



Bibliotherapy As An Emerging Intervention To Alleviate Stress And Anxiety Among Nursing Students: A Literature Review

¹ Jaseentha C.O., ² Litti K I, ³ Elsy N.P., ⁴ Libin Joseph, ⁵ Sr. Maggie Jose

¹ Professor, Department of Mental Health Nursing, B.C.M College of Nursing

² Nursing Tutor, Department of OBG Nursing, B.C.M College of Nursing

³ Professor, Department of OBG Nursing, B.C.M College of Nursing

⁴ Associate Professor, Department of Medical Surgical Nursing, B.C.M College of Nursing

⁵ Principal, Professor, Department of Community Health Nursing, B.C.M College of Nursing

Abstract

The nursing students must contend with demanding academic, clinical, and emotional requirements, which frequently leads to high levels of stress and anxiety. These stressors may negatively impact their general mental health, clinical competency, and academic performance if left unchecked. As alternative psychological interventions has grown, bibliotherapy—the therapeutic use of reading—has become a method of stress management and emotional resilience building. According to the review, nursing students deal with a range of stressors, like, personal difficulties, clinical obligations, and academic pressures. Bibliotherapy lowered stress, boosting emotional well-being, and improving coping mechanisms in its self-help, clinical, and creative forms. Studies conducted in India and around the world confirm its potential as a supplement to conventional therapies. Nursing students may benefit from the low-cost, promising mental health intervention known as bibliotherapy. Its integration into classroom environments may promote better academic performance and mental health. It is advised to conduct additional extensive, long-term research to confirm its efficacy over the long run.

Keywords:

Coping Mechanisms, Mental Health, Stress, Anxiety, Nursing Students, Bibliotherapy

Research Title:

A mini review article on "Bibliotherapy as an Emerging Intervention to Alleviate Stress and Anxiety Among Nursing Students: A Literature Review"

Objectives:

The purpose of this review of the literature is to determine how common stress is among nursing students and whether bibliotherapy is a useful intervention for reducing stress and anxiety in this demographic.

Methods:

From scholarly databases and pertinent peer-reviewed journals from national and international literature was carried out, focusing on nursing students, stress-related outcomes, and bibliotherapy interventions were chosen. To evaluate the therapeutic effect of bibliotherapy, both qualitative and quantitative data were examined.

INTRODUCTION

During their training, nursing students frequently encounter high academic, clinical, and emotional demands. If left untreated, these stressors can result in anxiety, depression, and burnout, which will have a detrimental effect on their professional and academic growth. In the midst of conventional stress-reduction techniques, bibliotherapy—the psychologically beneficial use of reading materials—has become a popular, affordable, and easily accessible way to promote students' mental health. The purpose of this review of the literature is to summarise the body of knowledge regarding the prevalence of stress in nursing students and investigate the efficacy of bibliotherapy as a stress and anxiety-reduction strategy. It is commonly acknowledged that one of the most difficult academic programs is nursing education, which is marked by extensive theoretical study, demanding clinical rotations, and ongoing evaluations. Nursing students are especially susceptible to stress and anxiety because of these academic difficulties as well as the emotional and psychological demands of providing care [1,2].

BIBLIOTHERAPY: AN OVERVIEW

A new psychological treatment called "bibliotherapy" makes use of books to promote mental wellness. In order to acquire understanding, find comfort, and create coping strategies, it entails reading books, poems, or other written materials [2].

Definition and Historical Background

The use of reading materials for therapeutic purposes is known as bibliotherapy. The idea originated in antiquity, when people thought that reading could heal them. Early in the 20th century, the term "bibliotherapy" was first used. Bibliotherapy was first applied in clinical psychology and library science, but it has since become recognised as an effective tool for providing emotional and psychological support in healthcare and educational settings [3,4].

Types of Bibliotherapy (Self-help, Creative, Clinical)

Three primary categories of bibliotherapy exist:

Reading books that provide techniques for stress management, mental health enhancement, and personal development is known as self-help bibliotherapy.

Clinical bibliotherapy is supervised by a therapist and incorporated into official counselling or psychotherapy sessions; creative bibliotherapy uses fiction, poetry, or narratives to elicit emotional reactions and promote introspection. The choice is based on the needs of the individual and the intervention's context, and each type offers distinct advantages [5,6].

