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## Impact of the Utilization of Bibliotherapy by School Libraries and Librarians on Behaviors of Juveniles in Correctional Homes

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# **Impact of the Utilization of Bibliotherapy by School Libraries and Librarians on Behaviors of Juveniles in Correctional Homes**

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## **Abstract**

It is a globally accepted axiom that children today are leaders of tomorrow therefore have prominent role to play in the development of knowledge societies. For this dream to be realized and fulfilled it behooves parents and all stakeholders including libraries to monitor our children's development especially in this era of globalization. In recent time it has been observed that children go through different types of experiences and challenges and there arose the need to seek for ways of helping as they grow. Bibliotherapy is a concept that involves the use of books to help children cope with their life. This study therefore is aimed at discovering the impact of the use of bibliotherapy by school libraries and librarians on the behaviours of juveniles in correctional centres using a state in Nigeria as a case in point. The study made use of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) design with a population sample of 30 purposively obtained from Abakaliki Correctional Centre in the categories of 13 girls child offenders and 17 boys out of parental control. The main instrument for data collection was a book written by a Nigerian author that talked about responsibility, honesty, cooperation and tolerance and was read to the juveniles during the group discussions which lasted for 8 weeks. The outcome of the study shows that the participants after the readings and discussions in line with themes of the book, showed more understanding of good behaviours as most of them were remorseful and regretted most of their actions as were prevalent during the discussion sessions.

It was based on the findings that recommendations were made which include that librarians and libraries in correctional homes can help create space and place that will assist meet the emotional needs of these juveniles among others.

**Keywords:** Bibliotherapy, Juveniles, Correctional Homes, Librarians, School libraries

## **1.0. Introduction**

It is a globally accepted axiom that children today are leaders of tomorrow therefore have prominent role to play in the development of knowledge societies. For this dream to be realized and fulfilled it behooves parents and all stakeholders including libraries to monitor our children's development especially in this era of globalization. In recent time it has been observed that children go through different types of experiences and challenges and there arose the need to seek for ways of helping as they grow. Bibliotherapy is a concept that involves the use of books to help children cope with their life. As explained by American Psychological Association (2020), bibliotherapy is a form of therapy that uses structured reading material and is often used as an adjunct to psychotherapy for such purposes as reinforcing specific in-session concepts or strategies or enhancing lifestyle changes..

In Nigeria for instance, there have been growing concern regarding the increase in the unruly behaviour of young people (Adegoke, 2015). This inform stakeholders which include librarians, teachers, scholars, parents/guardians, policy makers and other concerned bodies including non-governmental organization (NGOs) to continually discuss the worrisome dimension of these unruly behaviours and the accrued consequences on young people and the society at large. These unruly behaviours which ranges from possession of hard drugs, cultism, bullying, prostitution to theft are not only detrimental to physical and emotional wellbeing of the young people, it could also put the society into some problems (Muhammed, Salami, Adekeye, Ayinla and Adeoye, 2009).

According to McCaffrey (2016), bibliotherapy is commonly studied in psychology through focus group and relies on controlled aspects and more often than not prescribed non-fiction self-help books that were created by a psychologist. However personal attestation of readers has shown a powerful impact too even though the results may not be from a controlled environment. The implication is that books can help children and young people relate to and understand intricate feelings they may be going through. Bibliotherapy therefore noted Oyewusi (2016) is an important programme that could be potentially developed into young people's activities in school libraries with the school librarian assuming the role of a counselor where children and young people can be counseled through the recommendations of appropriate books that can assist them in removing their emotional burden. It is against this backdrop, that this study became a

necessity as to establish the impact the use of bibliotherapy will have on the behaviours of juveniles in correctional homes.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Children who are in juvenile homes are not there by desire but as a result of circumstances beyond their control. The implication is that such children need help that can shape their unruly behaviours which is the principle factor why they are in correctional homes in the context of the new law not to be incarcerated but to be rehabilitated and reformed (NCS law, 2019). The fact that the law has been enshrined in the constitution is not to say that it is well with these children in these homes. The fact is that there is still much to be done if we do not intend to have these juveniles turn hardened criminals after leaving the correctional homes. This is built on the premise that our correctional homes have long been neglected that there is none that can boast of basic amenities like libraries where these children can read and also recreate themselves and these are factors that have increased disobedient behaviours and cumulated into youth restiveness. It is in search of a way out that this study of use of bibliotherapy (as an extension service of school libraries) by school libraries and librarians on the behaviours of juveniles as to establishing the impact was initiated using the Abakaliki Correctional Home in Ebonyi State as the area of study.

