

Bibliotherapy Features in Children's Literature: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature is a powerful tool in bibliotherapy, helping children navigate social and emotional challenges by connecting them with relatable characters and situations. This therapeutic method embraces diverse perspectives and relevant issues, encouraging the development of new values. The current study reviews literature on bibliotherapy features in children's literature with the purposes of ascertaining the attributes and components of children's literature that may potentially facilitate emotional metamorphosis and bolster personal development. The review selected 33 English-language publications in the field of bibliotherapy and children's literature from peer-reviewed journals indexed in the Web of Science, and Scopus. The major findings demonstrate that the effective bibliotherapy focus on key elements such as well-crafted characters, compelling plots, universal themes, and empathy, supported by high-quality writing and illustrations. Additionally, the process is highly personalized, taking into account readability and the child's developmental stage. Overall, bibliotherapy provides a valuable approach for nurturing emotional and psychological growth, offering a safe space for children to explore and reflect through literature. Selecting appropriate literary materials is essential to maximizing its therapeutic impact. The results form the basis for several recommendations for future research for the further examination of bibliotherapy features for children literature.

INTRODUCTION

Children's literature has long been recognised as a powerful tool for addressing the social and emotional difficulties encountered by children, offering them a unique way to navigate personal hurdles through relatable narratives and characters (Adeyeye & Oboh, 2022). Literature is frequently utilized as a

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therapeutic instrument in group counseling and psychotherapy sessions. It helps children connect with characters in narratives, which in turn, aid them in navigating their own life hurdles. Engaging with these stories creates a secure environment for children to explore their emotions and develop coping mechanisms. The proficient application of children's literature in bibliotherapy encompasses the incorporation of various elements to address a range of emotional states and challenges. These elements comprise relatable characters and scenarios, diverse perspectives, the dissemination of information on pertinent issues, facilitation of discussions, promotion of new values, cultivation of an awareness of shared challenges, and provision of coping strategies (Pulimeno et al., 2020; Adeyeye & Oboh, 2022; Akinola, 2014). Employing bibliotherapy with children's literature functions as a preventive and developmental tool, nurturing the social and emotional development of children.

Bibliotherapy in young children presents distinct challenges compared to older individuals, stemming from factors such as limited vocabulary, difficulties in verbal expression, a wider array of life experiences, and shorter attention spans. Consequently, adjustments in material selection and therapeutic approaches are essential for younger children, given their inability to handle direct challenges as adolescents or adults. Selecting suitable books is emphasized as a crucial aspect of effective bibliotherapy with children. Moreover, in the realm of bibliotherapy for mental health, the specific criteria for optimal book selection remain ambiguous, but the emphasis on choosing high-quality literature remains paramount. Criteria for material selection encompass books with prominent and relevant storylines, exceptional writing, clear print, and compelling artwork. Additionally, Jalongo (1983) proposes three key advantages of using literature—acceptance, relevance, and information—that can serve as criteria for material selection. It is recommended to assess whether a story or book facilitates knowledge-sharing between adults and children, enables the child to apply the information to their own life, and supports the child's emotions and responses to present circumstances. Furthermore, books featuring exceptional writing, clear print, and relevant artwork that corresponds to the storyline are deemed beneficial.

In the selection of books for bibliotherapy, Coleman and Ganong (1988) emphasize various important factors. Firstly, the book should be suitable for the client's reading level to prevent frustration or disinterest. Secondly, a book's quality is enhanced when it addresses a broader range of topics, enabling children to better connect with their personal experiences. Thirdly, the guidance provided in the book should ideally present a variety of potential solutions to the issues discussed. Fourthly, it is vital for the book to accurately depict the problem, especially when using fiction for treatment. Moreover, practical solutions should be incorporated in the book. Lastly, the tone of the book is crucial, with a suggestion for a beneficial touch of humour in books used for bibliotherapy.

Altunbay (2018) outlines specific criteria for the selection of books in bibliotherapy, with a focus on the importance of books rooted in reality and those that cultivate imaginative worlds. The selection process should take into account exceptional writing, clear typography, and relevant, visually compelling artwork. Furthermore, Rozalski et al. (2010) presents additional attributes for identifying the appropriate book for a student encountering challenges, encompassing readability level, grade/interest level, portrayal of characters, context, illustrations (particularly for younger children), and the author's underlying message. These criteria are designed to meet the individual reader's requirements, correspond with their age and developmental stage, resonate with familiar characters, address specific circumstances, and deliver a coherent and impactful message throughout their reading experience.

Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1986) provide thematic and stylistic dimensions as general guidelines for bibliotherapy. The thematic dimensions centre on using literature to address emotional, psychological, and social challenges by focusing on universal, powerful, comprehensible, and positive themes. On the other hand, the stylistic dimensions involve leveraging rhythm, imagery, language, and complexity in literature as therapeutic tools. These dimensions are intended to promote personal development, emotional healing, and self-discovery. The effectiveness of bibliotherapy hinges on the careful selection of literature that resonates with readers' cognitive and emotional capacities while fostering a positive and uplifting mindset.

This process necessitates continuous assessment, individualization, and dedication to creating a therapeutic space for using literature as a catalyst for personal discovery and growth.

In summary, bibliotherapy consists of a number of essential components, including a targeted strategy, well-defined goals, individualized care, a variety of literature selections, accessibility considerations, active participation, a safe environment, group facilitation, continuous progress evaluation, professional assistance when needed, and regular assessment and reflection. The combination of these elements makes bibliotherapy a diverse and successful strategy for promoting positive emotional and psychological results by using literature in therapy.

While various frameworks and guidelines exist for implementing bibliotherapy with children, these resources often fail to provide clear, consistent strategies for selecting books that meet the specific needs of younger children, who may have more limited vocabulary, shorter attention spans, and distinct emotional needs compared to older individuals. Additionally, although certain elements of children's literature—such as relatable characters, plot development, and themes—have been identified as beneficial for bibliotherapy, there is limited research on how these features can be applied systematically to achieve optimal therapeutic outcomes.

As a result, the full potential of bibliotherapy as a therapeutic intervention for children remains underexplored. The objective of this review is thus to paint a picture of the bibliotherapy features of children's literature, with a focus on books. The paper intends to answer the main research question: What are the required bibliotherapy features of children's literature?

Guided by these research questions, the article will proceed with a theoretical background section, offering a comprehensive review of bibliotherapy, related concepts, key features of children's literature, and existing models/frameworks for bibliotherapy targeting children. Following this, the methodology section will detail the coding process and study selection. In the Results and Discussion section, the research questions will be addressed and analyzed in depth. Finally, the article will conclude by synthesizing the main findings, acknowledging the study's limitations, and offering recommendations for future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Bibliotherapy and other related concepts

Bibliotherapy refers to the use of books and narratives as a therapeutic tool for individuals dealing with mental illness, emotional distress, or personal challenges. The term is derived from the Greek word *biblos* (book) and *therapy* (therapeutic support). It involves the interaction between a reader and literature, facilitating personal growth, emotional adjustment, and healing. One of the earliest definitions by Caroline Shrodes in 1949 describes bibliotherapy as a dynamic interaction between the reader's personality and literature, which can aid in personality assessment and psychological growth. Bibliotherapy is particularly beneficial for children, as it helps them understand and manage emotional and social difficulties by connecting with characters and situations in the stories they read (Akinola, 2014). It can foster empathy and self-reflection, offering new perspectives on their own challenges.

Bibliotherapy has evolved over time to include various methods, such as fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, alongside audio-visual content like films, as therapeutic tools (McCullis, 2012). It has been integrated into various treatment methodologies, including self-help books, computer-assisted therapies, and virtual reality. Bibliotherapy has also been categorized into "clinical" and "developmental" forms, with the former being used by professional counselors and therapists, while the latter is employed by educators or non-professionals for promoting personal growth and development. Bibliotherapy has proven effective both in classrooms and therapy settings, helping children express and understand their emotions through literature (Borders & Paisley, 1992). This study will use Hebert and Furner's (1997) definition of bibliotherapy, focusing on its role in facilitating emotional change and growth in children by using literature

that reflects their developmental needs and challenges. Ultimately, bibliotherapy leverages the therapeutic potential of literature to promote emotional well-being and personal growth, offering a unique and valuable avenue for self-reflection and healing.

