

## **Introducing bibliotherapeutic services in the university environment: Student counsellors' view**

S. D. Somaratna

*Library, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

Bibliotherapy is using books or involving in literature related activities to help people in solving the issues that they may be facing at a particular time. It has been well recognised worldwide and this therapy holds great promise in helping people to better address concerns of negative emotion and personal development. Bibliotherapeutic services are being practiced in several universities in developed countries as a counselling method, but there is very little evidence in the Sri Lankan scenario. Hence, the aim of this study was to discover the university student counsellors' view on introducing bibliotherapeutic services in the university environment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the student counsellors at the University of Colombo to explore their views on bibliotherapy as a counselling tool. Fifteen student counsellors of the University of Colombo were interviewed, from the faculties of Science, Education, Arts and Management and from the Library. The student counsellors of the university basically practice multiple counselling methods; short-term individual counselling (100%) and long term group counselling (40%) except one, who practices bibliotherapy technique too as the counselling method. Among them only six were aware of the bibliotherapy technique of counselling. The majority of them (86.67%) believe that bibliotherapeutic services will help university students to overcome their problems. According to them, bibliotherapy will be successful on students' specific issues such as family/couples issues, social /life skills, education and career issues but not on grief, trauma/loss, specific clinical diagnoses, abuse and substance. The main selection criteria for developing a collection on bibliotherapy was 'recommendation of books by counsellors' (53.33%), 'relied on peer recommendations' (40%), 'book reviews' (40%) and 'recommendations made by librarians' (20%). The majority of the counsellors (86.67%) identify university library as the best place to develop the collection and self-help materials, workbooks, poetry, easy readers, fiction, non-fiction, audio books, AV books and e-books are the suggested material types. Most of the counsellors believe that students from both genders will be equally benefited from bibliotherapeutic services, while some (26.67%) believe that the female students will be benefited over the male students. According to the findings of the study, the student counsellors of the university are in favour of introducing a bibliotherapeutic service, for needy students in the university. To introduce this service under the professional guidance and with proper training.

**Keywords:** *academic libraries, bibliotherapy, student counsellors, university students*