

Teachers' Perception on the Use of Literature Bibliotherapeutic Interventions in Students' Bullying in Kenya Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract: In this paper, bullying was taken as a case study in which the efficacy of literature bibliotheraphy and the perceptions of the teachers about it was assessed. Bibliotherapy is one instructional tool teachers can use to help children and adolescents cope with their diverse needs and life's challenges like bullying in their respective schools. It is a systematic process of utilizing books to transform traditional reading into an instructional strategy to assist teachers in meeting the needs of all students in schools. For bibliotherapy to be effective, teachers need knowledge of the recommended procedures and understanding of how to guide students through the bibliotherapeutic process like the use of literature books in intervening on the problems affecting secondary school students like bullying. Additionally, teachers need to feel confident in the interventions they are implementing with students. Many teachers do not possess the knowledge of intervention methods to assist their students with non-academic issues in a manner that is sensitive to the emotional and social developmental needs of children and adolescents. This is a significant concern, especially considering that there are millions of secondary teachers in Kenya. Bibliotherapy through the use of literature books like fasihi and other books is one approach for teachers to guide secondary school students in coping with life's problems and challenges like bullying in schools through developing a better understanding of their experiences, and feelings through the structured utilization of literature. The main objective addressed in this paper was to assess the teacher's perception on the use of bibliotherapeutic care in public secondary in Kenya to address bullying as one of the problems facing students. A survey research design was employed to assess the perceptions of bibliotherapy quantitatively. According to Creswell (2008), survey design research examines the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of a population by collecting numerical data and statistically analysing the results. Teachers have and continue to use bibliotherapy, either unknowingly or in a simplistic manner without following established guidelines and procedures. However, current usage of literature in the classroom is typically described as story time, read aloud, guided reading, and other methods of using books with the intent of teaching or entertaining students. Students spend approximately 14,000 hours at school from kindergarten through high school graduation. Given the vast amount of time spent in the school setting and the growing non-academic needs of children and adolescents, bibliotherapy represents a valuable tool for educators to meet the needs of their students.

Key words: Bibliotheraphy, Literature Bibliotheraphy, Bullying, Perspective Teachers, Non-Perspective Teachers, Perceptions

1. Introduction

Website: www.jriie.com

Teacher education is an important area where the instructional potential of bibliotherapy has been recognized. Employing a phenomenological framework for viewing teacher education, Aiex (2010) recommended the use of novels to understand what

children experience as they learn to read. Authors, by whatever mixture of memory, insight and imagination, allow us to see through the eyes of others, and since all authors were once children, revelations of child life abound. Huns Deiro (2003) illustrate the insights about children's literacy development that teachers can gain from this practice. The use of juvenile literature for

educating mainstream teachers about students with special needs was advocated by Alexander (2008). She stated that, "Books written about children and adolescents with learning disabilities examine the cause of the learning disability, experiences of academic failure, remediation, affective development, and family reaction." (p. 25). Such information can complement and reinforce other forms of related knowledge regarding special education that teachers obtain from in-service support.

Arseneault (2011) introduced an activity in which she used images from literature to guide new teachers through various stages of composing a more formal teaching philosophy. In Particular, this activity "enabled the... teachers to reflect often on the basis of their practice and the ways in which their actions are influenced in the classroom" (p. 683). As part of an affective component for developing the instructional potential of teachers in the content areas, Bandura (1986) proposed the use of bibliotherapy. Through vicarious involvement with books and other written materials, teachers can gain significant knowledge about their students as well as themselves. "In particular, bibliotherapy cannot only help teachers contend with the demands of teaching. Reading-disabled students, but it can also provide assistance to teachers who are coping with their own insecurities related to the reading process" (Bardoza, 2009, p. 338).

This approach to bibliotherapy will develop further its application to teacher education at both the pre-service and in-service levels. The approach takes into account both the most relevant psychological theory and the recognized stages of bibliotherapy. It includes reading aloud, instructor-initiated readings, teacher-initiated readings, guided independent reading, and collaborative inquiry.