Children literature and its impact

Children's literature is a unique category of literary works specifically crafted to cater to the needs and interests of young readers (Pulimeno et al., 2020). The genre includes a wide range of forms, such as picture books, fairy tales, adventure stories, poetry, and more (Fadiman, 2023). It plays a crucial role in shaping children's imaginations, enhancing literacy skills, and fostering a lifelong love of reading. While modern children's literature can be categorized by genre or intended age group, its primary purpose is to entertain, engage, and educate young readers (Fadiman, 2023). With vibrant illustrations and relatable characters, children's books transport readers to imaginative worlds that expose them to diverse cultures, historical periods, and perspectives.

Beyond entertainment, children's literature serves as an educational tool, introducing fundamental concepts like colors, numbers, and letters for younger readers, and tackling more complex themes such as social issues, personal development, and ethical dilemmas as children grow older. These books enhance literacy by expanding vocabulary, improving comprehension, and developing critical thinking skills. Moreover, children's literature fosters social and emotional growth by helping young readers navigate their emotions and develop empathy through characters' experiences (Audsley, 2019; Shwanam, 2020).

The roots of children's literature trace back to oral traditions, including fairy tales and songs shared by adults with children. While the history of early children's literature is difficult to trace, many well-known stories originally crafted for adults were later adapted for children (Lerer, 2008). The "Golden Age" of children's literature, spanning from the late 19th to the early 20th century, brought forth numerous classic novels that remain relevant today.

Children's literature plays a pivotal role in language and literacy development. High-quality children's literature has been identified as one of the best means for acquiring reading skills, as it combines captivating storytelling with age-appropriate content (Shwanam, 2020). It also instills moral values and wisdom through engaging plots and illustrations, impacting young readers' mental development (Popova, 2012). The genre facilitates the development of foundational knowledge and comprehension, laying the groundwork for understanding more complex texts as children mature (Paterson, 1981; Al-Aufi, 2020).

In defining children's literature, scholars highlight the importance of its intended audience—children—and the need for these works to engage them in ways that reflect their developmental stage (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999; Hunt, 1996). The genre spans fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama, often incorporating narratives that resonate with young readers' experiences (Chevalier, 1989; Anderson, 2006). While some definitions prioritize entertainment and others emphasize the importance of empathy, the genre is universally seen as essential for fostering emotional growth, understanding, and inclusivity (Huck et al., 2001; Saxby, 1997).

The expansion of children's literature into digital formats, such as e-books and interactive apps, represents a significant shift in how young readers engage with stories. These modern adaptations introduce innovative ways to capture attention and enrich the reading experience, allowing children's literature to continue evolving and remain relevant in the digital age.

In conclusion, children's literature significantly impacts young readers by nurturing imagination, developing literacy skills, and fostering social and emotional growth. Whether in print or digital form, the genre remains an essential tool for shaping children's understanding of the world, promoting empathy, and encouraging a lifelong passion for reading.

Models/frameworks of Bibliotherapy features in children' literature context

With the intention of enhancing the reading experience and promoting the cognitive and emotional development of young readers, Chesson (2023) offers a thorough framework of elements found in children's literature. The proposed elements encompass unique and memorable characters, action and suspense, authentic dialogue, plot development and resolution, and the establishment of a lasting identity. Chesson underscores the importance of characters, emphasizing their influence on young readers' experiences and the enduring impact of strong character connections on overall enjoyment. Incorporating action and suspense challenges assumptions, recognizing their appeal to young minds and the essential role of engagement. Emphasizing believable conversation underscores the commitment to authenticity in storytelling, fostering relatability. The discussion on plot and resolution highlights the significance of upbeat endings, aligning with the genre's objective of cultivating wholesomeness and satisfaction. The concept of "A Lasting Identity" delves into themes of self-perception and identity formation, recognizing children's literature's potential in guiding readers through this aspect of personal development. Overall, Chesson's framework aims to cultivate enriching and meaningful experiences within children's literature.

