The Role of Bibliotherapy in Value System Formation by Undergraduates in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria

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This study investigated the role of bibliotherapy in value system formation by undergraduates in seven faculties of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Out of the 1,372 sampled students, 746 (54.37%) were males and 626 (45.63%) were females. The Chi-square statistical method at the alpha level of 0.05 was used in testing four hypotheses developed for the study. The results were statistically significant. Findings indicate that bibliotherapy exerts determining influence on value system formation by undergraduates with respect to group-, self-, society-, environment- and nation- oriented values. These findings corroborated previous studies by educators, librarians, physicians, nurses, psychologists and occupational therapists or bibliotherapists who are of the consensus that the book exerts influence on the human spirit and impacts heavily on human behavior and formation of value system.

Keywords: bibliotherapy, undergraduates, behavior modification, value system formation

Introduction and Literature Review

Chuma-Ibe (2009) citing Idachaba (2005) and Olurode (2005) contended that, of all things valuable to man, the most important is positive value system. This consists the moral, ethical and fundamental judgments that we as individuals deem important in living happily with one another. These basic values range from concern for others, love, honesty, integrity, responsibility, morality, patriotism, tolerance, gratitude, obedience, respect, accountability, dependability, trust, sincerity, piety and other such positive values that make for good governance, good neighbourliness and oneness in any society. They are the desirable ingredients for national growth and progress. These values are gradually drawing to extinction in Nigeria.

Nigeria is faced with the problem of corruption in high and low places. It has been branded as one of the most corrupt nations of the world. Transparency International (2010), Nigeria ranked 134, having a CPI (Corruption Perception Index) score of 2.4 points amongst the 178 countries surveyed. On the regional scale, Nigeria is ranked 28 most corrupt countries in Africa. One of the points Hilary Clinton made when she visited Nigeria was the alleged corruption at the NPA (Nigeria Post Authority) (Obi, 2011). Bode George was the chairman of the NPA. And it was his activities at the NPA that sent him to jail. Bode George was not a small fry. He was a formal Military Administrator, a Navy Commodore, a former Principal Staff Officer to former Chief of General Staff, a former National Chairman of the ruling party, PDP (People Democratic Party) and the PDP leader in the South West of Nigeria. So, George was not just any politician, he was “big”. However, the loud celebration with which Bode George was received after serving his prison terms for corruption is seen as

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an indication or erosion of values (Obi, 2011) and kid glove treatment given to corruption by the Federal Government and the ruling party (Soyinka, 2011). The celebration was done to the consternation of well-meaning Nigerians. For example, the Catholic Archbishop Okogie was vexed to pose the following question: “Tell me what they are celebrating? What message are they passing to the generality of the people and especially to the young ones? Are they saying it is ok to steal huge funds for that matter, and return triumphantly to enjoy the loot?” (Soyinka, 2011).

In the same vein, Nigerian judges are facing serious moral crises. The News (2011) reported that “Allegations of corruption and other vices expose the Nigerian Bar and the Bench to ridicule for fixing election cases”. The problem of corruption seems to have permeated all facets of national life in Nigeria. And a more fundamental national problem now, is where Nigerian youths can turn to for good values formation and appropriate sense of patriotism because corruption has become dangerously serious and pervasive in the nation. Perhaps, bibliotherapy could provide a solution. Reading of bibliotherapeutic books could provide the ideal values to the youths in Nigeria.

Unoh (1985), for example, noted that good citizenship and competence in one’s community, and in the nation, demand that the citizens be well-informed concerning local and national issues, people and events. This according to the authors, implies that the good citizen must be able to think clearly to exercise critical judgment in discriminating facts and opinions, reconcile conflicting views, detect and evaluate propaganda and reach conclusions that take most of the relevant factors into account. “Among all the avenues of communication available, proficient reading of books is the most effective tool for this purpose”. The relationship of reading difficulties to personality maladjustment is also well explained by Unoh (1985).

According to Schrank and Engels (1981), bibliotherapy means guided reading that helps individual gain understanding of the self and environment, learn from others and find solutions to problems. It consists of three fundamental processes between readers and literature: identification, catharsis, and insight. Identification begins with an affiliation between a reader and a character (a situation) in a story. This identification may expand one’s view of self or reduce one’s sense of being different from others. Catharsis takes place when readers share and vicariously experience motivation and conflict presented in literature. Readers often realize their identification and thus gain insight into motives of their own behavior. Insight occurs when readers see themselves in the behaviors described in the reading materials.

