

Use of bibliotherapy in patients with depression

Hüseyin Çaksen

*Divisions of Pediatric Neurology and Genetics and Behavioral-Developmental Pediatrics, Department of Pediatrics,
Faculty of Medicine Necmettin Erbakan University, Meram, Konya, Türkiye*

* * * * *

Depression is a common mental disorder with about 25% of women and 12% of men suffering from at least one depressive episode during their lifetime (Haller et al., 2019). An estimated 3.8% of the population experience depression. Approximately 280 million people in the world have depression. Depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological, and biological factors. Clinical depression is associated with social, occupational and physical impairment and mortality, despite the recent advancements made in its treatment (Pandarakalam, 2018; Çaksen, 2024).

Psychological treatments are the first treatments for depression. They can be combined with antidepressant medications in moderate and severe depression. Antidepressants are effective against chronic, moderate and severe depression; however, they don't help in mild depression and only one third of patients with depression respond fully to pharmacotherapy (Pandarakalam, 2018). Parallel to the marketing of newer antidepressants, complementary therapies have also been flourishing and they are very popular among patients with depression. Acupuncture, aromatherapy, biofeedback, homeopathy, hypnotherapy, reflexology, light therapy, massage therapy, meditative movement therapies including dance therapy, Chinese movement therapies, reiki, and yoga, mindfulness-based interventions, music therapy, osteopathy and religious/spiritual interventions are some of the complementary therapies practiced in patients with depression and interestingly they are popular even among the highly educated (Pandarakalam, 2018; Haller et al., 2019).

Biblio- is a combining form occurring in loanwords from Greek (bibliography). On this model, biblio- is used in the formation of compound words with the meaning "book" (bibliophile), and sometimes with the meaning "Bible" (bibliolatry, on the model of idolatry). (Bibliotherapy, 2024). Bibliotherapy (also referred to as book therapy or reading therapy), a complementary therapy, involves using any text to improve physical, social, mental, spiritual, and/or religious health, through reading, discussing, and facilitating a greater understanding. Aside from storytelling and reading of specific books, texts in the holy books of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are also included in the notion of bibliotherapy.

The idea of bibliotherapy is not new. Bibliotherapy has a long history in the library science literature as a tool to help treat medical and psychological problems. In fact, when we consider the booklets that Allah sent down to the prophets of Adam (the first man and the first prophet [Alayhi As-Salam (AS)]), Seth (AS), Idris (AS) and Ibrahim (AS), and that the books Allah sent down to the prophets of Moses (AS), Dawud (AS), Jesus (AS) and Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam), it is too clear that bibliotherapy is as old as human history. Herein, we discussed use of bibliotherapy

in patients with depression to draw attention to the importance of bibliotherapy, neglected by most health professionals.

Today, bibliotherapy is used to benefit people with cancer, addiction, trauma, autism, grief, divorce and mental health disorders. Xu et al. (2023) examined the 100 most-cited articles on bibliotherapy between 1980 and 2020. The applications of bibliotherapy in depression, anxiety, panic disorder, insomnia, and aphasia were the hot themes (Xu et al., 2023). There are many books that have the potential to contribute to the treatment of patients with depression (Table 1).

Bibliotherapy can be used to treat mild to moderate depression or subthreshold depressive symptoms, as a sole or supplementary therapy. Songprakun & McCann (2012) evaluated the efficacy of bibliotherapy by using the book, "The Good Mood Guide: A Self-Help Manual for Depression" in reducing psychological distress in individuals with moderate depression. They showed the distress scores of the intervention group were lower than those in the control group at post-test. Between post-test and 1-month follow-up, distress scores continued to decrease steadily in the intervention group but only decreased slightly in the control group (Songprakun & McCann, 2012). Gualano et al. (2017) reviewed the long-term effects of bibliotherapy in depression treatment in ten articles. They found that after long-term period ranging from 3 months to 3 years follow-ups, six studies, including adults, reported a decrease of depressive symptoms, while four studies including young people did not show significant results. In these studies, the self-help books used for bibliotherapy include "Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy" and "Control Your Depression." (Gualano et al., 2017). Recently, Wittkamp et al. (2023) reported that participants with distressing subclinical psychotic, depression, or anxiety symptoms in the affect regulation training condition showed a greater improvement of emotion regulation in daily life than those with bibliotherapy, but the affect regulation training was not superior over bibliotherapy in preventing the transition to mental disorders. There were significant longitudinal reductions from pre- to post-intervention for general psychopathology and symptoms but no superiority of the affect regulation training over bibliotherapy (Wittkamp et al., 2023).