### **1.2. Research Objective**

This study had specific objective which was:

1. To ascertain the impact of the use of bibliotherapy by school libraries and librarians on the behaviours of juveniles in correctional homes.

### **1.3. Research Question**

The study was also guided by one research

1. What impact does the use of bibliotherapy by school libraries and librarians has on the behaviours of juveniles in correctional homes?

## **2.0. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Conceptual Framework**

#### **2.1.1. Bibliotherapy**

Bibliotherapy which is also called book therapy, poetry therapy or therapeutic storytelling) is a creative arts therapies modality that involves storytelling or the reading of specific texts with the purpose of healing. It uses an individual's relationship to the content of books and poetry and other written words as therapy. Bibliotherapy is often combined with writing therapy. It has been shown to be effective in the treatment of depression (Burns, 1999), Thomas (2021) defines it as the reading of specific texts to support and help heal issues that you may be going through in your life. According to American Psychological Association (APA) (2020) bibliotherapy is a form of therapy that uses structured reading material and often used as an adjunct to psychotherapy for such purposes as reinforcing specific in-session concepts or strategies or enhancing lifestyle changes. Carefully chosen readings are also used by some individuals as self-help tools to foster personal growth and development, for example, by facilitating communication and open discussion of problems or enhancing self-concept (APA, 2020). . Merriam-Webster (2018) defines it as the use of reading materials for help in solving personal problems or for psychiatric therapy. Bibliotherapy generally refers to the use of literature to help people cope with emotional problems, mental illness, or changes in their lives (Pardeck, 1994), or to produce effective change and promote personality growth and development (Lenkowsky, 1987; Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller, 1989). By providing literature relevant to their personal situations and developmental needs at appropriate times (Hebert & Kent, 2000), bibliotherapy practitioners attempt to help people of all ages to understand themselves and to cope with emotional related problems. Ajayi (2014), classified bibliotherapy into two types; clinical and developmental bibliotherapy but in the context of this study the area of focus is developmental bibliotherapy which is defined as any planned use of books carried out with the aim to influence the personal growth and development. This is particularly relevant to the work of school libraries and their librarians.

### **2.1.2. Correctional Homes**

Correctional homes are institutions established for reformation and rehabilitation of persons assigned to it. The Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 under custodial service provides that while prisoners serve their jail terms, the emphasis should be more on correctional services tailored towards re-admitting them to society on completion of their jail sentence (Onwubiko, 2021). Darbouze (2010) reveals that correctional homes were earlier known as Jails. The purpose and the objectives of the department are to reform the inmates of such Correctional Homes rather than only punishment through incarceration. In Nigeria correctional homes for young people are referred as remand homes under the Child and Young Persons Law (Ajayi, 1997, Lagos State, 2003; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). Correctional homes serve as detention sites for young people who have violated child and the young person's law or the criminal code (young people in conflict with the law), young people in need of care and protection and parental control. The homes were established with the purpose of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of such remanded young people back to the society (Darbouze, 2010)

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### **2.2. Theoretical and Empirical Framework**

