



Bibliotherapy Treatment for Children with Depression: A Comparison of Male and Female Students in Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Mathew Adesanmi Farukuoye^{1*}, CMLN, CLN; Alice A. Bamigbola^{2*}, PhD, CLN

¹College Library, College of Health Sciences and Technology Ijero-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

²Department of School Media and Technology, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Abstract

Introduction: The concept of depression among secondary students encompasses a cluster of emotional, somatic, and cognitive health issues that emerge in adolescence and interfere with well-being and functioning without support. Early detection and treatment are critical during this formative period. Therefore, this study compared outcomes following bibliotherapy treatment with 199 students in Ekiti State, Nigeria, public secondary schools. The general objective of this study was to determine the extent to which gender moderates bibliotherapy treatment of depression among public secondary school students in Ekiti state, Nigeria. Specifically, we aimed to investigate the effect of Bibliotherapy (treatment) and gender on depression scores.

Methods: The multi-stage sampling procedure was used, and Ekiti State was stratified into three senatorial districts (Ekiti Central, Ekiti South, and Ekiti North). One Local Government Area (LGA) with the highest number of secondary schools was chosen from each stratum, and one secondary school with a large population of students was purposively selected from each LGA. The Senior Secondary School (SSS) Class 1 students in the selected schools were stratified and screened using the Patient Health Questionner-2 (PHQ-2) ($r=0.81$), and those who scored 3, optimal cut point and above were selected. The instrument used was the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) modified for adolescents (PHQ-A) ($r=0.84$).

Results: The participants were 17.00 ± 12.00 years; 49.2% were male, while 50.8% were female. There was a significant effect of treatment and gender on depression ($F_{(1,194)}=21.73$, $P(0.00)<0.05$, $\eta^2=0.013$) with female ($\bar{x}=15.84$) and male ($\bar{x}=16.23$).

Conclusion: The study concludes that there was a significant effect of gender on depression among students in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The discussion focuses on a possible explanation of these results.

Keywords: Bibliotherapy, Treatment, Depression, School, Male and female



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*Correspondence to:

Adesanmi Mathew Farukuoye,
College Library, College of Health
Sciences and Technology Ijero-
Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria
Tel: +23 48068343751
Email: farukson2000@gmail.com

Introduction

The significant impact of mental health disorders has led to its recognition as a global concern. According to the World Health Organisation (1), 75% of individuals with mental disorders in low- and middle-income countries, including Nigeria, do not receive the necessary treatment. One vulnerable group to depression is secondary school students (2). Depression is a common mental disorder characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration (3). In Nigeria, despite varying prevalence rates, several studies conducted in different parts of

the country have established that depression is common among secondary school students (4, 5). For instance, Omigbodun et al. (6) reported a 12.6% prevalence of probable depression among students in rural southwest Nigeria and found experiencing traumatic events as one of the predictors of depression, mainly when the event directly affected the youth, as in sexual assault or physical abuse. Adewuya, Ola, and Aloba's (7) study on major depressive Disorder, which involved a characteristic sample of adolescents in Nigeria, revealed a prevalence rate of 6.9%, with 5.5% for males and 8.9% for female participants. In a study by Fatiregun and Kumapayi, the prevalence of depressive symptoms was reported

to be 21.2% among secondary school students in a rural district of Egbeda Local Government Area of Oyo State (8). The rate of suicide attempts by young school leavers reported daily is a source of concern to many and points to the fact that many of them act under the influence of one substance or another as a result of depressive mood (9). However, considering the effects of this mental health disorder on the soul and mind of students to the extent of having suicidal thoughts, the requirement to prevent it cannot be overemphasized.

Different intervention programs can be used to address depression among students, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (10), problem-solving therapy, expressive writing for depression (11), and psychodynamic psychotherapy (12). Meanwhile, if these interventions had been efficiently accessible, depression would have reduced drastically among students in secondary schools in Nigeria. One intervention that can be implemented for individuals with depression is Bibliotherapy because of its accessibility and affordability options for students. Abimbola (13) described Bibliotherapy as a process that employs literature to help individuals develop self-awareness (having a clear perception of their problems), to understand their problems better thus, developing interest in finding a solution to the problem discovered. The underlying premise of Bibliotherapy is that interpreting stories is a dynamic process by which individuals can bring their own needs and experiences as well as the facts. Students in secondary schools may have difficulty identifying and communicating their problems, but stories can facilitate open discussion and self-understanding of their gender personality (14).

