

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

Bibliophobia, the fear of books, is a pervasive issue that significantly hinders academic achievement and lifelong learning, particularly among primary school pupils. This position paper analyzes the phenomenon of bibliophobia within the context of the Ilorin Metropolis, arguing that it is a multifaceted issue shaped by sociocultural, psychological, and educational factors. Utilizing a comprehensive literature review and theoretical frameworks, the paper identifies key influences contributing to bibliophobia, such as family dynamics, educational practices, and societal attitudes toward reading. The research methodology focuses on synthesizing existing studies and theoretical perspectives to illuminate the complexities of bibliophobia. Through thematic analysis, the paper reveals critical insights regarding the need for a multifaceted approach to address this issue. It underscores the importance of parental engagement, teacher training, and effective guidance and counselling strategies in fostering a positive reading environment. The findings call for targeted policy interventions aimed at instilling a love of reading among primary school pupils and reducing the prevalence of bibliophobia. By engaging stakeholders-parents, educators, and policymakers-this paper seeks to stimulate dialogue and awareness surrounding bibliophobia, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes. In conclusion, addressing bibliophobia through collaborative efforts and informed strategies is essential for promoting literacy and enhancing the overall learning experience for children in Ilorin Metropolis.

Keywords: Bibliophobia, Primary Education, Reading Anxiety, Sociocultural Factors, Educational Strategies



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INTRODUCTION

The fear of reading books or bibliophobia, can seriously impede a child's ability to learn. Although it is unclear how common bibliophobia is in Nigeria, reading anxiety is a documented issue among primary school students worldwide. Studies suggest that anxiety around reading can affect up to 20% of students (Javanbakht & Hadian, 2014). This dread can impede academic performance and also have long-term effects. Children who are bibliophobic may lose out on important chances to enhance their knowledge, cultivate a lifetime love of studying, and develop critical thinking abilities. There is no universally accepted definition of bibliophobia. There are two common perspectives to consider. From a clinical and therapeutic perspective, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders does not officially recognize bibliophobia as a distinct disorder (Downes, 2019). However, it may indicate underlying anxiety disorders, particularly generalized anxiety disorder, which can lead to heightened anxiety in various situations, including reading. From an educational standpoint, bibliophobia is commonly seen as a substantial dread or anxiety associated with reading assignments. This can include a variety of unfavorable feelings and actions that prevent a child from being willing or able to interact with books (Cummings, 2022). Instructors have a significant influence on how children feel about reading. Teachers have the unintentional ability to either exacerbate or lessen reading anxiety in their pupils through their interactions with them, their classroom surroundings, and their teaching techniques. Combating bibliophobia requires establishing a safe and encouraging learning atmosphere where children are not afraid to take chances and explore the world of books.

A major barrier for children starting their educational journeys might be bibliophobia or the dread of books or reading. Bibliophilia, while not formally recognized as a disorder, can manifest in various ways and hinder a child's inclination to engage with books (Kahn & Kellert, 2002). According to Maina (2010), children who suffer from bibliophobia may display worry, avoidance behaviors, and self-defeating thoughts regarding their reading skills. Their overall academic success and the

development of their reading skills can be greatly impacted by these worries. No study was found to have been conducted on bibliophobia in children in Ilorin Metropolis Primary schools however, research from other nations indicates that reading anxiety is a common problem among children in primary school (Jordan et al., 2019; Karimi & Nafissi, 2017). Given the importance of education in Nigerian society, it is imperative to look into the possibility of bibliophobia and its effects on Ilorin Metropolis primary school students. To effectively address the detrimental impacts of bibliophobia on children's development and to foster pleasant reading experiences, it is imperative to comprehend the causes and consequences of this problem. This paper examines how children learn and the effects of bibliophobia, focusing on the functioning of the brain in early childhood and the implications of bibliophobia. Factors Contributing to Bibliophobia in Ilorin Metropolis. Exploring strategies to address bibliophobia in Ilorin Metropolis, along with counselling implications for tackling bibliophobia among primary school pupils.

