BIBLIOTHERAPY AS A METHOD OF MEANINGFUL TREATMENT

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ABSTRACT

Bibliotherapy is an expressive therapy in which there is an individual relationship with the content or essence of books, poems and other writings as a therapy. Bibliotherapy according to experts is one type of therapy that uses literary reading activities to address the problems faced by someone. Bibliotherapy includes the task of reading to reading materials selected, planned, and directed as a treatment procedure or action with therapeutic purposes. With bibliotherapy it is believed to influence the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of individuals as expected and may stimulate readers to think. Bibliotherapy easy to implement, inexpensive, and can be done anytime and involve their own independence and full participation of the readers to internalize it. Provision of treatment in the form of bibliotherapy needs to be socialized as a method of meaningful treatment.

Kata Kunci : Bibliotherapy, Treatment, Reading

A. INTRODUCTION

Bibliotherapy method is actually an old concept in the bibliographic science (Eliasa, 2007). This concept has been widely used and documented in America for more than 100 years ago. Basically, bibliotherapy is the selection of reading materials that are relevant with particular client’s environment (www.wikipedia/bibliotherapy). That is also the case that happened when we reinvestigat the first library in ancient Greek where the use of the term “bibliotherapy” appeared when Crothes in Shectman, 2009 labels reading activities as the means for emerging one’s self power and have the quality of therapeuetic. Crothes describes that when people read their book, they will find themselves get into the world of the book pages, and it also occurs when they watch a good scene in a film, that they are involved in its characters. Therefore, when the ‘actor’ feels sad or happy, the readers feel the same feelings. Crothes asserts that qualified reading will develop new knowledge and ideas for life, and it soon results in a healing process that can enrich the readers’ personality (Schetman, 2009).
Bibliotherapy is considered to be an effective treatment since the World War I and World War II. According to Schetman (2009) there were many soldiers, who coming back with a trauma after wars. From that moment, bibliotherapy method was expanded and now it is applicable for any profession, age and population. As an example, bibliotherapy is used by school counselors (Gallding, 2005), social workers (Pardeck, 1988), nurses (Frankers, 2005), teachers (Kramer & Smith, 1998) and librarians (Breinstein, 1989 in Schetmen, 2009).

This article makes reference to some research findings and the writer’s study of the condition of Guidance and Counseling students, who were initially confused of their future career. The students still worry about their counselor profession that they will get. Although the department has arranged a curriculum that provides an understanding of the counselor profession, the students are still in doubt about their career. For this reason, the writer arranged a study using bibliotherapy as the method for improving their career motivation. The result showed the improvement of the students’ career motivation after they were given bibliotherapy actions (Eliasa, 2007). The term bibliotherapy was defined by some experts in this article, then, the types of the bibliotherapy used and its effectiveness in various settings were supported by the research findings.

B. DISCUSSION

1. Bibliotherapy Definition

The term bibliotherapy comes from Greek, that is biblus which means books, and therapy which means psychological assistance efforts. Therefore, bibliotherapy is defined as the use of books to help overcome a problem. In Webster Dictionary (1985, p.185), bibliotherapy is defined as a guideline for solving personal problems through reading. Whereas Berry (in Schectman, 2009) gives a more comprehensive definition: “a family of techniques for structuring interaction between a facilitator and a participant . . . based on their mutual sharing of literature.” Next, Baker gives a more clinical definition by defining bibliotherapy as the use of poems and literature for curing someone who suffers from mental or emotional illness (Schectman, 2009).
Bibliotherapy has become a medium for counseling to help overcome personal problems. Morawski & Gibert (2000; Lehr, 1981) explain in a simpler way that bibliotherapy is the use of books for helping people solve their problems. A literature study showed the variation and extension of this definition. Cohen (1994) provides an understanding that interactive bibliotherapy does not only emphasize on clinical intervention (such as, the use of bibliotherapy for administering psychological unit, societies mental-health centre and chemical dependence program) but also emphasizes on self development. There are, at least, more than one person in an interactive bibliotherapy process, they are usually professional teachers or others who facilitates the students’ involvement.

