's level of skill. It is essential to ensure that the language utilized in a book corresponds with a child's level of ability, particularly in the context of bibliotherapy, which involves using books as therapeutic instruments to tackle emotional or psychological difficulties. Bibliotherapy has a significant impact on a child's well-being by enhancing understanding, fostering literacy development, facilitating emotional expression, and promoting overall engagement.

- ii) Does the book include positive role models and characters that demonstrate characteristics such as kindness, empathy, and resilience?
The item has an agreement level of 83.9%, suggesting that there is minimal disagreement among the raters when assessing this criterion. The results indicate that the raters concurred that 66.1% of the examined books satisfied this criterion. It suggests consensus regarding the existence of positive role models and individuals who exhibit qualities such as kindness, empathy, and resilience. Although not unanimous, it indicates a significant degree of consensus. Mehdizadeh and Khosravi (2018) stated that integrating positive role models and characters that possess attributes such as kindness, empathy, and perseverance into bibliotherapy offers a potent means for emotional education, behavioural emulation, and the fostering of positive principles. The therapeutic influence of bibliotherapy is enhanced by these elements, as they inspire, guide, and encourage readers in their emotional and developmental journeys (Suvilehto, et al., 2019).

- iii) Is the book's main character close to the children's age?
The findings demonstrate a substantial level of concurrence, with a 96.4% agreement rate. It is important to highlight that just 69.6% of the books

assessed fulfilled this criterion. This indicates a significant degree of consensus among the raters. The age proximity between the main character of a book and the youngsters participating in bibliotherapy might enhance the efficacy of the bibliotherapy process. The close age proximity between the main character and the young individuals in bibliotherapy enhances the therapeutic effect by making the content more relevant, fostering understanding and empathy, providing examples, validating experiences, ensuring cultural and developmental significance, and increasing overall engagement and curiosity in the therapeutic process.

- iv) Are young readers shielded from any potential injury or exposure to content that may elicit feelings of threat or distress?

The findings demonstrate a 96.4% concurrence, signifying a substantial degree of unanimity on the protection of young readers from potential harm or disturbing material. This indicates a significant consensus among raters regarding the safety of the book's content. Creating a secure and nurturing therapeutic environment requires protecting children from possible harm or exposure to unsettling material while engaging in bibliotherapy. In the context of bibliotherapy and literature designed for young readers, intentional steps are taken to shield them from potential harm or exposure to content that may elicit feelings of unease or distress (Office of the Surgeon General, 2021). Nevertheless, the efficacy of these precautionary measures may fluctuate depending on variables such as the substance's content, the readers' age, and individual sensitivities.

- v) Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)

In this case, the Pooled Kappa is 0.724, which falls into the "Substantial" range. This suggests a notable level of agreement among raters beyond what would be expected by chance alone. Overall, the results indicate strong agreement on the appropriateness of the book for young readers, including aspects related to vocabulary, positive role models, age-appropriate main characters, and content safety. The substantial agreement, as indicated by Cohen's Kappa, adds confidence to the reliability of the assessments made by the raters.

Table 4.16
Interrater Reliability for Safety

Item	R1 X R2 (%)				% Agree	κ	κ Classification
	NN	NY	YN	YY			
Is the vocabulary used in the book aligns with the child's proficiency?	0	0	0	100	100		
Does the book include positive role models and characters that demonstrate characteristics such as kindness, empathy, and resilience?	17.8	16.1	0	66.1	83.9		
Is the book's main characters close to the children's age?	26.8	3.6	0	69.6	96.4		
Are young readers shielded from any potential injury or exposure to content that may elicit feelings of threat or distress?	0	3.6	0	96.4	96.4		
Pooled Kappa (κ pooled)						0.724	Substantial

Note. Based on $n = 56$. $p \leq$ Cohen's kappa. NN = No (R1), No (R2); NY = No (R1), Yes (R2); YN = Yes (R1), No (R2); YY = Yes (R1), Yes (R2). N/A = Cohen's kappa could not be reported. $\kappa \leq 0$ = poor, 0.01–0.20 = slight, 0.21–0.40 = fair, 0.41–0.60 = moderate, 0.61–0.80 = substantial, 0.81–1.00 = almost perfect

4.4 Conclusion

Overall, the analysis of Malaysian children's literature indicates that many of the bibliotherapy features identified in the literature are present in the selected texts. However, the findings also reveal several areas of weakness. Six items, in particular, recorded low levels of agreement between the two raters, with percentage agreement falling below 50%. For these items, both raters independently noted that the features were insufficiently represented or absent in the texts. This pattern suggests specific gaps in the inclusion of certain bibliotherapy-related features within the analysed children's books. A breakdown of the results obtained from the document analysis method is presented in Table 4.17. A comprehensive analysis of the results is provided in the following chapter.

The next chapter (Chapter 5) provides a concise overview of the research findings and their potential consequences. The findings are valuable to both academics and practitioners, as understanding bibliotherapeutic features is essential for promoting the emotional well-being of children through the incorporation of bibliotherapeutic elements. Furthermore, this study also highlight the constraints and provide guidance for future investigations in this area.

Table 4.17
Bibliotherapy Findings

Criteria		Percentage
Character	Main character	100
	Memorable character	85.7
	Judgment, responsibility and empathy traits	69.9
	Strengths and weakness	66.0
Plot	Things to ponder, inquire and take into account	23.2
	Major surprises and twists	21.4
	Interesting, simple and relevant	98.2
	Challenges and encounters	76.8
Illustrations	Coherent and pertinent	92.8
	Appealing colours	48.2
	Enhance children's knowledge	60.7
	Appeal to its target group	87.5
Readability	Well written	96.4
	Interaction with text	10.7
	Right level of reading development	100
	Vocabulary and language suitable for the target range	98.2
Theme	Specific values discussed	66.1
	Lessons drawn	83.9
	Develop critical thinking	19.6
	Coping techniques	75.0
Empathy	Characters demonstrate empathy	51.8
	Understanding others' feelings	62.5
	Understand the character's perspective	64.3
	Moral dilemmas or conflicts	44.6
Safety	Vocabulary is aligned with child's proficiency	100
	Include positive role models	66.1
	Main character close to the children's age	69.6
	Shielded from threat and distress	96.4

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this dissertation was to examine the attributes of bibliotherapy present in children's literature in Malaysia. At its heart, bibliotherapy is grounded in the idea that individuals can relate to fictional characters who reflect their own experiences, enabling them to examine social relationships, work through emotional challenges, and discover new paths in life (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). By conducting document analysis, we were able to identify several themes and areas of research that have not been adequately addressed in the existing literature. The analysis of bibliotherapy research primarily examined many aspects such as character, plot, illustrations, readability, theme, empathy, and safety. The investigation yielded valuable data, which was subsequently utilized to formulate a bibliotherapy framework for Malaysian children's literature. This framework aims to effectively support children's emotional development and personal growth. This chapter provides a concise overview of the research findings and their potential consequences. The findings are valuable to both academics and practitioners, as understanding bibliotherapeutic features is essential for promoting the emotional well-being of children through the incorporation of bibliotherapeutic elements. Furthermore, this study also highlights the constraints and provide guidance for future investigations in this area.

5.2 Bibliotherapy Findings

The purpose of this part is to offer a brief overview of the extensive research findings that have arisen from the combination of literature and document analysis. The literature on bibliotherapy provides a comprehensive understanding of how reading can stimulate human development, enhance emotional resilience, and contribute to better mental well-being, spanning from its historical origins to modern-day uses. As the researcher explore the research on bibliotherapy, we discover how children's books can serve as tools for healing, empowering, and self-exploration. The

discussion centres on the characteristics of bibliotherapy that have previously been presented and examined.

To minimise potential bias associated with network-based expert selection, the researcher deliberately included experts from a range of professional backgrounds, disciplinary areas, and institutional affiliations. Each expert was given a clearly defined role in the validation process and provided with structured validation criteria and standardised feedback instruments. This helped ensure that the evaluations were based on professional expertise and scholarly judgement rather than personal relationships or familiarity, while also strengthening the transparency and credibility of the validation process. The experts are:

- i) Karen Hyelim Koh
EFT Therapy Course, Korea Youth Counseling Association
EMDR therapy course, Korea Youth Counseling Association
TAP(Transactional Analysis for Parents) Course, Korea TA Center

- ii) Bijal Shah
Book Curator and Bibliotherapist
Book Therapy Organization London
https://www.instagram.com/booktherapy_by_bijal/
https://linktr.ee/booktherapy_by_bijal

- iii) Dr Murti Bunanta
Children's Literature Specialist
Children's Folklorist
Children's Book Writerdata analysia
President of SACL/INABBY
<http://kpba-murti.org/>
FB: Kelompok Pencinta Bacaan Anak
IG: kpba_murtibunanta
Youtube: bit.ly/KPBAyoutube

- iv) Dr Susanti Agustina
Bibliotherapist
Lecturer at Universitas Pendidikan Indoensia, Bandung, Indonesia
Founder [@bibliotherapy.id](http://bibliotherapy.id) Indonesia

5.2.1 Character

The data that were reported previously indicated that the feature character is present in significant amounts in all of the books that were analysed. For the purpose

of this review, the major characters are present in each and every book that was examined. According to the evaluation criteria, the main character is the most important aspect of the story because they are the focal point of the story. In light of this, it can be deduced that the success and impact of the story are greatly dependent on the main character's strength and the degree to which they are relatable. The main character of a well-developed story should have a distinct personality, a set of motivations, and a substantial part to play in the story's progression (Dean, n.d.). Throughout the course of the narrative, the trip and development of the character should be interesting and should strike a chord with the readers.

Given the emphasis on memorability, it is reasonable to expect that a character should make a lasting impression on the readers. Unique traits, a distinctive personality, or unforgettable experiences are all effective methods to achieve this objective. A character is deemed memorable when they can be easily recollected by readers long after they have completed the book, adding value to the overall reading experience (MasterClass, 2022). This element emphasizes the moral and expressive aspects of a character. To impart positive values to readers, it is crucial for the character to demonstrate the ability to make logical choices, take responsibility for their conduct, and show empathy towards others. This indicates that the character serves not only as a storytelling device but also as a moral compass, leading readers through the ethical and emotional challenges presented in the narrative.

It is important to aim for the development of a character that possesses a balanced combination of strengths and flaws. Characters are made more admirable and capable by virtue of their strengths, while their weaknesses make them more approachable and human. Readers are often more emotionally affected by characters who face and overcome challenges, as they showcase resilience and personal growth (Goethals & Allison, 2012). The criteria suggest that presenting the main character's qualities in a more intricate manner, encompassing both positive and negative aspects, enhances the authenticity and engagement of the reading experience (Hollis, 2023). This holds true for attributes of both positive and negative nature.

In a nutshell, the character is the most important aspect of the narrative, and their success is determined by their ability to be remembered, the ethical qualities they possess, and the strengths and faults that they clearly articulate. A truly impactful character not only advances the plot, but also resonates with young readers, leaving a lasting impression that may impart valuable life lessons.

5.2.2 Plot

This criterion implies that the plot should incorporate components that stimulate readers to engage in critical thinking, pose inquiries, and contemplate diverse viewpoints. It surpasses a simple storyline, compelling readers to actively interact with the tale on a more profound level. This may encompass themes that elicit contemplation on ethical quandaries, societal matters, or individual decisions. The lower percentage obtained from the assessment of the books indicates that the anticipated level of intellectually engaging content was not met. Although children's literature is commonly used for educational, entertaining, and emotional purposes, there may be situations, particularly in bibliotherapy, when critical thinking is not given enough importance. Several factors contribute to the perceived deficiency in critical thinking within certain children's literature used for bibliotherapy:

i) **Simplicity and Accessibility**

Books for children, especially those aimed at younger audiences, are intentionally designed to be straightforward to ensure accessibility and engagement (Little, 2023). While simplicity is crucial for young readers, it may sometimes lead to a lack of depth that fails to encourage critical thinking about the story, characters, or themes.

ii) **Content Suitable for the Appropriate Age Group**

Children's literature often tailors its content to cater to specific age groups, highlighting themes and stories that correspond to the readers' stage of development (Little, 2023). While this approach can limit the depth and complexity of the content, it may result in a lack of situations that require significant critical analysis.

iii) **Story Structure**

Children's literature often follows a simple and predictable storytelling structure to capture the imagination of young readers (Bayraktar, 2021). While this approach is effective for storytelling purposes, it may not always allow for the exploration of open-ended scenarios or complex plots that stimulate critical thinking and consideration of multiple possible outcomes.

iv) Focus on Emotional Influence

Bibliotherapy often emphasizes the importance of nurturing emotional connections and developing empathy (Martinec et al., 2022). While addressing emotional needs is essential, there is a potential for overshadowing the development of critical thinking skills. The focus on eliciting emotional responses may lead to narratives that are more emotionally engaging than intellectually challenging.

v) Market Expectations

Publishers may possess specific anticipations regarding the marketability of children's literature (Short, 2018). This can shape the selection of narratives, prioritizing topics that are deemed commercially viable while downplaying those that stimulate analytical thought.

The research also revealed that the evaluated books lack elements of surprise and unexpected twists. Surprises and twists introduce a sense of uncertainty to the storyline. A complex storyline often includes surprising plot twists that capture the reader's attention and keep them engrossed in the story. However, the relatively lower emphasis indicates that while surprises are considered, they may not hold as much significance as other story elements. This preference may suggest a desire for a balance between predictability and unexpected developments. Numerous children's books aim to convey particular moral or emotional lessons. These narratives often feature a straightforward and unambiguous structure, prioritizing clear cause-and-effect relationships. Incorporating unforeseen plot twists could disrupt the direct delivery of these intended messages. Nevertheless, it is important to note that surprises and twists have the potential to heighten emotional involvement with the storyline (Greene, 2023). Unforeseen twists in the plot can elicit a variety of emotions, enabling individuals to establish a more profound connection with the characters and narrative. This emotional engagement can have a therapeutic effect by serving as a means to express and delve into one's sentiments.

The document analysis findings indicate that a significant proportion of the examined books are written in an interesting, simple, and relevant manner. This criterion has a high percentage, which indicates its major value in assessing the plot. The plot should possess an intriguing quality that captivates the reader's attention,

while yet being uncomplicated enough to be comprehended by the intended audience (children). Furthermore, it should be pertinent to their experiences or developmental requirements. As mentioned by Currie (2019), the focus on simplicity implies a preference for a narrative that is easy to understand and captivating for the target demographic. As previously stated, a story that is clear and straightforward is lacking of the aspect of critical thinking.

The plot should introduce significant challenges that the characters must successfully overcome, offering opportunities for their personal growth and captivation. Findings of the analysis indicated a greater proportion of challenges and encounters and this signifies the significance of this component in constructing a captivating and dynamic storyline. Challenges and encounters are essential components of children's books that are utilized in the bibliotherapy process. The platform provides opportunities for emotional bonding, enhancement of skills, and meaningful conversations that can have a positive influence on children's emotional well-being and resilience (Lee & Hancock, 2023). Clark and Rumbold (2006) asserted that through the exploration of imaginary obstacles, young readers can acquire valuable perspectives and strategies that assist them in effectively confronting their own genuine hardships.

In summary, the plot aims to strike a harmonious balance between intellectually stimulating elements, unexpected twists, straightforward storytelling, and contemporary relevance. The narrative is expected to feature challenges and interactions that facilitate character development and maintain reader engagement. The emphasis on an intriguing, straightforward, and relevant narrative underscores a commitment to crafting a compelling and appropriate storyline for the target audience.

5.2.3 Illustrations

Coherent and pertinent illustrations are crucial for strengthening the overall narrative. The illustrations must align with the story, enrich the text, and provide a clear visual depiction. According to Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003), relevant images improve the reader's comprehension of the storyline and characters, guaranteeing a smooth integration between the visual and written components. Consequently, the pictures are not only required to be visually appealing, but also intimately connected to the storyline. They ought to make a substantial contribution to

the process of narrative and assist in understanding. As noted by Botsis et al. (2020), coherent illustrations emphasize visual clarity, ensuring that the images are easily distinguishable and do not result in confusion. This is especially crucial in bibliotherapy, which aims to promote emotional and psychological well-being. Illustrations that are clear and unambiguous help to avoid possible misunderstandings and enhance the overall enjoyment of reading. In the realm of bibliotherapy, relevant pictures actively contribute to the achievement of therapeutic objectives (Montgomery & Maunders, 2015). The selection and creation of these illustrations are intended to assist the therapeutic process by addressing specific emotional difficulties and promoting healthy coping strategies. They serve as instruments for both self-expression and exploration.

Utilizing appealing colours in children's literature as part of the bibliotherapy process is essential for creating an engaging and positive reading experience. The use of colours goes beyond mere visual attractiveness; it has the power to influence mood, emotions, and the overall success of the therapeutic intervention. The analysis of the children's books in this study revealed that just 48.2% of them had highly captivating illustrations. The presence of attractive colours might boost the bibliotherapy process in children's reading, while the absence of such colours may lead to a less captivating and potentially less impactful therapeutic experience. Here are some possible consequences and factors to consider when there is a lack of visually pleasing colours:

i) Reduced Visual Stimulation

According to Stern-Ellran et al., (2016), the absence of vibrant colours may reduce the visual stimulation for young readers. This can lead to a less captivating reading experience, which could potentially impact the overall efficacy of the bibliotherapy process. Children's motivation to engage with the material may decrease.

ii) Potential Impact on Mood

The presence of colours can impact one's attitude, while a deficiency of visually pleasing hues can lead to a subdued and dull ambiance. This may impact the emotional impact of the content, thereby impeding its capacity to establish an emotional connection with youngsters.

iii) Age Suitability Considerations

The absence of visually attractive colours may be deemed less suitable for the target demographic in terms of age. Younger children, especially, tend to have a favourable reaction to vibrant and intense colours, and the lack of such colours may lead to a less appropriate visual encounter.

Illustrations have a purpose that goes beyond decoration; they should actively enrich a child's educational experience. The expectation is that illustrations go beyond mere aesthetics to provide educational value, potentially conveying information, ideas, or cultural elements. The findings revealed that 60.7% of the evaluated books meet this requirement. Illustrations should achieve a harmonious equilibrium between aesthetic appeal and fulfilling an educational function. Their design should aim to enhance cognitive growth and broaden a child's knowledge base (Strouse et al., 2018).