Mechanisms of Action

Bibliotherapy functions in a number of ways. It enables people to empathise with characters, comprehend their own feelings, and gain fresh insights. Reading can encourage emotional expression, lessen feelings of loneliness, and offer comfort. By discouraging pessimistic ideas and promoting flexible thinking, it also improves cognitive restructuring. Bibliotherapy promotes emotional resilience and stress reduction through these mechanisms [7].

STRESS AND ANXIETY AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

Definition and Types of Stress

Stress is a physiological and psychological reaction to demands that are too great for a person to handle. It shows up as behavioural, emotional, and physical symptoms. Academic pressures, interpersonal relationships, clinical responsibilities, and personal expectations can all lead to stress in the context of nursing education. Acute stress (short-term), chronic stress (long-term), and episodic stress (recurring in patterns) are stress types that are pertinent to nursing students [8,9].

Common Stressors in Nursing Education

Throughout their education, nursing students face a variety of stressors. Exams, due dates for assignments, and the pressure to perform well academically are all sources of stress. The duty of patient care, the fear of making mistakes, and interactions with medical professionals are the main sources of clinical stressors. Financial limitations, family obligations, and adjusting to a new learning environment are examples of personal stressors. Because students are expected to apply their theoretical knowledge in high-pressure, real-life situations, clinical placements have been identified as one of the most stressful aspects of nursing education [10,11].

Impact of Stress on Academic and Clinical Performance

The academic achievement, clinical competency, and general well-being of nursing students can all suffer from high levels of stress. Prolonged stress affects cognitive abilities like focus, memory, and judgment, which results in subpar academic performance. Stressed-out students may feel anxious, less confident, and make poorer decisions in the clinical setting, all of which could endanger patient safety. Furthermore, chronic stress can result in depression, burnout, and even nursing program attrition [12,13].

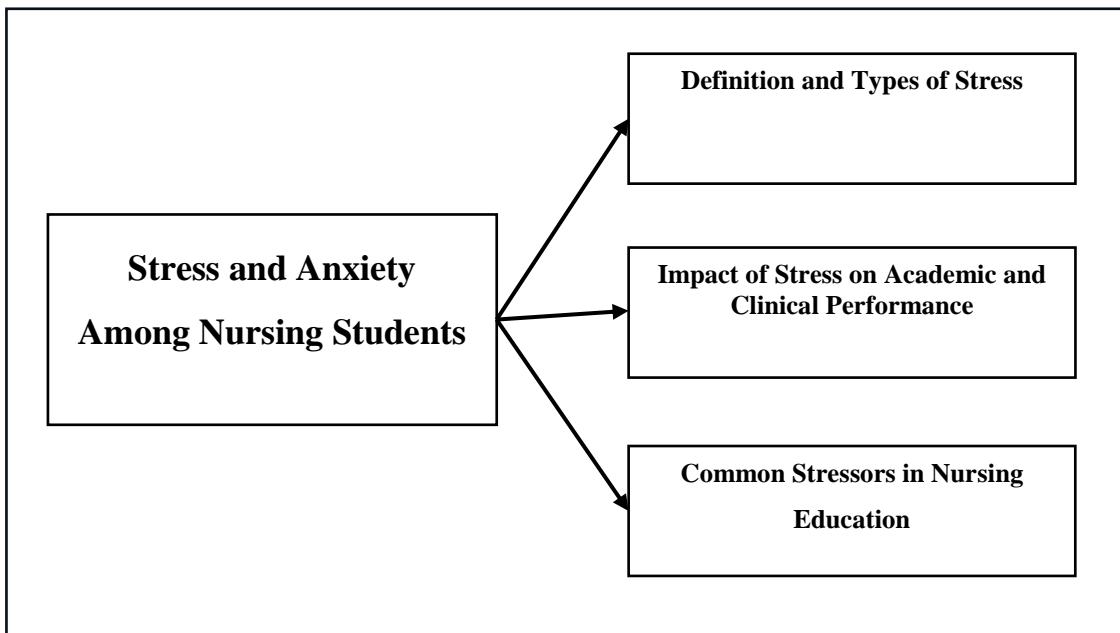


Figure 1: Stress and Anxiety Among Nursing Students

BIBLIOTHERAPY AS COPING STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Numerous coping mechanisms and interventions have been investigated to lessen the effects of stress, which is very common among nursing students. These tactics seek to improve academic and clinical performance, foster mental health, and strengthen students' resilience [14].