Bibliotherapy is an expressive therapy containing a relationship between an individual and the content of books, poems or other written works as a therapy. Bibliotherapy is always combined with writing activities for its participants. It is often called as reading therapy, a therapy in which the patients are asked to read motivational books that can help accelerate their recovery (www.holisticonline.com). According to Pedreck (in Eric Digest), bibliotherapy is a kinship technique that forms interaction structure between facilitator and its participant on the basis of qualified literature sharing.

In accordance with the above opinion, Shechtman (2009) emphasizes that “Bibliotherapy entails the use of literature for therapeutic purposes and it includes listening to stories and poems, watching films, and looking at pictures. It is a playful, engaging, and fun process.” Shechtman combines listening to stories, reading poems, watching films and looking at pictures in a series of bibliotherapy, so the activities run interestingly and pleasingly.

Pardeck (1989) defines bibliotherapy as a way done for helping someone solve his/her problems using books. Bibliotherapy in Sclabassi view is a type of therapy that uses literature reading activities for solving someone’s problem. This therapy involves reading tasks on selected, planned and guided reading materials as a treatment or action procedure with therapeutic purposes because it is believed that reading can affect someone’s attitude, feeling and behavior as it was expected.
The use of bibliotherapy as one of therapy alternatives in solving adolescents’ problems needs to be considered. It is because bibliotherapy can stimulate teenagers to think easily, cheaply and it can be done anytime and it involves their full participation and autonomous attitude, so the effectiveness of the result can be obtained (Eliasa, 2007).

2. Types of Bibliotherapy

According to Berry (Nur Fathiyah, 2006) bibliotherapy is divided into two types, they are: 1) clinical type and 2) education/humanistic type.

a). Clinical Type. It is a psychotherapy form done by health profession like psychiatrist, psychologist, social workers, etc. The facilitator is a therapist and the participant is the patient. The aim is for helping the patient to get a better condition. In this type, the function of this therapy is forming the individual life. A patient suffering from an illness or a certain physical defect can feel a particular satisfaction by reading biographies or stories on the success of the adaptation done by people with the same illness.

b). Education or Humanistic Type. It is a bibliotherapy type done by counselors, teachers, and librarians in educational settings. The facilitator is the group leader or manager. While the participants of this type of therapy are healthy people like students. The aim of this type of therapy is helping the participants to pursue their education or achieving satisfaction or a bigger actualization. In this type of education, bibliotherapy can expand someone’s perception on the difference of human conditions, so a wider perception of the difference of human conditions can be achieved. Besides, this therapy also helps open someone’s knowledge on the existence of various values that can build his/her life. Then at the end, he/she can understand various social conditions like poverty, social prejudice, etc and can put an emphasis on individual life patterns.

While those who receive both therapies are: hospital patients, veterans, naughty boys, alcoholic, drug addicts, students with the need of career and education guidance, individuals in psychotherapy activities, marriage counseling, etc.

While the types of bibliotherapy proposed by Scechtman (2009) are:

a) Affective Bibliotherapy
Most of the literature on children bibliotherapy is affective bibliotherapy (Gladding, 2005; Scechtman, 2009). Affective bibliotherapy uses high quality fiction and literature to help readers connect to human situation and emotional experience through identification process. Affective bibliotherapy is dependent on psychodynamic theories referring to Sigmund and Anna Freud. The basic assumption of affective bibliotherapy is that people use defense mechanism such as repression for protecting themselves from pain. When the defense is regularly activated, an individual will stay far from their emotion, and they will not realize the actual feeling. As they cannot solve their problems constructively, they need a technique for telling a story that helps offer a perception in their personal problems (Forgan, 2002). Then, by the creation of safe distance, it will indirectly bring the children or adolescents into sensitive, threatening, and even painful issues to face directly.

The positive values behind affective bibliotherapy are a better self-understanding and an awareness of the universality and uniqueness of the problems they face. The readers learn that they are connected with other people and culture that give them convenience and legitimate their feeling and thought (Gladding, 2005). Through reading and listening to other people’s stories, one will find a healing method that fulfills human basic needs for finding and understanding the truth, finding an explanation of bad experiences, and even for challenging injustices.