For those instructors who are considering the use of bibliotherapy for the first time, it is best that they integrate the practice into their courses on a gradual basis. Concentrating on one course and selecting only shorter works to read aloud at specific times throughout its duration would be one way of initiating the process. Assigning a short story as part of a unit. On a particular topic such as giftedness would be another means by which bibliotherapy could be incorporated into a course on a smaller scale. Providing time for observation and active reflection would be essential, especially for refining and expanding the usage of bibliotherapy in the teacher education classroom. The analysis of various outcomes, including a teacher's unfavourable reaction to a story or the large amount of debate that was sparked by a poem, would provide invaluable material for the revision of future implementations such as the guided independent readings of autobiographies.

In inclusive classrooms the teacher and the whole class play a role in meeting the needs directly or indirectly of students with exceptionalities. Bibliotherapy can help all the students in the class to learn coping skills that will help them deal with the social and emotional challenges that may occur (Beane, 2008).

Books and reading are an integral part of classroom life. Through books, "Children are able to see reflections of themselves. their times. their country; concerns...well-written realistic fiction will always help readers gain a deeper understanding of themselves and others." (Berain, 2006, p. 6) Teacher's who practice or need to use bibliotherapy can find connections to their state or provincial guidelines. Berain curriculum expectation demonstrate how easy it is to fulfill educational objectives with bibliotherapy. In an already busy day a teacher does not want to see bibliotherapeutic interventions as more work. Berain's article presents in detail "the setting, needed resources, story choice selection, lesson planning and potential benefits of bibliotherapy" (2004, p. 2). The authors state that the greatest challenge to the classroom teacher is finding the right book and although some annotated bibliographies are available online and in curriculum publications, not all issues are addressed. A teacher may have to find his or her own book and to that end the authors suggest the following evaluation framework: Is the story simple, clear, brief, non repetitious, and believable? Is it at an appropriate reading level and developmental level? Does the story fit with relevant feelings, needs, interests, and goals? Does it demonstrate cultural Diversity, gender inclusivity, and sensitivity to aggression? Do characters show coping skills and does the problem situation show resolution?

Children must be willing to explore books and discuss experiences and situations and most importantly not be forced into discussion (Binkow., 2008). Bibliotherapy is a powerful tool but teachers have been given very little instruction as to how to appropriately implement bibliotherapy in their classrooms (Blatchford, 1994). Teachers should collaborate with the school counsellor, psychologist, or librarian so they are prepared to handle any questions that may arise during story time or any of the follow up activities (Bond, 2010).

2. Literature Review

The days of parents, teachers, and administrators thinking that bullying is a rite of passage are gone (National Crime Prevention Council). Schools have become one of the most prevalent places for bullying behaviours because of the differences of students who attend (Bond, 2010). To address and help alleviate bullying, many states have mandated bullying education in schools (Deiro, 2003). Some of these programs include a mixture of educational and character-education programs in an attempt to prevent and reduce bullying incidents (Bankow, 2008).

This literature review presents research findings on

bibliotherapy and bullying. The literature reviewed here provides explanations of how, through bibliotherapy, students develop a greater sense of personal empathy toward other students, which can lead to fewer bullying behaviors. Critical literature surrounding bibliotherapy and its implementation was also reviewed and discussed. This paper will attempt to show that students who participate in a bibliotherapy unit focusing on bullying literature will be less likely to bully others and more likely to intervene when other students are being bullied (Berains, 2004).

According to Blanchford (1994) bullying takes many different forms. Examples of bullying range from repeated hitting and shoving to name calling and spreading rumors (Beane, 2008). Bullying has a trio of participant types: perpetrators instigate or bully others, perpetrators bully targets, and bystanders observe the bullying behaviors. Bullying does not have to be face to face. Bullying may take the form of repeated harassing or threatening online text messages, social media posts, or e-mails (Graham, 2010). When it takes place in online social media or e-mail settings, (Baldoza, 2008) calls it cyber bullying.

Although cyber bullying is a fairly new concept, bullying in school has been a problem since the advent of school (196).