How Children Learn and the Impact of Bibliophobia

It is essential to comprehend children's learning styles to properly handle bibliophobia. Young children have a tremendous drive to explore and make sense of the world around them because they are inherently curious. Actively engaging with their surroundings and using all of their senses to take in information is how they learn best (Van Der Hoeven Kraft et al., 2011). This comprises:

Observation: Children pick up knowledge by intently studying classmates and adults and then imitating their mannerisms. On the other hand, if children with bibliophobia connect reading to worry, they might shy away from witnessing reading activities.

Play and Exploration: A child's play is an essential part of his/her development. A child's appreciation of books as a vital learning tool might be hampered by bibliophobia, which can restrict his/her exploration of books and reading materials.

Asking Questions: Children have a natural curiosity and need for information. Children who suffer from bibliophobia may be discouraged from asking questions about reading because they are afraid of coming across as inept or nervous.

Creating Connections: Children absorb knowledge most effectively when it is connected to what they already know and have experienced. For Children, bibliophobia can lead to a bad connection with reading, which makes it hard for them to relate to the content in books. Essentially, bibliophobia interferes with a child's innate ability to learn. Their capacity to actively engage, explore, ask questions, and form connections with the written word is hampered by the anxiety and avoidance behaviours it causes them to link with reading assignments. This emphasises how crucial it is to deal with bibliophobia to help kids form a healthy relationship with reading and realize the full learning and development potential of reading.

How the Brain Works in Early Childhood and the Impact of Bibliophobia

Acquiring insights into the initial phases of brain development can be advantageous in identifying the potential origins and impacts of bibliophobia. Here is a summary of key points:

Quick Development of the Brain: The early years are a time of rapid brain development, lasting from birth until approximately age five. Brain cells called neurons quickly join with one another to build neural pathways, which provide the groundwork for all subsequent learning and cognitive abilities (Seung, 2012). This covers domains including language processing, memory, and visual processing that are essential for reading. A child's experiences that mould these brain connections are not predefined. Stronger and more effective brain pathways are created as a result of positive interactions with the environment, such as exposure to language and reading materials (Zadina, 2014). But bibliophobia can sabotage this vital procedure. A child's exposure to written language and reading experiences may be restricted by anxiety and reading avoidance practices. Thus, it may be more difficult for the brain circuits necessary for fluency and understanding when reading.

A Window of Opportunity: A crucial window of opportunity for brain development is represented by the early years. Early intervention for bibliophobia can guarantee the formation and strengthening of these essential reading-related brain pathways, establishing the groundwork for future academic achievement and a lifelong love of learning.

Understanding Bibliophobia in Children

Children experiencing bibliophobia may exhibit symptoms in various forms, often leading to avoidance behaviours that hinder their reading abilities. The warning signs and symptoms that children with bibliophobia may exhibit to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

Symptoms of Cognitive Function

Adverse Thoughts and Beliefs: Children suffering from bibliophobia could harbour unfavourable ideas and convictions about reading. They may dread criticism from teachers or peers, believe they are "bad readers" or worry about making mistakes when reading aloud.

Anticipation Anxiety: Children who suffer from bibliophobia may become anxious at the mere mention of reading assignments. When it comes to reading time in class or at home, they could feel anxious or dreadful.

Physiological Reactions: Children suffering from bibliophobia may exhibit physical signs that make it easy for sensitive caregivers, parents or teachers to identify such as signs that can be observed through the child's outer countenance. Physical signs such as elevated heart rate, perspiration, or stomachaches may accompany this (Bauer, 2013).

Difficulty Concentrating: When given reading assignments, children with bibliophobia may get anxious. Anxiety can make it harder for children to concentrate on the reading, which might impair their understanding and memory of the material.

Behavioural Signs and Symptoms

Avoidance Behaviour: To manage their fear, children who suffer from bibliophobia may take up a variety of avoidance techniques. This can be sobbing during story time, refusing to handle books, finding it difficult to finish reading assignments, or making up a sickness to get out of reading activities.

Tantrums and Withdrawal: When given reading assignments, younger children may act out or show signs of worry. They may deliberately steer clear of reading-related circumstances, such as when they sob during story time, refuse to hold books or find it difficult to finish reading tasks (Lesley, 2013).