Gender is determined by attributes such as tasks, functions, and roles of women and men in society rather than the biological characteristics of women and men (15). Gender was among the most significant predictors of depression as it has been found that females were more likely to have depression than males (16), and this comes in agreement with many studies (17, 18). El-Missiry (19) showed that depression among secondary school female students was estimated to be 15.3%—also, Bendixen, Daveronis, and Kennair (20) reported that adolescent girls have moderately more symptoms of depression than boys. In an investigation carried out by Riittakerttu et al., the

prevalence of depressed girls is 54.37%, and in depressed boys is 35.63%. However, the fact that females are more susceptible to depression may be explained by the theory that the biological and physical makeup of females automatically puts them more at risk of developing depression, as from puberty onwards, fluctuating hormone levels affect their body both physically and emotionally (21, 22). Considering the aforementioned information, conducting a study to determine the effectiveness of Bibliotherapy in the treatment of depression among male and female students in secondary schools is a compelling prospect. This study aims to determine the effect of bibliotherapy treatment on depression by comparing its effect on male and female students in public secondary schools in Ekiti state, Nigeria. However, a null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study; thus, there is no significant interaction effect of Bibliotherapy and gender on depression among public secondary school students in Ekiti state.

Materials and Methods

The present study is an interventional semi-experimental study with a pretest, posttest, and control group. The study population included SS 1 male and female students in three public secondary schools in Ekiti State who were keen to participate in the study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to select the participants for this study from the population owing to the consideration of all the schools in the state's three Senatorial Districts. In the first stage, Ekiti State was stratified into three senatorial districts (Ekiti Central, Ekiti South, and Ekiti North). Each stratum chose one Local Government Area with the highest number of secondary schools. One secondary school with a large population of students was purposively selected from each LGA. Anglican High School, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti Parapo College Ido-Ekiti, and African Church Comprehensive High School, Ikere-Ekiti, were selected. In the second stage, the senior secondary class 1 students in the selected schools were stratified and screened using the Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2) ($r=0.81$). The third stage involves a total enumeration of SS1 students who scored 3, the optimal cut point and above. Hence, 89 individuals from Anglican High School in Ado-Ekiti and 61 individuals from Ekiti Parapo College in Ido-Ekiti were chosen for

the experimental group. In contrast, the control group comprises 49 individuals from African Church Comprehensive High School, Ikere-Ekiti. However, 199 students aged 17.00 ± 12.00 years were exposed to bibliotherapy and control groups for 12 weeks.

Data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire for socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and a Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) modified for Adolescents (PHQ-A). The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) modified for Adolescents (PHQ-A) is a nine-item questionnaire used to test the participant's level of depression and monitor the treatment. It was administered to the students before and after the treatment. The PHQ-9 scores each of the nine DSM-IV criteria as '0' (Not At All) to '3' (every day). It has been validated for use in Nigeria by Adewuya, Ola, and Afolabi (23), who reported an internal consistency of 0.85 and optimal cut-off score for depressive Disorder as 3 (sensitivity 0.897, specificity 0.989, positive predictive value 0.875, negative predictive value 0.981). To perform the study, the inventory was first completed by case and control groups. Next, a justification meeting was held for both groups, and a book titled *The Diary of a Housemaid* by Chigbo Ugwuoke was donated to them; this addresses themes relevant to depression and the target population of students. The control group was not exposed to any treatment but was released to normal class activities (conventional method) for twelve weeks. Then, 12 sessions of 1 hour and 30 minutes about Bibliotherapy were held within 3 months for the Case group in 2023. The way of tackling depression was trained through group reading, question and answer, and brainstorming with the Case group in the 12 sessions. After 3 months of Bibliotherapy sessions, both groups completed the inventory and measured again.

Results

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics employed was Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Thus, the hypotheses were tested using pretest as covariates. The calculated mean score across the group was effectively done to compare the mean through the estimated marginal mean. Additionally, pairwise post hoc analysis was carried out to establish the magnitude of significant differences in the effects of treatments on depression among students in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The hypothesis was tested by using a 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1 showed that out of the 199 participants, 101 (50.8%) were females and 98 (49.2%) were males. This suggests that there was no gender disparity in the distribution of the participants, as both male and female students were adequately represented in the study. The result also revealed that 52.3% (104) of the participants were 12-14 years old, and this constituted the majority. However, the lowest in the age category were those above 17. This shows that most of the students in public secondary schools in Ekiti who participated in the study were young adolescents, as expected in the study.

