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**Perception of the Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in Fostering Emotional Adjustment among Junior Secondary School students in FCT, Abuja**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research paper sought to investigate the perception of the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, in fostering emotional adjustment among junior secondary students in FCT, Abuja. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 482 students drawn from junior secondary school within the six area councils of the FCT, Abuja which are: AMAC, Abaji, Kwali, Kuje, Bwari, Gwagwada area councils. The simple Random sampling technique was adopted for the study. Participants were those who had been exposed to bibliotherapy. Data was collected using the researchers made instrument called Bibliotherapy Effectiveness Self Report Questionnaire (BESRQ). The Cronbach Alpha was used to calculate the reliability. The  $r$  obtained was 0.835, which was considered high enough for the instruments to be used. The research questions were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and mean. The research hypothesis was tested using the ANOVA statistical tool. The data show that most of the students agreed that bibliotherapy was effective in fostering their emotional stability. There was also significant difference in the effectiveness of bibliotherapy based on the area councils of students; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected since  $d.f. p(v_1=5, v_2 = 84)$  at 5% level of significance was 2.323 and the calculated  $F = 9.663$  was greater than the critical value 2.32. Based on the above conclusion, it was recommended among others that school counsellors should make use of bibliotherapy in fostering emotional stability of students, especially new intakes.*

**Keywords:** *Bibliotherapy, fostering, emotional adjustment and effectiveness*

## **Introduction**

Bibliotherapy was coined from joining two Greek words, “biblion” which means book and “therapeia” which means healing by Samuel McChord Crothers in 1916. The American Library Association (ALA), therefore defined bibliotherapy as “the use of selected reading materials as therapeutic adjuncts in medicine and psychiatry; also, guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading” (Gove, 1961: 212). From the above definition one would agree with Coleman and Ganong (1990) that bibliotherapy refers to reading of books with the aim of bringing about psychological healing to the reader. The reason being that it is believed that bibliotherapy enhances reading comprehension, self-esteem, emotional intelligence and fosters improvement of emotional adjustments for students with learning and behavioural challenges. This can be achieved by giving relevant books to students to read based on the counsellor’s insight of issues before him. Rozalski, Stewart & Miller (2010) looked at bibliotherapy as a projective indirect tool that employs literature for growth of children and it can be used to teach children life’s challenges by encouraging them to connect with book characters, thereby helping them to appraise themselves individually and perhaps independently. Bibliotherapy therefore can serve the purposes of self-actualization and problem solving, social acceptance/ attitude, psychotherapy, and self- discovery.

Bryant & Roberts, (1992) identified three types of bibliotherapy to include clinical, developmental, and client-developed bibliotherapies. Clinical bibliotherapy is administered to individual manifesting emotional or behavioural challenges. The therapeutic aim is to help the client to gain insight or behavioural changes by using imaginative literature like fiction, poetry, short stories, drama, biography, autobiography, prose excerpts, tales, and fables to create exemplary models for him to emulate and have a change of behaviour which can bring about emotional adjustment in the long run (Lenkowsky 1987). Similarly, developmental bibliotherapy uses self-help literature in healthy clients who wish to maintain emotional and mental health or self-actualization. The client-developed bibliotherapy enhances creative potentials of the client by creating an imaginary outcome of a story which is meant to teach the client desired lessons. In this type of treatment strategy, the client writes as if he/she was one of the characters in the story, or writes a letter from one character to another, focusing on certain issues, common to both of them that are characters in the story as well as to the client (Bryant & Roberts, 1992).

The purpose of bibliotherapy is to provide suitable books, or audio / visual materials to students to help them gain understanding of particular problems that require attention. Through such therapeutic process students can do self-appraisals, achieve better understanding of their

worlds, and eventually gain emotional intelligence of their emotional patterns which will translate to emotional adjustment. The books or audio / visual aids used as therapeutic tools in bibliotherapy must have instruments of change, development, effective decision-making mechanism, and emotional adjustments apparatus. Bibliotherapy is therefore expected to produce a number of desirable results for clients. The expected outcomes of successful bibliotherapy were reported to include: enhanced self-concept, increased self-expression, relief from emotional stress, increased understanding of personal or generic human behaviour or motivation, more honest self-appraisal, discovery of others with similar problems or situations (sense of belonging), realization of the variety of potential solutions, and plan for finding a workable solution to identified problems (Bryant & Roberts, 1992; Hynes & Hynes-Berry, 1986).