Traditional Stress Management Approaches

Traditional methods of stress management include social support, time management, physical activity, and relaxation techniques. Stress levels have been found to be effectively decreased by methods like progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, and mindfulness meditation. By releasing endorphins and elevating mood, physical activities like yoga, walking, or sports can also reduce stress. Prioritising assignments and minimising academic overload are two benefits of effective time management for students [15,16].

Role of Psychological Support in Student Well-being

For nursing students, having access to psychological support services is essential. Peer support groups, mentorship programs, and counselling services offer students emotional support and direction. When it comes to recognising stressed-out students and connecting them with the right support networks, faculty members are crucial. Students' mental health is greatly enhanced by educational institutions that create a supportive learning environment [17,18].

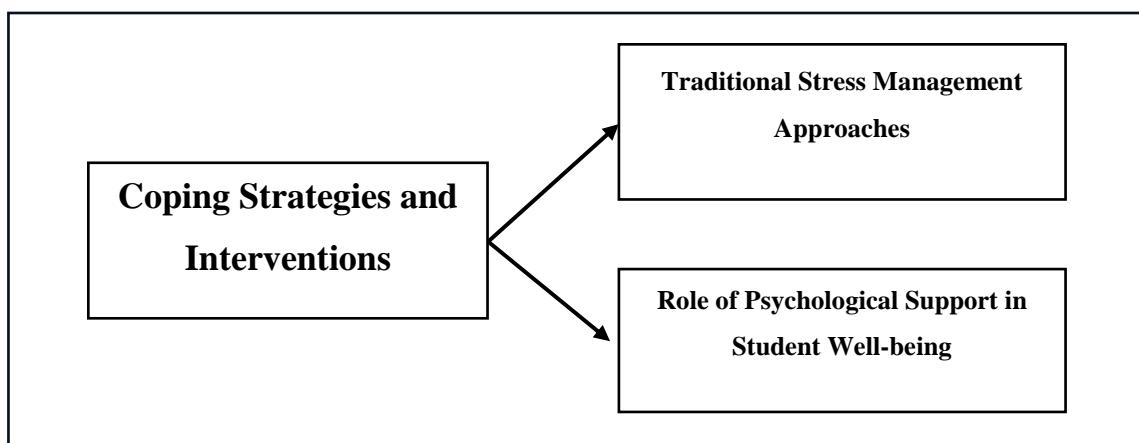


Figure 2: Coping Strategies

EFFECTIVENESS OF BIBLIOTHERAPY IN REDUCING STRESS

The usefulness of bibliotherapy in lowering stress and anxiety has been the subject of numerous studies, especially involving students and medical professionals [19].

Global Studies on Bibliotherapy and Stress Reduction

The effectiveness of bibliotherapy is supported by international research. College students who took part in bibliotherapy sessions reported significantly fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, according to a U.S. study. Similarly, studies conducted in the UK revealed that bibliotherapy enhanced university students' academic motivation and emotional health. These studies demonstrate bibliotherapy's potential as an affordable and widely available stress-reduction strategy [20,21].

Indian Context: Studies on Bibliotherapy Among Nursing Students

Bibliotherapy is slowly becoming more well-known in India. A small number of studies carried out in Indian nursing schools have shown promising results. For instance, a study conducted in Tamil Nadu found that nursing students who participated in bibliotherapy had better coping mechanisms and lower stress levels. To determine the efficacy of bibliotherapy in various educational contexts across the nation, more thorough research is necessary [22].

Comparative Studies with Other Interventions

According to comparative research, bibliotherapy is just as successful at reducing stress as other methods like mindfulness, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), and relaxation training. Bibliotherapy is a useful adjunctive strategy, particularly in settings with limited resources, even though it might not be able to completely replace clinical interventions for serious mental health conditions. Students who are reluctant to seek formal counselling because of stigma or lack of access will especially benefit from it [23,24].

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING EDUCATION

Students' academic performance and emotional health can be improved by incorporating bibliotherapy into nursing education. Promoting bibliotherapy as a component of comprehensive student support can be greatly aided by educational institutions [25].

Integration of Bibliotherapy into Academic Settings

Through reading groups, wellness initiatives, and stress management classes, nursing schools can integrate bibliotherapy into their curricula. Poetry, fiction, and self-help books are among the therapeutic literature that libraries can curate collections of. Emotional expression and resilience can also be fostered by assignments that promote reflective writing and reading [26].