Pardeck (1994), the goals of bibliotherapy are: (1) to provide information about a problem; (2) to communicate new values and attitudes; (3) to create an awareness that others have dealt with similar problems; and (4) to provide solutions to problems.

Bibliotherapy programmes are carried out almost mainly through reading. Reading is an overwhelming experience that involves high level of attention and concentration. Unoh (1985) observed that an examination of the relationship between reading ability and personality development may also shed light on the importance of the study of ready. He submitted that reading involves the whole personality and that it is capable of yielding countless values. It is like entering a cool stream in a hot day. Within the realm of physical human experience, anyone who gets into a stream expects to get wet. If the intruder gets wet, expectedly, must experience the temperature of the stream at the material time. Everything being equal, should be able to describe the experience of being wet.

This is simply an act of living. According to Aboyade (1981), “Reading is concentrated living”. It is a short cut to the abundant life. It is every man’s experience made your own. Reading explains, improves and
intensifies living. The more an individual reads, the more his intelligence grows, and he is able to perceive and understand various issues from a broader perspective. This is possible because books give deeper meaning and interest to various aspects of living. A dialectical relationship exists between books and men. And it has become impossible to separate men from books and books from men. This is an amazing phenomenon; Men create books but books build men. Men build nations but books are the laborers, unsung builders of modern nations through men who had made judicious use of books. Aidons and Huxley as cited in Aboyade (1981) remarked, “Every man who knows how to read has it in his power to magnify himself, to multiply the ways, in which he exists, to make his life full, significant and interesting”.

A reader in Nigeria can turn to books, if he wants to enter the world of Shakespeare in the 17th century England or the thought process of philosophers like Aristotle and Bertrand Russell or the imaginative world of Achebe, Soyinka and such creative writers. Books provide imaginative experiences that help to broaden our appreciation of other people, widen our awareness of their needs and deepen our sympathies with their joys and deprivations. These borrowed experiences from books bring about the growth of understanding and attitudes. Books give a deeper meaning and interest to various aspects of living. According to Aboyade (1981), those who read, the value is obvious. But like some other good habits in life, which we recognize as beneficial, reading to most people is something to be admired in others rather than associated with themselves.

Books have the potentials of being used to expand the human thought processes, change or modify, and direct human behavior towards a pre-determined direction of a community or an organizational culture. These possibilities have great import for teaching and learning, and implications for adoption of appropriate methodologies to deliver a curriculum in whatever direction. This implies that books can be used, in a learning setting and with appropriate programmes to help individuals gain enhanced knowledge and develop useful insight of themselves, their environment, learn from others and be able to find solutions to problems. The technique of using books to enhance the quality of human existence is known as bibliotherapy. Books can add quality to life through communication, education, contemplation and therapy. In the modern schools, books are used for obtaining information for enjoyment, for the cultivation of aesthetic taste, and for the development of critical ability.

Aboyade (1981) and Moore (1962) opined that there is considerable evidence to suggest that bibliotherapy may be an effective practice in the effort to modify attitudes. Moreover, this evidence is broadly-based, concerning people and topics throughout the life span and human condition. The reading of books plays a vital role in the development of personality. It helps in character formation and in the activation of the intelligence, which makes an individual to grow more mature. It provides unlimited opportunities for cultural enrichment, and leads to the deepening of perception and sensitivity. Reading, frees an individual from the constraints of space and time. People who read, can be free because reading banishes ignorance and superstition. Books are gateways to a wider world than our immediate surroundings provide, serving to interpret other cultures and epochs in history other than our own. The printed word has the power to revolutionize our ways of thinking and living. Universal literacy is a factor in building the world of understanding because reading helps the individual understand his society and his role as a citizen, as a writer and as an individual, with his own personal needs and problems (Aboyade, 1981). Through books, the thoughtful reader attains full personal development and enrichment of life in the best books, he can become conversant with great minds of all times. Good reading can extend one’s sights beyond the petty concerns of daily life and help to establish a feeling of kinship with other people, who have dilemmas and get into predicaments like ourselves (Balogun, 1975).
The Role of Bibliotherapy in Value System Formation

Over the years, empathy has been defined in diverse ways in the psychological literature. Although, there is no agreement on its definition, many social and developmental psychologists currently differentiated between various vicarious emotional responses to others’ emotions and taking the cognitive perspective of another. Specifically, many theorists and researchers studying human development defined empathy as an emotional reaction to another’s emotional state or condition for example, feeling sad when you view a sad person. Boadu (1976) noted that empathy is the process through which the imagination is used to achieve a psychic identification with things both familiar and alien to ourselves. Psychic identification is meant the ability to see things in the way that the things present themselves in reality to us. In this process, a set of behavioral responses tend to be evoked in us corresponding to things presented to us and which we identify with. This definition of empathy enables us to analyze the relationship between the empathy process, print media, value system and the modernization process.