3. Methodology

A survey research design was employed to assess the perceptions of bibliotherapy quantitatively. According to Creswell (2008), survey design research examines the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a population by collecting numerical data and statistically analyzing the results. Fink (2013) acknowledges the variability of survey types and methods. This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design (Fink, 2013). The survey measure was given once to participants and provided a single snapshot 44 of the attitudes and perceptions of the teacher's population. A cross-sectional survey design was selected because this approach gathers data on an important subject at one point in time, so that others can plan for change (Fink, 2013). Survey research design was used to describe the perceived attitudes and behaviors of the teachers in the study's population. Focus group discussion was another method that was used in the classroom as teachers and students discussed the characters depicted in the literature texts to see if they depicted bibliotherapeutic characteristics.

4. Results and Discussion

Chang (2003) assert that recognition of the participant's need is the essential first step in the process of creative bibliotherapy. Hence, respondents were asked to give their opinions on whether or not they identified the needs of students in their classes through observation, parent conferences, student writing assignments etc. According

to the data provided, a cumulative total of 85.7% of the respondents indicated that they were not involved in the identification of student needs. Only 14.3% indicated that they were involved in the identification and recognition of student needs in their classes.

This finding clearly brings to the fore teachers' lack of awareness or interest in the bibliotherapeutic potential of the stories they teach. This view is evidenced in the data when the teachers respond to the statement on whether or not they connect students with appropriate materials that can meet their psychological and emotional challenges, especially short stories that focus on whatever needs have been identified. In this regard, 75% of the respondents indicated that they did not connect students to reading materials as motivated by student needs. Since no identification was made, no connection was done. Only 25% suggested that they connected students to reading materials as a result of their emotional needs. However, this finding contradicts the previous one where a higher percentage indicated that they did not identify student needs.

Teachers were further asked their opinion on whether they design follow-up activities like discussion, paper writing, drawing, and drama for the reading based on the short stories prescribed for fasihi. Data shows that 75% agreed that they designed these follow-up activities; while 25% indicated they did not. In the context of literature teaching, it can be conjectured that the teachers were referring more to teaching and learning activities in the literature lessons than they did with regard to bibliotherapy (Espelage, 2001). This is also evidenced in the data regarding whether or not the teachers engaged their students in the reading, viewing, or listening phases by asking questions and short discussions throughout the reading exercise, then giving the summary of what was discussed in the stories.

In this regard, all the respondents (100%) indicated that they did. Perhaps, they were responding to the pedagogic process rather than the bibliotherapeutic process in class. Christie (2005) asserts that, in order to use books, teachers must have a good command of different materials, such as stories, myths, history books, and other genres of children's books. This assertion does not just imply academic knowledge but functional knowledge as well so that relevant stories or sections can be used to address student needs. As a result of non-identification of students' emotional needs, most teachers indicated that they did not achieve closure through discussion and a listing of possible solutions, or some other activity (Esch, 2008). In this regard, data showed that a cumulative 78.6 did not achieve closure, while 21.4% suggested that they achieved closure.

When asked whether reading short stories had been reassuring to students by helping them to identify that they are not alone in dealing with a particular problem, 96.5% of the respondents indicated that they agreed with this assertion while 3.6% disagreed. Similarly, 100% of

the respondents indicated that they agreed that reading short stories helped students in learning about an issue that might give someone the right words and confidence to seek additional help, such as talking with friends, family members, and also teachers. All the respondents also agreed that reading short stories had helped students to gain new insight on the challenging situation they are facing and how it could be managed. However, when asked whether reading short stories had helped students to improve on their academic performances and competences, 96.7% of the respondents indicated that it did not. This finding contradicts the assertion by Collins (2001) in her assertion that bibliotherapy met the educational expectations of a remedial reading course while simultaneously accelerating literacy practices and promoting positive youth development. development may be conjectured to mean psychological, emotional and academic (Entenman, 2005).

Finally, the study sought to establish whether or not the engagement in literature had bibliotherapeutic outcomes. In this regard, the teachers were asked to comment on whether or not they agreed that reading short stories had helped minimize or stop the problem at hand from degenerating into a more complex problem. In this regard, 92.8% agreed while 7.1 % disagreed. Similarly, when asked whether reading short stories had helped communicate new values and change in attitudes caused by the problem, 89.3% also agreed with the assertion; while 10.7% disagreed.