Illustrations have a crucial role in captivating the attention and capturing the interest of the intended readership. The findings indicated that most books analysed focus significantly on creating illustrations or visuals that deeply connect with the target demographic of the book. Gaining insight into the tastes and visual communication style of the specific age demographic is of utmost importance. The illustrations should be relevant, suitable for the intended age group, and in line with the cultural and developmental background of the readers.

To summarize, illustrations in this context should be clear and relevant, with a particular focus on improving the overall storytelling. Although attractive colours and informative content are deemed significant, their importance may be overshadowed by the necessity of carefully aligning the visuals with the narrative and effectively captivating the target audience. This sophisticated approach acknowledges the complex and diverse function of illustrations in children's reading.

5.2.4 Readability

According to Rozalski et al. (2010), ensuring readability in children's reading is an essential factor to consider in the bibliotherapy process. The concept is all-encompassing and includes literature that is skilfully written, interacting with the text, the reading level, and the clarity of language appropriate for the intended age group. Well written content is essential for effective communication in the practice of

bibliotherapy. The language should possess clarity, cohesiveness, and captivation in order to enhance the reader's experience in a favourable manner. Proficient writing effectively conveys therapeutic themes, guaranteeing that readers may readily comprehend and establish a connection with the material (Zhang et al., 2020). The analysis indicated that 96.4% of the examined books satisfied this criterion. Clarity in expression enables readers, particularly those involved in bibliotherapy, to effectively understand and deal with intricate emotions or concepts presented in the literature. The writing style enhances the overall therapeutic ambiance, fostering a supportive and efficient reading experience.

Contrary to the common practice of engaging with texts in a personal and introspective manner, the study's findings revealed a different outcome. A score of 10.7% indicates a reduced emphasis on text interaction, suggesting that the books prioritize the story rather than interactive components. Interaction could include prompts, questions, or activities designed to engage readers more actively. Interaction in children's literature entails the inclusion of several components that stimulate readers to actively participate with the content. This interactive feature is specifically created to enhance the reading experience, foster understanding, and provoke thoughtful contemplation (Promoting Early Literacy and Fostering a Love for Reading (News), n.d.). Children's literature should explore methods for incorporating interactive elements into its content through:

i) Prompts for Reflection

Johnson (2016) postulated that the inclusion of suggestions inside the text can encourage readers to engage in thoughtful reflection on the story, characters, or issues. These prompts may pose open-ended inquiries, encouraging children to reflect on their own emotions and experiences in connection with the story.

ii) Discussion Questions

By incorporating discussion questions at the conclusion of chapters or sections, it encourages dialogue among readers and their caregivers, educators, or peers. This facilitates children to express their opinions and viewpoints, promoting communication and social engagement (Malik & Marwaha, 2022).

iii) Decision-Making Opportunities

Children are encouraged to engage in conversation with their caregivers,

teachers, or peers through the use of discussion questions that are included at the end of each chapter or section. This facilitates children to express their opinions and viewpoints, promoting communication and social engagement.

iv) Interactive Multimedia

Interactive multimedia refers to a form of media that allows users to actively engage with and manipulate various types of content, such as text, images, audio, and video. Incorporating multimedia components like QR codes or hyperlinks that direct to further content, films, or games associated with the narrative. This offers a multimedia encounter and might be especially captivating for technologically proficient young readers.

By integrating these interactive components, children's reading for bibliotherapy transforms into a dynamic and engaging encounter. These tactics not only improve understanding but also foster emotional expression and facilitate connection with the therapeutic aspects of the content (Vogel et al., 2008).

When it comes to bibliotherapy, it is crucial to ensure that the book is appropriately matched to the reader's level of reading proficiency. A perfect score in this category indicates that the text is meticulously customized to match the cognitive capacities and understanding levels of the target audience. This alignment guarantees that readers may properly engage with the material. Selecting the appropriate degree of reading proficiency is a method that prioritizes the needs and abilities of the young reader. It improves understanding, enabling young readers to establish a connection with the content on both an emotional and intellectual plane. This is especially crucial in bibliotherapy, where the objective is to offer a supportive and easily approachable reading encounter.

In the context of bibliotherapy, it is important to employ vocabulary and language that is appropriate for the intended readers. The significant proportion of 98.2% suggests that there is a notable focus on choosing words and language patterns that correspond to the developmental stage and linguistic abilities of the intended readers. Appropriate vocabulary and choice of language enhance the ease of understanding and availability of the content (Promoting Early Literacy and Fostering a Love for Reading (News), n.d.). This guarantees that readers, particularly those participating in bibliotherapy, may effortlessly understand and relate to the material. It

reduces language obstacles, promoting a more inclusive and efficient therapeutic experience.

To summarize, the assessment standards for readability in the bibliotherapy process emphasize the significance of well written content, congruence with the appropriate level of reading proficiency, and the utilization of vocabulary and language that is appropriate for the intended readership. Although interactive features are not given as much importance in this specific review, the main objective is to provide content that is unambiguous, easily accessible, and conducive to achieving therapeutic goals.

5.2.5 Theme

Children's literature has a distinctive and influential part in the process of bibliotherapy, acting as a therapeutic instrument to address the emotional, social, and psychological needs of young readers (Heath et al., 2005). According to Pullimeno et al. (2020), the theme is the central and guiding factor that connects the core messages, values, and lessons of the narrative in this literary intervention. Themes in children's books used for bibliotherapy are essential for facilitating investigation, introspection, and personal development. These stories are designed to connect with the experiences of young readers by using well-developed themes. They provide a secure environment for emotional expression and encourage meaningful conversations.

Chowdurry (2016) noted that values in children's books have a substantial impact on moulding young minds and shaping their moral and ethical growth. Authors and illustrators frequently incorporate values into stories to convey significant life lessons and encourage the development of positive character qualities. Values encompass moral ideas, ethical considerations, and social aspirations. The findings revealed that a significant 66.1% of the books analysed focus on conveying and developing particular values inside the story. A moderate score indicates that although specific ideals are included in the story, they may not be the primary emphasis. The story may address values that enhance the growth of characters or communicate underlying themes, without making them the central theme.

For lessons drawn in the story, the high score of 83.9% suggests a significant focus on the didactic nature of the literature, where the narrative is used as a means of communicating relevant teachings. The books presumably intend to offer readers

useful ideas and viewpoints to enrich their comprehension and personal development. Children can relate to the characters and get interested in the stories because the situations are similar to their own or show them things from a different point of view. The lessons depicted serve as reflective surfaces, revealing not only the fictional realm but, more significantly, the inner worlds of the users. The characters' experiences serve as metaphors for addressing real-life challenges, aiding in our comprehension and emotional well-being.

Critical thinking involves the capability to evaluate, assess, and integrate various sources of information. This is essential for effective decision-making and problem solving. When used in bibliotherapy, children's books can help build these cognitive skills by telling stories that get readers involved with the story. The smaller percentage of 19.6% indicates that in this examination, there may be a restricted focus on explicitly cultivating critical thinking abilities through the story itself. The process of critical thinking entails the examination, assessment, and integration of knowledge, which may not be the primary objective of the book (Altun & Yildirim, 2023). Although critical thinking is an important skill, the lower score suggests that the main emphasis of the children's literature is on imparting values and lessons rather than expressly promoting readers to engage in profound analytical thinking. Various strategies can be proposed to instil critical thinking in children's books:

i) Open-Ended Questions

One could propose the creation of a story that presents open-ended questions to prompt readers to contemplate character motivations, choices, and potential results. This stimulates critical thinking as youngsters engage in the process of considering different viewpoints and potential outcomes. Open-ended questions stimulate children to reflect on the story, characters, and incidents (How to Use Open-Ended Questions with Children - StoriesAndChildren.com, 2021). Rather than seeking a conclusive answer, these inquiries prompt subjective examination, encouraging readers to reflect on their emotions and viewpoints about the narrative. When faced with open-ended questions involving hypothetical scenarios or challenges, children are prompted to practice critical thinking in contemplating possible solutions. This nurtures the growth of problem-solving skills and empowers individuals to apply logical reasoning to hypothetical situations.

ii) Multiple Viewpoints

An effective approach to foster critical thinking is to examine many viewpoints within children's books. The book encourages young readers to engage in critical thinking by encouraging them to explore multiple perspectives, question existing beliefs, and develop a more nuanced understanding of the story (O'Reilly et al., 2022). Incorporating diverse characters and viewpoints can facilitate the development of analytical thinking. By providing various opinions, children are encouraged to examine and contrast different perspectives, promoting empathy and a more sophisticated comprehension of circumstances. Exposure to characters with diverse ideas, goals, and values prompts children to challenge stereotypes and broaden their understanding of the complexities inherent in human behaviour (Killen et al., 2018).

iii) Predictions and Inferences

Bal and Veltkamp (2013) highlighted that the story should be structured in such a way that it provides the reader with opportunity to make predictions and conclusions. Encouraging children to make educated guesses about the direction of a story is a valuable method for promoting their analytical thinking and activating their cognitive abilities (Insights, 2023).

iv) Problem-Solving Scenarios

There should be problem-solving scenarios included into the plot, in which the characters are required to think critically in order to overcome obstacles. This gives children the opportunity to see and participate in the decision-making process (Lansdown, 2005), allowing them to practice their problem-solving abilities within a fictitious setting (Suldo et al., 2019). The reader is required to examine, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to come at answers to the issues and dilemmas that are presented inside the story. Bibliotherapy offers a dynamic and captivating platform to cultivate critical thinking skills by integrating well-crafted problem-solving scenarios into children's reading, as stated by Eisenman and Harper (2016). This approach facilitates the development of critical thinking abilities. These hypothetical situations equip young readers with the self-assurance, resiliency, and cognitive capabilities

necessary for intelligent problem-solving, allowing them to approach obstacles with confidence and resilience.

v) Real-Life Connections

Real-life connections play a crucial role in imparting critical thinking skills through children's literature for bibliotherapy. Facilitating connections between the fictional story and children's personal experiences enables them to employ critical thinking in real-life situations. Encouraging children to relate the narrative to their own experiences is crucial for fostering their critical thinking skills in terms of the applicability of the story's lessons to their lives. This approach not only enhances their critical thinking abilities but also empowers them to navigate through life with improved capabilities for thoughtful analysis and decision-making.

Developing critical thinking in children is a valuable investment in the intellectual skills of young readers. It provides individuals with the ability to traverse the complexity of the world, make well-informed choices, and tackle obstacles with a critical mindset. The ability to think critically becomes more than just a skill; it becomes a valuable asset that enables children to actively and deliberately interact with literature and, by extension, with the complexities of life.

Coping strategies in children's literature refer to the particular techniques, skills, and procedures that characters employ to successfully deal with problems, stress, or difficult emotions encountered within the story. These methods are often portrayed as a way for characters to navigate adversity, control their emotions, and conquer challenges. Rozalski et al. (2010) highlighted that incorporating coping strategies into children's stories within the field of bibliotherapy aims to empower young readers with practical skills for managing their real-life situations. Findings of the analysis indicated a high score of 75% signifies that the books emphasize the provision of practical strategies to help readers deal with many parts of life. The story is likely to include people or situations that exemplify healthy coping skills, with the goal of assisting readers in their own emotional and problem-solving endeavours.

To summarize, the theme in children's literature, as assessed by the given criteria, revolves around the exploration of particular values, imparting moral lessons, fostering critical thinking skills, and a significant emphasis on incorporating coping

strategies to assist readers in navigating the challenges of life. Every element contributes to the overall thematic depth and possible influence of the work on its young readers.

5.2.6 Empathy

Empathy is a very important part of social and emotional growth, and how it is shown in children's books is very important. Findings indicated a moderate score of 51.8% of the books analysed focus on characters that demonstrate empathy. More than half of the stories show characters showing empathy, but it's important to think about how real and deep the depictions are. Empathy should be shown in a way that goes beyond simple actions and shows that characters really understand and share other people's feelings. Within a critical analysis, it is essential to examine the intricate ways in which characters demonstrate empathy and the impact of these depictions on the comprehension of this crucial emotional skill by young readers. In the realm of children's literature for bibliotherapy, authentically empathetic characters serve as nurturing role models (Dirks, 2010), steering young readers through the multifaceted landscape of emotions and relationships (Coleman, 2019). These meticulously crafted characters serve a crucial role in cultivating emotional intelligence and resilience in their young readers.

In terms of understanding others' feelings, the high percentage of 62.5% makes it seem like there is more of a focus on characters being able to understand how other people feel. This is good because it shows that you care about understanding other points of view and being emotionally intelligent. A critical analysis, on the other hand, should look at the range of feelings shown and how complicated the situations are. Are the characters able to understand a wide range of emotions? Do these images help us get a better sense of how complex empathy is? Understanding children's bibliotherapeutic reading and its portrayal of others' emotions is a multifaceted endeavour that demands careful scrutiny. When critically assessing this theme, it is not sufficient to merely acknowledge its presence; one must also evaluate its quality, profundity, and influence. When carried out with careful consideration, the act of comprehending the emotions of others becomes a catalyst for personal growth, promoting emotional intelligence and empathy in the young individuals it aims to cultivate (Shrodes, 1961).

Children's books used for bibliotherapy often focus on the understanding of characters' perspectives, which effectively fosters empathy, emotional intelligence, and cognitive development in young readers. Understanding a character's perspective is an essential aspect of empathy, and the provided percentage of 64.3 indicates a relatively strong emphasis on this element. A critical viewpoint would entail evaluating if this comprehension goes beyond superficial observations. Do the characters engage in a struggle to understand the reasons, backgrounds, and experiences that influence their perspectives? The profound nature of these investigations greatly enhances the efficacy of empathy representation in children's literature. Characterization that is deep and varied lets young readers see things from different points of view, which helps them gain a deeper understanding of the complicated things that make people unique (Partington, 2023).

The inclusion of moral and conflict aspects in children's books for bibliotherapy is essential for promoting emotional intelligence, ethical comprehension, and cognitive growth. The therapeutic influence of literature is enhanced by these components since they offer young readers the chance to investigate, contemplate, and navigate intricate circumstances. The data on the percentage of moral dilemmas or conflicts (44.6%) indicates that there is a considerable need for enhancing explicit efforts to encourage debates on this crucial subject. As pointed out by Selby (2023), fostering conversation among young readers, educators, and caregivers is essential for reinforcing the lessons on empathy conveyed in the stories. An essential assessment should examine whether the narratives offer prompts, inquiries, or post-reading exercises that actively involve readers in contemplating and discussing empathy. There are several reasons why certain children's books may not prominently emphasize moral dilemmas or conflict:

i) Developmental Appropriateness

Books for young children, especially those aimed at very early readers, may prioritize simplicity and straightforward storytelling (Ewers, 1992). Sunden (2023) proposed that authors and publishers have the choice to focus on themes appropriate for the targeted age group, steering clear of complex moral issues that may pose challenges for the understanding of very young children, considering their cognitive and emotional development.

ii) Cultural Sensitivity

Ismail (2023) pointed out that the substance of children's literature is influenced by cultural factors. Certain cultures may exhibit preferences for specific themes or a tendency to shun potentially controversial or sensitive topics. Authors and publishers have the option to prioritize universal values, positive conduct, and collaboration instead than exploring ethically intricate or controversial matters.

iii) Educational Objectives

Children's books are frequently written with explicit educational goals in mind (Pulimeno, 2020). Some individuals may prioritize the cultivation of fundamental literacy abilities, nurturing a passion for reading, or acquainting learners with rudimentary principles. Although moral dilemmas and conflicts can provide important opportunities for learning, some books may prioritize different instructional objectives.

iv) Parental Preferences

Publishers and authors should take into account the preferences of parents and caregivers who buy or read books to children. Certain parents may have a preference for stories that are in line with their own values and beliefs, while authors may opt to provide content that has a higher chance of being positively received by a wide range of readers.

v) Market Trends

The content of children's books can be influenced by market trends and industry expectations (Sekeres, 2009). Publishers may consider current trends, commercial demands, and cultural changes when determining the subjects and content of children's literature.

To summarize, although the percentages suggest a significant presence of empathy-related themes in children's literature, a thorough analysis should explore the calibre, profundity, and efficacy of these depictions. The objective is not only to introduce empathy as an abstract idea, but rather to engage young readers in stories that genuinely delve into the intricacies of comprehending and empathizing with the

emotions of others. This aims to cultivate a sincere and enduring influence on their emotional growth.

5.2.7 Safety

The safety precautions in children's books are of utmost importance to guarantee a positive and intellectually stimulating reading experience. Safety encompasses various components that collectively contribute to establishing a constructive and meaningful reading experience for young minds. The current study revealed unanimous consensus among the raters that the vocabulary employed in the children's literature is perfectly matched with the linguistic capabilities of the intended age group. Employing language suitable for the reader's age guarantees that young individuals may understand the material, promoting a favourable and empowering reading encounter. Additionally, it facilitates the advancement of language acquisition and proficiency in reading and writing. Streubel et al. (2020) concluded that an extensive vocabulary enables children to express their sentiments and emotions with greater efficacy. It is essential for children to articulate any concerns or discomfort they may be encountering.

Positive role models in children's literature play a crucial role in shaping the moral and social development of young readers. Children can greatly benefit from observing and imitating characters that possess attributes such as kindness, empathy, and resilience. These attributes enhance the reading experience and can also exert a favourable influence on a child's conduct and perspective. The data revealed that 66.1% of the investigated books met this criterion, indicating the presence of positive role models. While this suggests that positive role models are present to some extent, the percentage indicates that it might not be a comprehensive representation or that the positive characteristics of kindness, empathy, and resilience may not be consistently demonstrated by all characters. Featuring characters in children's literature that possess a wide array of desirable attributes can have advantageous effects. This can cultivate a comprehensive comprehension of virtues and promote constructive conduct among young readers.

