

Bibliotherapy: A contrivance to the Happiness at workplace

Nidhi Kaushal, Dr. Sanjit Mishra

I.I.T. Roorkee

Email : nidhi.k3333@gmail.com

Abstract

Various tools are available in the Human Resource Management studies to work out with the difficulties of the employees at the workplace. Most of them are purely based on Management science. In the paper, we have explored the usefulness of bibliotherapy as a significant technique to resolve the various issues faced by the employees in any organization. Through its different characters, situations, and themes, a work of literature provides a variety of experiences with the help of the readers can invent solutions to their problems. In this paper, we have focused on the interrelatedness between the act of reading and the experience of Happiness at the workplace.

Keywords: Literature, Management, Organization, Happiness

Introduction

Bibliotherapy, or book therapy, involves the systematic use of books to help people cope with their mental, physical, emotional, developmental or social problems. The etymology of the term bibliotherapy (Biblio- is the Greek word for books and, therapy comes from therapeia, meaning to help medically) aligns bibliotherapy together with some other similar practices, such as art therapy, dance therapy, music therapy, play therapy, etc (Tukhareli, 2016).

Bibliotherapy is a very broad term for the ancient practice of encouraging reading for therapeutic effect. The first use of the term is usually dated to a jaunty 1916 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, "A Literary Clinic." In it, the author describes stumbling upon a "bibliopathic institute" run by an acquaintance, Bagster, in the basement of his church, from where he dispenses reading recommendations with healing value. "Bibliotherapy is a new science," Bagster explains. "A book may be a stimulant or a sedative or an irritant or a soporific. The point is that it must do something to you, and you ought to know what it is. A book may be of the nature of soothing syrup or it may be of the nature of a

mustard plaster." To a middle-aged client with "opinions partially ossified," Bagster gives the following prescription: "You must read more novels. Not pleasant stories that make you forget yourself. They must be searching, drastic, stinging, relentless novels."

Berthoud and Elderkin trace the method of bibliotherapy all the way back to the Ancient Greeks, "who inscribed above the entrance to a library in Thebes" that this was a 'healing place for the soul.' The practice came into its own at the end of the nineteenth century, when Sigmund Freud began using literature during psychoanalysis sessions. After the First World War, traumatized soldiers returning home from the front were often prescribed a course of reading. "Librarians in the States were given training on how to give books to WWI vets, and there's a nice story about Jane Austen's novels being used for bibliotherapeutic purposes at the same time in the U.K.," Elderkin says. Later in the century, bibliotherapy was used in varying ways in hospitals and libraries and has more recently been taken up by psychologists, social and aged-care workers, and doctors as a viable mode of therapy.

For all avid readers who have been self-medicating with great books their entire lives, it comes as no surprise that reading books can be good for your mental health and your relationships with others, but exactly why and how is now becoming clearer, thanks to new research on reading's effects on the brain. Since the discovery, in the mid-nineties, of "mirror neurons"—neurons that fire in our brains both when we perform an action ourselves and when we see an action performed by someone else—the neuroscience of empathy has become clearer. A 2011 study published in the *Annual Review of Psychology*, based on analysis of fMRI brain scans of participants, showed that, when people read about an experience, they display stimulation within the same neurological regions as when they go through that experience themselves. We draw on the same brain networks when we're reading stories and when we're trying to guess at another person's feelings.

Other studies published in 2006 and 2009 showed something similar—that people who read a lot of fiction tend to be better at empathizing with others (even after the researchers had accounted for the potential bias that people with greater empathetic tendencies may prefer to read novels). And, in 2013, an influential study published in *Science* found that reading literary fiction (rather than popular fiction or literary nonfiction) improved participants' results on tests that measured social perception and empathy, which are crucial to "theory of mind": the ability to guess with accuracy what another human being might be thinking or feeling, a skill humans only start to develop around the age of four.

Keith Oatley, a novelist and emeritus professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Toronto, has for many years run a research group interested in the psychology of fiction. "We have started to show how identification with fictional characters occurs, how literary art can improve social abilities, how it can move us emotionally and can prompt changes of self-hood," he wrote in his

2011 book, *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*. "Fiction is a kind of simulation, one that runs not on computers but on minds: a simulation of selves in their interactions with others in the social world...based in experience, and involving being able to think of possible futures." This idea echoes a long-held belief among both writers and readers that books are the best kinds of friends; they give us a chance to rehearse for interactions with others in the world, without doing any lasting damage (*Ceridwen, 2015*).