The results show bibliotherapy as an effective therapy. Pardeck and Pardeck (1984), in their literature review, find 24 studies which support the positive use of fiction in changing the participants’ attitude, improving their firmness, and changing their behavior.

b) Cognitive Bibliotherapy

Cognitive bibliotherapy has been done in the beginning of the twentieth century by a psychiatrist and a librarian who were cooperating in their effort for helping their client with psychological problems. They offered some books that suited the patient’s difficulties, assuming that the patient will learn something from the therapy process and be able to apply it in their own life. This activity can be done with or without the existence of medicines. It can also become a self-help activity or it is followed by
particular meetings for discussing the books. However, the main focus of the therapy is the relationship between the content of the books and the patient’s problems or difficulties.

The basic assumption of cognitive bibliotherapy is that every behavior is achieved through learning, therefore, it can be learnt again through appropriate guidance. This theory is based on the concept of learning as the main catalyst in behavior changing. For this reason, cognitive bibliotherapy is defined as a high quality learning process having therapeutic advantages.

3. Bibliotherapy as An Effective and Meaningful Method

Bibliotherapy can be used in various settings with various specific problems. In its application, bibliotherapy can be used for kids, adolescents, adults and it can be done for a long- or short-term action for various psychological problems (Sclabassi, 1973).

Several American clinics have tried this technique and they showed bibliotherapy as able to give effects that can be compared with medicine therapy or psychotherapy. The patients receiving this therapy recovered from depression faster than those using conventional therapy. They look live better. Riordan and Wilson (Eliasa, 2007) state that most of the studies showed bibliotherapy as an efficacious treatment for solving problems. Generally, bibliotherapy sees success as an additional therapy.

The other expert, Stephanie A. Nugent analyzed the effect of bibliotherapy on the self-concept of talented students. The result showed the significant relationship between self-concept formation and bibliotherapy. The students were instructed with bibliotherapeutic technique, and then with bibliotherapeutic discussion technique, a motivational option must be considered when combined with the methodology of the talented students.

On the other side, the development of interactive bibliotherapy motivates adult readers to build their thinking ability and effectively gives advantages for applying it in their daily life. Reading popular writing can also help improve the vigilance of the students’ community (Page, 1988).
In his study on bibliotherapy, Cohen (1993) found that the participants used their new knowledge obtained from bibliotherapy process for accomplishing their daily duties. According to Monsho (2000), psychologists started to use the term bibliotherapy in the beginning of 1900. Then, Jacqueline Stanley wrote “Reading to Heal: How to Use Bibliotherapy to Improve Your Life.” Around 1920, Sadie Johnson Delaney, a librarian of New York Public Library in Harlem, stated that bibliotherapy activities are “prescriptions”, books help people solve their problems.

Monsho (2000) also stated that through bibliotherapy or reading therapy, participants can solve their problems in it, and still according to Monsho, there was another research findings that women reading almost all books can help themselves cure their emotional injury. Then, as a complement of professional therapies, bibliotherapy can play the role of a strong recovery instrument.

Lenkowsky (1987) noted that bibliotherapy has become a legitimate part of social science literature for more than a half century. As an example, bibliotherapy has played an important role in various education fields like family counseling (Sheridan, Baker, & de Lissovoy, 1984), social skills development (Nickolai-Mays, 1987) and curriculum planning for talented children (Herbert, 1991). Interactive bibliotherapy referring to the most studied type of bibliotherapy. In particular, interactive bibliotherapy emphasizes on interaction processes among its participants, and usually a teacher or the other professional facilitates the participants’ involvement through written materials and related activities such as group discussions. Interactions using bibliotherapy can give contributions to the cognitive and affective development as a whole (Jalongo, 1983).