Emotional Adjustment on the other hand is a process of making desirable responses to both positive and negative stimuli within an individual's psychological environment. Emotional adjustment can be an individual's capacity to be resilient and maintain a peaceful and well-adjusted life in the midst of stresses or pressures of life. It is a process of maintaining a balance between pursuing personal satisfaction and keeping to acceptable norms and values within a social context. Shaffer (1961), cited in Kaushik (2016), defined adjustment as a process by which, living organism maintains a balance between his needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfactions of these needs. School adjustment, which is a form of emotional adjustment, is the process of adapting to meet academic requirements in the school setting. Students need adaptive emotion to be able to cope with their academic and social commitments. There is a link between poor emotional adjustment with low academic achievement, behavioural challenges, unprofitable educational aspirations and school dropout (Raju & Rahamtula, 2007) cited in Kaushik (2016).

Students generally encounter mental, mood or emotional changes as a result of challenges surrounding their lives in the process of transiting from childhood through adolescence. These challenges may come from within or from outside. If they fail to adjust appropriately it can lead to mental complexity, conflicts, anxiety, and academic under-achievement. It is important to state that there is a relationship between academic achievement and the adjustment level of students. This fact makes it mandatory for counsellors and other professionals in the helping profession to promote adolescents healthy emotional development so that they can carry out their learning activities with self-motivation. The emotional adjustment level of an individual could indicate how healthy the person is in terms of emotions, personality, and relationships with other people within the social contexts (Bronstein, Fitzgerald, Briones & Pieniadz J. 1993). Those who are

socio-emotionally competent; or in other words, emotionally well-adjusted were observed from findings to engage in fewer deviant activities, antisocial and misconduct behaviour (Jewell & Stark, 2003). This makes it obvious that our school system must be organized in a way that emotional adjustment can be enhanced as emotional maladjustments are better prevented with early interventions, than trying to treat anxiety disorder, depression and other anti-social behaviour which normally emanates from emotional maladjustments, and which are difficult to find cure for. Thus, emotional maladjustment is a predictor of maladaptive behaviour and poor academic performance. McCulliss (2012) observed that bibliotherapy is an important clinical tool for mental health professionals who may prescribe reading (fiction, nonfiction, and poetry) or audio/visual material including films, in addition to engagement in discussion, an art activity, or writing, in their work with patients for the purpose of reflection, healing, and personal growth. Bibliotherapy thus is a viable tool in the hand of a counsellor to help students to overcome school adjustment problems.

For the purpose of this study, bibliotherapy shall be operationally defined as a counselling strategy of using appropriate books to help students reason, adjust, and be able to go through life's challenges with appropriate coping strategies. Reading in this situation is a means of therapy as students are guided by positive behavioural patterns projected by the books they read. Adjustment problems have spiral effects on students experiencing them. Such problems (or rather, challenges) include: unfavorable relationship at home, not being able to meet social expectations, difficulty in adjustment to peer group, school failure, conflict with friends and family members, and vocational decision process. Since it was envisaged that bibliotherapy could help emotionally maladjusted students and enhance their behaviour modifications, it was imperative to find out how junior secondary school students perceived the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in that direction.

### **Statement of the problem**

Emotional adjustment for teenagers or adolescents is essential to their overall developments. Junior secondary school students are basically adolescents and are undergoing a transition process from childhood to adulthood (Osareren, 2001 and Egbochukwu, 2008). Because of the peculiarity of this period in human development, adolescents need a lot of emotional stability to be able to cope with the ever growing challenges and life stressors around them. A number of issues have been associated with this stage of human development by researchers. Adomeh (2006) for instance, noted that anxiety, depression and stress are likely emotional adjustment problems that can affect adolescents and the society.