This finding further complicated the situation since these teachers had not engaged in the prerequisites for bibliotherapy, yet, they affirm bibliotherapeutic outcomes. This may be a consequence of lack of knowledge of bibliotherapy among the teachers. Teachers acknowledged that they had their students for a major portion of their day and, therefore, should be talking with them on various subjects. One teacher told a story of how a little girl made faces when she wasn't happy. "If she didn't want to be next to someone, she would just give them this nasty face and I don't think she really realized just how unattractive it was until I put her in front of the mirror" and asked her to make the same face. So "...I think the facial expressions have gotten better."

Several teachers stated that at the "beginning of the year, we'll set our classroom rules and we discuss them and why we do have them." They felt dialogue was important between the teacher and her students when forming classroom rules. Several teachers spoke of times they helped children talk through a difficult situation and think about good choices. They often talked about the child's feelings and how to help them express those feelings appropriately. While the teachers admitted that time was an issue, they also agreed that preschool teachers should work to find time to talk with their students so they are better prepared to enter elementary school, when teachers' time constraints are likely worse,

according to teacher. The topic of modeling appeared briefly in the FG1.

Teachers used bibliotheraphy by use of literature books to converse about appropriate behaviors when responding to being picked on by another. Teacher 5a1 read a story to her class about "Lucy Lamb and how...she would pick on people and then" when it happened to her, she didn't like it. Most of the teachers indicated that they modeled fair and ethical behaviors, although they did not openly verbalize it. They believed the students knew that their teachers were their friends and would come to their rescue when needed. Teacher 5a1 reported that a child was aware that his teachers "wouldn't allow" certain behaviors and that all the children have "got to be friends." Another teacher felt that problems of bullying in public secondary schools could be decreased by the modeling and teaching of appropriate interpersonal behavioral skills.

The majority of these teachers modeled the caring and trust that Coloroso (2008) purport will reduce intimidation and victimization in classrooms. Several participating teachers spoke of the lack of education on bibliotheraphy among parents overall in intervening in problems like bullying in schools. In FG1, teachers cited the misconceptions parents had when they were informed about this study (Doll, 2008). This concern came up in FG2 at the very beginning of the session. "...I think that in the people that rejected the idea of the [bullying prevention] class, there is a large percentage of parents that don't believe bullying occurs." Several teachers voiced agreement when the teacher verbalized her view. Teacher 4a1 felt that one parent in her class refused to allow her child to participate because she "doesn't follow and read through everything. She didn't really educate herself on what was there, so I thought that was kind of interesting and he was one of the kids I'd like to really be in there working it out."

Teacher 4c1 felt that one girl in her class who was behaving poorly would benefit most from help at home. 'Her mom is the one I think that really needs help and support and education on how to handle her at home' In this paper data from teachers' perceptions of bullying in public secondary school students was analyzed based on two focus groups, one that took place before bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions and a second focus group that occurred after literature bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy sessions; 2) teacher observations of their students on the playground; and 3) an interview with the counselor at the participating school. The following table (Table 1) illustrates the themes identified both in the focus group sessions and in the literature review.

Table 1. Perceptions of Teachers on Bibliotheraphy

Literature Review	Focus Group Data	Conclusions	Changes in Perceptions
Bullying Definitions: Olweus (n.d.) says bullying involves 1) imbalance in power; 2) repeated negative behavior; 3) intent to cause harm	Bullying Definitions: Bullying is 1) hurting someone's feelings; 2) making a child feel bad; 3) picking on another; 4) finding your power level among the group	Teachers have a general idea of bullying that includes pieces of the definition from the experts, but they sometimes do not include all of the traits that make up bullying behavior.	Teachers' definitions of bullying broadened and "difficult situations were redefined," according to the counselor.
Purposeful: DeHaan (1997) believes that bullying is purposeful behavior aimed at controlling another	Purposeful: Teachers described bullying as "purposeful" behavior where children acted with a certain purpose in mind such as getting others in trouble	Teachers appear to recognize that bullying is "purposeful" behavior and does involve controlling others, although they may think of tattling as this behavior	Teachers' opinions of purposeful behavior grew from getting others in trouble to include a wider range of behaviors rather than tattling
Media: Bullying may be caused by exposure to violence in the media and at home (Gruenert, as cited in Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008; DeHaan, 1997).	Media: Media encourages bullying by exposure to violence on television and with video games, especially with the influence of older siblings.	Teachers recognize the influence media has on young children and how the lack of parental control of media in a child's life may impact children's behavior. Teachers also recognize that children need limits and guidance from parents in this regard	Teachers' perceptions changed to see their role as more of an advocate for children and they wanted to provide an educational opportunity for parents