Karges-Bone (2015) describes bibliotherapy as a notion that has a long history in human history, dating back to the time when people used to congregate around communal fires. The 7-Part Literary Model she introduces covers plot, setting, characterization, theme, conflict, point of view, and style, providing insight into the "what and why" of reading. Emphasizing the pivotal role of plot, the focus is on fostering creativity, exploration, and ethical guidance in children's literature. Authors deliberately construct narrative structures to engage young readers, impart moral lessons, and stimulate imaginative abilities. The importance of setting is highlighted, contributing to the overall reading experience, aligning with intended themes, and enhancing story progression. Characterization is identified as fundamental, with well-developed characters serving as vehicles for moral lessons, empathy, and fostering a love for reading. Themes, as main ideas or morals, play a central role in connecting with young readers, offering insights into life, relationships, and personal development. Conflict, both internal and external, acts as a driving force, generating suspense and excitement while contributing to character development and positive principles. Point of view influences narrative style and reader connection, carefully selected to shape young readers' engagement with the story. Style, encompassing word arrangement, images, tone, and more, reflects the author's unique conveyance of ideas, significantly shaping the overall tone, ambiance, and readability of a children's book. Karges-Bone's model serves as a comprehensive guide for creating impactful bibliotherapeutic experiences, emphasizing the enduring significance of identified literary elements in shaping children's literature and promoting emotional and psychological growth.

Ree (2012) lays up seven essential components—characters, setting, story, point of view, subject, style, and tone—in her comprehensive framework for analyzing various features in children's literature. Characters, whether human, animal, or objects with human traits, are developed through inner and exterior attributes such as thoughts, dialogues, actions, and behaviours. The "setting" encompasses the geographical, chronological, and social context, crucial for constructing the universe in which the story unfolds. Plot entails a series of incidents demonstrating character behaviour, contributing to a well-structured storyline, with Ree stressing the significance of a captivating plot for engaging young readers. In children's literature, point of view refers to the aspect of the story presented by the author from a character's viewpoint, offering readers glimpses into characters' thoughts and experiences. The choice of point of view significantly influences how readers, especially children, perceive and comprehend the story. Themes in children's literature are overarching concepts or lessons carefully chosen to resonate with young readers, providing vital life lessons and encouraging critical thinking and empathy. The author's selection of themes shapes the reader's experience and determines the educational value of the book. Style involves the author's word selection and arrangement to develop the storyline, characters, environment, and overall theme, encompassing a unique and creative writing technique designed to captivate young readers and provide an immersive reading experience. Tone in children's literature refers to the affective ambiance or authorial disposition conveyed through the written text, influencing the emotional reactions of readers. The tone may

vary significantly based on the author's purpose, literary genre, and explored thematic elements. Ree's framework offers a comprehensive understanding of these elements in crafting impactful children's literature.

METHOD

Search Strategies and Study Selection

A search was performed across two academic databases - Web of Science, and Scopus—following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram (Fig. 1; Moher et al., 2009).

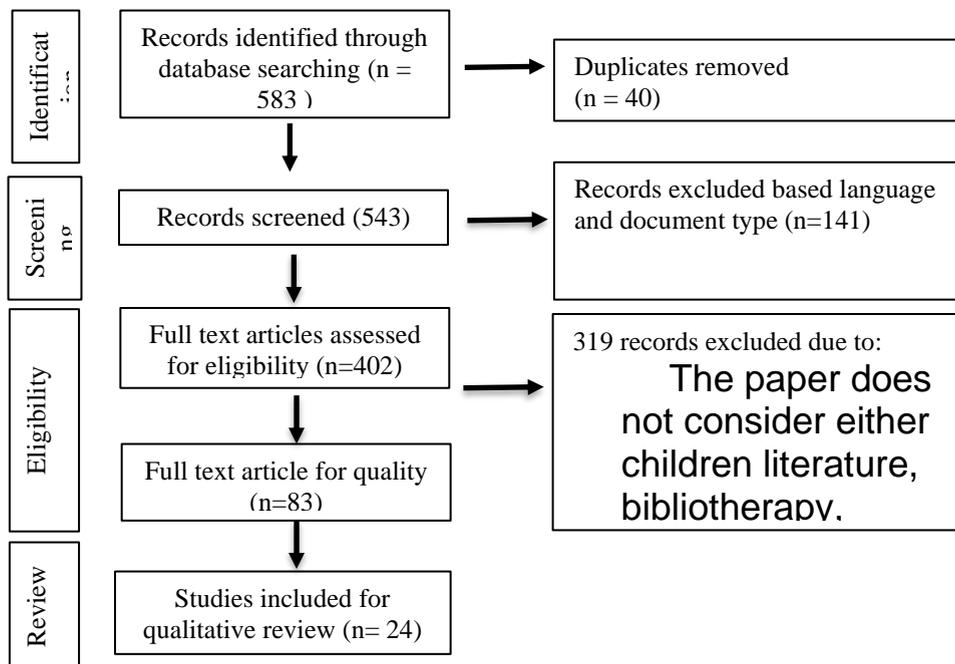


Figure 1. Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram

The diagram illustrating the article selection process visually represents the steps involved in identifying, evaluating, and choosing articles.