Emotional Symptoms

Frustration and Low Self-Esteem: Children who struggle with reading and have bad reading experiences may have low self-esteem and feelings of frustration.

Adverse Self-Talk: Pupils suffering from bibliophobia could form unfavourable opinions about their reading comprehension. Haque (2019) suggests that individuals may express thoughts such as "I'm bad at reading" or "I'll never get this," which can diminish their motivation and hinder their advancement.

Loss of Interest in Reading: Children may become disinterested in reading as a result of the bad feelings connected to it, which can lead to a vicious cycle.

Distinguishing Between Reading Challenges:

It is critical to differentiate dyslexia and other specialised learning difficulties from bibliophobia. Both can cause difficulties with comprehension and fluency when reading, but dyslexia is a neurological condition that affects how the brain interprets written language (Kızılaslan & Tunagür, 2021). Children with dyslexia might not exhibit the same degree of bibliophobia-related worry or avoidance behaviour. There are instances where bibliophobia co-occurs with more general anxiety disorders. For example, children with generalised anxiety disorder may feel anxious when reading in a variety of contexts (Holmes et al., 2015). Treating children with bibliophobia effectively requires determining whether there are any underlying anxiety disorders. It is critical to distinguish dyslexia from other reading challenges, like bibliophobia. Bibliophobia refers to the anxiety specifically linked to the act of reading. The individual may be an average reader; however, anxiety hinders their desire to engage with reading or to find pleasure in it (Horney, 2013). Dyslexia is a neurological learning disability that impacts the brain's capacity to interpret written text. Moojen et al. (2020) indicate that children with dyslexia may experience challenges in decoding skills (sounding out words), fluency (reading smoothly), comprehension (understanding what they read), and written expression.

According to Ströbel (2014), the main feature of bibliophobia is anxiety and unfavourable feelings related to reading. Although anxiety is not the main symptom, dyslexic children may feel frustrated by the difficulties they have when reading (Zuppardo et al., 2023). Although the precise cause of bibliophobia is unknown, it has been associated with anxiety disorders, fear of failure, and unpleasant reading experiences (Cummings, 2022). Ciulkinyte et al. (2024) define dyslexia as a neurological disorder with a hereditary predisposition. It is crucial to remember that these are broad classifications, and children can occasionally have dyslexia and bibliophobia together. A skilled professional's thorough evaluation is required to identify the underlying cause of a child's reading difficulties. Teachers and caregivers can help children overcome obstacles and build a positive relationship with reading by providing focused support by knowing the distinctions between dyslexia and bibliophobia.

METHOD

This research methodology addresses bibliophobia among primary school pupils in Ilorin Metropolis through a comprehensive literature review and theoretical analysis. The research focuses on the analysis of existing literature, theoretical frameworks and case studies related to bibliophobia. The literature review analyzes existing studies on bibliophobia, its causes, and effects on primary school pupils using academic databases like JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ERIC. The theoretical framework explores cognitive-behavioural theories and sociocultural perspectives to understand how fear of reading develops and how it can be

addressed through cognitive restructuring. Thematic analysis extracts key themes related to the causes of bibliophobia, its impact on academic performance, and effective interventions. A position statement will be formulated based on the analysis, emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive strategies to combat bibliophobia. The insights gained contribute to the discourse on bibliophobia and inform future educational policies and practices designed to foster a love of reading among children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Contributing to Bibliophobia in Ilorin Metropolis

Creating effective therapies for bibliophobia in primary school-aged children in Ilorin Metropolis necessitates a comprehensive understanding of its potential origins. We will examine several key elements that may contribute to the emergence of this issue here: A variety of factors can influence students in Ilorin Metropolis, particularly those in primary education. Presented here is a summary of several potential causes:

Socioeconomic elements Access to Books: A child's access to books and other reading resources at home may be limited by poverty. Due to insufficient practice and enjoyment, this limited exposure might impede the development of fundamental reading skills and foster a bad relationship with reading. A child's exposure to reading might be hampered by limited access to books and learning resources at home which can further exacerbate fears about reading ability (Merga, 2020).