The causes of emotional disturbance in secondary school students and adolescents in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria can be overwhelming and they differ from one student to another. One of the challenges of School Counsellors is how to find out the precise causes of their students' emotional problems so that they can deploy appropriate counselling strategies that can be of maximum help to curb them. One of the approaches that have been adopted by Counsellors elsewhere to provide the much needed emotional adjustments for students is bibliotherapy. Against this backdrop, this research sought to investigate the effectiveness of bibliotherapy from the perspective of the students in relation to how it could foster emotional adjustment among students of junior secondary schools in the FCT, Abuja.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to investigate whether bibliotherapy could be perceived to foster emotional adjustment by junior secondary school students in the FCT, Abuja and to determine the level of effectiveness of bibliotherapy in fostering such emotional adjustment of junior secondary school students of FCT, Abuja.

### **Research Questions**

- Do junior secondary school students in FCT, Abuja perceive bibliotherapy as being effective in fostering their emotional adjustment?
- What is the level of effectiveness of bibliotherapy in fostering emotional adjustment of junior secondary school students in the FCT, Abuja?

### **Research Hypothesis**

- There is no significant difference in the perceived level of effectiveness of bibliotherapy by junior secondary school students in fostering emotional adjustment of students based on area councils of FCT, Abuja.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 482 students drawn from the junior secondary school students within the six area councils of the FCT, Abuja, namely, Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Abaji, Kwali, Kuje, Bwari, and Gwagwalada. The simple Random sampling technique was adopted in the study. Participants were those who had been exposed to bibliotherapy. Data was collected using the researchers made instrument titled Bibliotherapy Effectiveness Self Report Questionnaire (BESRQ). The Cronbach Alpha was used to calculate the reliability. The  $r$  obtained was 0.84, which was considered high enough for the instrument to be used. The instrument consisted of 15 test items to elicit

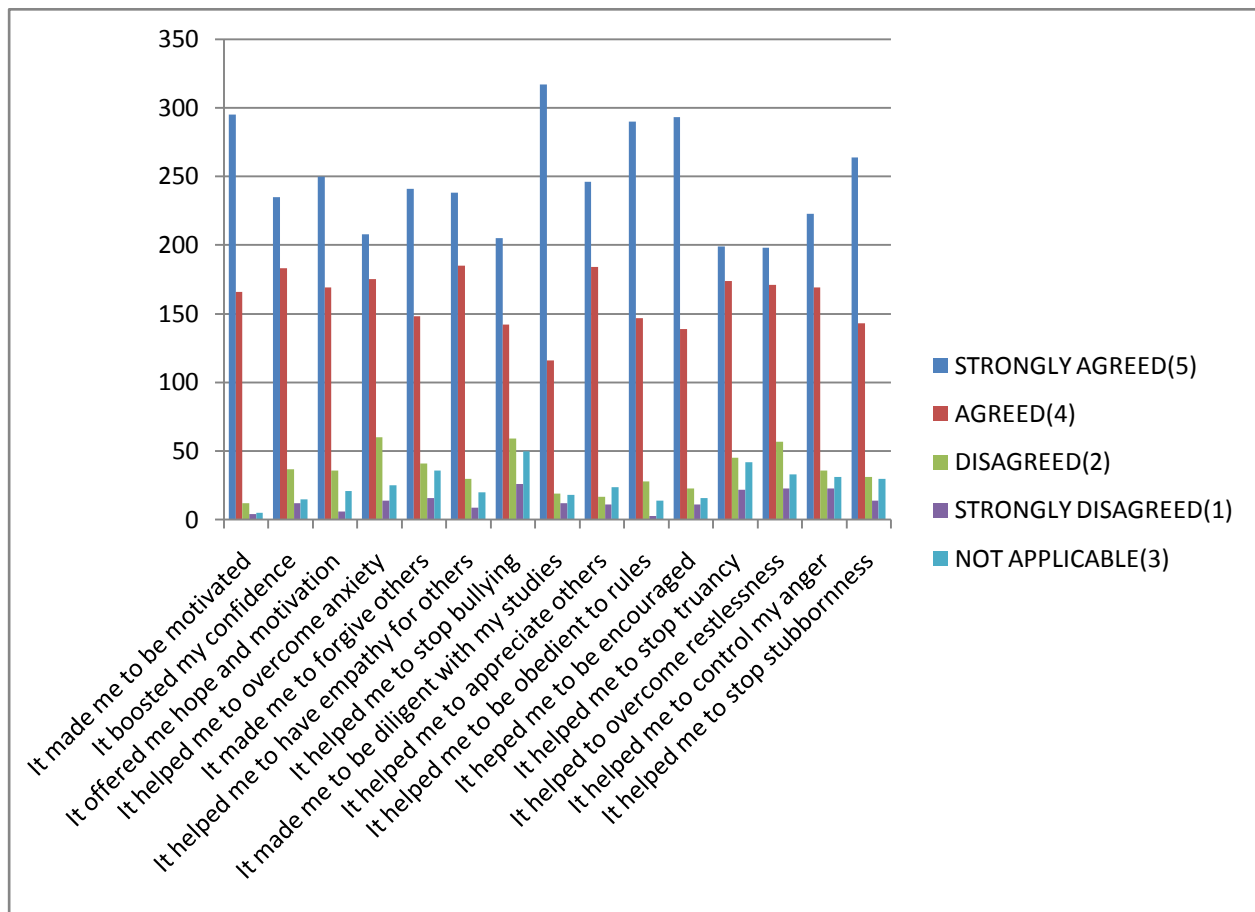
responses from students to determine their perception of the effectiveness of bibliotherapy on their emotional adjustment. The test had 5 Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (5), Agreed (4), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) Not applicable (3). The research questions were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean. The research hypothesis was tested using the ANOVA statistical tool.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1:** Analysis of Bibliotherapy’s Effectiveness as Perceived by JSS Students in Fostering their Emotional Adjustment