Table 2 showed that during the pretest, the depression mean score for female (mean=19.32) was higher than their male counterparts (mean=17.39). This implies that the level of depression in female was higher than their male counterparts. However, for the posttest, the level of depression was lower for females (mean=15.84) than for males (mean=16.23).

Further analysis of the covariance to show the interaction of gender on depression among the students is presented in Table 3.

In Table 3, the analysis showed a significant interaction effect of gender on depression among

Table 1: Gender and Age Distributions

Distribution	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	98	49.2
Female	101	50.8
Total	199	100.0
Age range (Years)		
12 – 14	104	52.3
15 – 17	82	41.2
Above 17	13	6.5
Total	199	100.0

Table 2: Mean score of depression level according to gender

	Pretest				Posttest			
	Gender	N	Mean score	SD	Gender	N	Mean score	SD
Control Group	Male	24	17.39	3.081	Male	24	17.39	3.081
	Female	25	19.32	2.923	Female	25	19.32	2.923
	Total	49			Total	49		
Experimental Group	Male	74	17.39	3.081	Male	74	16.23	1.089
	Female	76	19.32	2.923	Female	76	15.84	2.033
	Total	150			Total	150		

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the Interaction between Gender and Depression

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Corrected model	28325.3	4	7081.325	116.7826	0.000
Intercept	18455.43	1	18455.43	304.3601	0.000
Pretest	803.911	1	803.911	13.2578	0.000
Treatment group	15354.38	1	15354.38	253.2188	0.000
Gender	4021.228	1	4021.228	66.31662	0.000
Treatment and gender	1317.778	1	1317.778	21.73231	0.000
Error	11763.54	194	60.63681		
Total	1039335.00	199			
Corrected total	40087.851	198			

students in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria ($P < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis, which states that there was no statistically significant interaction effect of gender on depression among students in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, was rejected.

H_{01} : There is no significant effect of Bibliotherapy (treatment) and gender on depression among students in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Table 3 revealed that there is a significant effect of treatment and gender on depression among students in public secondary schools ($F_{(1,194)} = 21.73, P(0.00) < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.013$). Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected because there is a significant interaction between gender and the treatment (Bibliotherapy) of depression among students in public secondary schools. This implies that the difference between the gender of the students and the treatment given was significant. The table also shows a contributing interaction of 1.3%, which implies that treatment and gender taken together had an effect on depression among students in public secondary schools.

The analysis further revealed a significant interaction effect of gender on depression among students in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there was no statistically significant interaction effect of gender on depression among students in

public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria, was rejected. This finding indicates that the impact of facilitating treatments, such as Bibliotherapy, on depression differs according to gender. The results suggest that the interaction effect between treatment and gender favored female students more than their male counterparts in terms of reducing depression levels. In other words, female students achieved better results in terms of reducing their depression symptoms compared to male students.

Discussion

An investigation was made into the main effect of gender on depression among students in public secondary schools. The finding of the study revealed that the gender of the students had a significant main effect on depression among students in public secondary schools. Findings from the study show that there is a significant interaction effect of gender on depression among students in public secondary schools. Hence, hypothesis 1 was rejected. It can, therefore, be deduced that the gender of students has many implications on the manifestation of depressive symptoms such as sadness, low self-worth, disturbed sleep or loss of appetite, and loss of interest in usual activities among students in public secondary schools. This finding suggests that the impact of facilitating treatments, such as Bibliotherapy, on depression is not the same

for all genders. The results indicate that the interaction effect between treatment and gender favored male students more than their female counterparts in terms of depression. In other words, the treatment is more effective with male than female students because male students achieved better outcomes in reducing depression compared to female students. This contradicts the findings from the study of Jacob and de Guzman (24) that demonstrates the effectiveness of bibliotherapy intervention for reducing female adolescent depression.

The study revealed that female students had a greater tendency to get involved in depression than their male counterparts. The findings showed that during the pretest, the depression mean score for female was higher than their male counterparts. This implies that the level of depression in female was higher than their male counterparts. The findings also supported the assertion of Chinawa et al. (25) that depression of all forms is the most common among females. This is also in tandem with the report of Al-Kaaba (16) that females were more likely to have depression than males. The reason for this may be changing hormone levels that affect their physical, biological, and mental order and exposure to fatigue, which they lack corresponding energy to absorb.