According to Hannigan (1962), bibliotherapy can serve group therapy by expertly providing materials for discussion and also by reinforcing and complementing the discussion through appropriate reading lists with the librarian acting as an analyzer of the discussion material and provides the medicament as the case may be for the use of the group therapist. Be that as it may, the literature on bibliotherapy revealed Arulanantham and Navaneethakrisghnan, (2013) began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was accepted in the library field, when a trained librarian was employed at the Mclean Hospital, Massachusetts in 1904. In the era, as a leading role, books were used as a therapy towards patients. It was in the year 1920s, Sadie Peterson-Delaney, also a librarian from Veteran's Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama had success in the outstanding program that was related to bibliotherapy towards African – American war veterans. She then received world recognition because of the method she adopted to treat the psychological and physical needs of war victims. In fact a year before; in 1919 an article was written by a librarian about bibliotherapy. The librarian was co-author with a neurologist in the publication of 'The

therapeutic use of hospital library' (Bibliotherapy sourcebook 1978). Consequently, bibliotherapy is no longer a strange method or practices in library service, especially libraries in hospitals. The role of a library will be more visible and significant with bibliotherapeutic schemes rather than the traditional perceptions of being the custodian of information/books. According to previous studies by Battleson and Nessel (2012) and Fanner and Urquhart (2008 & 2009) the practices of bibliotherapy for helping the mentally ill continues to be well-recognized by librarians who often take part in programmes of rehabilitation and bibliotherapy. Library plays a role as a stress-reduction agency through their services and activities of bibliotherapy (Jackson, 2006). Through the programme the children learn to cope with their threatening problems. Past research which include that of Brewster (2008) and Hutchinson (2014), identified lack of standardized bibliotherapy practice as inhibitors to the schemes of bibliotherapy. It is highlighted that the authority which offers the service has no proper syllabus and in fact some libraries and librarians did not realize that services offer is technically bibliotherapy (Hutchinson, 2014).

According to Janaviciene (2010), bibliotherapy can be divided into three categories which are clinical bibliotherapy, rehabilitation bibliotherapy and education bibliotherapy also known as personality development. Brewster (2009) also classified bibliotherapy into three categories which are clinical, supportive and developmental bibliotherapy. To summarize the studies from the different authors, bibliotherapy has three types which are clinical, rehabilitation and educational bibliotherapy. A main issue this study attempts to explore is the impact of the use of bibliotherapy on the behaviours of juveniles in correctional homes. Indeed, studies have shown that reading has significant benefits to the reader experience and life. Through reading, not just that the readers will acquire new ideas and knowledge, reading contributes significantly to job success, career development and ability to respond to change (UNESCO (2010).

In addition to the "how" of conducting bibliotherapy, practitioners also need to be aware of potential benefits and pitfalls associated with this procedure. Bibliotherapy has obvious value in that it provides the opportunity for the participants to recognize and understand themselves, their characteristics, and the complexity of human thought and behavior. It may also promote social development as well as the love of literature in general, and reading in particular (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). It reduces feelings of isolation that may be felt by people with problems.

Writing on developmental bibliotherapy, McCulliss (2012) posit that it is practiced by school librarians to facilitate and help children and young people cope with issues or situations that could affect or has affected their behaviour noting that careful selection of story books based on issues the young people are going through is very paramount in to having a good session/therapy.

In carrying out the function of bibliotherapy the librarian explains Hannigan (1962) should recommend and provide reading materials through; reader's advisory service, individual and/or group therapy and special library activities correlated with patients' interest. According to Hannigan (1962) through readers advisory service the librarian stimulates and develops reading interest by recommending and providing reading materials through discussion with young people who come to the library while through individual and group therapy, he lessens the mental and emotional strain and motivates the patient towards normal living through professional guidance in the use of library materials. Whereas, through special activities the librarian aids the patients' physical and mental recovery and adjustment by creating and stimulating their initiative, self-reliance and confidence through project leading to use of library materials, hobby and vocational displays.