The use of the print media (books) to achieve value system formation objectives is dependent, to a large extent, on the bibliotherapist. The bibliotherapist must be able to empathsies with the readers, if the content of book is to achieve the desired objectives. Thus, the content of the books chosen for bibliotherapy exercise must be based on thorough understanding of the empathic process by the bibliotherapist. The entire process of bibliotherapy exercise entails communication. The book as a medium of communication greatly facilitates the development of emphatic skills (Lerner, 1964). According to Steward (1956), the empathic process can be developed through training. He contended that:

Empathy is the basic action of human behavior... it evolves from personal knowing, but not without effort and discipline... Empathy, as here conceived is not just a putting on oneself in the other’s, or as one is infected by a stray emotional feeling. Effort and imagination, choice and deliberation, and therefore, creative selection are required by the empathic act.

Also, Lerner (1964) was of the view that empathy is basic to human behavior and is capable of being fully developed through learning. By implication, the kind of empathic skills expected of the youths who may be the leaders of tomorrow, are such that only by training and practice through social experience and private effort that such skills could be acquired. They must necessarily read books and enough of them too. This is because the book, as a medium of communication plays an important role in this training process.

Through the use of books, readers are given a tacit encouragement to identify themselves with persons or characters that are embodiments of desired and desirable attributes, such as intelligence, courage, heroism, kindness, love, honesty and others, just as the readers may be tacitly encouraged to reject and condemn persons or characters having undesirable attributes, thus empathy changes human being from less acceptable to a more acceptable manner of doing things. What changes in the real sense is not the individual, but what makes him and individual are his/her operative values. As has been noted in this study, reading causes empathic development in an individual in three ways: identification, catharsis and insight. Identification acts as a form of encouragement for a reader to develop an empathy with a character having similar problems, opportunities, aspirations and possibilities. Whenever identification and empathy are firmly established through reading, they provide a most dependable source of problem solution, conflict resolution and behavior therapy. The reader, who has identified himself with a particular personage invariably, tends to try to solve his own problems using the techniques that has been either used successfully, or advocated strongly, by the personage with whom he
Catharsis takes place when readers share and vicariously experience, motivations and conflicts presented in the literature. Readers, often realize their identification and thus, gain insight into motives of their own behavior. Insight, occurs when readers see themselves in the behavior described in the reading materials (Schrank & Engels, 1981) and they try to apply the techniques used by the personage they have identified themselves with, to solve their own problems. In this vein, according to Chuma-Ibe (2009) as cited in Maurus (2002), Odejide (2004) and Okebukola (2005), noted that:

Just as reading positive books can change an individual’s behavior from negative to positive; we must not forget that there are bad books. Just like bad films, bad books can destroy a personality. When books in the realm of pornography, counter-culture and extreme radicalism are read, they are capable of making their readers grow toward emotional and social bad health and undesirable behavior.

Books, Vicarious Experience and Behavior Modification

Chuma-Ibe (2009) opined that modeling can produce novel responses by providing cues on new behavior and can inhibit or dis-inhibit existing behavior patterns, or facilitate previously learned behaviors. Chuma-Ibe (2009) pointed out that the social learning theory of Bandura (1965; 1977) on the role of modeling and the implications of vicarious re-enforcement through identification is suitable for the study of effects of bibliotherapy on behavioral modification of youths in public schools in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, several literacy works have been produced, using role models as characters, with the aim of effecting changes in users’ values, attitudes and behaviors vicariously. Fayose (1978), Adedokun (2001) and Odejide (2004) demonstrated in their various studies that the experiences of characters and situations that children encounter in literature help them greatly to develop themselves. Chuma-Ibe pointed out that the results of these studies agree with Bandura’s (1977) theory that when adolescent is provided with self-instruction experiences and vicarious experiences in which the adolescent has the opportunity to view life or symbolic models through insight, it results in behavior modification and change. Bandura’s social learning theory specified the key elements in bibliotherapeutic intervention and an in-depth understanding of the process of behavior modification and change.