Both electronic and manual search methods were utilized to identify relevant articles, with selection based on five key inclusion criteria.

- Articles were limited to peer-reviewed journals.
- No restrictions on the publication year of the studies included.
- Articles were published on bibliotherapy and children literature.
- The study focused on assessment of bibliotherapy features for children's literature.
- The articles were written in English.

Articles were searched using the following terms in the title, keywords, and abstracts: “bibliotherapy and children literature,” “reading therapy and children's literature,” and “book therapy and children

literature” with a focus on their connections to bibliotherapy features in children’s literature. The terms were selected as they relate to the various therapeutic and developmental aspects of bibliotherapy for young readers.

Based on the search strategy, the study identified 583 articles across the specified databases. The retrieved papers were imported to Mendeley using the BibTex format. This permitted to erase the duplicated papers, adjust, and export it to a spreadsheet After removing duplicates and screening the abstracts and full texts against the inclusion criteria, the remaining articles were further reviewed to ensure their relevance to the research questions. Ultimately, 34 studies, all published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals, were selected for the review to ensure the research's reliability and validity.

The Coding Process and Data Extraction

After finalizing the eligible studies for review, we coded 24 studies based on bibliotherapy and children literature. The coding process helped to clarify the research context and identify relevant information related to bibliotherapy features for children literature applied in each study. The authors specifically focused on coding the bibliotherapy features, particularly examining the aspects of therapeutic benefits within children’s literature as aligned with established bibliotherapy frameworks. The data extraction was carefully reviewed and refined multiple times through consensus among the authors before being synthesized and interpreted for the results and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What are the required features of bibliotherapy for children’s literature?

The literature has created and developed various bibliotherapy features for children literature. The result demonstrates that among the bibliotherapy features for children’s literature cited, the papers reviewed exhibited a trend of mainly focusing on characters, plot, topic, illustrations, readability, and empathy.

Characters

In the realm of children's literature, characters hold a pivotal role in engaging young readers and effectively communicating central ideas and lessons. Whether portrayed as human beings, animals, mythical creatures, or inanimate objects, characters take on various forms. In literature, the term "character" pertains to individuals within the story who exhibit distinct traits, actions, and motivations. Thoughtful selection of texts, free from controversial elements, enriches a child's understanding of characters' emotions and perspectives. According to Domestika (2023), characters in children's literature are crucial in captivating the attention and curiosity of young readers. Ranging from courageous heroes to cunning villains, these characters profoundly influence reading experiences and serve as influential channels for imparting moral values, nurturing empathy, and fostering emotional development. Within the realm of children's literature, characters with diverse personalities encounter different challenges and achieve notable successes, offering young readers a unique opportunity to delve into varied worlds, cultures, and viewpoints. This exploration nurtures curiosity and deepens their comprehension of the intricacies of the human experience.

Plot

Children's literature serves as a valuable and educational resource, providing captivating narratives that highlight the art of storytelling. Through this practice, young readers are able to embark on imaginative voyages, gain moral insights, and cultivate creative abilities. The carefully constructed storylines within children's books act as gateways to adventure, discovery, and personal development. Josselson (2004) emphasizes the importance of a story's plot, underscoring its vital role in outlining the chronological progression of events within a narrative, thus shaping both the occurrences and their sequential arrangement. When examining a narrative's plot, the traditional approach involves considering the

chronological succession of events caused by specific factors, culminating in a coherent storyline. This interconnectedness of various elements aims to construct significance and captivate the intended audience. The plot is perceived as a narrative structure guiding young readers through characters, settings, central conflicts, and resolutions (Glatch, 2023). The creation of these stories takes into account the cognitive abilities of young individuals, aiming for a harmonious integration of both entertaining and educational elements (Ginsburg, 2022). The analysis delves into narrative structures in children's literature, concentrating on fundamental components that evoke strong responses from young readers.