Faculty Training and Resource Availability

Teachers' ought to receive training on how to spot stress symptoms and suggest suitable reading. Teachers can be prepared to lead guided reading sessions by attending bibliotherapy workshops and seminars. To accommodate students' diverse needs and preferences, educational institutions should make sure that a variety of culturally appropriate reading materials are available [27].

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Academic leaders and policymakers ought to think about incorporating bibliotherapy into mental health support regulations. Money should be set aside for staff training, library resource maintenance, and the creation of bibliotherapy programs. The effectiveness and impact of bibliotherapy interventions in educational settings can be improved through cooperation with mental health specialists [28].

RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are still gaps in the literature on bibliotherapy, despite the encouraging data. The majority of studies have a small sample size and scope. To evaluate the long-term impacts of bibliotherapy on stress reduction, longitudinal studies are required. The usefulness of various reading material formats and genres should also be investigated in research. Furthermore, cross-cultural comparative research can shed light on the applicability and flexibility of bibliotherapy [29].

Using Books to Help with Stress and Anxiety

Studies support that using bibliotherapy helps college students manage stress and anxiety. In 2020, Al-Dossary and Al-Mahmoud conducted a quasi-experimental trial with female college students and found that CBT-based bibliotherapy greatly alleviated their stress about exams. People involved experienced better control of their emotions and enhanced marks on tests [30].

Therapy Using Reading for Children and Adolescents

Bibliotherapy appears to help children and adolescents manage trauma, feelings of grief, and inappropriate emotional responses. In their 2005 review, Heath and colleagues showed how bibliotherapy could encourage empathy, emotional awareness, and resilience in youth [31]. More recently, Zhou et al.

used a meta-analysis to show that bibliotherapy helped treat depression and anxiety in adolescents; the results did not seem as strong for young children experiencing anxiety [32].

Using Books for Helping Trauma and Spiritual Healing

Among people with cancer and trauma, counsellors rely on books to support both spiritual thought and talking about emotions. Bussing and Recchia pointed out that specially selected texts gave patients a way to talk about their fears, hopes, and beliefs, which helped them overcome existential stress and search for meaning [33].

Therapy Helped by Digital and social media

Thanks to digital health, bibliotherapy now reaches more people. In 2024, Zheng and colleagues discovered that a social media-centred program could help dementia caregivers feel better mentally. Such digital solutions can reach many people, mainly caregivers and those whose mobility or location is restricted [34].

DIFFERENT WAYS CHANGE CAN HAPPEN IN BIBLIOTHERAPY

The therapeutic change caused by bibliotherapy follows four main steps, which Pardeck outlines [35].

Identification

At the beginning of the reading process, the reader recognizes themselves in what takes place in the text. Being identified allows them to relate and feel less by themselves. Sharing experiences with your child helps him or her relate to and believe in the story.

Catharsis

Going through catharsis means your feelings can surface, which helps you feel better emotionally. Showing your emotions may look like crying or laughing, or feeling like you've been listened to.

Insight

Having a fresh view can allow people to look at what's happening to them in a clearer way. Knowing the story and the experiences of the person can help readers become more aware of their own issues and ideas. Ways things are used and how they become widespread

Readers discover that what they go through is common to everyone on Earth. Having this insight encourages people to relate and look forward to change. People may also take the example of the characters; use the solutions they try and adapt them to deal with similar problems.