The protagonist in the analysed books is approximately of a similar age to the intended readership. The findings revealed that the primary protagonists in the book closely align with the age of the children, scoring at 69.6%. This can improve the

ability of youngsters to relate to and comprehend the experiences of the protagonist. Additionally, it enables the transmission of insights and ideas to the readers' personal experiences. It is worth to highlight that some characters in the story books are not closely aligned with the age of the children due to several reasons:

i) Educational Purpose

Within various educational settings, literature may incorporate characters who are either older or younger than the intended audience in order to present diverse viewpoints or impart particular teachings.

ii) Fantasy

Certain works of children's literature belong to the fantasy or allegory genre, in which characters often serve as symbols or representations of abstract notions rather than genuine humans. In such instances, the age of the characters may not correspond with the target audience.

iii) Historical Context

The plot could be situated inside a particular historical or cultural framework, where the ages of the characters are dictated by the needs of the story rather than the age group for whom it is designed.

iv) Genres and Themes

The inclusion of characters from multiple age groups in a book can be beneficial for storytelling purposes, as it allows for a wider range of perspectives and the exploration of universal themes that are relevant to different age demographics.

v) Intentional Creativity

Authors may deliberately select characters of varying ages to excite the imagination, foster creativity, or enhance cognitive development in young readers.

Although it is customary for primary characters in children's literature to be of a similar age to the target audience, deliberate deviations from this convention can be purposeful and fulfil certain artistic or educational objectives.

The phrase "shielded from threat and distress (96.4%)" suggests that young readers are provided with a significant degree of safeguarding or prevention from potentially distressing or threatening circumstances within the framework of the analysed children's literature. The substantial percentage indicates that the content is specifically crafted to mitigate the risk of exposing the young audience to situations that could potentially cause emotional or psychological distress. Practically speaking, this could entail designing the storyline, characters, and general narrative in a manner that protects young readers from explicit or dramatic circumstances that may cause pain. Authors and publishers may deliberately refrain from using themes or situations that have the potential to evoke fear, anxiety, or emotional distress in youngsters. The goal is to create a positive and secure reading experience that aligns with the developmental needs and sensitivities of the target age group. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the extent to which young readers are protected from possible harm or emotional discomfort can differ depending on the particular content and genre of the literature (Mar et al., 2011). Certain stories may incorporate little obstacles or conflicts that are suitable for a specific age group and enhance the storyline without creating excessive distress. It's important to find the right balance between giving young readers interesting and useful content and protecting their mental health in order to get the best results.

To summarize, the above findings indicate a significant focus on safety factors in the creation of children's literature. The language is suitably matched to the child's level of competence, a decent amount of good role models is incorporated, the main character is of a similar age to the children, and there is a significant level of safeguarding against frightening or disturbing circumstances. These characteristics all contribute to establishing a secure and age-appropriate literary experience for children.

5.3 Understanding Bibliotherapy in the Malaysian Children Literature

The comprehension of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature extends beyond the simple delivery of stories. It involves a comprehensive strategy to support the development of young individuals, cultivate a sense of cultural identity, tackle societal challenges, and enhance emotional health. By immersing themselves in storylines that mirror their own cultural context, children not only embark on exciting reading experiences but also embark on transformative journeys of self-exploration

and personal development. This highlights the significant role of Malaysian children's literature as a powerful instrument for bibliotherapeutic intervention.

Malaysian children's literature mirrors the wide range of races and cultures present in the country. By utilizing narratives that incorporate regional folklore, traditions, and customs, young readers are exposed to characters and scenarios that strongly resonate with their own cultural heritage. Cultivating cultural awareness not only cultivates a sense of pride and identity but also facilitates the growth of empathy when youngsters engage with narratives that are distinct from their own. Children's literature promotes tolerance and empathy by depicting characters who navigate cultural boundaries and form cross-cultural friendships. These stories educate young readers about the significance of valuing and acknowledging differences, fostering cultural sensitivity, and encouraging harmonious relationships in a diverse community.

Values and moral stories in Malaysian children's literature have a significant impact on forming the ethical principles of young readers and offering insights into cultural norms and societal expectations. These narratives frequently communicate moral teachings by means of captivating storylines, well-developed characters, and vivid surroundings, so enhancing the moral and character growth of youngsters. A significant number of children's books in Malaysia incorporate moral lessons and ideals into their plots. These narratives act as sophisticated guides for young individuals, imparting moral principles and providing education on ethics. Through bibliotherapy, young readers can absorb moral teachings, thus nurturing the development of a strong ethical foundation. The stories allow young people to gain understanding of ethical values and integrate them into their personal growth. This practice fosters a sense of moral obligation within Malaysia's diverse and culturally rich environment.

Exploring social concerns in Malaysian children's literature is an effective method to involve young readers in significant discussions about the difficulties and complexities of the surrounding world. These stories provide valuable perspectives on social issues and promote critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of social duty through skilfully constructed storylines and realistic characters. Malaysian children's literature functions as a medium for discussing social issues that are pertinent to young readers. Books may delve into subjects such as friendship, family interactions, cultural diversity, and environmental responsibility. By engaging actively with these

stories, young people can gain a deeper understanding of societal challenges and develop successful approaches for addressing complex issues.

Promoting emotional literacy in Malaysian children's literature is a crucial element in cultivating the emotional well-being of young readers. Emotional literacy encompasses the comprehension and proficient handling of one's own emotions, along with the ability to empathize with the emotions of others. Malaysian children's literature plays a significant role in fostering emotional intelligence in youngsters by means of well-constructed stories. Emotional literacy plays a vital role in bibliotherapy, and Malaysian children's literature offers an opportunity to explore into a variety of emotions within familiar situations. Characters frequently confront emotions like as fear, joy, friendship, and resilience, aiding in the cultivation of emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms for young readers' own experiences.

In general, children's literature in Malaysia exhibits the fundamental traits of bibliotherapy. However, this work is deficient in features such as captivating illustrations, thought-provoking ideas, significant surprises and plot twists, engaging textual interactions, the cultivation of critical thinking, and the exploration of moral dilemmas and conflicts. The majority of stories written in Malaysia exhibit straightforward and uncomplicated storylines. While it is comprehensible that this method is advantageous for the extremely young readers, it is important to introduce children at this stage to a certain degree of critical thinking and engagement with texts. Incorporating thought-provoking ideas into children's books is a powerful method to captivate young minds, promote critical thinking, and cultivate an enduring passion for reading. Not only does it enhance the reading experience, but it also fosters the overall growth of young minds by cultivating their intellectual curiosity, emotional intelligence, and social consciousness. Plot twists in children's books utilized for bibliotherapy can serve as potent instruments for emotional and psychological development. Strategically integrating story twists can engage the attention of young readers, inspire their imagination, and offer significant insights that enhance their emotional well-being. The unforeseen shifts in the storyline not only enhance the reader's involvement but also offer significant chances for emotional, cognitive, and social development in young readers. It is important to note that including moral difficulties and conflicts into children's books for bibliotherapy can be an effective method of tackling intricate problems, cultivating empathy, and encouraging emotional and ethical growth. Through the exploration of complex scenarios

presented in a narrative framework, children can develop essential life competencies and cultivate a more profound comprehension of their own identities and the world around them.

Ultimately, bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature has great potential as a dynamic and culturally attuned method for addressing emotional, social, and educational needs. Bibliotherapy, based on Malaysia's diverse culture and language, is a great tool for enhancing emotional well-being, empathy, and resilience in young readers. Malaysian bibliotherapy incorporates cultural awareness to ensure that literature functions as a reflective tool, mirroring the experiences and values of its readers. The presence of several languages, such as Malay, English, Chinese, Tamil, and others, contributes to the accessibility and inclusivity of therapeutic literature, allowing a wider range of people to benefit from it. The incorporation of bibliotherapy into curriculum, school libraries, and educational initiatives in the field of education offers a chance to cultivate emotional intelligence and literacy abilities concurrently. Malaysian children's literature plays a role in moulding individuals who are compassionate and socially conscious by tackling societal concerns via well-crafted narratives. This helps them negotiate the intricacies of their diverse culture more effectively. Bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature is an evolving and complex approach that addresses emotional and educational needs, while also fostering a sense of cultural recognition and unity among young readers. The ongoing exploration and integration of bibliotherapy into the Malaysian literary landscape have the potential to positively influence the holistic development of the country's future generations.

5.4 Framework

In response to the growing demand for well-organized and effective bibliotherapeutic methods, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive framework that encompasses key elements of bibliotherapy. This section introduces a framework that aims to identify important characteristics in bibliotherapy interventions, providing structured guidance for practitioners, educators, and writers seeking to maximize the therapeutic effectiveness of books. The framework integrates essential elements to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of bibliotherapy in modern settings. Without a standardized framework outlining crucial characteristics, the field of bibliotherapy

may struggle to deliver consistent and personalized interventions. This framework aims to address this gap by offering a systematic approach for identifying, incorporating, and evaluating essential elements in bibliotherapeutic activities. It recognizes the nuanced relationship between specific features, therapeutic goals, and the unique qualities of diverse readers. Figure 5.1 below depicts the framework on Malaysian children’s literature in facilitating children’s emotional development and personal growth.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the bibliotherapy framework developed in this study, summarising the relationship between children’s literature, bibliotherapy features, the bibliotherapy approach, and developmental outcomes. The framework presents a structured, layered model in which children’s literature forms the foundation, providing the material necessary for engagement, while the bibliotherapy features act as pillars that support meaningful interaction.

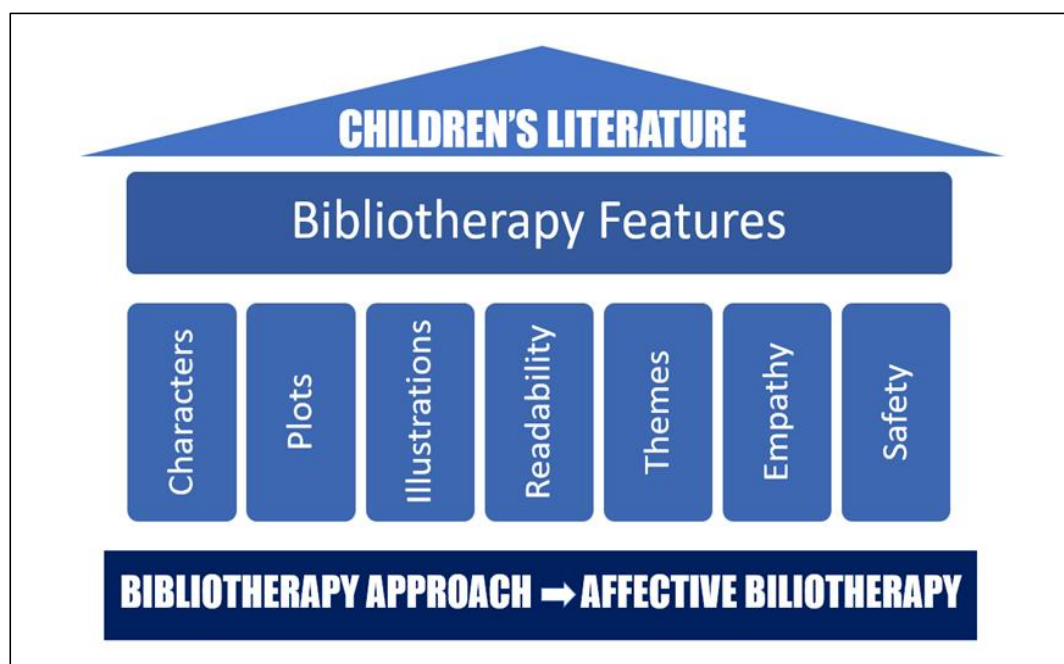


Figure 5.1 Framework on Malaysian Children’s Literature in Facilitating Children’s Emotional Development and Personal Growth

The seven key bibliotherapy features—characters, plots, illustrations, readability, themes, empathy, and safety—represent the essential elements identified through this study as supporting affective engagement. These features were observed in both the literature review (RO1) and the document analysis of Malaysian children’s literature (RO2), which demonstrated that local texts incorporate these elements to varying degrees. Each feature contributes uniquely:

- Characters allow children to identify with, admire, or relate to literary figures.
- Plots mirror experiences that resonate with children's own lives, aiding reflection.
- Illustrations convey emotions and abstract concepts visually, enhancing comprehension.
- Readability ensures texts are accessible and age appropriate.
- Themes offer underlying messages or insights relevant to young readers.
- Empathy encourages children to understand diverse perspectives and emotions.
- Safety ensures that content engages intellectually and emotionally without causing distress.

At the base of the framework, these features feed into the bibliotherapy approach, which in this study is operationalized as affective bibliotherapy. This approach emphasises children's emotional and reflective engagement with texts, providing structured opportunities to explore feelings, relate to characters' experiences, and link narratives to personal understanding. The framework shows that affective bibliotherapy acts as the mechanism through which bibliotherapy features are activated, transforming literary engagement into opportunities for emotional development and personal growth.

The findings further indicate that affective bibliotherapy functions as a mediating process that transforms literary engagement into opportunities for emotional understanding and personal reflection. Through guided discussion, emotional identification with characters, and activities that link narratives to personal experiences, children are provided with a structured and supportive context to explore emotions. This process does not imply therapeutic intervention but rather highlights the role of literature in fostering emotional awareness and reflective thinking.

The outcomes associated with this process, as evidenced in the findings, are best understood in terms of emotional development and personal growth. Emotional development is reflected in children's increased ability to recognise, articulate, and manage emotions, while personal growth is associated with the development of emotional intelligence, empathy, resilience, and self-awareness. These outcomes

emerge gradually through repeated and meaningful engagement with literary texts, reinforcing the iterative nature of the framework.

The framework also highlights the interdependence of its components. Without carefully selected literature, the features cannot be fully present; without the bibliotherapy approach, the features cannot be effectively utilised; and without both working in tandem, the intended developmental outcomes may not be achieved. This visual representation encapsulates the findings of this study, demonstrating how Malaysian children's literature, when aligned with key features and applied through affective bibliotherapy, can foster emotional awareness, empathy, reflective thinking, and personal growth among young readers.

The validation of the proposed Framework on Malaysian Children's Literature for Bibliotherapy was carried out through expert review involving two distinguished professionals, each contributing unique perspectives and expertise to ensure the framework's relevance, effectiveness, and cultural appropriateness.

1. Hjh Rozainun binti Mahmud – Counselor (Universiti Teknologi MARA)

The first expert consulted in the validation process is an experienced counsellor from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Arau, Perlis, Malaysia, who provided critical insights into the psychological and therapeutic applicability of the framework, especially in addressing emotional and developmental needs of children.

The expert verified that the framework is both theoretically robust and practically applicable, while remaining culturally appropriate for bibliotherapy interventions using Malaysian children's literature. Based on the validation feedback, the expert endorsed the proposed Bibliotherapy Framework for Malaysian Children's Literature, which comprises seven key features: characters, plot, illustrations, readability, themes, empathy, and psychological safety.

The framework is designed to guide the systematic evaluation and development of children's books for bibliotherapeutic application in Malaysian educational, library, and counselling contexts. Drawing on professional experience in counselling, together with an understanding of Malaysian cultural values and educational practices, the expert confirms that the identified features are conceptually sound, culturally relevant, and practically applicable in supporting children's

emotional and psychological well-being. The framework reflects both developmental considerations and the realities of children's everyday experiences in Malaysia.

Characters are viewed as a central point of emotional connection for young readers. Effective bibliotherapeutic characters should be relatable, age-appropriate, and reflective of familiar Malaysian contexts such as family life, school settings, and community interactions. Characters who openly experience emotions such as fear, sadness, anger, joy, or confusion allow children to recognise similar feelings in themselves, supporting emotional awareness and normalisation.

The plot element highlights the importance of simple and developmentally appropriate storylines. Narratives that present a clear challenge, followed by constructive coping responses and a reassuring resolution, help children understand emotional regulation and problem-solving. Such plot structures are particularly relevant in Malaysian educational and counselling contexts, where values such as cooperation, respect, and perseverance are emphasised.

Illustrations play an important supportive role by helping children interpret emotions, relationships, and story situations. Expressive and culturally sensitive visuals are especially valuable in Malaysia's multilingual environment, as they enhance comprehension and engagement while encouraging emotional discussion. Well-designed illustrations can make stories more accessible and meaningful during bibliotherapy activities.

The feature of readability ensures that bibliotherapeutic materials remain accessible to children of different developmental and linguistic levels. The use of clear language, familiar vocabulary, and appropriate text length supports positive reading experiences, reduces anxiety, and enables children to engage with emotionally relevant content without feeling overwhelmed.

Themes within the framework focus on everyday experiences that are meaningful to children, such as friendship, family relationships, kindness, loss, change, resilience, and moral decision-making. When presented in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner, these themes allow children to explore emotional challenges safely while remaining aligned with Malaysian social and educational norms.

Empathy is recognised as a key therapeutic outcome of bibliotherapy. Through engagement with stories and perspective-taking, children learn to understand the feelings of others and develop compassion. This supports the development of

prosocial behaviour and positive peer relationships, which are strongly valued within Malaysian school and early childhood settings.

Finally, psychological safety forms the foundation of all other features. Bibliotherapeutic texts should provide reassurance and emotional comfort, avoiding content that may cause fear, confusion, or distress. A sense of safety within the narrative allows children to explore emotions confidently and supports trust in the reading experience.

Overall, the validated seven-features Bibliotherapy Framework provides a structured and culturally appropriate approach to using children's literature for bibliotherapy in Malaysia. By integrating characters, plot, illustrations, readability, themes, empathy, and psychological safety, the framework supports a balanced and holistic use of literature to promote children's emotional understanding and psychological well-being.

The bibliotherapy framework developed in this study offers a practical and coherent guide for practitioners, educators, and authors seeking to use children's literature in a purposeful and therapeutic manner. By clearly identifying essential components, the framework supports more informed and effective bibliotherapy practices while remaining adaptable to the diverse and evolving needs of readers. It builds upon established bibliotherapy principles and extends their application, reinforcing the role of literature as a meaningful resource for healing, emotional understanding, and personal growth. The researcher acknowledges that the initial framework validation relied heavily on expert endorsement through signatures and general confirmation of expertise, without sufficient analytical discussion of each expert's evaluative input. In addition, the involvement of the same individual as both a panel contributor and framework validator may have introduced potential

In response, the framework validation process has been revised. One expert who was previously involved has been removed from the framework validation stage to avoid role overlap and ensure greater objectivity. The remaining expert involved in the validation are independent and were not part of the earlier panel discussions.