Personalities: Olweus (n.d.) believes bullying can be caused by certain personalities, a tendency toward aggressive behavior, environmental factors, peers, and physical strength.	Personalities: Teachers hoped Boy A's parents would report his "personality" to his school so they would be prepared to help him with his aggressive behavior early in the year.	Teachers seem to care for their students and recognize that some personalities will require more guidance, patience, and intervention, but did not associate this behavior with bullying. Teachers also recognized the importance of environmental factors such as home life.	Teachers now seemed to understand that an aggressive personality could be associated with bullying behavior and recognized the importance of all stakeholders working together to prevent bullying.
Bullying Behaviors: Scarpaci (2006) concurs with Olweus that bullies use physical (hitting, tripping, shoving), verbal (name- calling, teasing, insulting), and social (exclusion, rejection, gossip) attacks on others.	Bullying Behaviors: Teachers enumerated hitting, name-calling and exclusion as bullying behaviors through their examples in the discussions.	Teachers were aware of some of the categories of typical bullying behaviors.	Teachers became aware of more bullying behaviors and were better able to recognize them in their classes.
Teachers: Craig, et al (2000) & Cuban (2007) say teachers are an integral part of any anti-bullying initiative.	Teachers: Teachers felt they needed to watch and make sure bullying doesn't happen. They believe teachers are going to be your main source of help for bullying.	Teachers seem to care for their students and feel a responsibility to prepare and empower them to deal appropriately with bullying behaviors.	Most of these teachers felt a responsibility to care for their students, but did not feel they had training to deal with bullying. Their confidence to intervene with bullying behaviors increased after this study.

Parents: Ma (2001) confirms that bullies often have poor parenting.	Parents: Teachers have a concern for lack of parenting skills in aggressive children.	Teachers care for their students and want parents to become better educated with parenting skills and ways to help their children with aggressive behavior.	The teachers asked the director and counselor to have classes for the parents and students on bullying next year.
Power: Olweus (n.d.) states that bullying involves an imbalance in power due to size or social clout.	Power: Teachers discussed power brought about by size, social clout, and age.	Teachers recognized the presence of power in their students, but did not necessarily connect it with bullying behaviors.	Teachers' insight into bullying behaviors increased so that they may more often recognize power struggles (that might lead to bullying) in their students.

A baseline of teachers' perceptions literature bibliotherapeutic interventions of bullying in students for example was established by an initial focus group that met before any bibliotherapeutic intervention sessions took place. Discussions revealed a consensus that these teachers were aware of the general concept of bullying from apparent prior knowledge (Dobie, 2010). However, little if any thought had been given to bullying in preschool before the contemplation of this study. During FG1 participants mentioned that bullying was purposeful, intimidating, and sneaky.

Teachers did believe bullying was "purposeful" which could imply intent to harm, but might not imply harm either. This may have been the feeling of these teachers, but that was not clear from our discourse (Dewey,(1938). A definition of harm was not considered in the discussion but literature bibliotherapeutic interventions on problems like bullying in public secondary schools was addressed in order to get the teachers perceptions on the greater intervention of bullying through literature bibliotherapy by use of literature.