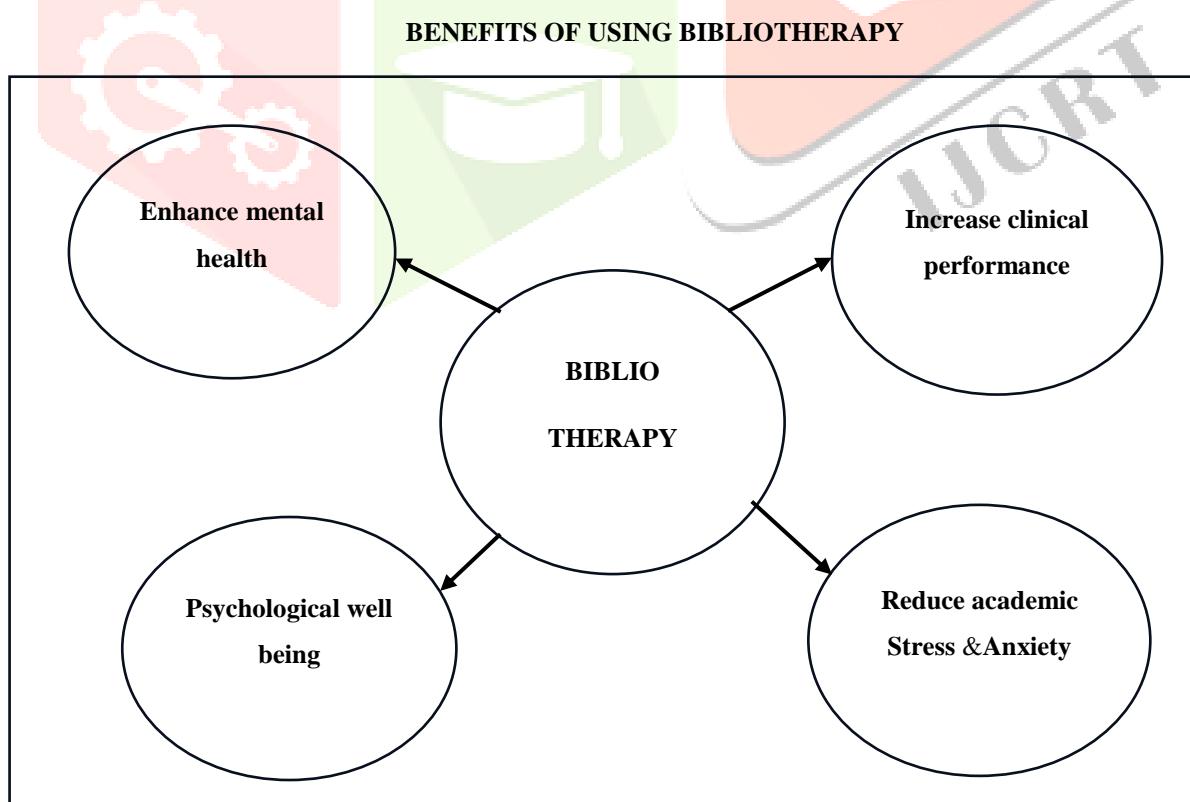


Figure 3. Benefits of Bibliotherapy

Enhance mental health by using minimum resources

Of all available treatments, bibliotherapy is one of the most economical ways to help people. It can operate with minimal infrastructure, does not require frequent personal sessions with specialists, nor does it depend on complicated equipment. Most bibliotherapy programs provide access to books, stories, poems, or curated lists available in libraries, schools, hospitals, or freely on the internet. For this reason, it is often better suited for areas with limited access to mental health professionals [34].

Psychological wellbeing and Adaptability at on pace

One of bibliotherapy's strengths is its adaptability to different situations. Individuals can read at their own pace, in their chosen environment, and on their preferred schedule. This autonomy helps them feel safe and maintain privacy, which traditional therapy may not always offer. It is particularly useful for those who are shy, fear social stigma, or are hesitant to consult a psychologist [31].

Increases clinical performance

Bibliotherapy enables the nursing students to increase their clinical performance by engaging with literature that reflects personal emotions promoting self-reflection. Observing characters in similar situations helps the individual understand their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. It also fosters emotional growth, enhances self-awareness, and improves confidence in clinical performance [31].

Reduce academic stress and anxiety

Bibliotherapy takes various forms and can be applied in one-on-one therapy, group discussions, classrooms, support groups, or as a digital mental health tool. Teachers and counsellors can facilitate group bibliotherapy in schools using grade-appropriate materials. Digital and mobile applications now offer guided bibliotherapy, making it accessible regardless of location [32].

LIMITATION AND RESTRICTIONS

A major problem when using bibliotherapy is that a person must be able to read and write decently. Anyone who finds text hard to read is unlikely to gain from text-based solutions. Reading texts that fit the reader's culture and are written in their first language works best in bibliotherapy [33,34]. The fact that no translated bibliotherapies are available in some common regional languages in India can keep those populations from feeling understood. Working towards this requires writing materials for therapy that people can read in the language they know and using audiovisual methods to work around any reading issues [35,36].