According to Nola Kortner, the functions of bibliotherapy can be taken through its background of the problem:

1. Developing an individual self-concept
2. Improving the understanding of behavior and self-motivation
3. Building self-honesty
4. Showing the path for finding personality and other interests
5. For emotional sustainability and mental pressure
6. Showing that he/she is not the only person having problems
7. Showing that there are many solutions for solving problems
8. Helping someone through problem discussion
9. Helping plan an action for solving the problems (Eric Digest: Bibliotherapy)

Bibliotherapy as an effective additional activity in small groups, has been done by Scechtman (2009), who explains that “Bibliotherapy as an adjunct to treatment is helpful in classroom programs, just as it is in small groups.” He explains that bibliotherapy can be used as a preventive effort in the classroom, especially for helping aggressive students and those who are identified as doing aggressive behavior.

Similarly, the result found by Eliasa et al clarify the position of bibliotherapy as one of the effective techniques for improving the career motivation of the students’ of the guidance and counseling study program, so in the future they will become a professional counselor. The result of the action showed some improvements with 27 points for bibliotherapy aspects, 28 points for career motivation aspects, and 27 for career aspects. Besides, the intensively done bibliotherapy provided some actions for its subjects to read, understand, reflect and internalize reading materials in the daily activities. The result of the observation also showed the existence of expression change and body movements signaling that the subjects are enthusiastic for becoming a professional counselor. It is also well defined in the interview transcripts that the students became more enthusiastic for achieving their success, especially as a counselor. They were motivated for organizing their life, avoiding laziness, and doing positive thinking. Their knowledge also increased and they became keen on reading. They understood their characteristics, potentials, strength and weaknesses that they got from their friends’ SWOT analysis, so they opened themselves for better change. It is in accordance with bibliotherapy functions proposed by Nola Kortner such as developing individual self-concept, improving self motivation, and showing paths for finding one’s personality.

Eliasa (2007) findings showed the effectiveness of the book “Think and Grow Rich” from Napoleon Hill that was taken as the main reference in the bibliotherapy study under career topic for improving career motivation that is similar to Dr. Forrest Scogin from University of Alabama, who states the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in evaluating popular
books. The researchers assessed the effectiveness of the book "Feeling Good" from Dr. David Burn with the one from Dr. Peter Lewinsohn "Control Your Depression” as a treatment for self-administration for the participants suffering from depression. The result showed that the book 'Feeling Good’ was as effective as a full individual psychotherapy or as a treatment using the best anti-depression medicine (Eliasa, 2007).

Various issues and problems can also be solved using bibliotherapy. As for people who experience a more specific difficulty such as death and dying (Todah, Smith, Barnes, 1998 in Scechtman, 2009) and also divorce problems (Kramer & Smith, 1998).

Some evaluations (done by Gould and Clum 1993, Scogin, Bynum, and Stephen et al, 1990 in Acocella and Bootsin, 1996 in Nurfathiyah, 2007) have found that the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in solving various problems was not far from some actions done by therapists, especially for someone who suffers from certain skill deficits such as less assertive and for one who suffers from worries and depression. However, bibliotherapy is less effective for overcoming behavior problems that relate to habit problems such as smoking, boozing, and obesity. According to Schechtman (2009) this method is less suitable for the readers having a wide interpersonal problem and serious symptom. Then, according to Schogin (Schechtman, 2009) readers with lower level of reading and education will experience higher discontinuance, so the education background affects the consistency of bibliotherapy.

Another problem of cognitive bibliotherapy is that the understanding of written materials requires emotional and intellectual maturity, so it often causes perception distortion. However, Schogin (Schechtman, 2009) keeps recommending bibliotherapy as the best self-help effort and the very first step in supplying the mental health services.

**C. CONCLUSION**

Bibliotherapy as an expressive action gives a positive effect for its readers. Besides adding knowledge on understanding the content of the reading materials, adding the knowledge treasure of what have been read, it also help overcome some problems that the readers face. Yet bibliotherapy method is seldom applied in counseling areas.
The importance of this bibliotherapy ought to be a collective reading movement as a preventive, curative and development effort for its readers. For counselors, it can also be used as an effort for self development and reflection. Therefore, bibliotherapy can be used as a method for meaningful treatment.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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