Theme

The term "theme" encompasses the fundamental and recurring idea, message, or conceptual framework that permeates a narrative (Gomez & Maker, 2011). This underlying concept augments the depth and significance of the story, nurturing a meaningful connection between readers, particularly young audiences (Clandinin & Conelly, 1991). This connection facilitates the extraction of valuable life lessons and insights. Common themes in children's literature often centre around universal or age-appropriate subjects that are relevant to the experiences and development of young readers. These themes serve as channels for conveying important values, emotions, and ideas, presenting opportunities for introspection, the cultivation of empathy, and the nurturing of personal growth among young audiences (Amos & Wisniewski, 1995). The conveyance of themes in children's literature occurs through the thoughts, words, actions, emotions, conflicts, and desires of characters, playing a crucial role in connecting various story elements (Ismail, 2023). These underlying themes significantly impact young readers, resonating with them at a profound level. Thoughtful selection of appropriate themes is vital in effectively addressing diverse emotional and psychological needs in children. The incorporation of these concepts into stories aims to assist youngsters in understanding themselves and the world, including coping with loss, nurturing a positive self-image, building resilience, and fostering empathy (Ismail, 2023). Essentially, the inclusion of themes in children's literature aids readers in comprehending the external environment, nurturing empathy, understanding, and critical thinking about the underlying significance and implications of the narratives they encounter (Harits & Chudy, 2017).

Illustrations

The combination of language and imagery creates significant and transformative experiences for young individuals (Goddard, 2011). Illustrations play a powerful role in enhancing written stories, helping children comprehend narratives of exploration, emotion, and self-discovery (Arizpe & Styles, 2015). In bibliotherapy, illustrations are invaluable in aiding the cognitive and emotional development of young minds as they deal with challenging emotions, issues, and personal growth (Vahidi, 2018). Strouse et al. (2018) observe that illustrations in children's literature are crucial in addressing emotional and psychological challenges. They act as sources of comfort, inspiration, and healing, compassionately portraying companionship, resilience in the face of adversity, and complex emotions. The role of illustrations in picture books is pivotal; Bader (1976) suggests that visual (illustrations) and verbal (words) elements are interconnected, influencing each other and playing a significant role in the development of the story. Moss (1990) refers to this as the "interweaving of text and pictures," while Lunn (2003) describes it as a "marriage of pictures and story." Nodelman (1998) emphasizes the intricate interaction between visuals and text, suggesting their combined impact exceeds individual contributions. Sipe (1998) characterizes the relationship between text and pictures as a "synergy," highlighting their combined potential for a more significant impact than either element alone. Furthermore, Sipe emphasizes the necessity for readers to transition between the sign systems used in written and visual texts, underscoring the importance of documenting these transitions in records of children's reading activities (p. 102).

Readability

The concept of readability pertains to the ease or difficulty for readers to comprehend a text, and it plays a critical role in promoting effective understanding in written communication. If a text surpasses the readers' comprehension level, it can impede communication (Ismail et al., 2016). Assessing the reading level is essential for identifying appropriate reading materials that children can engage with independently, ensuring that they are neither overwhelmed nor disinterested. Children's literature, which encompasses a wide variety of books with diverse characteristics, is dynamic and multifaceted, tailored to appeal to readers across different age groups and to accommodate their unique interests and varying skills. The role of readability in children's literature is vital for optimizing the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, a potent tool for fostering emotional and psychological development in young readers. The ability to connect with and comprehend a story is crucial, as it enables children to actively engage with characters and situations that resonate with their own experiences and emotions (Ewing et al., 2016). Through providing literature that is engaging and age-appropriate, bibliotherapy can effectively harness the therapeutic potential of books to assist children in navigating life's complexities, fostering resilience, and developing essential coping mechanisms (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Reading, as a form of bibliotherapy, offers children the opportunity to explore various emotions, confront challenges, and anticipate resolutions within the safe confines of fiction. Moreover, recognizing the unique needs and preferences of each child when selecting books enhances therapeutic effectiveness. Tailoring the reading experience to a child's developmental stage, cultural background, and personal struggles ensures that the literary material serves as a source of comfort, guidance, and healing (Children's Bureau, 2023).