To clarify the direction of the study and its alignment with the research objectives, the findings in Chapter 5 are organised and discussed explicitly in relation to the research objectives. Each set of findings is presented to address a specific research objective and is subsequently interpreted through discussion supported by

relevant literature. This structure ensures that the results directly inform the discussion and contribute meaningfully to the overall direction of the study.

The discussion highlights how the findings relate to existing bibliotherapy theories and frameworks, particularly by identifying limitations in their applicability to Malaysian children's literature. While prior studies provide valuable theoretical foundations, the findings demonstrate the need to account for cultural, linguistic, and contextual factors specific to Malaysian children. Based on these findings and their alignment with the literature, the development of a new bibliotherapy framework is justified. The framework integrates relevant literary features with established bibliotherapy principles, directly addressing the gaps identified through the findings and discussion.

In addition, the Problem Statement, Research Objectives, Research Questions, and Research Methodology have been carefully realigned to ensure consistency and coherence throughout the study. Each research objective is clearly linked to the qualitative research design, providing a clear and logical progression from findings to discussion and framework development.

Table 5.1 shows a clear and connected progression across the three research objectives. For RO1, the discussion highlights that the literature consistently agrees on several essential features of children's literature for bibliotherapy, including relatable characters, meaningful themes, suitable readability, supportive illustrations, empathy, and psychological safety, all of which help children engage emotionally and reflect on their experiences. Building on this foundation, RO2 examines Malaysian children's literature and finds that although some of these features are present, they are not applied consistently, reflecting the early stage of bibliotherapy practice in Malaysia. Finally, RO3 brings together the findings from RO1 and RO2 to support the development of a bibliotherapy framework that is specifically suited to Malaysian children's literature, combining established bibliotherapy principles with culturally relevant elements. Overall, the table highlights the importance of moving towards a context-sensitive framework that better reflects Malaysian cultural values and children's lived experiences.

Table 5.1
Alignment of Research Objectives, Findings, and Discussion

Research Objective (RO)	Focus of Discussion	Key Findings	Supporting Literature
RO1	Identification of bibliotherapy features in children's literature	The discussion for RO1 is grounded in findings from the literature review, which identify key features required in children's literature for bibliotherapy. These include relatable characters, meaningful themes, appropriate readability, illustrations, empathy, and psychological safety. The literature consistently highlights that developmentally appropriate narratives enhance children's engagement, emotional reflection, and therapeutic potential.	Pardeck (1994); McCulliss and Chamberlain (2013); Abdul Aziz et al. (2025)
RO2	To examine the existing Malaysian children's literature in meeting the required features.	The discussion for RO2 evaluates how selected Malaysian children's literature reflects the bibliotherapy features identified in RO1. The findings indicate that while certain features are present, others are inconsistently represented. This pattern aligns with previous studies suggesting that bibliotherapy practices in Malaysia are still developing and that many existing frameworks are adapted from Western contexts, limiting their cultural relevance and applicability to Malaysian children's literature.	Abidin (2022); McCulliss and Chamberlain (2013); Abdul Aziz et al. (2025)
RO3	To propose a bibliotherapy framework on Malaysian children's literature	For RO3, the discussion synthesises findings from RO1 and RO2 to justify the development of a bibliotherapy framework tailored specifically to Malaysian children's literature. Supported by prior research, the framework integrates established bibliotherapy principles with culturally relevant literary features, addressing gaps identified in current practices and enhancing contextual suitability.	Pardeck (1994); McCulliss and Chamberlain (2013); Abdul Aziz et al. (2025)

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Implications for the Future of Bibliotherapy in Malaysian Children's Literature

The incorporation of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature is a significant improvement towards comprehensive child development within the diverse landscape of the country's literary works. Bibliotherapy, the practice of utilizing literature as a therapeutic instrument, has been acknowledged for its capacity to cultivate emotional intelligence, instil resilience, and promote empathy (Martinec et al., 2022). At its heart, bibliotherapy is grounded in the idea that individuals can relate to fictional characters who reflect their own experiences, enabling them to examine social relationships, work through emotional challenges, and discover new paths in life (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). When considering the current state of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature, it is important to examine the potential consequences of this unique method for the future. This section discusses the possible transforming benefits of bibliotherapy on the emotional well-being and cognitive development of young minds in Malaysia.

- i) Cultural Resonance and Identity Formation – Cultural resonance refers to the deep and meaningful connection that individuals or groups have with their cultural heritage (Kubal, 1998). It plays a crucial role in the formation and development of one's identity. An important consequence of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature is the chance to enhance cultural resonance and the development of identity. Bibliotherapy utilizes tales that include the broad cultural landscape of Malaysia, enabling children to identify with and relate to the stories, therefore serving as a potent means of self-representation. This cultural portrayal not only cultivates a feeling of satisfaction but also enhances the inclusivity and unity of society (Multiculturalism: Celebrating Diversity and Unity in Society - FasterCapital, n.d.) by commemorating the abundance of Malaysia's cultural legacy.

- ii) **Developing Emotional Resilience:** Bibliotherapy equips children with essential skills for effectively navigating complex emotions (Shah, 2023), thereby promoting the development of emotional resilience. Literary examination of characters navigating challenges, achievements, and disappointments offers a secure environment for youngsters to indirectly encounter and comprehend a variety of emotions. Bibliotherapy, as indicated by Harper (2010), is a valuable tool for nurturing emotional intelligence in children, aiding them as they navigate the diverse trials and changes in their lives.
- iii) **Improving Interpersonal Abilities and Empathy:** Spinrad and Gal (2018) mentioned that bibliotherapy's immersive nature fosters the cultivation of social skills and empathy in young readers. By interacting with characters from various backgrounds and views, children are motivated to comprehend and value the experiences of individuals different from themselves (Kovas et al., 2015). Consequently, this establishes the basis for a generation that is more compassionate and sensitive, promoting societal unity and comprehension.
- iv) **Enhancing Formal Education:** Bibliotherapy supplements formal education and enhances the learning experience for children (Ali et al., 2023; Lucas et al., 2019). Incorporating bibliotherapy into educational settings not only enhances literacy skills but also provides educators with a unique opportunity to address socio-emotional aspects of learning (Başarı et al., 2018). Integrating literature into the curriculum enables educators to create a comprehensive and engaging learning environment.
- v) **Preventing and Resolving Mental Health Issues:** Utilizing bibliotherapy in a proactive manner can significantly contribute to the prevention and management of mental health issues in children. Bibliotherapy functions as a proactive strategy (Khalik, 2017) by providing a means for self-expression and self-reflection, enabling children to effectively express their emotions and seek help as needed (Heath et al., 2005). Additionally, bibliotherapeutic interventions can be tailored to address specific mental health concerns, thereby promoting a more comprehensive approach to children's well-being.

- vi) **Cultivating Lifelong Reading Practices:** Introducing bibliotherapy throughout early childhood establishes the groundwork for an enduring passion for reading throughout one's life. Bibliotherapy promotes emotional well-being by creating a positive link between literature and children (Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2019), inspiring them to seek comfort, knowledge, and happiness in books consistently over their lifetime. Engaging in literary pursuits not only improves their cognitive skills but also equips them with a lifelong approach to coping with challenges (Parisi et al., 2012).

- vii) **International Perspectives and Cross-Cultural Understanding:** Bibliotherapy provides children with the opportunity to explore diverse perspectives from around the world and develop cross-cultural understanding. In Malaysian children's libraries, bibliotherapy expands the horizons of young readers by featuring books from various countries, thereby fostering a global mindset and encouraging the appreciation and respect for diversity on a global scale.

The potential impact of bibliotherapy on future Malaysian children's books suggests a significant influence on various aspects of child development. Engaging with literature offers more than just an enjoyable literary journey; it also provides a profound exploration of national identity, emotional resilience, and the fundamental aspects of humanity that take root in the creative minds of young readers. The integration of bibliotherapy within children's literature in Malaysia signals an upcoming era in which stories transcend their traditional role as mere narratives. Bibliotherapy in Malaysia offers valuable support for the nation's young people, imparting not just the joys of reading, but also valuable guidance for navigating life's complexities. Bibliotherapy contributes to both learning and well-being, enhancing the educational process and addressing the social and emotional aspects of a child's development. It not only enriches formal education, but also fosters a lifelong love for reading, ensuring that literature remains a steadfast companion for intellectual and emotional enrichment.

The future of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature extends beyond a mere shift in writing style; rather, it constitutes a transformation with far-reaching implications. Stories possess an extraordinary ability to influence people's perspectives, evoke emotions, and equip the next generation to navigate the intricacies

of an interdependent world with resilience, compassion, and a profound appreciation of their own heritage. As Malaysia embarks on this literary odyssey, the impact of bibliotherapy has the potential to usher in an era where each turned page symbolizes progress towards nurturing a society that esteems the knowledge contained within books.

In summary, the examination of bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children's literature offers valuable insights into culturally relevant interventions for young readers. To create a more impactful and memorable experience for Malaysian children, it is important to underscore the integration of character elements, plots, illustrations, readability, themes, empathy, and safety. By aligning these interventions with Malaysia's cultural context, bibliotherapy can effectively address the unique emotional and psychological needs of young readers in the country. Furthermore, the exploration of bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children's literature highlights storytelling as a means of instilling important values, fostering empathy, and promoting emotional intelligence. Integrating these features not only contributes to children's cognitive development but also shapes their socio-emotional well-being. As bibliotherapy gains recognition as a viable intervention in children's literature, fostering collaboration among educators, mental health professionals, and authors is crucial to refining and expanding these features. The ongoing commitment to incorporating culturally sensitive and diverse elements in bibliotherapy for Malaysian children's literature undoubtedly enhance its effectiveness in promoting holistic development and well-being among young readers in Malaysia.

6.2 Research Contribution

There is a limited amount of material available regarding the application of bibliotherapy in children's books within the Malaysian context. Despite the fact that the practice of bibliotherapy is widely accepted all over the world, this is contrary to the situation. Several contributions may be recognized from the findings of this research in relation to the constructs that were identified in the research questions. These contributions can be found in the following ways.

6.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research complements the Psychoanalysis Theory by Sigmund Freud. Bibliotherapy applies psychoanalytic theory to examine how the concepts of psychoanalysis might be incorporated into therapeutic reading sessions (Martinec, 2022). Psychoanalysis places great importance on the impact of the unconscious mind, symbolic components, and the investigation of emotions and interpersonal connections. This study proposes that characters, plot, illustrations, readability, theme, empathy, and safety serve as symbolic aspects and operate through unconscious processes. Kasperek-Zimowska et al. (2021) noted that the utilization of symbolic elements and unconscious processes in bibliotherapy enhances the therapeutic encounter for readers by accessing the profound aspects of the unconscious mind. The findings of bibliotherapy indicate that skilfully written literature frequently includes symbolic aspects, allowing readers to interact with narratives on a symbolic level (Grinnell, 2023). This alignment substantiates the notion that literature functions as a medium for investigating unconscious emotions and cognitive processes. Bibliotherapy involves intentionally incorporating symbolic components, which is in line with the ideas of psychoanalysis that recognize the depth and complexity of the unconscious mind.

The findings of bibliotherapy provide practical applications and insights that are in line with the essential concepts of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), therefore complementing its theory. Both bibliotherapy and CBT have a common emphasis on cognitive processes, behavioural patterns, and the possibility of therapeutic transformation. The synthesis of bibliotherapy research and CBT theory deepens our comprehension of how interventions based on books facilitate cognitive and behavioural changes. With its focus on well-written stories, bibliotherapy offers a way to change the way you think. The characters and stories in bibliotherapeutic materials often show things from different points of view, which can help people become more cognitively flexible and question harmful ways of thinking. This is consistent with the cognitive restructuring procedures that are fundamental to CBT (Dobson, 2009).

Bibliotherapy allows readers to relate to characters who go through cognitive and behavioural difficulties (Gambrill, 2002). The process of identification and modelling aligns with the ideas of CBT, in which the observation of good role models

and learning from others' experiences play a significant role in bringing about cognitive and behavioural change. Both bibliotherapy and CBT place significant emphasis on the crucial role of self-awareness in the therapeutic process. Research on bibliotherapy suggests that individuals experience an increased level of self-awareness of their ideas, feelings, and behaviours as a result of engaging with literature (Cook et al. 2006; Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2018; Pehrsson et al. 2007; Taft et al. 2016). This self-awareness is consistent with CBT's focus on self-observation and introspection. It is worth mentioning that bibliotherapy introduces readers to a range of coping skills that are woven within narratives. This enhances the emphasis of CBT on the learning of skills, wherein individuals acquire adaptive coping mechanisms to effectively handle stress, anxiety, or other difficulties. An examination of characters' coping mechanisms enhances the reader's range of abilities.

Hence, this research not only deepens the comprehension of Psychoanalysis Theory, but also broadens and amplifies the scope of components involved in various contexts of CBT. Ultimately, research on bibliotherapy acts as a beneficial supplement to both psychoanalytic theory and Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), enhancing our comprehension of the therapeutic possibilities embedded in literature-based therapies. The combination of bibliotherapy and these psychological frameworks emphasizes the adaptability of story engagement in targeting the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions of individuals' well-being.

6.2.2 Methodological Contributions

Methodological contributions are crucial as they empower researchers to explore new questions about the behaviour and performance of individuals, groups, and organizations, as well as to re-examine existing questions with greater rigor (e.g., Kuhn, 1996). It is the creation or improvement of study techniques that facilitate the gathering, analyzing, and interpretation of data. This study presents a novel framework for assessing and classifying therapeutic aspects within bibliotherapy practices, which is an important methodological contribution to the study of bibliotherapy features. Our technique enables a more detailed understanding of how particular literary qualities contribute to therapeutic outcomes by using a robust evaluation metrics and an extensive coding system. By using this approach, bibliotherapy assessments become more accurate and practitioners have a clearer path

to effectively customizing therapies. In order to improve bibliotherapy approaches and better assess their effects on different psychological and emotional needs, we have developed a systematic and reproducible methodology that would further the field.

One important methodological contribution of this research is the introduction of a novel methodology to document analysis. In order to find underlying patterns, themes, and insights pertinent to bibliotherapy features, this methodology entails a methodical and controlled investigation of textual sources. We provide a thorough and rigorous methodology for assessing the features and efficacy of bibliotherapy interventions by utilizing a multi-phase procedure that includes data collecting, theme coding, and interpretive analysis. Our approach to document analysis improves feature identification precision and allows for a more thorough comprehension of the ways in which particular textual components impact treatment results. This methodology not only offers a reproducible paradigm for further study, but it also standardizes the examination of various bibliotherapy resources. As a result, it makes a substantial contribution to the profession by providing a precise, systematic way to evaluate and improve bibliotherapy practices, which in turn leads to more efficient and scientifically supported therapeutic applications.

6.2.3 Practical Contributions

In the context of Malaysian children's literature, the inclusion of bibliotherapy elements offers significant practical benefits that go beyond mere storytelling. Given literature's crucial role in shaping cultural identity, language skills, and emotional strength, integrating bibliotherapy elements into Malaysian children's literature represents a strategic and influential effort. This introduction examines the practical advantages of incorporating bibliotherapy elements, highlighting how these interventions not only enhance literary engagement but also act as a catalyst for fostering cultural pride, emotional well-being, and overall development among Malaysian youth. By exploring locally relevant stories and characters, bibliotherapy emerges as a dynamic force capable of addressing the unique socio-cultural needs of young readers in Malaysia.

The incorporation of bibliotherapy has become a viable approach in Malaysia for promoting the emotional well-being of children within the ever-changing field of educational and therapeutic treatments. Bibliotherapy, the utilization of literature as a

therapeutic instrument, has the capacity to provide distinct advantages in tackling mental health difficulties in youngsters. Nevertheless, the effective execution of bibliotherapy necessitates careful examination of cultural complexities (Gwynne, 2023), cooperation between educators and mental health experts, and a dedication to making it accessible, inclusive, and ethically sound. This section provides detailed suggestions for integrating bibliotherapy into educational and therapeutic settings in Malaysia, with the goal of maximizing the effectiveness of this unique method in promoting the overall development of children.

- i) Cultural Sensitivity – The primary and most important factor to consider while implementing bibliotherapy in Malaysia is the careful selection of materials that are culturally relevant. It is crucial to acknowledge the varied cultural composition of the country and guarantee that literature accurately represents the abundance of this variety. Integrating Malaysian children's literature that connects with many cultural origins promotes a feeling of self-identification and inclusion. Moreover, it is imperative to offer sensitivity training to facilitators, such as educators and therapists. This entails comprehending and valuing cultural differences in order to establish an inclusive and nurturing atmosphere for children (Johnson, 2016) hailing from diverse backgrounds.
- ii) Cooperation and integrating: A multidisciplinary approach is crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of bibliotherapy (Bruneau & Pehrsson, 2017). According to Widermann et al. (2023), collaboration between educators and mental health professionals facilitates the creation of a comprehensive support system for children. By integrating bibliotherapy into the curriculum, educators can seamlessly align literary interventions with educational objectives, thereby enhancing the academic experience while also integrating emotional and psychological development into the broader educational framework.
- iii) Enhancing accessibility and inclusivity: Ensuring the availability of a wide range of materials is crucial for the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in Malaysia. It is crucial to establish a collection of children's literature that is culturally diverse and to address the issue of language barriers by providing translations (Adam, 2019). Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize and tackle

socioeconomic inequalities in the availability of books. Community outreach initiatives can be implemented to provide bibliotherapeutic materials (Ward & Allred, 2023) to marginalized populations, guaranteeing equal access for all children to benefit from this technique.

- iv) **Customizing Bibliotherapy for Individual Requirements:** Recognizing and appreciating diverse learning styles is crucial for the success of bibliotherapy interventions. Tailoring interventions to suit each child's specific learning preferences can maximize the effectiveness of bibliotherapeutic approaches. Monitoring progress and seeking input from both children and caregivers improves the adaptability and customization of a bibliotherapy program.
- v) **Continuing Education:** It is essential to continue providing training for educators and therapists to enable the effective integration of bibliotherapy (Morawski, 1997). Professional development workshops that focus on bibliotherapy concepts and practices, along with ongoing learning opportunities, ensure that practitioners stay current on the most effective methods. Establishing a network and community of practice for professionals in bibliotherapy encourages the sharing of experiences and knowledge, fostering a cooperative and supportive atmosphere.
- vi) **Ethical Considerations:** The effectiveness of bibliotherapy programs hinges significantly on ethical considerations. Avasthi et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of upholding confidentiality and privacy during therapy sessions, as well as obtaining informed consent from parents or guardians. Prioritizing the emotional well-being of children and establishing a foundation of trust are fundamental aspects of ethical bibliotherapy.
- vii) **Assessment and Ongoing Enhancement:** The success of bibliotherapy programs depends significantly on the commitment to ongoing assessment and continual improvement. Regular assessments of program effectiveness, combined with evidence-based adjustments, play a vital role in improving bibliotherapy interventions. Researching the impact of bibliotherapy in Malaysia contributes to the global knowledge of effective strategies.