The findings of this study, however, contradict that of Bennett et al. (26), that there is no gender difference in depression among adolescents. The findings of this study also variance with that of Al-Qaisy (27), that male college students were more likely to experience depressive disorders than female college students. It also contradicts Gibson et al. (28) that femininity appeared to be productive against depression symptoms in college education people. The contrast in this study to previous studies on gender and depression among students in public secondary schools may be because the focus of some of the studies was on adolescents generally, which may be within and outside school settings, rather than on students in secondary schools or high schools as the case may be. In some cases, the studies focused on college education without taking into consideration secondary schools, which are intermediary education. This study's focus is neither on the adolescent generally nor college education but on depression among students in secondary schools as it affects the gender of the students, and the finding of the study thus shows

that gender does affect the depressive mood of students in public secondary schools.

In conclusion, there was a significant interaction effect of gender on depression among students in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This underscores the importance of considering gender differences when implementing interventions such as Bibliotherapy and cognitive restructuring to address depression in secondary school students. The findings highlight the need for tailored approaches that consider gender-specific factors and considerations in supporting the mental well-being of students in Ekiti State.

Conclusion

Gender was found to be a significant factor, as the effects of Bibliotherapy on depression differed between male and female students, with male students achieving better outcomes. These findings emphasize the need for tailored and context-specific approaches to address depression among students. Educators, mental health professionals, and policymakers must consider gender differences when developing interventions and support systems to promote mental well-being in schools. Finally, the study highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing depression among students in public secondary schools. It provides valuable insights for future research and the development of effective intervention strategies. By implementing targeted interventions and considering contextual factors, we can create a supportive and nurturing school environment that promotes students' mental health and well-being in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Given the differential effects of interventions on depression based on gender, it is important to develop gender-sensitive approaches. Governments at all levels and school administrators should provide resources and programs that address the specific mental health concerns and coping strategies of male and female students. Creating safe spaces for open dialogue about mental health can help reduce the stigma surrounding seeking help and promote early intervention.
2. School administrators should prioritize the development of comprehensive mental health support systems. This includes providing access

to trained counselors or psychologists to assess and support students' mental health needs. Collaboration with external mental health professionals and community resources can further enhance the effectiveness of these support systems.

3. Establishment of functional libraries in all secondary schools in Nigeria. Libraries should have adequate and timely resources, especially books that would help tackle depression and should be provided in school libraries.

4. Qualified teacher librarians should be employed to man such libraries, and such librarians should be set for training from time to time. The Association Body of School Libraries should endeavor to ensure school administrators' compliance in recruiting qualified teacher librarians.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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APPENDIX

Consent to Participate in Depression Research

Reason for the research

You are being asked to participate in research by Mr. Adesanmi Farukuoye and Dr. Alice A. Bamigbola.

The study will investigate the Bibliotherapy treatment for Children with Depression: A comparison of Male and Female Students in secondary school in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Research process/procedure

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire requesting you to supply some information about your depressed state. The questions may require 10-20 minutes of your time. Your responses will be gathered for a case study in which you **will not be** identified by your real name or any distinctive feature that would allow anyone to recognize you. Sessions that involve Bibliotherapy may be video or audio-recorded. Your responses **will not** be shared with anyone within or outside Ekiti State and will not affect any future interaction you may have with the research student.

Risks

Some of the items in the survey may seem personal, but you do not have to answer any question you are uncomfortable with if you don't want to.

Benefits of the research

You may gain additional insight into the benefits of positive reading and its implications for your emotional health. You may not only personally benefit from participating in this research, but you might gain enough knowledge to help others overcome depression at any level. The results of this study will encourage you to succeed in secondary schools and beyond.

Confidentiality of information supplied

Your names will not be used on the survey or in the questionnaire; you do not need to add your name except if you wish to. The video or audio recording will be kept from improper viewing, but you may view your video upon request.

Contact information of the researcher

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Adesanmi Farukuoye at 09067371412 or farukson2000@gmail.com

Participation in this research is voluntary, and your signature below indicates that you agree to participate.

I agree to partake in depression research

Signature.....Date.....