Some issues of the employees at the workplace.

Interpersonal conflict

Communication Problems

Gossip

Bullying

Harassment

Discrimination

Low motivation and job satisfaction

Performance issues

Poor job fit (*Armstrong, 2015*)

Some other Problems

Attitude problem: In a professional workplace setting, a bad attitude can affect everyone and cause conflict among employees. In some cases' attitude problems are able to be ignored by the majority of employees, and a productive employee with a slight attitude problem is not a distraction

Fear of Inadequacy: Jealousy among employees, or a fear of inadequacy, can sometimes cause an attitude problem with the employee that feels threatened, according to the article titled "How to Handle Difficult Behavior in the Workplace" published on the Mediate website. An employee may feel that his skill set is not adequate enough to perform at the same level as his co-workers,

and this causes conflict and an attitude problem that can become pervasive.

Personal Problems: When people feel pressured in many aspects of their life, they sometimes lash out in non-productive ways, so says the article titled "Approaching Worker Attitude Problems" published on the HR Tools website. If an employee seems to be having problems communicating with co-workers, sit the employee down and ask them why they are being difficult. Try to avoid being confrontational. If you offer the employee a sympathetic ear, you may find that the problems stem from personal issues that have nothing to do with the workplace, but because so much time is spent at work the frustration boils over in the form of a bad attitude (*Root, 2016*).

Some examples of the Problematic Employees

The Disappearing Act: Sometimes, problematic behavior crops up in connection with troubles emerging in an employee's personal life. For example, several months after Pac Team America president Eric Zuckerman, 30, gave a new employee time off to recover from injuries in a car accident, she was arriving late to work, leaving early, and sometimes sneaking away at midday for long naps from his Paramus, N.J., merchandise display company. After unsuccessfully trying to discuss the problem with her several times to find solutions to accommodate her, he eventually had to fire her

The Scofflaw: Randy Cohen, 46, thought he had hired a new employee who fit the energetic, open culture of his Austin, Texas, ticket brokerage, Ticket City. But soon the employee routinely ignored policy and procedures. Cohen found himself constantly correcting the young salesperson's behavior so that he didn't alienate customers. "He made the company a bunch of money, but he was a pain," says Cohen. Over the past 21 years, Cohen says he's had other employees who've bucked the rules, including drinking on the job. Cohen now has a policy of

"firing fast" when he finds an employee who isn't willing to follow rules.

The Sour Apple: Negative employees who bad-mouth the company and its leadership to fellow employees and even customers can disrupt morale. Cohen found one in his ranks after learning about the naysayer from other employees. Eventually, the person left the company, but he says he wouldn't be as tolerant again. "Someone like that can really hurt morale," he says.

The Filcher: Regardless of their diligence in re-hire screening, employers occasionally discover illegal activity by their employees. Vonda White, 46, recalls having an unsettling feeling about an employee at her Tarpon Springs, Fla., insurance-brokerage firm Collegiate Risk Management. He demonstrated a negative attitude and seemed distant in his day-to-day dealings with her. Eventually, she discovered he had copied the company's database and was trying to help a friend launch a competing company, White says (*MORAN, 2016*).

The magic of words in healing

Happiness is state of well-being characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy or the emotions experienced when in a state of well-being (*Wikipedia, 2016*).

Happiness at work has traditionally been seen as a potential by-product of positive outcomes at work, rather than a pathway to success in business (*vocabulary, 2016*)

Bibliotherapy can act as a powerful tool in creating happiness at work and the organizations have happier employees with increasing productivity as well. "Bibliotherapy" uses books in two ways: First, it can inspire you to reflect on a certain topic, often by identifying with a story's character. Second, it can give you structured approaches to address specific problems. Bibliotherapy can be useful for self-help, but it's

often most effective when paired with expert guidance or psychotherapy. The approach can target everyday concerns and is effective with adults of all ages, dealing with issues such as depression, anxiety, alcohol abuse, addictions, insomnia, eating disorders, and migraines. Bibliotherapy can also help children and even assist parents in helping their children become less anxious.

For structured approaches, the emphasis is often one of the following:

Experiencing new ways to think about your situation so you also can explore new emotions and new behaviors.