In conclusion, the integration of bibliotherapy in educational and therapeutic contexts in Malaysia exhibits significant potential for improving the emotional wellbeing of children. To establish a more effective and inclusive approach to bibliotherapy, we must adhere to a set of comprehensive guidelines. These guidelines include embracing cultural sensitivity, fostering collaboration, ensuring accessibility, tailoring interventions, prioritizing professional development, adhering to ethical considerations, and committing to ongoing evaluation. It is crucial to acknowledge the profound impact that literature may have on fostering the emotional and intellectual development of Malaysia's future generations.

6.3 Limitations of the Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the bibliotherapeutic elements found in Malaysian children's literature, several limitations must be acknowledged that may have influenced the scope, depth, and generalizability of the findings.

i) Limited Representation of Available Literature

During the course of this research, certain limitations were identified in relation to the selection and analysis of the chosen books. Although a significant number of children's books were identified and included in the content analysis, it is probable that the list of books chosen for study was not a comprehensive representation of all the books available. Books published before 2015 were excluded from the analysis because there were concerns that the content in these books might be outdated and not relevant to the experiences of children currently aged 6 to 12 years. Furthermore, books not housed in public libraries in Klang Valley—especially rare, independent, or self-published works—were inaccessible and therefore excluded. These lesser-known publications may contain culturally significant narratives or alternative viewpoints that are important for a more inclusive bibliotherapeutic analysis.

ii) Regional and Institutional Constraints

The present study encountered a significant constraint due to the limited access to children's books in public libraries, particularly within the Klang Valley. This limitation highlights a crucial challenge that impedes the comprehensive exploration of the influence and potential of bibliotherapy in the Malaysian

setting. The scarcity of resources creates difficulties in obtaining a representative sample that encompasses the diverse array of Malaysian cultures, languages, and traditions. Consequently, this limitation hampers the exploration of how bibliotherapy caters to the varied backgrounds of young readers. Moreover, the restricted availability of children's books in the specified region impacts the generalizability of the research findings, potentially failing to accurately represent the experiences of children in other regions of Malaysia where access to diverse literature may differ. Consequently, the research findings may not entirely reflect the broader Malaysian context.

iii) Methodological Constraints: Tools and Instruments

Constraints pertaining to the assessment procedure were also recognized. The question employed in the current study was devised by the researcher and had not undergone empirical validation before its implementation. Despite conducting an assessment of interrater reliability during the middle of the book evaluations and providing extra training, the interrater reliability varied from "Moderate" to "Almost Perfect." Hence, the establishment of a coding system that is supported by empirical evidence in future assessments of children's literature could lead to increased consistency among raters when evaluating various aspects. Moreover, providing additional training to the raters could have enhanced the consistency among them, especially for topics that had little consensus.

iv) Lack of Longitudinal or Empirical Impact Evaluation

While this study focused on the presence of bibliotherapeutic features in literature, it did not investigate the actual therapeutic impact of the books on child readers over time. Therefore, the study remains limited to theoretical potential rather than measurable outcomes. Without direct feedback or behavioral data from children, the conclusions about the effectiveness of the books remain inferential.

v) **Absence of Reader Engagement Analysis**

The study focused solely on textual analysis of children's books without examining how actual readers—children—engage with or interpret the content. This limitation is significant because bibliotherapy is inherently interactive and subjective; the effectiveness of therapeutic features can vary depending on a child's personal experiences, maturity, emotional readiness, and reading comprehension. Without data on how children respond to the materials, the study cannot confirm whether the books truly fulfill a therapeutic role.

vi) **Limited Inclusion of Stakeholder Perspectives**

The perspectives of key stakeholders such as educators, librarians, psychologists, and parents were not incorporated into the analysis. These individuals play a crucial role in selecting, recommending, and contextualizing books for children and may offer valuable insights into the suitability and perceived effectiveness of bibliotherapeutic literature. Their omission creates a gap in understanding how these books are used or viewed in real-world settings.

6.4 Propositions

Propositions in bibliotherapy research are assertions or suppositions that suggest relationships, associations, or predictions about the impacts, mechanisms, or results of bibliotherapeutic interventions. They provide guidance for research inquiries, assisting in the organization and evaluation of hypotheses in the context of utilizing literature for therapeutic purposes. The propositions act as fundamental principles for scholars investigating the complex relationship between bibliotherapy and emotional well-being. Through the process of testing and refining these ideas, scholars would be able to make significant contributions to the expanding field of bibliotherapy research. Based on the framework suggested earlier, the following are the propositions:

- i) Interacting with the characters and aspects in literature has a therapeutic effect on readers, promoting emotional well-being and personal development.
- ii) Engaging with literature that presents plots helps individuals connect with and contribute to emotional recovery.

- iii) The inclusion of illustrations in bibliotherapy increases reader involvement, leading to more substantial therapeutic results.
- iv) The readability of bibliotherapy materials significantly impacts the efficacy of emotional well-being for readers.
- v) The thematic contents of bibliotherapy materials significantly influences the emotional well-being and growth.
- vi) The practice of fostering empathy through bibliotherapy materials and interventions greatly enhances emotional well-being and personal growth.
- vii) Establishing a sense of safety and emotional security is crucial for maximizing emotional well-being and promoting personal growth.

The aforementioned propositions establish a structure for comprehending the ways in which particular components within bibliotherapy features contribute to the process of emotional well-being and individual development. Ultimately, these propositions not only present opportunities for future research but also offer practical advice for practitioners aiming to utilize the healing capabilities of reading. By adopting these propositions, the field of bibliotherapy can progress and provide sophisticated and impactful interventions that address the varied emotional needs of readers as they strive for healing and personal growth.

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the current use and development of bibliotherapy within Malaysian children's literature. These recommendations are grounded in the analysis of literary features identified in the selected texts and are intended to guide present practices among authors, educators, librarians, mental health practitioners, and other stakeholders involved in children's reading and well-being. There is a clear need to understand how local literature can be used in a therapeutic way, especially for children. This research fills that gap by looking closely at the specific features of Malaysian children's books that may support emotional growth and healing. This study has explored the use of bibliotherapy in Malaysian children's literature, focusing on how stories can help support the emotional and psychological well-being of young

readers. While bibliotherapy is well known and widely used in Western countries, research in Malaysia is still at an early stage.

Greater consideration should be given to how bibliotherapy features are incorporated into the development of Malaysian children's books. This study highlights seven elements; characters, plots, illustrations, readability, themes, empathy, and safety as central to supporting bibliotherapeutic use. These features were examined in 56 selected Malaysian children's books through expert evaluation and document analysis. The findings indicate that many existing texts show limited narrative depth and relatively restrained visual expression. While many of these features were present in the books, some important aspects were missing. For example, many stories lacked depth in their content, and the use of colours and illustrations was often limited. These missing elements reduce the books' ability to fully engage young readers and support their emotional needs. To address this, authors and publishers may consider strengthening emotional content through more fully developed characters and coherent plotlines that invite reflection and emotional engagement.

One important contribution of this study is the development of a practical framework to help writers, teachers, and mental health professionals use children's books more effectively for bibliotherapy. The bibliotherapy framework developed in this study provides a structured reference that may be applied in educational, library, and supportive contexts. Grounded in the cultural and developmental characteristics of Malaysian children, the framework is appropriate for local use. Educators, librarians, school counsellors, and mental health practitioners may refer to the framework when selecting, evaluating, and using children's books for emotional support, classroom activities, or guided reading. The use of a structured framework supports greater consistency and clarity in bibliotherapy practice, reducing reliance on informal or unsystematic approaches. It can guide the selection or creation of books that are not only educational but also emotionally supportive.

The bibliotherapy features checklist developed in this study offers a practical means of reviewing children's books currently in use. Schools, libraries, and other relevant institutions may draw on the checklist to examine their existing collections and to identify titles that are more appropriate for bibliotherapy-related activities. In addition, the checklist may inform future book selection and acquisition decisions, and encourage the production of children's literature that responds more effectively to both educational aims and emotional considerations.

Stories can be more than just tools for learning and it can also help children express their feelings, reflect on their experiences, and develop emotional resilience. In Malaysia's diverse cultural setting, using local stories for this purpose can be especially powerful, as children may relate more easily to characters and situations that reflect their own lives.

One of the key contributions of this study is the development of a culturally relevant framework for integrating bibliotherapeutic elements into children's literature. This framework offers practical guidance for educators, librarians, mental health professionals, parents and authors seeking methods to support children's emotional and psychological well-being through literature. By foregrounding the role of literary elements in therapeutic engagement, the study adds valuable insight into how literature can serve as a tool for self-reflection, emotional expression, and personal growth among young readers in Malaysia.

The findings also point to the need for closer collaboration among key stakeholders, including authors, illustrators, educators, psychologists, librarians, parents, and publishers. Greater cooperation across these groups may help ensure that children's books are culturally relevant while also providing meaningful emotional and developmental support. Such collaborative efforts are particularly important in addressing gaps identified in this study, including limited emotional depth and a lack of emphasis on visual and narrative complexity.

The findings also indicate the value of further strengthening professional understanding related to bibliotherapy. Carefully designed professional development initiatives for teachers, librarians, and mental health practitioners may support a clearer understanding of bibliotherapy principles and the considered use of children's literature as a supportive resource. Improved professional preparation may assist practitioners in facilitating reflective reading experiences and in applying literary materials more thoughtfully when working with children who encounter emotional or psychological challenges.

Like all research, this study has its limitations. The number of books analyzed was limited, and the evaluations relied on expert judgment, which may include some subjectivity. However, these limitations provide useful direction for future research. More in-depth and long-term studies are needed to test how bibliotherapy actually affects children over time. It is also important to look at stories in different languages,

including indigenous and bilingual texts, as well as digital books that are becoming more common.

In summary, this study has taken an important step in understanding how children's literature in Malaysia can support bibliotherapy. It offers both theoretical and practical contributions by identifying key literary features, highlighting current gaps, and proposing a helpful framework for future use. Continued emphasis should be placed on producing culturally resonant and emotionally safe children's literature. In Malaysia's diverse cultural context, stories that reflect children's lived experiences, values, and linguistic backgrounds can foster stronger identification and emotional connection. Ensuring emotional safety within stories allows children to explore feelings in a supportive and non-threatening way, reinforcing the role of literature as a meaningful resource for emotional growth and resilience. The research shows that with thoughtful planning and collaboration, stories can play a meaningful role in helping children manage emotions, build empathy, and grow into emotionally healthy individuals.

Although this study has identified key bibliotherapy features in Malaysian children's literature and proposed a framework suited to the local context, there are several areas that future work could explore to strengthen and extend these findings.

To begin with, future studies should consider examining children's outcomes directly, rather than focusing only on the features found in books. This research has shown what bibliotherapy features are present (or missing) in Malaysian children's texts, but it does not measure how children change after using these books. Follow-up studies could therefore use pre-post designs, longer-term tracking, or school-based interventions to examine whether children demonstrate improvements in areas such as emotional regulation, coping skills, empathy, or behaviour after structured bibliotherapy sessions.

Secondly, future research could widen the range of children's books analysed. The current study focused on 56 titles available in selected Klang Valley libraries. Including a larger number of books from different parts of Malaysia—such as rural libraries, school collections, independent publishers, and community reading programmes—may give a more complete picture of how bibliotherapy features appear across Malaysian children's literature. This would also allow comparisons between genres, publishers, age levels, and storytelling styles.

Third, future work should pay closer attention to Malaysia's multilingual and multicultural reality. Many children read in more than one language, including Bahasa Melayu, English, Mandarin, Tamil, and indigenous languages. Future studies could examine whether bibliotherapy features are expressed differently across languages and cultural traditions, and whether certain stories promote stronger identification, empathy, or emotional safety depending on the child's background. Research on bilingual texts and indigenous narratives may be particularly valuable, as these can reflect identity and lived experience in ways that are deeply meaningful for children.

Fourth, future studies may explore bibliotherapy features in digital formats, since children are increasingly exposed to e-books, audiobooks, and interactive story apps. It would be useful to examine whether the same features identified in printed texts apply in digital settings, or whether additional elements—such as multimedia effects, interactive design, and visual pacing—shape emotional engagement and reflection in different ways.

Fifth, future research could develop a more detailed taxonomy of therapeutic themes in Malaysian children's literature. While "themes" emerged as one important feature in this study, future work could classify themes more specifically (for example, anxiety, grief, bullying, anger, friendship, divorce, disability, or identity issues). A clearer thematic classification would make it easier for educators and practitioners to select books for particular emotional needs and support more targeted bibliotherapy programmes.

Finally, future research could focus more directly on how bibliotherapy is implemented in real settings. Studies that observe bibliotherapy sessions in schools, libraries, counselling contexts, or family settings could provide insight into practical issues such as facilitation skills, children's responses, ethical considerations, and how emotional safety is managed during discussions. Understanding these practical factors would help strengthen the application of the framework developed in this study.

Overall, future work that combines book-based analysis with outcome measurement and real-world implementation would provide a stronger evidence base for bibliotherapy in Malaysia and support the development of children's literature that is both culturally relevant and emotionally supportive.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

List of Books Evaluated

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
1	2015	Ayah, Apa itu?	Alam Anuar	Karangraf	6 - 9	16	Buku ini mengisahkan Ana, seorang kanak-kanak yang penuh dengan rasa ingin tahu. Ibu bapa disarankan agar bersabar dan melayan soalan anak dengan tenang dan penuh kasih sayang. Komunikasi yang baik antara ibu bapa dan anak penting untuk mengukuhkan hubungan keluarga.
2	2015	A better person	Zarina Ismail	Goodwill Publication	6 - 9	18	A Better Person is an inspiring story that follows the journey of a young character who struggles with bad habits and poor attitudes. Through meaningful experiences, guidance from family and friends, and moments of self-reflection, the protagonist slowly begins to change. The story highlights the importance of humility, kindness, and personal growth. Zarina Ismail weaves a narrative that encourages readers—especially children—to strive to become better individuals by making positive choices in daily life.
3	2015	The Greedy Goatherd	Mimi Samuel	Legend Book House and Distributor	6 - 9	16	The Greedy Goatherd tells the tale of a man who looked after goats but was never content with what he had. Driven by greed, he always wanted more goats, more food, and more wealth. One day, his selfish decisions led to unexpected consequences that taught him an important lesson about contentment and sharing. Through a simple narrative and relatable characters, the story conveys strong moral values about greed, gratitude, and the importance of being satisfied with what one has.
4	2015	Studying Hard	Ali Gator	Ali Gator Publication	6 - 9	23	Akhlaaq Building For Kids Series, featuring Saaliha & her younger brother Ali. This series inspires children to develop good Manners through fun stories involving children like

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
							themselves. STUDYING HARD: Good study habits get good results. Learn to study well and the results will come. Saaliha always studies hard. After school she always revises the lessons from class that day. Some days Ali tries to study with Saaliha too
5	2015	My Father's Farm	Emila Yusof	Oyes! Books Publication	6 - 9	30	A book about Dina who likes to go to her father's farm to help out by feeding and playing with the animals.
6	2015	Balasan Gajah yang Baik Hati	Azlina Mohd Masri	Penerbitan Pena Sakti	6 - 9	22	Buku ini mengisahkan seekor gajah yang menyelamatkan dua ekor semut ketika angin kencang melanda. Semut kemudian membalas budi apabila gajah diserang harimau, dengan menggigit harimau hingga ia melepaskan gajah. Kisah ini menunjukkan nilai murni seperti sikap tolong-menolong dan membalas jasa.
7	2015	Menjaga Kesihatan Diri	Kamarudin Mahpol	Zadin Publishing	6 - 9	24	Buku panduan kesihatan menyeluruh ini menggabungkan nasihat perubatan moden dengan prinsip-prinsip Islam untuk mempromosikan kesihatan holistik, dan sesuai untuk semua peringkat umur dan latar belakang.
8	2015	Budak yang Pemarah	Rattana Kodchanat	Penerbitan Pelangi	10 - 12	36	Buku ini mengisahkan bagaimana kanak-kanak bernama Marika mengatasi rasa marahnya melalui simbolik benda-benda seperti sekaki payung yang bermuka sedih, sepinggan buah-buahan yang kelihatan hodoh serta beberapa barangan lain. Buku ini mengajar kanak-kanak untuk mengawal emosi marah mereka dengan mengalihkan emosi tersebut kepada benda lain.
9	2015	Haikal Serba Tahu	Khairul Momokz	Buku Prima	10 - 12	19	Haikal ialah seorang pelajar popular di sekolah kerana sikapnya yang ramah dan banyak pengetahuan. Dia berkawan baik dengan Odah dan Lina, dan mereka sering bersama serta saling menyokong antara satu sama lain.
10	2015	Bilakah Saya Akan Membesar?	Rattana Kodchanat	Penerbitan Pelangi Sdn Bhd	10 - 12	27	Seorang budak perempuan mendapatkan tip yang berguna daripada ibunya supaya bagaimana untuk dia membesar

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
							dengan sihat, ceria dan positif.
11	2015	Keluarga Bahagia	Rattana Kodchanat	Penerbitan Pelangi Sdn Bhd	10 - 12	35	Siri ini menggambarkan kehangatan dan gelagat lucu sebuah keluarga yang penuh kasih sayang. Fokus pada Sofin, anak bongsu, yang sering menangis kuat. Apabila tangisannya memenuhi ruang, ahli keluarga yang penyayang bertindak dengan pelbagai aksi untuk menghiburkan dan menenangkan Sofin. Kisah ini disampaikan melalui ilustrasi berwarna dan cerita ringan, yang bertujuan membantu membina kecerdasan emosi kanak-kanak—mendukung nilai toleransi, empati, dan kehangatan keluarga yang positif.
12	2015	Respect for Teachers	K.F.Liew	Pustaka Kalam Bestari	10 - 12	24	Respect for Teachers by K.F. Liew is a meaningful story that emphasizes the value of appreciating and honoring educators. The story follows a group of students who, through their classroom experiences and personal reflections, come to realize the sacrifices and dedication shown by their teachers. Through moments of misunderstanding, learning, and growth, the students learn that respect is not just shown through words, but also through behavior, discipline, and gratitude. This story serves as a gentle reminder of the important role teachers play in shaping young minds and building the future.
13	2015	Never Stop Trying	Surina Mat Adil	Penerbitan Alam Ilmu	10 - 12	32	Never Stop Trying is an inspiring story written by Surina Mat Adil that highlights the importance of perseverance and determination. The main character faces several challenges in school and daily life but refuses to give up. With the support of family and friends, and a belief in personal growth, the character continues to push forward despite setbacks. The story conveys a powerful message: success does not come instantly, but through consistent effort and a strong will to improve. It encourages young readers to stay motivated and never lose hope, even when things get tough.