In fact, several teachers admitted in both FG1 and FG2 that when first asked to participate in this study, they were skeptical as to whether bullying transpired in public secondary schools at all. However, the literature bibliotherapeutic interventions and observations during this study have altered their opinions in this regard. During FG2, the teachers were convinced that bullying does occur in preschool children and quoted several literature stories that illustrated their beliefs (Deiro, (2003). The teacher participants also reported an

increased consciousness of bullying and demonstrated an atmosphere of cooperation in identifying and stopping bullying behaviors through literature bibliotherapeutic intervention as a team. "I think it just made us more aware," 4b1 said, "we saw the light bulb come on..." Several teachers expressed their feeling of being "more educated" after the literature bibliotherapeutic intervention classes. This paper has "broadened our definition on literature bibliotherapeutic interventions on bullying," according to another teacher.

A sense of some urgency has appeared in this group and a desire to protect victims and assist bullies and their families has surfaced (DeHaan, (1997). Therefore, they have requested that the counselor continue to present the literature bibliotherapeutic intervention strategy classes to their students again next year. "And in actual fact, we have actually requested that [the counselor] come next year and do the same lessons in our class, because I really liked, you know, liked them." Teachers referred to information and vocabulary learned in the literature bibliotherapeutic sessions after the sessions were completed when interacting with the students in the classroom and on the playground (Cuban, 2007). Teachers would remind the children of the counselor's words and strategies and reported that these reminders most often sparked a quick and appropriate response to the situation in question. "The only reason...the kids are misbehaving in the way they are is because they don't know yet." Everyone agreed that students need a foundation of knowledge on literature bibliotherapeutic care on bullying that provides appropriate and inappropriate ways to respond to aggressive behavior.

Teacher 4a1 stated, "...this literature bibliotherapeutic intervention information is the foundation that they need moving forward."

These teachers have also requested more education for the parents in their school. As a whole, the participants were surprised at the lack of support for the bullying study and the lack of education about the subject from their parents (Crick, 2007). Since the study revealed what the teachers described as "a large percentage of parents" that did not believe bullying occurred in preschool, these educators have been distressed. They realize, as do several of the researchers such as Swearer (2004) that home influence plays a major role in children's bullying behavior. Families are "major socializing agents" for children, according to Swearer, Cooper (2003, p. 20). Teacher 5a1 felt that parents "...don't realize what literature bibliotherapeutic care on bullying is and they don't realize what it can lead to, you know." Therefore, the participants are petitioning their director and counselor to have parent meetings at the beginning of school to explain literature bibliotherapeutic care of bullying and to enlighten these adults as to the proactive stance this school is taking on the subject. It is their hope that with more education, parents will become partners with them in battling bullying behaviors in these young children (Creswell, 2007). Literature bibliotherapeutic sessions by teachers have brought bullying to the forefront not only with the teachers, but with the students and parents. Parental awareness goes hand-in-hand with teacher awareness as they work together for the safety of the children. Cornier (1974) recommend that any bully prevention program involve all stakeholders. When parents and teachers unite, a comprehensive plan of bullying prevention may be developed that highlights the

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individual needs of the school, as is recommended by Craig (2000).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

As seen in this paper, bibliotherapeutic handling of public secondary school student's problems like bullying is a sensitive one that brings many prior experiences and preconceived notions to the minds of the parents and teachers. The results in this paper were valuable and insightful in as far as the teacher's perceptions on bibliotherapeutic intervention through the use of literature. Teacher participants came full circle, indicating a total change in perception, from doubting the use of literature books in intervening in the student's problems like bullying and be the champions of caring for their students and working to see that bullying is no longer tolerated at their school. Teachers must be committed to establishing a relationship with each of their students that will foster trust and caring. If teachers are not willing to use bibliotheraphy on the problem of bullying and pretend it does not exist, students will suffer as was demonstrated by the two reports of bullying that came to light as a result of this paper. The outcomes of this aggressive behavior are too grim to disregard. Bullying is not a natural part of growing up nor is it simply tattling when children report their experience with hurtful behavior. It inflicts serious harm on others, some of whom never recover. Bibliotheraphy through literature was seen as a better way to address this problem of bullying in public secondary schools. Teachers unanimously were in agreement that bibliotheraphy through the use of literature was important in tackling the student's problems like bullying.

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