Letting your values guide your behaviors while you tune into and accept whatever difficult emotions you're facing.

Recognizing how you usually relate to other people and making thoughtful choices about how you want to relate to others moving forward (*Hprc, 2016*).

Some examples from scholarly studies:

Recent studies from Liverpool University led by Professor Philip Davies have demonstrated that reading the classics improves our own reflectiveness and self-knowledge. Extracts from works such as 'Othello,' 'King Lear,' 'Macbeth' and 'Coriolinus' were read by participants and scientists measured brain changes during these exercises using Magnetic Resonance Imaging. Extracts from the work of Larkin, Wordsworth, and TS Eliot were also read by the readers for the experiment. After reading the classical work, the participants then read the work in a simplified form, without any of the metaphor and colors of the original. Not surprisingly, the results showed much greater electrical activity in the brain when the complex phrases and eloquent sentences were being read, as opposed to the dumbed down versions of the classical construct. Indeed, the right side of the brain which is concerned with personal memory and emotion was highly

stimulated when reading poetry, which prompted the scientists to extrapolate that self-reflection and a reappraisal of previous experiences, is produced by the bardic works (*Oselfandshelf, 2013*).

Bibliotherapy reduces depression. Psychologists at the New School for Social Research in New York found that reading fiction can enhance 'theory of mind' – the skill of understanding other people's mental states and navigating complex social relationships. People who are depressed often have a low theory of mind (Lee ETAL, 2005). Research at the University of Liverpool found that readers are 21 percent less likely to report feelings of depression and 10 percent more likely to report good self-esteem than non-readers. Researchers at the University of Sussex found that after six minutes of reading, subjects' stress was reduced by up to 68 percent. A 2013 survey by the Book Trust said, 'People who read books regularly are on average more satisfied with life, happier, and more likely to feel the things they do in life are worthwhile.'*(Roberts, 2015)*

Bibliotherapy is helpful in Employee's issues in the organization.

It develops imagination and creativity -Our brain stretches as we create pictures in our mind. Once again, those pictures are unique, personal and may serve as inspiration for our job, school assignments and everything else. Reading increases experiences and a reader can learn about different cultures, people, and places

Reading Inspirational quotes motivates readers- Reading expands our brain and gives us creativity a chance to come alive. It improves our writing skills and vocabulary, which is great because nothing's more attractive than intelligence. Reading favorite book quotes will always serve us with inspiration.

Reading is a versatile form of entertainment and it is a fun- It can be relaxing, funny, exciting, thrilling and much, much more. We can do it on

the train, in waiting rooms, on the beach and pretty much anywhere else our heart desires.

It is a distracting mood lifter - If we are in a bad mood we don't necessarily need a psychologist; we need to read better books. Our favorite book will help us to forget about our problems for a while.

Reading helps in self-improvement – It helps to understand the world better and in a much deeper way. We will begin to have a greater understanding of topics that interest. For example, how to build self-confidence, how to make better plans before taking action, how to memorize things more efficiently and so on, all of these modes of self-improvement stem from reading. Through reading, we create a structured path toward understanding and taking better actions in the future.

It Improves understanding - Reading increases understanding for the rules of life, which will help us to better adapt to society. To play well in a game, our first need is to proficiently understand the rules.

It enhances communication skills- Communication is the most important tool that reading can transmit. As we read, we understand more and thus, can communicate better with people. Communication is one of the most important tools to use each day to connect with each other. If we don't read, we can't even connect with the world and what people are discussing. Reading connects us with the world.

Through reading we get to read other people minds - While reading, we can actually see how characters think, act and feel. This will help us to understand how real people think, act and feel. It's like a superpower.

It boosts imagination and creativity - Reading exposes us to a world of imagination, which reflects that nothing is impossible in this world. Through reading, we explore different angles to things that already know and understand how

different actions lead to different results (*Ene, 2014*).

Conclusion

The organization is ultimately a set of people and they ultimately treasure to it. When there is a group of people working together then there will be definitely some problems that some employees face more professional problems rather than personal issues and vice versa. Reading books have magical powers to cure these problems and act as a life changing agent. Happiness at work can be gained by reading practices of interesting literature and it can be a powerful tool to solve problems. Reading literature definitely, increases happiness at work by increasing the morale. Bibliotherapy can also be a means of healing the affected employees.

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