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
14	2015	Mila's Big Family	Maslina Yusoff	Buku Prima	10 - 12	30	In this warm and inviting tale, Mila becomes fast friends with Jijah and her siblings, whose close-knit family life is bustling with noise, laughter, and shared moments. Through their interactions, Mila learns new ways of expressing care, understanding sibling dynamics, and the joy found in extended families. The story is brought to life with bright, engaging illustrations and simple yet meaningful language—perfect for children aged 3 and up.
15	2015	Asam Pedas Ikan Pari Aminah	Siti Nur Solehah	Khalis Suci Enterprise	10 - 12	24	Kisah perjuangan Aminah, seorang ibu tunggal yang menyara hidup dengan memasak selepas kematian suaminya. Masakan asam pedas ikan parinya yang unik dan enak menarik perhatian penduduk kampung dan pelancong. Seorang penulis makanan dari kota yang tersesat ke kampungnya tertarik dengan masakannya dan mencadangkan agar ia dipasarkan ke seluruh negara. Namun, Aminah menghadapi dilema untuk memilih antara mengekalkan keaslian resepinya atau mengorbankan prinsip demi kemajuan hidup.
16	2015	Kemaafan	Zarina Ismail	Pustaka Cergas Jaya	10 - 12	14	Buku ini mengisahkan tentang dua adik-beradik, Sabrina dan Syikin. Syikin digambarkan sebagai seorang kanak-kanak yang bermasalah. Buku ini bertujuan untuk menyampaikan pengajaran tentang kepentingan memaafkan, menggunakan peribahasa dalam penceritaan.
17	2015	Nasib Seekor Kambing Jantan	Zulkifli Puteh	Penerbit Sanmin Sdn Bhd	10 - 12	32	Cerita Nasib Seekor Kambing Jantan mengisahkan tentang kehidupan seekor kambing jantan yang sering dipinggirkan dan tidak dihargai oleh haiwan-haiwan lain di ladang. Walaupun sering menjadi bahan ejekan kerana sifatnya yang degil dan kasar, kambing jantan ini sebenarnya memiliki hati yang baik dan keberanian yang luar biasa. Suatu hari, ladang mereka diancam oleh serigala, dan tanpa diduga, kambing jantan inilah yang tampil berani menentang ancaman tersebut. Tindakannya menyelamatkan haiwan lain

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
							mengubah persepsi mereka terhadapnya. Cerita ini menyampaikan mesej bahawa setiap individu mempunyai kelebihan tersendiri dan tidak wajar dinilai hanya berdasarkan luaran.
18	2016	Brave Tiny Tutti	Esther Ong	Little Son Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	16	Brave Tiny Tutti tells the inspiring story of a small and timid turtle named Tutti who lives in a peaceful pond with other animals. Despite his small size and shy nature, Tutti dreams of becoming someone brave and helpful. One day, danger comes to the pond when a sudden flood threatens the safety of the animals. While others panic, Tutti gathers his courage and helps lead the smaller creatures to safety using his knowledge of hidden paths around the pond. His actions surprise everyone and earn him great respect. The story highlights the values of inner strength, courage, and the idea that even the smallest creature can make a big difference.
19	2016	Up in The Jambu Tree	Sabariah Faridah Jamaluddin	Little Caliphs International Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	26	Young siblings Sarah and Emir climb high into their beloved jambu (guava) tree, using it as a cozy haven for imaginative play. Up there, they pretend to work as doctors, farmers, chefs, and more—exploring different occupations and roles with enthusiasm. With its bright illustrations, basic vocabulary, and even Arabic words, this playful story introduces topics like jobs, creativity, perseverance, and the joy of learning. Aligned with Islamic values, the story encourages children to draw inspiration and knowledge from the Qur'an and features positive messages supportive of early childhood development
20	2016	Caring for Orphans	Ali Gator	Ali Gator Publication	6 - 9	24	This story is about Saaliha and her younger brother Ali visiting orphans. They learn the meaning of friendship and the joy of helping others. The engaging storytelling approach makes this book accessible and enjoyable for readers.

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21	2016	Ucapkan, Saya Minta Maaf	A. Ralvinder Singh	Ladybug Publishing and Distribution	6 - 9	17	Pada suatu hari yang panas, seekor unta bernama Carlos melompat ke dalam kolam tempat sahabatnya, Cory, sedang minum, menyebabkan air menjadi keruh. Tindakan itu membuat Cory marah dan tidak mahu bercakap dengan Carlos. Carlos berasa sedih dan meminta nasihat daripada rakan-rakannya, Oona dan Andre, tetapi cadangan mereka tidak berjaya. Akhirnya, Carlos berjumpa burung hering bernama Vino yang menasihatinya supaya meminta maaf. Keesokan harinya, Carlos memohon maaf kepada Cory, dan Cory memaafkannya kerana itu sahaja yang dia mahukan.
22	2016	Fiqah untuk Kanak-kanak: Adab Meminjam	Syarifah Rohaida Syed Ahmad	Kiddibird Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	23	Buku ini mengisahkan Nayla yang kehilangan buku sains kepunyaannya kerana telah dipinjam tanpa pengetahuannya dan bagaimana Nayla berinteraksi dengan rakan sekelasnya tentang hal tersebut. Buku ini sesuai untuk mengajar pentingnya etika dan adab ketika meminjam dalam Islam dan dapat membantu kanak-kanak untuk memahami dan mengamalkan adab yang baik dalam kehidupan seharian.
23	2016	Patah Tumbuh Hilang Berganti	Maslina Yusoff	DBP	10 - 12	38	Mila, seorang gadis kecil, sangat menyayangi burung murai peliharaannya — sehinggalah pada suatu hari, burung itu terbang pergi dan tidak kembali lagi. Mila berasa sangat sedih atas kehilangan tersebut. Tidak lama kemudian, dia terdengar kicauan merdu seekor burung kenari yang hinggap berdekatan. Kesedihan Mila bertukar menjadi kegembiraan apabila dia menyedari bahawa burung kenari itu menjadi teman baru yang menenangkan hatinya. Melalui pengalaman ini, Mila mempelajari makna peribahasa Melayu “patah tumbuh hilang berganti”, iaitu bahawa permulaan baharu boleh muncul daripada sebuah kehilangan.
24	2016	Hendak Seribu Daya, Tak Nak	Maslina Yusoff	DBP	10 - 12	44	Buku ini mengisahkan perkenalan Mila dengan rakan baharunya, Johan, di sekolah. Pada awalnya, Mila tidak menyukai Johan kerana sikapnya yang suka mengusik dan

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
		Seribu Dalih					menarik rambutnya. Keengganan Mila untuk ke sekolah diatasi dengan pujukan ibunya, yang mencadangkan agar Mila meminjamkan buku cerita dan komik kepada Johan. Tindakan ini membuka ruang persahabatan antara mereka apabila Johan turut meminati bahan bacaan tersebut. Kisah ini menonjolkan nilai usaha dan pendekatan positif dalam membina hubungan, selaras dengan pepatah "hendak seribu daya, tak hendak seribu dalih."
25	2017	Cuba Buat Sendiri	Nani Menon dan Amelia Yusof	Integra Kreatif Media Sdn bhd	6 - 9	10	Pengarang melatih kanak-kanak yang mempunyai ego dan kegedilan tersendiri melalui penceritaan dalam buku beliau. Karakter kakak dan adik dalam buku ini menggambarkan kasih sayang seorang kakak kepada adiknya untuk belajar berdikari dan kurang meminta pertolongan dari si kakak.
26	2017	Anak Pak Malim	Zarinah Ismail	Semangat Integrasi Enterprise	6 - 9	14	Andik, seorang pemuda malas, enggan membantu ayahnya, Pak Malim, yang menyara hidup dengan menjual rotan. Apabila ayahnya jatuh sakit dan mereka kehabisan makanan, Andik meminta bantuan tetapi ditolak penduduk kampung. Ketua kampung bersetuju membantu dengan syarat Andik bekerja. Andik akur, bekerja keras, dan menerima bantuan. Akhirnya, dia mula rajin dan kehidupannya berubah menjadi lebih baik.
27	2017	Building Up One Another	Elaine Tan	Penerbitan D.E.	10 - 12	24	This book is designed to instil positive social values in young readers. It highlights the importance of respect, empathy, and teamwork among peers. Through engaging storytelling and colourful illustrations, the author encourages students to build supportive relationships, fostering a sense of community and shared growth. This book serves as an educational tool to promote social harmony and personal development in school settings.
28	2017	Kuasai Budaya Ilmu	Jamilah Bujang	E1 Publications Sdn Bhd	10 - 12	24	Kisah ini mengisahkan Raif, seorang murid Tahun 3 yang tidak berminat belajar dan lemah dalam membaca. Ibu

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							bapanya mengambil tindakan dengan menjemput guru tuisyen ke rumah. Pada mulanya, Raif tidak menunjukkan minat, namun setelah menonton dokumentari tentang angkasawan, dia bercita-cita menjadi seorang angkasawan. Disebabkan dokumentari itu dalam bahasa Inggeris, Raif mula sedar kepentingan menguasai bahasa tersebut. Dia berusaha membaca buku bahasa Inggeris secara konsisten dan akhirnya berjaya memenangi kategori Bahasa Inggeris dalam program NILAM sekolah.
29	2018	Don't Be Gullible	Norazizi Harun & Waheeda	Fine Tune Publication	6 - 9	30	This book convey an important reminder to think carefully and not trust people or information too quickly. It emphasizes the need for critical thinking. The message encourages readers to be cautious, question what they read, and avoid blindly believing everything. In short, it's a warning to stay alert and think critically, especially when dealing with information from any sources.
30	2018	We share	Elaine Chua	Enam	6 - 9	24	
31	2018	Two Sisters, One Sarong	Lorraine Yuung	Precious Pages Resources	6 - 9	32	Gituan and Riang share countless joyful memories—playtime, bedtime, and snuggles—wrapped together in their treasured sarong. As they grow older, sibling rivalry, jealousy, and anger begin to drive them apart, dimming the vibrant colours of their world. Hope returns with the arrival of their baby sister, Inang, but only when a family crisis brings them together does the bond truly mend, restoring color, closeness, and love
32	2018	Jangan Bersikap Pelupa	A. Ralvinder Singh	Ladybug Publishing and Distribution	6 - 9	17	Cerita "Jangan Bersikap Pelupa" mengisahkan seekor anjing laut bernama Sam yang sering terlupa perkara penting seperti membawa buku ke sekolah, makan bekal, dan membawa pulang bekas makanan. Dia meminta bantuan ibunya untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut. Ibunya mencadangkan Sam menggunakan pelekat untuk mencatat perkara penting dan

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							menampalnya di tempat yang mudah dilihat. Cadangan itu berjaya membantu Sam mengingati tugas hariannya, dan dia berasa sangat gembira serta berterima kasih kepada ibunya.
33	2018	Sayangi Apai	Hasmiah Hussain	DBP	6 - 9	31	ayangku Apai berkisarkan seekor anak tupai bernama Apai, yang dilarang oleh ibu bapanya keluar bermain seperti rakan sebaya. Namun, Apai tetap degil dan keluar tanpa izin—malangnya dia hampir dimakan ular akibat keghairahan bermain. Peristiwa menakutkan itu memberi pengajaran besar: Apai berubah, menjadi lebih taat dan menghargai nasihat ibu bapanya.
34	2018	Bertemu dengan Pembuli	Siti Munirah	Pena Intelek Enterprise	6 - 9	24	Cerita ini mengisahkan tentang seorang murid bernama Amir yang berpindah ke sebuah sekolah baru. Pada awalnya, Amir sangat teruja, namun kegembiraannya tidak bertahan lama apabila dia mula diganggu oleh seorang pelajar yang suka membuli. Amir berasa takut dan tidak tahu bagaimana untuk menangani situasi itu. Dia cuba mengabaikan pembuli tersebut, tetapi buli itu semakin menjadi-jadi. Akhirnya, Amir memberanikan diri untuk melaporkan kejadian kepada guru disiplin. Guru tersebut memberikan nasihat dan membantu menyelesaikan masalah itu. Pembuli diberi kaunseling dan akhirnya meminta maaf kepada Amir. Cerita ini membawa mesej tentang keberanian bersuara, pentingnya mendapatkan bantuan, dan bagaimana perubahan positif boleh berlaku apabila masalah ditangani dengan betul.
35	2018	Tidak Baik Menyakiti Orang	Md Ridza Zainol Abidin	Alaf Almu	6 - 9	28	Cerita ini mengisahkan seorang budak lelaki bernama Haziq yang suka mengejek dan menyakiti perasaan rakan-rakannya di sekolah. Dia sering mengeluarkan kata-kata kasar dan mempermainkan orang lain tanpa menyedari kesan perbuatannya. Suatu hari, Haziq sendiri menjadi mangsa ejekan apabila dia melakukan kesilapan semasa persembahan di sekolah. Dia berasa sangat malu dan sedih, lalu menyedari

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
							betapa pedihnya hati apabila disakiti. Selepas kejadian itu, Haziq meminta maaf kepada rakan-rakannya dan berjanji untuk berubah. Cerita ini mengajar kita tentang pentingnya menjaga tutur kata dan tidak menyakiti hati orang lain.
36	2018	The Disobedient Frog	Jackie Foo	Impian Publications and Distributors	10 - 12	32	This tale follows a young frog who persistently disobeys his mother—doing the opposite of everything she says. When the mother frog falls seriously ill, she makes a final request: bury her near the river, knowing her son will do the opposite and place her grave on the hill. Tragically, he does finally obey—but only after her passing. Soon, heavy rain washes away her grave by the riverbank. Filled with regret and sorrow, the frog cries inconsolably every time it rains.
37	2018	Friends	Elaine Chua	Enam	10 - 12	24	This story centers around the close friendship between two best friends, Mei Ling and Aisha, who do everything together—studying, playing, and helping each other. One day, a misunderstanding causes a rift between them, and their friendship begins to fall apart. Both girls feel sad but don't know how to fix things. With the help of a caring teacher, they realize the importance of communication, forgiveness, and appreciating each other. In the end, they reconcile and their bond becomes even stronger.
38	2018	Emily, Kawan Baharu Amani	Bambang Irwanto	Ana Muslim Sdn Bhd	10 - 12	79	Buku ini mengisahkan Iman Amani, seorang gadis yang suka bercerita dan mempunyai impian besar. Amani berkenalan dengan Emily, seorang rakan baru yang berbeza karakter daripadanya. Walaupun risau tentang perbezaan mereka, Amani ingin berkawan dengan Emily. Cerita ini mengajak pembaca mengenali kisah persahabatan dan penerimaan perbezaan.
39	2019	You Can Do It	Nely Hasila Choy	MDM Enterprise	6 - 9	14	Little bear is growing up day by day. Mother bear helps him to put on socks. “Mom, I can do it. Look, I can put on socks by myself!”. Little bear put on his coat and buttons up.