S/N	ITEMS	SA(5)		A(4)		D(2)		SD(1)		NA(3)		Mean	
1	<i>It made me to be motivated</i>	295	61.2%	166	34.4%	12	2.5%	4	0.8%	5	1.0%	4.53	90.5%
2	<i>It boosted my confidence</i>	235	48.8%	183	38.0%	37	7.7%	12	2.5%	15	3.1%	4.23	84.6%
3	<i>It offered me hope and motivation</i>	250	51.9%	169	35.1%	36	7.5%	6	1.2%	21	4.4%	4.29	85.8%
4	<i>It helped me to overcome anxiety</i>	208	43.2%	175	36.3%	60	12.4%	14	2.9%	25	5.2%	4.04	80.9%
5	<i>It made me to forgive others</i>	241	50.0%	148	30.7%	41	8.5%	16	3.3%	36	7.5%	4.16	83.1%
6	<i>It helped me to have empathy for others</i>	238	49.4%	185	38.4%	30	6.2%	9	1.9%	20	4.1%	4.27	85.4%
7	<i>It helped me to stop bullying</i>	205	42.5%	142	29.5%	59	12.2%	26	5.4%	50	10.4%	3.91	78.3%
8	<i>It made me to be diligent with my studies</i>	317	65.8%	116	24.1%	19	3.9%	12	2.5%	18	3.7%	4.47	89.3%
9	<i>It helped me to appreciate others</i>	246	51.0%	184	38.2%	17	3.5%	11	2.3%	24	5.0%	4.32	86.4%
10	<i>It helped me to be obedient to rules</i>	290	60.2%	147	30.5%	28	5.8%	3	0.6%	14	2.9%	4.44	88.8%
11	<i>It helped me to be encouraged</i>	293	60.8%	139	28.8%	23	4.8%	11	2.3%	16	3.3%	4.41	88.2%
12	<i>It helped me to stop truancy</i>	199	41.3%	174	36.1%	45	9.3%	22	4.6%	42	8.7%	4.00	80.0%
13	<i>It helped to overcome restlessness</i>	198	41.1%	171	35.5%	57	11.8%	23	4.8%	33	6.8%	3.96	79.3%
14	<i>It helped me to control my anger</i>	223	46.3%	169	35.1%	36	7.5%	23	4.8%	31	6.4%	4.11	82.1%
15	<i>It helped me to stop stubbornness</i>	264	54.8%	143	29.7%	31	6.4%	14	2.9%	30	6.2%	4.27	85.4%