According to Chuma-Ibe (2009), Bandura’s (1977) social theory of learning explains that, behavior can be modified by providing appropriate learning conditions and experiences. This postulation operates under the assumption that all behaviors develop through the process of learning, and can reduce or cease totally when they are unlearned using stimuli-response-associative learning procedure. Also, changes in an individual’s environment usually bring about changes in the individual’s values and attitudes. This means that changes in both the overt and covert behavior of an individual can be effected by re-organizing that individual’s thinking pattern, perception, attitude or belief about an idea through the use of veritable stimulus. This could be through exposure of the individual to positive role models vicariously, using positive reading materials or through experiences by observation. When this occurs, self-confidence is built to challenge negative values the individual had acquired. The individual can re-enforce this, by imitating what is good, thereby shedding off the negative, overtime, for the positive. This results in behavior modification and subsequent behavior change.

While Bandura’s social learning theory on behavior provides a general overview and a pertinent illustration on general behavior modification and change, a rather more specific theoretical perspective, “the roots of bibliotherapy in behavior change” by Okwilagwe (2003) as cited in Chuma-Ibe (2009). From this
The theoretical perspective, in every human society, family, community members, religious, corrective institutions and the contemporary society are seen as the main framework for the socialization of individuals from birth to adulthood, based on the cultural beliefs of the people around him. The beliefs determine the value system tenable among such a group. It is the value system of an individual that determines his or her attitude to issues, to the other members of the society and invariably, dictates the person’s behavior toward himself and to others within the larger society. In other words, the socialization of an individual to adhere to the sentiments and values of his or her culture, is what determines his attitude to issues, and other things. In the same vein, it is viewed in bibliotherapy that when an individual is exposed to positive reading materials, piety, courage, respect and such other positive values, the individual’s negative values, attitudes and behaviors, are most likely re-orientated and re-socialized, along positive lines, resulting in the emergence of a more positive personality. As the regular reading is sustained, the positive values are better entrenched to last through life.

The result of Chuma-Ibe’s study is in consonance with those of Bandura (1965; 1977), Fayose (1978), Adedokun (2001) and Odejide (2004). Chuma-Ibe’s study revealed that there is a significant main effect of treatment (bibliotherapy) on behaviors modification of adolescents as indicated in the differences in the pre- and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups ($F_{(2, 297)} = 66.542, p = 0.05$). This confirms the view of scholars that new values can be developed, negative values and attitudes of individuals can be modified using positive reading materials.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study was to determine whether bibliotherapy influences value system formation by undergraduates. Conclusions were based on self-reports from a questionnaire administered to the undergraduates by the researchers in the university campus.

**Significance of Study**

The findings of this study would provide an avenue of solution to the problem of finding reliable sources for good values and acceptable social behavior for youths in Nigeria. It could help in the formulation of a National Policy on the use of books for behavior modification in Nigeria.

**Research Problem**

This study investigated whether a relationship exists between bibliotherapy and value system formation by undergraduates of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

**Research Hypotheses**

1. Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of group- and self-oriented values;
2. Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of society- and environment-oriented values;
3. Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of nation- and self-oriented values;
4. Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of group, self- and society-oriented values.
Methodology

Design

The research design is the descriptive survey design which employs, the ex-post facto approach. This is a survey research because the objective here is to engage in the interpretation of facts without manipulation of the variables involved in the study. It also intends to make comparisons and evaluate the various prevalent phenomena, through the collection and analysis of factual information, surrounding bibliotherapy and value system formation by youths.

Subjects

The participants in this study were 1,372 undergraduates of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. They were randomly selected from seven faculties of the university as follows: Arts, 194; Social Sciences, 194; Education, 198; Agriculture, 199; Veterinary Medicine, 190; Sciences, 198 and Basic Medical sciences, 199. The population was made up of 746 (54.37%) males and 626 (45.63%) females.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire used for the purpose of this study, was adapted from researcher Nicholas’ Value Systems as Determinants of Books Read, in Cohen’s Attitude Change and Social Influence, with some modifications. The questionnaire is made up of two sections: section A, consisted of personal data (age, sex and faculty), while section B consisted of items on the influence of bibliotherapy on the value system formation by undergraduate students.

Procedure

A total number of 1,400 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents at the seven faculties during the academic session at a time when students were on the last lap of the semester, about to prepare for examinations. The administration was done by the researchers. Of the total number of 1,400 copies of the questionnaire administered, 1,372 were found to have been properly filled and usable for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The Chi-square statistical analysis was used to show relationships amongst and between variables. The hypotheses were tested at the alpha level of 0.05. When the Chi-square value ($\chi^2$) was greater than the alpha value (0 <), the result fell within the region of rejection then null hypothesis (H0) was accepted vice versa.