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
							“Mom, I can button up by myself!.” They are going walkdown the stairs. Mother Bear wants to take Little Bear in her arms. “No, no. I can walk by myself and the rest little bear do it by itself. One day mother bear gets sick. Little Bear gets panic and cries. “don’t cry baby. Can you help me?” “I can mom!” “can you please give me cup of water?” Little bear goes to the neighbour grandma Racoon’s house. He told Grandma Racoon about his mother and Grandma Racoon give him some medicine to his mother. After that, he sits by bedside to look after her mom until dad come back. Dad holds him up and said, “you can take care of your mom, baby. You did good!” Little bear laughs happily on hearing of the praise.
40	2019	Be Polite and Courteous	Nely Hasila Choy	MDM Enterprise	6 - 9	14	This book teaches children the importance of good manners through simple language and real-life examples. With colourful illustrations, it shows polite behaviours like saying "please," "thank you," and taking turns, while also explaining why these actions matter. The book encourages empathy, kindness, and respect, helping children build positive relationships. By being polite and respectful helps create strong and caring connections with others.
41	2019	The Milkmaid and her Pail of Milk	Kohwai and Young	Kohwai and Young	6 - 9	16	A hardworking milkmaid heads to market with a full pail of milk balanced on her head. Along the way, she daydreams about what she’ll do with the money: buy eggs, raise chickens, and eventually treat herself to a new dress and attention at the village fair. Lost in her fantasies, she tosses her head—much like she imagined—and the pail tumbles to the ground, spilling all the milk. In an instant, her dreams vanish. She is left only with the age-old lesson: “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.”
42	2019	My Mother's Garden	Emyla Yusof	Oyes! Books Publication	6 - 9	23	A little girl named Dina spends a joyful day exploring her mother’s lush garden—a vibrant playground filled with

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
							flowers, frolicking insects, and fluttering butterflies. Shy at first, Dina's curiosity and imagination blossom as she observes nature and pretends to become a flower or a dragonfly. When a sudden rain sends her running indoors, she eagerly waits by the window until she can return and reconnect with the garden's wonders. The book concludes with a fold-out glossary listing the plants by their Malay, English, and scientific names—adding a learning dimension to the delightful story
43	2019	Tok Belang Kehilangan Belang	Nurazmi Mokhtar	Oyes! Books Publication	6 - 9	20	Tok Belang sangat garang. Haiwan-haiwan di hutan memang takut padanya. Pada suatu hari, malapetaka menimpa Tok Belang. Siapakah yang boleh menolongnya?
44	2019	Ikan Pari yang Berani	Hashim Latiff	Penerbitan Maju	6 - 9	32	Penghuni dasar laut mengadakan mesyuarat tergempar setelah mendapat khabar tentang ancaman dari sekumpulan ikan naga yang ingin merompak kampung mereka. Mereka menubuhkan pasukan pengawal dan berharap ikan paus dapat membantu, namun paus berada di laut tenggara. Sotong mencadangkan agar jerung yang pergi memanggil paus kerana kelajuan mereka, dan semua bersetuju. Sementara rakan-rakan lain berada di laut timur, pari ditinggalkan sendirian di rumah. Ketika seekor ikan naga menyerangnya, pari menggunakan helah dan keberaniannya untuk menikam ikan naga dengan ekornya yang berbisa hingga mati. Tindakannya itu membuat seluruh warga dasar laut memuji keberanian pari yang berjaya mengalahkan musuh yang jauh lebih besar.
45	2019	Nana Suka Berkongsi	Q. Malyana Shuhaimi	Ana Muslim Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	24	Nana adalah seorang kanak-kanak kecil yang sedang belajar nilai penting berkongsi. Namun, dia mengalami kesukaran untuk memahami konsep itu sepenuhnya. Melalui situasi harian—seperti bermain dengan mainan, makanan, atau alat tulis—cerita ini menunjukkan bagaimana Nana belajar untuk menjadi lebih murah hati dan gembira apabila berkongsi

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							dengan rakan-rakan. Buku ini bertujuan membantu kanak-kanak membentuk tabiat berkongsi sebagai amalan positif dalam kehidupan seharian.
46	2019	Yippie! Anis Rasa Gembira!	Razlina Radzuan	Ana Muslim Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	21	Anis bangun pada suatu pagi dengan perasaan yang sangat gembira—semuanya kelihatan sempurna, daripada cahaya matahari hingga ke sarapannya. Dia ketawa melihat pantulan dirinya, menari di halaman belakang, dan berkongsi kegembiraannya dengan ahli keluarga serta rakan-rakan yang ditemuinya. Apabila hari berakhir, Anis menyedari bahawa kegembiraannya adalah satu anugerah yang boleh dikongsi, membawa senyuman dan kebaikan kepada orang sekeliling. Sebuah kisah ringkas tetapi bermakna yang meraikan kegembiraan harian dan kesan positif yang boleh merebak daripada satu hati ke hati yang lain.
47	2019	Safeeya and Kitty : Playing in the Rain	Dr. Ana Yasmin Azmi	Aulad Read and Play	10 - 12	32	Curious and observant, Safeeya and her loyal companion Kitty embrace the joy of a rainy day. As raindrops fall, Safeeya reflects on the wonders of nature—pondering how each drop reveals the greatness of Allah’s creation. Through their play, she learns to appreciate the environment around her, seeing rain not just as weather, but as a blessing to be celebrated and shared.
48	2019	Bullying the New Pupil	Norazizul Harun & Veedhra	Kensington Edu Houz Enterprise	10 - 12	30	This book tells the story of a new student who faces bullying at a new school. The content shows the emotional effects of bullying and how the student eventually gets support from a teacher and classmates. It emphasizes the values of empathy, kindness, and courage in building a safe and welcoming school environment.
49	2020	Sofia is a Crybaby	Rachel	Aneka Publication and Distributors Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	22	Part of a storybook series featuring a character named Sofia, this installment appears to explore challenges children face around emotional expression—specifically crying or temper tantrums. The book likely shows Sofia learning healthy ways

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							to identify and manage BIG feelings when things don't go her way. Through events like sharing toys, bedtime routines, or conflicts with friends, Sofia demonstrates that it's okay to feel sad or overwhelmed, but she gradually discovers strategies to calm down, express herself respectfully, and seek support when needed.
50	2020	The Hardworking Carpenter	S.Subramaniam	Aneka Publication and Distributors Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	16	Pak Usop was a fifty-year-old carpenter who had built many homes for his clients. His craftsmanship was highly praised, and his clients were always satisfied with the quality of his work. He had learned the trade from his father and continued the legacy with dedication and skill. Due to his excellent reputation, many people sought his expertise to build their homes. Pak Usop worked diligently from dawn until dusk to meet the growing demand. His strong work ethic and commitment to excellence made him a role model for others to follow.
51	2020	Muiz, Pembuli di Sekolah Baharu	Hamdan Hj Mohd Ali	Malidi Publication	10 - 12	32	Buku cerita ini memberi tumpuan kepada nilai moral di mana watak utamanya ialah seorang murid baharu bernama Muiz. Dia baru sahaja berpindah ke sekolah lain dan masih membawa sikap lamanya, iaitu suka membuli rakan-rakannya. Pada suatu hari, Raju dan Alim ternampak Muiz sedang membuli rakannya. Keadaan menjadi lebih buruk apabila Muiz tidak mahu mendengar nasihat mereka. Akibat perbuatan Muiz, Raju dan Alim telah dilaporkan kepada guru disiplin. Selepas itu, Muiz menyesal atas perbuatannya dan berjanji untuk berubah serta tidak membuli orang lain lagi.
52	2020	Gajah Mencari Sahabat	Azly Yusof	Kiddibird Sdn Bhd	6 - 9	16	Buku yang mengisahkan seekor gajah yang kesepian dan mencari sahabat, tetapi ditolak oleh haiwan lain kerana saiz dan kekuatannya. Namun, apabila harimau mengancam haiwan-haiwan di hutan, gajah dengan berani menghadapinya dan menyelamatkan semua. Tindakannya membuat haiwan lain menerima dan menghargainya. Cerita

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							ini mengajar tentang keberanian, belas kasihan, dan pentingnya tidak menilai seseorang dari luaran sahaja.
53	2020	Kehilangan	Dr. Ahmad Rostam Md Zin	Al Ameen Serve Holdings Sdn Bhd	10 - 12	24	Dunia adalah persinggahan di mana anak-anak perlu dia ajar untuk berusaha sebaik mungkin agar dapat mencapai apa yang diimpikan . Ini juga penting untuk menanamkan perspektif bahawa kematian itu bermaksud pengakhiran dunia dan tidak perlu berselindung di sebalik metafora lain seperti ahli keluarga jalan jauh, ahli keluarga tidak mahu balik dan sebagainya .
54	2020	Koleksi Tiga Sahabat Baik	Jamaliah Juni	Kiddibird Sdn Bhd	10 - 12	128	Cerita ini mengisahkan tiga sahabat baik – Amin, Bala, dan Chong – yang sangat rapat dan sentiasa berkongsi segala-galanya. Mereka gemar mengumpul barang unik seperti setem, batu kecil, dan buku komik. Pada suatu hari, timbul salah faham apabila salah seorang daripada mereka menuduh rakannya mengambil koleksi kesayangannya. Perselisihan mula berlaku dan persahabatan mereka menjadi renggang. Namun, dengan kejujuran, komunikasi yang baik, dan bimbingan daripada guru mereka, mereka berjaya menyelesaikan masalah tersebut. Akhirnya mereka sedar bahawa nilai persahabatan jauh lebih penting daripada koleksi peribadi.
55	2020	Seperti Mencurah Air Ke Daun Keladi	Hasmin Abdul	Sunrise Publisher	10 - 12	22	Buku ini merupakan koleksi cerita bergambar yang direka untuk menerangkan maksud peribahasa Melayu, termasuk peribahasa “Seperti Mencurah Air Ke Daun Keladi.” Cerita-cerita ini disesuaikan dengan Kurikulum Sekolah Malaysia, bertujuan untuk memberi contoh kehidupan harian yang menggambarkan makna peribahasa tersebut. Setiap cerita bukan hanya menyampaikan nilai moral dan teladan, tetapi juga membantu pembaca—terutamanya kanak-kanak—memahami penggunaan peribahasa dalam situasi sebenar.
56	2020	Seperti Aur Dengan	Hasmin Abdul	Sunrise	10 - 12	24	Buku bergambar ini menghidupkan peribahasa Melayu

	Publication Year	Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Target age	Number of pages	Summary
		Tebing		Publisher			<p>“bagai aur dengan tebing”. Kisah ini mengisahkan tentang sebatang buluh muda yang tumbuh di tepi tebing sungai, yang hanya dapat hidup subur kerana tebing tersebut mengekalkan tanah dan mencegah hakisan. Sebagai balasan, akar buluh itu membantu mengukuhkan tebing sungai, melindunginya daripada runtuh. Melalui metafora semula jadi yang jelas ini, naratif ini menyampaikan nilai kerjasama, sokongan bersama, dan saling bergantung—pengajaran moral penting yang berkait rapat dengan kehidupan berkeluarga, persahabatan, dan komuniti.</p>

APPENDIX 2

Public Libraries in the Klang Valley Accessed By Researchers

WILAYAH ERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR	
1	Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia 232, Jalan Tun Razak, 50572 Kuala Lumpur.
2	Islamic Arts Museum Children's Library Jalan Lembah, Tasik Perdana, 50480 Kuala Lumpur
3	Perpustakaan Kuala Lumpur 1, Jln Raja, City Centre, 50050 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur
4	Perpustakaan Kuala Lumpur Cawangan TTDI 31204, Jalan Athinapan, Taman Tun Dr Ismail, 60000 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur.
5	Perpustakaan Awam Damansara No 9, Unit 9, Jalan Beringin, Bukit Damansara 50490 Kuala Lumpur
6	Pustaka KL @ Bandar Baru Sentul Kuala Lumpur Jalan 3/48a, Bandar Baru Sentul, 51000 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur.
SELANGOR, DARUL EHSAN	
1	Perpustakaan Raja Tun Uda Jalan Kelab Golf 13/6, Seksyen 13, 40100 Shah Alam, Selangor
2	Anggerik Mokara Library Jalan Utarid U5/9, Taman Mutiara Subang, 40150 Shah Alam, Selangor
3	Perpustakaan Awam Selangor Daerah Klang 139 Jalan Tengku Kelana, Klang, Selangor
4	Perpustakaan Komuniti Petaling Jaya Lot 389, Jalan Selangor, Seksyen 4, 46050 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.
5	Perpustakaan Kanak-Kanak Puchong B-07-01, IOI Boulevard, Jalan Kenari 5, Bandar Puchong Jaya, Puchong, Selangor.
6	Toy Library@Kinrara 1, Jalan Merak, Bandar Puchong Jaya, 47100 Puchong, Selangor
7	Pepustakaan Hipermedia MBSJ Puchong Persiaran Puteri 1, Bandar Puteri, 47100 Puchong, Selangor

APPENDIX 3

Validation Form of Bibliotherapy Features

Validation of Bibliotherapy Features						
<p>Dear Experts,</p> <p>This inventory contains 7 domains and 28 items related to bibliotherapy features. We need your expert judgement on the degree of relevant of each item to the measured domains. Your review should be based on the definition and relevant terminologies that are provided to you. Please be as objective and constructive as possible in your review and use the following rating scale:</p> <p>Degree of relevance: 1 = the item is not relevant to the measured domain 2 = the item is somewhat not relevant to the measured domain 3 = the item is quite relevant to the measured domain 4 = the item is highly relevant to the measured domain</p>						
TESTED ITEM		RELEVANCE				SCORE
Characters						
1	Presentation of characters	1	2	3	4	
2	Memorable characters	1	2	3	4	
3	Characters exhibiting traits like judgment, responsibility and empathy	1	2	3	4	
4	Characters serve as valuable instruments for imparting moral lessons	1	2	3	4	
Plot						
1	Storylines include a wide array of settings	1	2	3	4	
2	Maintain the children's interest by holding their attention	1	2	3	4	
3	Story is interesting, clear, relevant, and easy to understand.					
4	Challenges and encounters faced by the characters	1	2	3	4	
Illustrations						
1	Text and illustrations coherent and pertinent	1	2	3	4	
2	The colours in the illustration are appealing enough	1	2	3	4	
3	Enables the children to articulate and investigate their deepest ideas and emotions.	1	2	3	4	
4	Book's appeal to its target age group					
Readability						
1	Well written	1	2	3	4	
2	Chance to connect with the text by asking questions, giving them ideas, and getting them to take part.					
3	Ensuring that children are provided with tales and texts that are suitable for their evolving reading abilities	1	2	3	4	
4	Vocabulary and language used in the book is suitable for the target age range.	1	2	3	4	
Theme						
1	Values being discussed	1	2	3	4	
2	Lessons be drawn from the book	1	2	3	4	
3	Stimulating critical thinking abilities	1	2	3	4	

Validation of Bibliotherapy Features

Dear Experts,

This inventory contains 7 domains and 28 items related to bibliotherapy features. We need your expert judgement on the degree of relevant of each item to the measured domains. Your review should be based on the definition and relevant terminologies that are provided to you. Please be as objective and constructive as possible in your review and use the following rating scale:

Degree of relevance:

- 1 = the item is not relevant to the measured domain
- 2 = the item is somewhat not relevant to the measured domain
- 3 = the item is quite relevant to the measured domain
- 4 = the item is highly relevant to the measured domain

4	Offer coping techniques	1	2	3	4	
Empathy						
1	Exhibition of empathy in the characters					
2	Self-reflection	1	2	3	4	
3	Engaging with the emotions	1	2	3	4	
4	Encourage discussions about empathy	1	2	3	4	
Safety						
1	Vocabulary is appropriate and matches the child's language skills.	1	2	3	4	
2	Features positive role models and characters	1	2	3	4	
3	Characters closely match the age of the children	1	2	3	4	
4	Readers protected from potential harm or exposure to content that could trigger feelings of danger or distress.	1	2	3	4	

If you have more inputs that have not been listed above, please provide them here:

APPENDIX 4

Children's Book Rating Form

Book Information

Target Age: _____

- 1 Name of Book:
- 2 Author:
- 3 Publisher:
- 4 Year of Publication:
- 5 Types of Illustration: Color Drawing Black & White Photograph Color Photograph Black & White Drawing None

Literature Information

Characters			
1	Is a specific main character/protagonist identified in the book?	Yes	No
2	Are there any notable literary characters that are particularly memorable?	Yes	No
3	Do characters exhibit traits like judgment, responsibility, and empathy?	Yes	No
4	Are the characters show their true natures, their strengths, and weaknesses?	Yes	No
Plot			
5	Does the story give kids a range of things to ponder, inquire about, and take into account?	Yes	No
6	Are there any major surprises or twists in the story that catch the reader's attention?	Yes	No
7	Is the story interesting, simple, relevant, and easy to comprehend?	Yes	No
8	Are there challenges and encounters faced by the characters depicted in a genuine and realistic manner?	Yes	No
Illustrations			
9	Are the text and illustrations coherent and pertinent?	Yes	No
10	Are the colors in the illustration appealing enough?	Yes	No
11	Did the illustrations in the book enhance the children's knowledge about the issues of concern?	Yes	No
12	Do the illustrations contribute to the book's appeal to its target age group?	Yes	No
Readability			
13	Is the book well written for the targeted age group?	Yes	No
14	Are there opportunities for young readers to interact with the text, such as through questions, prompts, or participation?	Yes	No

15	Does the book give kids stories and texts that are right for their level of reading development?	Yes	No
16	Is the vocabulary and language used in the book suitable for the target age range?	Yes	No
Theme			
17	Are there specific values being discussed or emphasized?	Yes	No
18	Can any lessons or moral values be drawn from this story?	Yes	No
19	Does the book enhance the development of critical thinking skills?	Yes	No
20	Does the book provide some coping techniques and responses to the crisis or issue at hand?	Yes	No
Empathy			
21	Do the characters in the story demonstrate empathy towards one another or other characters?	Yes	No
22	Are there lessons or messages about understanding and considering others' feelings?	Yes	No
23	Does the book encourage readers to put themselves in the shoes of the characters and understand their perspectives?	Yes	No
24	Are there moral dilemmas or conflicts in the story that encourage discussions about empathy?	Yes	No
Safety			
25	Is the vocabulary used in the book aligns with the child's proficiency?	Yes	No
26	Does the book include positive role models and characters that demonstrate characteristics such as kindness, empathy, and resilience?	Yes	No
27	Is the book's main characters close to the children's age?	Yes	No
28	Are young readers shielded from any potential injury or exposure to content that may elicit feelings of threat or distress?	Yes	No

APPENDIX 5

Borang Penilaian Buku Kanak-Kanak

Maklumat Buku

Sasaran Umur: _____

- 1 Tajuk Buku:
- 2 Nama Pengarang:
- 3 Penerbit:
- 4 Tahun Penerbitan:
- 5 Jenis Ilustrasi: Lukisan Foto Foto Lukisan Tiada
 Berwarna Hitam & Berwarna Hitam &
 Putih Putih

Maklumat Literatur

Watak			
1	Adakah watak utama/protagonis tertentu dikenal pasti dalam buku?	Ya	Tidak
2	Adakah terdapat watak-watak yang sangat diingati?	Ya	Tidak
3	Adakah watak mempamerkan sifat seperti pertimbangan, tanggungjawab dan empati?	Ya	Tidak
4	Adakah watak-watak itu menunjukkan sifat sebenar mereka, kekuatan serta kelemahan?	Ya	Tidak
Plot			
5	Adakah cerita itu memberi kanak-kanak pelbagai perkara untuk direnungkan, dipersoalkan dan diambil kira?	Ya	Tidak
6	Adakah terdapat sebarang kejutan atau kelainan besar dalam cerita yang boleh menarik perhatian pembaca?	Ya	Tidak
7	Adakah cerita itu menarik, ringkas, relevan dan mudah difahami?	Ya	Tidak
8	Adakah terdapat cabaran dan pertembungan yang dihadapi oleh watak digambarkan dengan cara yang tulen dan realistik?	Ya	Tidak
Ilustrasi			
9	Adakah teks dan ilustrasi koheren dan relevan?	Ya	Tidak
10	Adakah warna dalam ilustrasi cukup menarik?	Ya	Tidak
11	Adakah ilustrasi dalam buku meningkatkan pengetahuan kanak-kanak tentang isu yang menjadi perhatian?	Ya	Tidak
12	Adakah ilustrasi berupaya menjadi daya tarikan buku kepada kumpulan umur sasarannya?	Ya	Tidak
Kebolehbacaan			
13	Adakah buku itu ditulis untuk kumpulan umur yang disasarkan?	Ya	Tidak