### **2.3. Role of School Libraries and Librarians in Changing Young People's Behaviours**

Most young people are not aware that they can go to the library in order to get supportive literature that will help them with their problems and lead them to new knowledge, support, insight and possible solution (Baruchson-Arbib, 2010). School librarian and libraries can help young people with reading activities to empower and emancipate them from actions that are detrimental both to them and the society. Through reading young people could enter into the life and experiences of others and this could have implications on their knowledge, scope of experiment, enjoyment and long lasting solution to what they are passing through. A well written story book or novel has other uses apart from educational purpose.. It could provide information that is new to the reader, meet recreational and entertainment needs and also gain insight in issues that the young people are dealing with. Reading of books have been an instrument of change, development and helps in effective decision making (Akinola, 2014)

During reading, users of books are able to compare and contrast behaviour/characters in the book and this will help the reader with inferring some form of reasoning. The role of the librarian as the leader of bibliotherapy group meeting is an effective one in situation involving inmates in correctional institutions. In addition to motivating reading interest and helping to escape for a time from problems, bibliotherapy groups have other important goals such as socialization and communication (Hannigan, 1962). In Nigeria noted Adegoke (2015), the most convenient place to have access to book it is the library as preliminary observations have revealed that the economic recession in the country would not allow many young people the opportunity to buy personal books for themselves in the face of other pressing needs such as food, clothing and shelter he added.

Onwubiko and Uzoigwe (2004) revealed that a school library provides instructional materials to enrich the curriculum, supplement textbooks, give students unlimited opportunity for learning and keeps teachers and students up-to-date on the new social, economic and scientific development. School libraries therefore are one of the sources for providing reading resources and a gateway to knowledge. It is a repository of books and other resources that could help young people shape their thoughts and influence their actions. As revealed by IFLA (2015), a school library provides a range of learning opportunities for individual, small groups and large groups with a focus of intellectual content, information literacy and cultural and social development. According to IFLA /UNESCO (1999), school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge based society. Unruly young people need school library to help with their cultural and social development by transforming them into responsible citizen as this in tandem with IFLA/UNESCO (1999) school manifesto that specific services and materials must be provided for those who are unable to use mainstream library services and materials.

School librarians motivate students to discover the world through reading as they help them locate books and information on the topics of their interest while school library with good resources help young people explore the world around them through print and electronic media (Oyewusi). Furthermore, a functional library states Mahajan (2010), would not only provide textbooks for curriculum needs of the young people but will also provide books that will enhance

skills that could help the young people in the future as well as equips them with long-life learning skills and develops the imagination enabling them to live as responsible citizens. This it does through the selection, acquisition and provision of access to appropriate sources of information.

### **3.0. Research Methodology**

The study made use of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) design with a population sample of 30 participants purposively selected from Abakaliki Correctional Centre in the categories of 13 girls' child offenders and 17 boys out of parental control. The main instrument for data collection was a book written by a Nigerian author that talked about responsibility, honesty, cooperation and tolerance and was read to the juveniles during the group discussions which lasted for 8 weeks. The main idea behind the focus group discussion was to provide the bibliotherapy procedure and discussion using the book 'My storybook on value for the African child written by Omoegun in 2014. The focus group discussion also assisted the researcher in soliciting in-depth information on the solution to the challenges facing the young people in the correctional centre using the story book as a baseline for bibliotherapy.

#### **3.1. Method used to collect information**

The story book was distributed to the participants for personalized reading for one week which was followed by a six week of collective discussion and activities with the eighth week being used as a round-off session. Imperatively, the duration of the whole bibliotherapy process was eight weeks. In the course of the group discussion, the following tools were used for timing, behavioral control and recording of observations and responses; notepad and pencil, focus group script, table recorder from the researcher/s android phone, ethical consent form from the ministry of youths and social welfare which coordinates the juvenile section of the correctional home and clock for time management. It also pertinent to state that researcher provided refreshment for the young people throughout the duration of the therapy which made them relaxed and fully participated in the activities.

#### **4.0. Presentation of results**

The whole exercise was on juveniles in correctional centre in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It was observed that these young people were reprimanded in the correctional centre on the ground of reformation and rehabilitation and not as a punitive measure as they exhibited unruly behaviour ranging from theft drug addiction, cultism, prostitution to arson among other listed offences. To get access to the juveniles, the researcher held a joint meeting with the home management and the assisting teachers/librarians who was handy in creating the desired atmosphere for reading and comprehension.