Results

The results of the hypotheses tested are presented as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (alternative hypothesis): Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system on the basis of group and self-oriented values. The findings are presented in Table 1. In testing the first predicted null hypothesis, the observed value 1,659.8 as compared to the tabled value of 9.49 was statistically significant with a degree of freedom of 0.05. The details are summarized in Table 1.

Hypothesis 2: Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of society- and environment- oriented values. The results are represented in Table 2. Table 2 shows that the null hypothesis was statistically significant at alpha level of 0.05, where, the observed value was 239.8 while the tabled value
was 9.49.

Table 1

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Notes. *Expected frequency; **Significance at 0.05; 5. SA = "Strongly agreed"; 4. AE = "Agreed"; 3. DE = "Disagreed"; 2. SD = "Strongly disagreed"; $X^2$ = Chi-square; df = degree of freedom.

Hypothesis 3: Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of nation- and self- oriented values. The results are represented in Table 3. As indicated in Table 3, the observed value 725.6 was greater than the tabled value of 9.49 at a significance level of 0.05. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3

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Notes. *Expected frequency; **Significance at 0.05; 5. SA = "Strongly agreed"; 4. AE = "Agreed"; 3. DE = "Disagreed"; 2. SD = "Strongly disagreed".

Hypothesis 4: Bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of group, self- and society- oriented values. The findings are represented in Table 4. The results show that the observed
value 1904.6 as compared to the table value 15.51, was greater. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 4

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Notes. *Expected frequency; **Significance at 0.05.

Discussion of Findings

The computed outcome of the first hypothesis which was statistically significant, evidently shows that bibliotherapy will be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of group- and self- oriented values. This has been further confirmed by Myracle (1995). Still in line with the above, are Chaee et al. (1971) and Unoh (1981) who stated that while family and peer relationships can make a difference in an individual’s value system formation, psychological variables can also make a difference since some people are “pre-disposed” to read and react in ways that others are not. The computed outcome of the second predicted hypothesis was also significant at a significance level of 0.05, as shown in Table 2, thus rejection of the null hypothesis. Horace (1970) and Cole and Scribner (1974) are of the view that bibliotherapy will be a determinant of value system formation by undergraduates. Literacy is a crucial factor in changing the way people think and behave, it co-occurs with other cultural features like urbanization and so, all these put together through the book medium of communication will determine an individual’s value system formation.

The third null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The reason for rejection was further confirmed by Gray (1991). According to him, reading influences beliefs, attitudes, morale, public opinion, voting patterns as well as crime and other forms of anti-social behaviors. In line with the above, Unoh (1981) opined that through the reading of books readers are given a tacit encouragement to identify themselves with persons or characters that are embodiments of desired and desirable attributes, such as intelligence, courage, heroism, kindness, love and honesty, and to condemn persons or characters having undesirable attributes, thus having a good sense of judgment, which will influence their value system formation positively in line with self- and nation- oriented values.

The fourth and last hypothesis, however, has that bibliotherapy will not be a determinant of value system formation on the basis of group, self- and society- oriented values. The null hypothesis was rejected. This is supported by literature in this field. For instance, Osiki (1996) and Kluckhohn (1996) are of the view that bibliotherapy will be a determinant of value system formation as prescribed by the total environment in which individuals navigate for a living.

Conclusions

In the light of the findings of this study, it could be deduced that, bibliotherapy determines value system formation of undergraduates. Bibliotherapy, exerts a therapeutic influence especially on areas like relieving
emotional and mental pressure in individuals, providing more than one solution to an individual’s problems and helping people to discuss their problems more freely thus solving them. Bibliotherapy has been successfully used in solving the problems of truancy, absenteeism, aggressive tendencies, moral bankruptcy, deviant behaviors, etc., the harvest of bibliotherapeutic gains in these respects has continued to be on the increase (Osiki, 1996b). In sum, bibliotherapy has high propensity of continuous adaptability and usage in diagnosing and treating disturbed human conditions and behaviors.

Recommendations

Transparency international’s rating for 2010 shows that Nigeria corruption profile is still bad. It negatively affects the development of national value system. Nigerian youths must be weaned out from the paths of corruption as they are the leaders of tomorrow. They should be empowered with positive human values to face the future and contribute to nation building. When all avenues seem to have failed, the book presents a sustainable source of positive values. And bibliotherapy can go a long way to help the situation. There should be national a policy towards encouraging reading among the youths in Nigeria.

References


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