Empathy

Empathy encompasses readers forming emotional connections with characters and situations in literature, involving understanding and emotionally engaging with characters' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This emotional connection potentially leads to enhanced self-awareness and understanding of personal emotional well-being. Bratitsis and Ziannas (2015) emphasize that empathy is multifaceted, encompassing emotional recognition and cognitive understanding of others' emotions. Both emotional and cognitive empathy are crucial for fostering empathetic and prosocial behaviours. Bertrand et al. (2018) highlight the complexity of empathy, involving intergroup, interpersonal, and intrapersonal processes. Due to diverse perspectives, empathy is challenging to confine to a singular definition across various disciplines. The role of empathy in children's literature for bibliotherapy is crucial, with the potential for significant impacts. Literature involving young readers in fictional characters' experiences promotes empathy, fostering emotional intelligence, diverse perspectives, and social harmony (Nikolajeva, 2013). Empathy allows children to explore various viewpoints, cultures, and experiences, nurturing an open and inclusive attitude towards the global community (James, n.d.). Bibliotherapy facilitates empathetic engagement with literary characters facing challenges like prejudice, bullying, grief, and fear, encouraging a deeper understanding of complex emotions and situations.

CONCLUSION

The literature review was conducted to enhance our understanding of bibliotherapy features of children's literature. By reviewing 24 papers published in peer-reviewed journals and in bibliotherapy, we address the major aspects of bibliotherapy features generally explored by researchers, various features used for children's literature in the context of therapy. Thus, the researchers categorized these aspects on the basis of the six main components of bibliotherapy features for children's literature, which is among the most influential frameworks. The findings show that the majority of researchers emphasize the features from six aspects: characters, plot, illustrations, readability, theme, and empathy

These components collaboratively contribute to the crafting of captivating and profound stories that deeply resonate with young readers, offering those opportunities for emotional exploration, personal development, and the acquisition of essential life skills. The deliberate selection of literature featuring

distinct and unforgettable characters enables young readers to establish profound emotional bonds, nurturing empathy and insight. Incorporating elements of action, suspense, and authentic dialogue ensures that the narrative holds the fascination of young minds while upholding its genuineness. Furthermore, the careful crafting of plot and resolutions in children's literature, often favoring optimistic and gratifying outcomes, contributes to a wholesome reading experience that addresses the adversities presented within the story. Moreover, universal, impactful, and easily understandable themes play a crucial role in imparting valuable life lessons and insights. Stylistic elements such as rhythm, imagery, language, and intricacy contribute to the overall mood, atmosphere, and readability of children's literature. The inclusion of illustrations serves as a potent tool in aiding the comprehension of stories and addressing emotional and psychological challenges encountered by children. Additionally, ensuring appropriate readability for specific age groups promotes independent engagement and effective understanding. Bibliotherapy, as a personalized and nuanced approach, relies on a careful evaluation of these features to create a therapeutic space for readers. The selection and integration of these elements require continuous assessment, individualization, and dedication to harnessing literature's potent capacity for personal discovery and growth. As an ever-evolving practice, bibliotherapy in children's literature remains a dynamic and essential tool for navigating emotional and psychological challenges, offering young readers a gateway to both fictional worlds and meaningful self-reflection.

The paper provides an overview of bibliotherapy features used in children's literature. The articles were selected after conducting a search in two databases (Web of Science, and Scopus). The current study only includes papers retrieved from these databases, and only papers published in English were selected. Hence, other articles on the topic may have been written in other languages but have been omitted. Future research may expand the search scope and review publications in other languages to present a more comprehensive picture of bibliotherapy features in children's literature.

The findings indicate that numerous studies have explored bibliotherapy features in children's literature. Many studies have assessed the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in addressing children's emotional and psychological needs through self-reported data from educators, librarians, and caregivers. Future research may develop and implement more empirical and interactive approaches to assess the actual impact of bibliotherapy on children's well-being.

Additionally, a limited number of studies have employed a mixed-method approach to evaluate bibliotherapy's role in children's literature. Therefore, further studies combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies should be conducted to provide a more comprehensive understanding of bibliotherapy's effectiveness. Subjective and objective evaluations should also be incorporated into these assessments to reflect the actual influence of bibliotherapy on children's cognitive and emotional development. This gap highlights the need for further exploration of bibliotherapy's role across different educational settings and age groups.

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