Quranotherapy (or Quranic therapy), a unique book therapy, involves reciting, reading and listening to the Quran to improve physical, social, mental, spiritual, and/or religious health. Quranotherapy has been used to protect people from diseases or to treat the diseases including psychiatric disorders in many parts of the world for over 1440 years (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2014; Hasanović et al., 2021; Pajević et al., 2021). Because the Quran is a both a book of law, and a book of prayer, and a book of wisdom, and a book of worship, and a book of command

Table 1. Recommended books for adults with mild to moderate symptoms of depression

-
- Akhtar M: *Positive Psychology for Overcoming Depression: Self-help Strategies to Build Strength, Resilience and Sustainable Happiness*. Watkins Publishing, London, 2018.
 - Atkinson S: *Climbing Out of Depression: A Practical Guide to Real and Immediate Help*. TarcherPerigee, New York, 2009.
 - Barker PJ: *A Self-Help Guide to Managing Depression*. Springer, New York, 1993.
 - Burns DD: *Feeling Good-The New Mood Therapy*. HarperAudio, New York, 2017.
 - Burns DD: *Feeling Great: The Revolutionary New Treatment for Depression and Anxiety*. PESI Publishing & Media, Eau Claria, WI, 2020.
 - Butler G, Grey N & Hope T: *Manage Your Mind (3rd ed)*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018.
 - Edelman S: *Change Your Thinking: Overcome Stress, Anxiety, and Depression, and Improve Your Life with CBT*. Da Capo Lifelong Books, Philadelphia, PA, 2007.
 - English translation: Mustafa Khattab. *The Clear Quran*. Book of Signs Foundation, Bolingbrook IL, 2023.
 - Frankl VE: *Man's Search for Meaning*. Beacon, Boston, MA, 2006.
 - Ghaemi SN: *On Depression: Drugs, Diagnosis, and Despair in the Modern World*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 2013.
 - Gilbert P: *Overcoming Depression: A Self- Help Guide Using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques (3rd ed)*. Robinson, London, 2021.
 - Greenberger D & Padesky CA: *Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think (2nd ed)*. The Guildford Press, New York, 2015.
 - Hanson R: *Hardwiring Happiness: The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm, and Confidence*. Harmony, New York, 2013.
 - Harper FG: *Unfuck Your Brain: Getting Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-Outs, and Triggers with Science (5-Minute Therapy)*. Microcosm Pub, Portland, OR, 2017.
 - Hayes SC: *A Liberated Mind: How to Pivot Toward What Matters*. Avery, New York, 2019.
 - Holdsworth N & Paxton R: *Managing Anxiety and Depression*. Mental Health Foundation, London, 1999.
 - Johnstone M. *Living with a Black Dog: His Name is Depression*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, Kansas City, MO, 2006.
 - Korb A: *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*. New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA, 2015.
 - Lewinsohn PM, Munoz RA & Youngren MA: *Control Your Depression*. Simon & Schuster Books, London, 1992.
 - McIntosh D: *This is Depression: A Comprehensive, Compassionate Guide for Anyone Who Wants to Understand Depression*. Page Two, Vancouver, BC, 2019.
 - Nursi BS: *From the Risale-i Nur Collection. Message for the Sick*. Nur Publishers, Tempe, AZ, 2010.
 - Nursi BS: *From the Risale-i Nur Collection. The Short Words*. Nur Publishers, Tempe, AZ, 2010.
 - Nursi BS: *From the Risale-i Nur Collection. The Supreme Sign: Observations of a Traveller Questioning Creation Concerning his Maker*. Nur Publishers, Tempe, AZ, 2006.
 - Parker G: *Dealing with Depression. A Commonsense Guide to Mood Disorders*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2005.
 - Phipps AB, Eldelman S, Perkins DP, Barisic ML, Deane FP & Gould GV: *The Good Mood Guide: A Self-Help Manual for Depression*. Lifeline South Coast (NSW), Wollongong, NSW, 2004.
 - Rowe D: *Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison*. Routledge, London, 2003.
 - Rumi J: *The Masnavi of Rumi. Book One. A New English Translation with Explanatory Notes*. Alan Williams (Translator). I. B. Tauris, London, 2020.
 - Smith MJ: *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty: How to Cope-Using the Skills of Systematic Assertive Therapy*. Bantam, New York, 1975.
 - Tanner S & Ball J: *Beating the Blues: A Self-Help Approach to Overcoming Depression*. Susan Tanner and Jillian Ball, Sydney, 2001.
 - Tomasulo D: *Learned Hopefulness: The Power of Positivity to Overcome Depression*. New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA, 2020.
 - Williams C: *Living Life to the Full: Key Life Skills to Change Your Life*. Five Areas Limited, Clydebank, Scotland, 2018.
 - Williams C: *Overcoming Depression and Low Mood. A Five Areas Approach (4th Ed)*. CRC Press, New York, 2014.
 - Williams M, Teasdale J, Segal S & Kabat-Zinn J: *The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness (2nd ed)*. The Guilford Press, New York, 2024.
 - Winston SM & Seif MN: *Overcoming Unwanted Intrusive Thoughts: A CBT-Based Guide to Getting Over Frightening, Obsessive, or Disturbing Thoughts*. New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA, 2017.
-