The procedure which was divided into eight sessions which started with an introduction by the researcher for the purpose of the gathering followed by the introduction of the story book to be read and onward distribution of the books to the participants for independent reading. The participants were guided in the reading based on the themes which were; cooperation, tolerance, honesty and responsibility and every session was followed by questions, activities and discussions. In the course of discussion and interactions, after the systematic reading and getting involved in the activities that followed each session, it was observed that majority of the participants wished they were not involved in the unruly behaviours that caused their be remanded in the correctional home as most of them verged to be of good behaviour on their release from the home and reintegrated to the society.

#### **5.0. Discussion of findings**

The stories in the book were designed to inspire people into getting involved in thinking positively about themselves, others and the world around them and to be relevant in the society. The stories had themes that could help young people develop personal, social, peaceful, cooperative and emotional values. The stories were also based on core values and very story ended with some activities that were used during the group discussion to make the participants reflect, imagine, communicate, create, write artistically express and play with values. These values include; cooperation, honesty, responsibility and tolerance and the participants showed their willingness to embrace all these values once released from the remand home..

The researcher observed that in the course of reading the story book, the juveniles were anxious but during the discussion sessions, it was discovered that the young people maintained eye

contact with the researcher away from how they were at the inception and they later assumed a sober look that some of them burst into tear an indication that the stories had an emotional effect on them. The outcome of this study is conformity with the assertion that bibliotherapy has obvious value in that it provides the opportunity for the participants to recognize and understand themselves, their characteristics, and the complexity of human thought and behavior. It may also promote social development as well as the love of literature in general, and reading in particular (Gladding & Gladding, 1991). It reduces feelings of isolation that may be felt by people with problems.

## **5.2. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The outcome of this study shows that the use of bibliotherapy has positive impact in the behaviours of juveniles in correctional home as it noticed that they assumed a sober look that some of them burst into tear an indication that the stories had an emotional effect on them. The bibliotherapy intervention did create the awareness that reading story books can help young people to learn from the experience of other young people. The inference therefore is that bibliotherapy has this outstanding value that helps those exposed to it to understand who they are and what they are as well as giving them the opportunity to understand the world in its true colour and prepare their minds towards combating challenges that may come their ways. Furthermore, the therapy is like tonic that encourages reading among young people. In view of the above findings that these recommendations are made:

- ☞ It is very imperative that through extension services, school librarians and libraries should take it upon themselves to be rendering specialized services to disadvantaged groups such as juveniles in correctional homes. This built on the assumption that books read by such people can affect their feelings and actions. On the other hand, correctional centres with library facilities should help juveniles by employing bibliotherapy interventions with a view to reforming and preparing them for reintegration into the wider society
- ☞ Most pupils are ignorant of the fact that they can go to the school library to get supportive literature that will help them with their problems and lead them to new knowledge, support, insight and possible solution. To this end, there is the need for librarians to take

bibliotherapy process to young people that have been classified as having unruly, wild and uncontrollable attitude that have lead to be confined to correctional homes. After all, if the mountain fails to move to Mohammed, Mohammed has to move to the mountain so as to achieve his purpose.

- ☞ Going by the outcome of this study, the use of bibliotherapy as an intervention process to help juveniles in correctional centres has proved that libraries in correctional centres can create space and place that will meet the needs of these juveniles emotionally. The emphasis is that an effective library services within the correctional centres will go a long way to helping juveniles to refocus and create a safe environment. It therefore behooves government and national correctional service authorizes to provide these centres with functional libraries.
- ☞ The basic function of any librarian is to identify the information needs of his/her clients and provide information resources that will lead to them being satisfied. In other words, school libraries should be important institution in the implementation of bibliotherapy with the function of the librarian in the process being to help each individual find his book in line with one of the reference laws of Ranganathan which says: ‘every reader his book.’
- ☞ On a final note, library schools regulators and curriculum planners in all higher institutions should include Bibliotherapy (if not in existence) as a compulsory course for all student-librarians and this will help produce competent and interested librarians in this field. Stating the obvious, school librarians need to understand the aims and objectives of having constant bibliotherapy sessions with people in need of such interventions as not to end up committing crimes and exhibiting unruly behaviours that may land them into correctional homes.

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