Table 2: Histogram Presentation of JSS Students' Perception of Bibliotherapy Effectiveness



From Tables 1 and 2, the research question, which says: “Do junior secondary school students in FCT, Abuja perceive bibliotherapy as being effective in fostering their emotional adjustment?” was answered in the affirmative? Findings revealed that more students reported effectiveness of bibliotherapy having gone through the process. The study also sought to know the level of effectiveness of bibliotherapy. From the data it was observed that bibliotherapy has a high level of effectiveness among the students that were investigated. The level of effectiveness is obtainable from Table 2 above. The null research hypothesis was rejected because the data proved that there was significant difference in the level of effectiveness of bibliotherapy based on the area councils where students’ schools are located. This can be confirmed from Table 3 below.

Table 3: Levels of Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in Fostering Emotional Adjustment of Students Based on Area Councils

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.470	5	.494	9.663	.000
Within Groups	4.294	84	.051		
Total	6.764	89			

*d.f. ( $v_1=5, v_2 = 84$ ) at 5% level of significance is 2.32*

Since the calculated  $F = 9.663$  is greater than the critical value 2.32, it was significant. Hence there was difference in the level of effectiveness of bibliotherapy in fostering emotional adjustment of students, based on their area councils.

### Discussion of Findings

Bibliotherapy can foster emotional adjustment of students as observed in this study. This finding corroborated the position Coleman and Ganong (1990) who opined that the aim of bibliotherapy was to bring about psychological healing to readers. Tables 1 and 2 give us clear insight to support the claim. The data show that most of the students agreed that bibliotherapy was effective in fostering their emotional stability. This perceived effectiveness of bibliotherapy in



fostering emotional adjustment among junior secondary school students also corroborated the works of McCullus (2012) who found that bibliotherapy was effective in fostering healing and personal growth.

Students, especially of basic seven were helped to become emotionally stable through the use of bibliotherapy. The students of this study having gone through the process of bibliotherapy became emotionally confident and stable; and thus became more ready for their academic work. That bibliotherapy was perceived by the students as effective in fostering their emotional adjustment is not surprising as Jewell and Stark (2003) have earlier found that the use of bibliotherapy accounted for high level of emotional adjustment, low level of deviant activities, antisocial and misconduct behaviour. These were also the observation of the respondents of this present study. The students, who participated in this study, confirmed that bibliotherapy helped them to control their anger and stop truancy. It also made them to be diligent in their studies, courageous and obedient among others.

Going by the data of this study, it is safe to say that bibliotherapy is an effective therapeutic approach to foster the emotional adjustment of students. The reason is that bibliotherapy as a therapeutic process is a programme that relieves someone from emotional stress and leads to the realization of varieties of potential solutions to a number of identified problems. This position corroborates the findings of Bryant and Roberts (1992).

### **Conclusion**

Bibliotherapy, from the findings of this research was an effective therapeutic approach to bring about emotional stability of students. Bibliotherapy with its psychological healing was found effective in fostering the emotional adjustment of students.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended based on the findings of this study that counsellors should make use of bibliotherapy to foster emotional stability of students. The advantages of bibliotherapy cannot be overemphasized considering the fact that counsellors can make use of it with many students at the same time. The process is self-discovery; and makes it easy for the counsellor as the therapy may not be energy sapping or time consuming on the part of the counsellor. However, government and other stake holders in our educational system should make materials available for counsellors for them to be effective in using this approach in counselling processes. Librarians have very important roles to play in making this system effective. Counsellors should work closely with librarians to select materials that can help promote bibliotherapy in schools.

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