and summons, and a book of invocation, and a book of thought, and a unique, comprehensive sacred book comprising many books to which recourse may be had for all the needs of all mankind (Nursi, 2012). Rafique et al. (2019) reported that the Quranotherapy reduced the level of depression in women with depression. The Quran with and without translation, both are effective for reducing stress, anxiety and depression during in pregnant women (Jabbari et al., 2020). Based on 15 articles' results, Moulai et al. (2023) concluded that "reducing the level of anxiety, stress, and depression" and "simple, affordable, practical and cost-effective treatment to reduce depression and anxiety" were the most important outcomes of Quranotherapy.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that bibliotherapy, a complementary therapy, is as old as human history and has been used to protect from illnesses or to treat the diseases including psychiatric disorders for thousands of years. Second, bibliotherapy applied by taking into account the sociocultural characteristics and beliefs of societies provides improvement in patients with mild and moderate depression. Lastly, we strongly recommend that randomized controlled studies should be performed on use of bibliotherapy in patients with mental health disorders including depression living in different geographies of the world. These studies will make a great contribution to health professionals and patients in clinical practices.

Acknowledgements: None.

Conflict of interest: None to declare.

References

- Bibliotherapy. (2024, July 27). *Collins Dictionaries*. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/bibliotherapy>
- Çaksen, H. (2024). A holistic view of health. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 36(3-4), 397-399.
- Gualano, M. R., Bert, F., Martorana, M., Voglino, G., Andriolo, V., Thomas, R., Gramaglia, C., Zeppegnò, P., & Siliquini, R. (2017). The long-term effects of bibliotherapy in depression treatment: systematic review of randomized clinical trials. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 58, 49-58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2017.09.006>
- Haller, H., Anheyer, D., Cramer, H., & Dobos, G. (2019). Complementary therapies for clinical depression: an overview of systematic reviews. *BMJ Open*, 9(8), e028527. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-028527>
- Hasanović, M., Pajević, I., & Hasanović, M. (2021). Islamic approach to the psychotrauma: animation, growth and transformation. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 33(Suppl 4), 870-881.
- Jabbari, B., Mirghafourvand, M., Sehhatie, F., & Mohammad-Alizadeh-Charandabi, S. (2020). The effect of Holly Quran voice with and without translation on stress, anxiety and depression during pregnancy: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 59(1), 544-554. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0417-x>
- Koenig H. G., & Al Shohaib S. (2014). *Health and well-being in Islamic societies. Background, research, and applications*. Springer, Cham, Switzerland.
- Moulai, K., Haghdoost, A. A., Bahaadinbeigy, K., & Dinari, F. (2023). The effect of the holy Quran recitation and listening on anxiety, stress, and depression: A scoping review on outcomes. *Health Science Reports*, 6(12), e1751. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.1751>
- Nursi, B. S. (2012). *From the risale-i nur collection. Words*. Söz, Istanbul. <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.377>
- Pajević, A., Pajević, I., Hasanović, M., & Jakovljevic, M. (2021). Medicine and psychology of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) – A unique scientific and religious approach. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 33(Suppl 3), S299-S308.
- Pandarakalam, J. P. (2018). Challenges of treatment-resistant depression. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 30(3), 273-284. <https://doi.org/10.24869/psyd.2018.273>
- Rafique, R., Anjum, A., & Raheem, S. S. (2019). Efficacy of Surah Al-Rehman in managing depression in Muslim women. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 58(2), 516-526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0492-z>
- Songprakun, W., & McCann, T. V. (2012). Evaluation of a bibliotherapy manual for reducing psychological distress in people with depression: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 68(12), 2674-2684. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2012.05966.x>
- Wittkamp, M. F., Krkovic, K., & Lincoln, T. M. (2023). Effectiveness of a transdiagnostic emotion regulation training in an at-risk sample: a randomized-controlled trial of group-based training versus self-help bibliotherapy. *The British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(2), 411-430. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12415>
- Xu, Z., Liu, R., Guo, L., Gao, Z., Gao, Z., Liu, X., Li, J., Li, B., & Yang, K. (2023). The 100 most-cited articles on bibliotherapy: a bibliometric analysis. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 28(9), 2728-2744. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2022.2068183>

Correspondence:

Prof. Hüseyin Çaksen, MD, PhD
Divisions of Pediatric Neurology and Genetics and
Behavioral-Developmental Pediatrics Department of
Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine Necmettin Erbakan
University, 42090 Meram, Konya, Türkiye
huseyincaksen@hotmail.com