Generic Self-help Material Might Not Meet Everyone's Needs

Though self-help bibliotherapy helps people manage their own feelings, it often cannot be tailored to the specific needs of each person. Readers rarely find themselves in generic materials because they don't suit every person's background or mindset. A book developed for Western teens with anxiety won't necessarily assist an Indian teen facing pressure from school, family life or friends. Since allowing a facilitator or therapist to guide the process helps it stay interactive, bibliotherapy can easily become passive otherwise [36,37].

The role of implications for nursing actions

They are important for giving care that looks after body and mind together. Bibliotherapy can assist in traditional therapies for people in psychiatric nursing, paediatric and adolescent care, oncology, palliative care and caregiver support. If nurses bring therapeutic reading into their work, it helps patients handle emotions, deal with stress and boost the skills they use to cope. By showing nurses how to guide or recommend bibliotherapy, medical professionals help them lead patients on paths to emotional well-being. It can also support nurses' own emotional health by allowing spaces for both careful thinking and self-care needs.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Nursing students experience anxiety and stress that affects the emotional and academic well-being unlike others. Different research studies have proved that bibliotherapy is an effective tool to promote self-reflection, stress reduction and enhance emotional support. In nursing education, integrating bibliotherapy helps in holistic development that enables to have a healthy environment for positive learning.

CONCLUSION

Nursing students frequently experience stress and anxiety, which has a negative influence on both their academic achievement and mental health. A promising intervention that fosters self-reflection, improves coping mechanisms, and provides emotional support is bibliotherapy. According to the literature, bibliotherapy is useful, approachable, and flexible enough to be used in classrooms. Including bibliotherapy in nursing education can help students grow holistically and create a positive learning atmosphere. To fully realise its potential and guarantee its long-term implementation, more study and legislative actions are required.

Based on study investigated the effects of bibliotherapy counselling techniques on stress among students in nursing schools in Kaduna state, Nigeria, concluded that bibliotherapy counselling techniques effectively reduced the emotional and psychological components of stress among nursing students. The study recommended that counsellors collaborate with librarians to create a specialized collection of books and materials that support bibliotherapy and counselling techniques (BTCT). This ensures students have easy access to high-quality resources tailored to their needs. Government and research centres should encourage ongoing research into BTCT within nursing schools to explore new and innovative ways to apply bibliotherapy.

Financial support and Sponsorship:

Self-funding

Declarations

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest

Acknowledgement

The author thanks everyone for the time and effort and for generously and candidly sharing the suggestions

REFERENCES

1. Smith A, Jones B. Stress levels among nursing students: A global perspective. *Journal of Nursing Education*. 2018;57(4):215–21.
2. Nguyen T, Tran D. Bibliotherapy and coping skills among healthcare students. *Nurse Educator*. 2020;45(4):197–202.
3. Patel R, Kumar S. Challenges in implementing bibliotherapy in academic settings. *Nursing Education Today*. 2017;55:28–34.
4. O'Neill M, Jackson R. Integrating bibliotherapy into nursing curricula: Future directions. *Nurse Education in Practice*. 2019;37:50–5.
5. Williams K, Harris J. Types of bibliotherapy and their therapeutic effects. *Clinical Psychology Review*. 2018;25(4):301–12.
6. Carter S, Reed P. Creative bibliotherapy: Using literature to evoke emotional responses. *Arts in Psychotherapy*. 2017;53:23–9.
7. Bellamy S, Goldstein A. Cognitive mechanisms underlying bibliotherapy. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*. 2019;29(2):138–46.
8. Lee E-S. Impact of life stress on depression, subjective well-being and psychological well-being in nursing students: Mediation effects of coping. *J Korea Acad-Ind Coop Soc* [Internet]. 2017;18(1):55–65. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5762/kais.2017.18.1.55>
9. Patel D, Shah S. Stress and anxiety among nursing students: Prevalence and correlates. *Nursing and Health Sciences*. 2017;19(2):123–30.
10. Brown C, Williams K. Factors influencing stress in nursing education. *Nurse Education Today*. 2016;45:53–8.
11. Green J, Black M. Social support and stress in nursing students. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 2015;24(5–6):776–83.
12. Zhao Y, Li X. Anxiety and depression in nursing students: A systematic review. *Mental Health Nursing*. 2019;40(2):101–10.
13. Turner J, Grant S. Chronic stress and mental health in nursing students. *Journal of Psychiatric Nursing*. 2017;12(4):215–20.
14. Happell B, O'Donovan A, Sharrock J, Warner T, Gordon S. They are a different breed aren't they? Exploring how experts by experience influence students through mental health education. *Int J Ment Health Nurs* [Internet]. 2021;30 Suppl 1(S1):1354–65. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/inm.12881>
15. Martin G, Clark H. Bibliotherapy as a tool for stress reduction: A review. *Journal of Therapeutic Interventions*. 2020;5(1):30–8.
16. Hernandez M, Lopez P. Use of bibliotherapy in nursing education: A pilot study. *Nursing Education Perspectives*. 2018;39(6):356–60.
17. Evans R, Bell J. Mechanisms of bibliotherapy in emotional regulation. *Psychology and Education*. 2019;56(1):42–8.
18. Thompson L, Baker J. Effectiveness of bibliotherapy for reducing anxiety in nursing students. *Journal of Mental Health*. 2021;30(3):250–6.
19. Jackson L, Murray E. Bibliotherapy effectiveness in healthcare settings. *Journal of Health Psychology*. 2020;25(7):999–1010.