14	Adakah terdapat peluang untuk pembaca berinteraksi dengan teks, seperti melalui soalan, gesaan atau penyertaan?	Ya	Tidak
15	Adakah buku itu memberikan cerita dan teks kepada kanak-kanak yang sesuai untuk tahap perkembangan membaca mereka?	Ya	Tidak
16	Adakah perbendaharaan kata dan bahasa yang digunakan dalam buku sesuai untuk lingkungan umur sasaran?	Ya	Tidak
Tema			
17	Adakah terdapat nilai khusus yang dibincangkan atau ditekankan?	Ya	Tidak
18	Adakah terdapat pengajaran atau nilai moral yang boleh diambil daripada kisah ini?	Ya	Tidak
19	Adakah buku itu meningkatkan perkembangan kemahiran berfikir kritis?	Ya	Tidak
20	Adakah buku ini menyarankan teknik mengatasi masalah dan cara untuk bertindak balas kepada krisis atau isu yang dihadapi?	Ya	Tidak
Empati			
21	Adakah watak dalam cerita menunjukkan empati terhadap satu sama lain?	Ya	Tidak
22	Adakah terdapat pengajaran atau mesej tentang memahami dan mempertimbangkan perasaan orang lain?	Ya	Tidak
23	Adakah buku itu menggalakkan pembaca meletakkan diri mereka dalam kedudukan watak dan memahami perspektif mereka?	Ya	Tidak
24	Adakah terdapat dilema moral atau konflik dalam cerita yang menggalakkan perbincangan tentang empati?	Ya	Tidak
Keselamatan			
25	Adakah perbendaharaan kata yang digunakan dalam buku sejajar dengan kecekapan kanak-kanak?	Ya	Tidak
26	Adakah buku itu mengandungi unsur-unsur teladan dan watak positif yang menunjukkan ciri-ciri seperti kebaikan, empati dan daya tahan?	Ya	Tidak
27	Adakah watak utama buku itu hampir dengan usia kanak-kanak?	Ya	Tidak
28	Adakah pembaca dilindungi daripada sebarang kemungkinan kecederaan atau pendedahan kepada kandungan yang mungkin menimbulkan perasaan terancam atau kesusahan?	Ya	Tidak

APPENDIX 6

Rating Tabulations

Rating Tabulation for Character

Item 1 Rater 1 * Item 1 Rater 2					Pooled Kappa	Average Kappa
Count						
		Item 1 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
	No	0	0		0.4197	0.3700
Item 1 Rater 1	Yes	0	56	56		
Total			56	56		

Item 2 Rater 1 * Item 2 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 2 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 2 Rater 1	No	8	4	12
	Yes	4	40	44
Total		12	44	56

Item 3 Rater 1 * Item 3 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 3 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 3 Rater 1	No	16	3	15
	Yes	0	36	41
Total		9	47	55

Item 4 Rater 1 * Item 4 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 4 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 4 Rater 1	No	12	5	16
	Yes	2	37	40
Total		11	45	56

Rating Tabulation for Plot

					Pooled Kappa	Average Kappa
Item 5 Rater 1 * Item 5 Rater 2						
Count		Item 5 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
Item 5 Rater 1	No	32	8	40	0.654	0.497
	Yes	3	13	16		
Total		35	21	56		

Item 6 Rater 1 * Item 6 Rater 2				
Count		Item 6 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 6 Rater 1	No	40	2	42
	Yes	2	12	14
Total		42	14	56

Item 7 Rater 1 * Item 7 Rater 2				
Count		Item 7 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 7 Rater 1	No	0	1	1
	Yes	0	55	55
Total			56	56

Item 8 Rater 1 * Item 8 Rater 2				
Count		Item 8 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 8 Rater 1	No	7	5	12
	Yes	1	43	44
Total		8	48	56

Rating Tabulation for Illustrations

					Pooled Kappa	Average Kappa
Item 9 Rater 1 * Item 9 Rater 2						
Count						
		Item 9 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
Item 9 Rater 1	No	2	2	4	0.690	0.718
	Yes	0	52	52		
Total		2	54	56		

Item 10 Rater 1 * Item10 Rater 2						
Count						
		Item 10 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
Item 10 Rater 1	No	14	14	28		
	Yes	1	27	28		
Total		15	41	56		

Item 11 Rater 1 * Item 11 Rater 2						
Count						
		Item 11 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
Item 11 Rater 1	No	18	3	21		
	Yes	1	34	35		
Total		19	37	56		

Item 12 Rater 1 * Item 12 Rater 2						
Count						
		Item 12 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
Item 12 Rater 1	No	6	1	7		
	Yes	0	49	49		
Total		6	50	56		

Rating Tabulation for Readability

					Pooled Kappa	Average Kappa
Item 13 Rater 1 * Item 13 Rater 2						
Count						
		Item 13 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
	No	0	0		0.888	0.094
Item 13 Rater 1	Yes	2	54	56		
Total		2	54	56		

Item 14 Rater 1 * Item 14 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 14 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 14 Rater 1	No	34	14	48
	Yes	2	6	8
Total		36	20	56

Item 15 Rater 1 * Item 15 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 15 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
	No	0	0	
Item 15 Rater 1	Yes	0	56	56
Total			56	56

Item 16 Rater 1 * Item 16 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 16 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
	No	0	0	
Item 16 Rater 1	Yes	1	55	56
Total		1	55	56

Rating Tabulation for Theme

					Pooled Kappa	Average Kappa
Item 17 Rater 1 * Item 17 Rater 2						
Count		Item 17 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
Item 17 Rater 1	No	8	7	15	0.733	0.750
	Yes	4	37	41		
Total		12	44	56		

Item 18 Rater 1 * Item 18 Rater 2				
Count		Item 18 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 18 Rater 1	No	8	1	9
	Yes	0	47	47
Total		8	48	56

Item19 Rater 1 * Item 19 Rater 2				
Count		Item 19 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 19 Rater 1	No	40	4	44
	Yes	1	11	12
Total		41	15	56

Item 20 Rater 1 * Item 20 Rater 2				
Count		Item 20 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 20 Rater 1	No	11	2	13
	Yes	1	42	43
Total		12	44	56

Rating Tabulation for Empathy

					Pooled Kappa	Average Kappa
Item 21 Rater 1 * Item 21 Rater 2						
Count						
		Item 21 Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
Item 21 Rater 1	No	19	6	25	0.670	0.674
	Yes	2	29	31		
Total		21	35	56		

Item 22 Rater 1 * Item 22 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 22 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 22 Rater 1	No	13	4	17
	Yes	4	35	39
Total		17	39	56

Item 23 Rater 1 * Item 23 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 23 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 23 Rater 1	No	15	3	18
	Yes	2	36	38
Total		17	39	56

Item 24 Rater 1 * Item 24 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 24 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 24 Rater 1	No	18	10	28
	Yes	3	25	28
Total		21	35	56

Rating Tabulation for Safety

					Pooled Kappa	Average Kappa
Item 25 Rater 1 * Item 25 Rater 2						
Count						
		Rater 2		Total		
		No	Yes			
	No	0	0		0.724	0.502
Item 25 Rater 1	Yes	0	56	56		
Total			56	56		

Item 26 Rater 1 * Item 26 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 26 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 26 Rater 1	No	10	9	19
	Yes	0	37	37
Total		10	46	56

Item 27 Rater 1 * Item 27 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 27 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 27 Rater 1	No	15	2	17
	Yes	0	39	39
Total		15	41	56

Item 28 Rater 1 * Item 28 Rater 2				
Count				
		Item 28 Rater 2		Total
		No	Yes	
Item 28 Rater 1	No	0	2	2
	Yes	0	54	54
Total			56	56

APPENDIX 7

E-mail to Panel of Experts

Dear

I trust this message finds you in good health. I am reaching out to extend an invitation for your involvement in a critical research initiative aimed at gathering insights and expertise from esteemed professionals such as yourself. Your input will play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of our study.

My current focus is on a research project titled "Exploring Bibliotherapy Elements in Malaysian Children's Literature." This study seeks to assess the presence of bibliotherapeutic components in Malaysian children's literature, particularly within books. To accomplish this, we are keen to garner the input and viewpoints of distinguished experts in this field.

Given your extensive knowledge and experience in bibliotherapy and children's literature, your participation in our survey would be highly valuable. We firmly believe that your insights can significantly enhance our understanding of the subject matter and contribute to the development of well-informed recommendations and conclusions.

The survey has been designed to be succinct, requiring no more than 15 minutes of your precious time. It comprises 28 questions encompassing various facets of the topic. We fully comprehend the value of your time and genuinely appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our request. Your participation would undoubtedly be an indispensable contribution to the success of our research project.

Thank you for contemplating this invitation. We sincerely hope that you can spare the time to support our research by participating in the survey. Your expertise is invaluable, and your input will exert a significant impact on the success of our study.

Yours sincerely,

(Rafidah bt Abdul Aziz)

APPENDIX 8

Letter of Consent

Bibliotherapy Features in Malaysian Children's Literature

Principal Investigator: Rafidah Abdul Aziz

Affiliation: Universiti Teknologi MARA

Dear

I hope this e-mail finds you well. You are invited to serve as a panel expert in our research study entitled "Bibliotherapy Features in Malaysian Children's Literature." Before confirming your participation, we ask that you carefully review and understand the information outlined in this consent form. Should you have any inquiries or apprehensions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Principal Investigator at via email.

Purpose of the Study: We are conducting this study to collect expert opinions and insights regarding the bibliotherapeutic aspects found in Malaysian children's literature, specifically focusing on books. Your expertise in children's literature and bibliotherapy is crucial to our research, and your insights will be highly valuable to the outcomes.

Procedures: As a panel expert, you will be tasked with evaluating the bibliotherapy components by assigning ratings to each element. Additionally, you are encouraged to offer feedback through suggestions and critical comments. The anticipated time commitment for your participation is approximately 15 minutes.

Risks and Benefits: Your involvement in this study poses minimal risks. Nevertheless, it offers the chance to contribute your expertise to a significant research endeavour focused on evaluating bibliotherapy elements in Malaysian children's literature. Additionally, participating in this study will open networking opportunities within your field.

Confidentiality: All responses and contributions will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Any information provided during the study will be anonymized, and your status as a panel expert will not be divulged in any research outputs or publications.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the option to decline participation or withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences. Your decision will not impact your professional relationship with your Institution/Organization.

Contact Information: If you have any questions, concerns, or wish to withdraw from the study, please contact:

Rafidah Abdul Aziz

[Your Position] [Your Contact Information]

Consent: I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. I

voluntarily agree to participate in the research study as a panel expert.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Thank you for your willingness to contribute to our research.
Sincerely,
Rafidah Abdul Aziz
Principal Investigator [Your Institution/Organization]

APPENDIX 9

Expert Validation Form for Bibliotherapy Framework

(For Expert Review and Content Validation)

Section A: Expert Information

Item	Description
Signature	
Expert Name	
Area of Expertise	(Children's Literature / <u>Bibliotherapy</u> / Psychology / Education)
Years of Experience	
Institutional Affiliation	
Role in Validation	Independent Expert Reviewer

Section B: Framework Validation Criteria

Rating Scale:

- 1 = Not Relevant / Not Clear
- 2 = Needs Major Revision
- 3 = Needs Minor Revision
- 4 = Relevant / Clear
- 5 = Highly Relevant / Very Clear

Table 1: Content Validity Evaluation of Bibliotherapy Framework

No.	Framework Component	Evaluation Criteria	Rating					Comments / Suggestions
			1	2	3	4	5	
1	Overall Framework	Clarity of framework structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Framework Objective	Alignment with research objectives (RO)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Character Element	Relevance to emotional healing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Plot Element	Ability to support emotional problem-solving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Theme	Appropriateness for children's emotional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Illustration	Support for emotional engagement and comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Readability	Suitability for children's cognitive level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Empathy	Potential to foster empathy and self-reflection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	Cultural Context	Cultural relevance to Malaysian children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10	Practical Use	Applicability in educational / therapeutic settings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Section C: Open-Ended Expert Feedback

1. **Strengths of the Proposed Framework:**

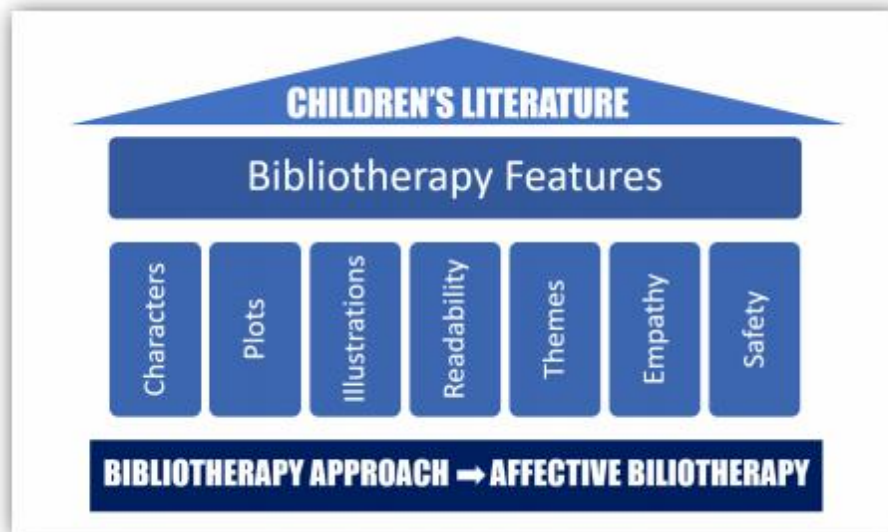
2. **Weaknesses or Areas for Improvement:**

3. **Suggestions for Enhancing Framework Effectiveness:**

4. **Additional Elements to Consider:**

APPENDIX 10

Framework Validation by Experts



Expert Validation Report on the Bibliotherapy Framework for Malaysian Children's Literature

This report serves to formally validate a proposed **Bibliotherapy Framework for Malaysian Children's Literature**, which comprises seven core features: (i) **Characters**, (ii) **Plot**, (iii) **Illustrations**, (iv) **Readability**, (v) **Themes**, (vi) **Empathy**, and (vii) **Psychological Safety**. The framework is designed to guide the systematic evaluation and development of children's books intended for bibliotherapeutic use within Malaysian educational, library, and counselling contexts.

Based on my professional expertise in counselling, as well as my familiarity with Malaysian cultural values and educational practices, I confirm that these seven features are theoretically sound, culturally appropriate, and practically applicable for supporting children's emotional and psychological well-being.

Feature 1: Characters

Within the proposed framework, **characters** function as the primary emotional entry point for children. Bibliotherapeutic characters should be relatable, age-appropriate, and culturally resonant, reflecting Malaysian family structures, school environments, and community life. Characters who express common emotions such as fear, sadness, anger, joy, and confusion enable children to

recognise and normalise their own emotional experiences, thus supporting emotional identification and self-awareness.

Feature 2: Plot

The **plot** component of the framework emphasises clear, simple, and developmentally appropriate narrative structures. Effective bibliotherapeutic plots typically present a recognisable problem followed by constructive coping strategies and a reassuring resolution. In Malaysian educational and counselling settings, such plot structures support emotional regulation, problem-solving, and resilience while reinforcing culturally valued behaviours such as cooperation, respect, and perseverance.

Feature 3: Illustrations

Illustrations serve as a visual-emotional support system within the framework. Expressive and culturally sensitive illustrations assist children in interpreting emotions, social interactions, and story contexts, particularly in multilingual learning environments common in Malaysia. Visual elements enhance comprehension, engagement, and emotional discussion, making them essential for bibliotherapy-based interventions in classrooms and school libraries.

Feature 4: Readability

Readability ensures that bibliotherapeutic materials are accessible and inclusive. This framework emphasises the use of simple sentence structures, familiar vocabulary, and appropriate text length aligned with children's developmental and linguistic levels. Positive reading experiences foster confidence, reduce anxiety, and encourage children to engage with emotionally meaningful content without cognitive overload.

Feature 5: Themes

The **thematic dimension** of the framework focuses on age-appropriate and culturally relevant life experiences, including friendship, kindness, family relationships, loss, change, resilience, and moral decision-making. In the Malaysian context, presenting these themes in a gentle and indirect manner allows children to explore emotional challenges safely while aligning with local educational and social norms.

Feature 6: Empathy

Empathy is a central therapeutic outcome embedded within the framework. Through narrative engagement and perspective-taking, children learn to understand and respect the feelings of others. This feature supports the development of prosocial behaviour and healthy peer relationships, which are core values promoted within Malaysian schools and early childhood education programmes.

Feature 7: Safety

The final component, **safety**, underpins all other features in the framework. Bibliotherapeutic books should provide reassurance and emotional comfort, avoiding content that may be frightening, confusing, or culturally inappropriate. A psychologically safe narrative environment enables children to explore emotions with confidence, security, and trust.

Overall Framework Validation

In conclusion, the seven-feature Bibliotherapy Framework offers a **systematic, culturally grounded, and developmentally appropriate structure** for evaluating and developing Malaysian children's literature for bibliotherapeutic purposes. The interrelationship among characters, plot, illustrations, readability, themes, empathy, and psychological safety ensures a holistic approach to emotional and psychological support through literature.

I hereby affirm that this framework is valid, comprehensive, and suitable for application in Malaysian educational institutions, school libraries, and child-centered counselling settings. It provides a robust foundation for the present study and contributes meaningfully to the advancement of bibliotherapy research and practice in Malaysia.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Rafidah binti Abdul Aziz obtained Bachelor of Science in Library Science and Information (Hons.) in 1996 from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, MSc in Information Management (2002) from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam. Currently she is working as a Director at the Perak State Public Library Corporation since August 8, 2022, until now. Previously, she was a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Information Management, UiTM Puncak Perdana Campus. In addition to her professional roles, Rafidah is actively involved in non-governmental initiatives. She has been serving as the President of the Malaysian Bibliotherapy Association since 2017 until now, contributing significantly to the development and promotion of bibliotherapy practices in Malaysia.

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