20. Smith R, Lee M. Impact of bibliotherapy on university students' mental health. *Journal of American College Health*. 2019;67(3):213–9.
21. Brown J, Thomas A. Emotional well-being and academic motivation: Bibliotherapy in higher education. *Educational Psychology*. 2018;38(5):596–607.
22. Rajan P, Kumar S. Bibliotherapy as stress relief for nursing students in Tamil Nadu. *Indian Journal of Nursing Education*. 2021;12(1):45–52.
23. Green A, White K. Comparative effectiveness of bibliotherapy and CBT. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 2020;76(6):1045–54.
24. Singh R, Patel D. Mindfulness, relaxation, and bibliotherapy in stress management. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. 2019;28(2):385–93.
25. Turner S, Hayes L. Integrating bibliotherapy in nursing education. *Nurse Educator Today*. 2017;54:1–7.
26. Garcia M, Lopez F. Implementing bibliotherapy programs in academic libraries. *Library Management*. 2018;39(4–5):238–47.
27. Patel N, Shah R. Faculty training for bibliotherapy: A case study. *Nurse Educator*. 2017;42(5):263–7.
28. Johnson P, Martin D. Policy development for bibliotherapy programs. *Journal of Nursing Administration*. 2019;49(8):386–93.
29. Nazi R, Ali PMN, Akhouri D. Bibliotherapy- Use of books for healing: an Experiential Study to Introduce Prospective Bibliotherapy Service in Libraries. *srels* [Internet]. 2023;209–15. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17821/srels/2023/v60i3/171030>
30. Al-Dossary R, Al-Mahmoud S. The effect of cognitive behavioral bibliotherapy on stress levels among female college students during exams. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*. 2020;10(3):45–52.
31. Heath MA, Sheen D, Leavy D, Young E, Money K. Bibliotherapy: A resource to facilitate emotional healing and growth. *Sch Psychol Int* [Internet]. 2005;26(5):563–80. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0143034305060792>
32. Stewart A, Hughes ND, Simkin S, Locock L, Ferrey A, Kapur N, et al. Navigating an unfamiliar world: how parents of young people who self-harm experience support and treatment. *Child Adolesc Ment Health* [Internet]. 2018;23(2):78–84. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/camh.12205>
33. Büssing A, Recchia DR. Spiritual needs of patients with chronic and life-threatening illnesses: Literature review of spiritual interventions. *Journal of Religion and Health*. 2020;
34. Zheng J, Liu H, Zhang L, Tang Y. Social media-based bibliotherapy to support dementia caregivers: A digital mental health intervention. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2024;21(1):132–45.
35. Jones J. Towards an understanding of power relationships in institutional abuse*. *Early Child Dev Care* [Internet]. 1994;100(1):69–76. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0300443941000104>
36. Sridhar D, Dhanasekaran S. Cultural and linguistic limitations of bibliotherapy in non-Western contexts: An Indian perspective. *Indian Journal of Mental Health Education*. 2021;3(2):45–52.
37. Habibu ML, Sain ZH, Zubairu Z, Lawal US. Effects of bibliotherapy counselling techniques on stress management among students in schools of nursing in Kaduna state, Nigeria. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research* [Internet]. 2024;15(1):282–92. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.62154/e3w9j879>