Lack of Resources: In certain places, the issue may be made worse by restricted access to technology. Low-income children may not have access to educational apps, audiobooks or e-books that can enhance print books and encourage a love of reading. Low-income children may not have access to libraries or peaceful areas for reading, which further restricts their options for enjoyable book experiences.

Unsupportive Home Environment: Children's perceptions of books are greatly influenced by the presence of parents or older siblings who read or who have a positive relationship with books and reading. Negative associations with books can result from a lack of support or positive role models for reading at home (Merga, 2020).

Unintentionally, this relates to the following points:

Pressure to Perform: Bibliophobia can be exacerbated by classroom settings that do not provide opportunities for autonomous reading exploration, a variety of interesting and diverse reading materials, or comfortable places to read. Stressful learning environments that are just concerned with test scores might make kids anxious about reading and make the process less enjoyable for them (Malone & Lepper, 2021).

Inefficient Instructional Strategies: Approaches to teaching reading that are very strict or teacher-centered can discourage pupils who are already having difficulty reading and make learning to read feel stressful. Another possible contributing factor is a lack of emphasis on creating pleasant associations with reading. Teaching reading that follows the traditional drill-and-kill method might discourage youngsters from connecting with books and make reading seem monotonous (Benjamin, 2014).

Absence of Diverse Reading Materials: A curriculum that does not offer a sufficient number of interesting and developmentally appropriate reading materials may cause children to lose interest in reading and develop unfavourable opinions about it.

Taking Culture into Account:

Attitudes Toward Reading: A child's view of the value and pleasure of reading can be influenced by cultural attitudes toward reading in the community. A youngster may be less motivated to read if it is not recognised as a valued activity in the family or society. Children's motivation and engagement might be influenced by cultural perspectives on the value and purpose of reading (Merga, 2020).

Language of teaching: Children may have additional difficulties and fears pertaining to reading comprehension and fluency in multilingual situations where the language of teaching is different from the home language. In the event that the language of instruction is not the same as the child's native tongue, reading comprehension difficulties and concerns may arise.

The Impact of Bibliophobia on Children's Development

Children who suffer from bibliophobia may experience serious consequences for their general cognitive development, emotional stability, and academic performance. Let us examine these possible outcomes in more detail:

Academic Challenges:

Impaired Ability to Read: children who are bibliophobic may find it difficult to acquire vocabulary, read fluently, and decode. This may have a knock-on effect, making it harder for them to understand other subjects that mostly depend on reading comprehension. Children who suffer from bibliophobia may find it difficult to acquire basic reading abilities such as comprehension, decoding, and fluency (Rubery, 2022). This may cause problems in a number of academic courses where reading comprehension is a major requirement.

Vocabulary Development: Children who do not receive adequate reading experiences with materials will not learn new words to enrich their vocabulary which will affect their overall communication and academic prowess.

Reduced Academic Achievement: Reading difficulties can hurt one's performance in several academic areas. Pupils suffering from bibliophobia may lag behind their classmates and become dissatisfied with their assignments. Poor reading comprehension and a little vocabulary might affect children's overall academic trajectories by causing them to do poorly in a variety of areas (Welsh et al., 2010).

Decreased Pleasure in Reading: A negative link between books and reading is produced by bibliophobia, which makes it difficult to appreciate and be motivated to interact with reading materials (Haque, 2019).

Loss of Learning Opportunities: Children who struggle with reading may find it challenging to engage in book-related activities or to read aloud to classmates. Their social development may be hampered by this and they may become socially isolated. Children who avoid reading because they are anxious lose out on important chances to increase their knowledge and learn new things.

Decreased Exposure to Diverse Cultures and Perspectives: Children who read are exposed to a variety of cultures, viewpoints, and experiences. Their exposure to these enlightening elements of reading may be restricted by bibliophobia. Anxiety might rise due to a fear of reading in various scholastic contexts as well as when reading alone. Children may exhibit avoidance behaviours that impede their ability to learn.

Psychological Consequences:

Reduced Self-Esteem: Poor reading experiences can cause low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. Pupils suffering from bibliophobia may find it difficult to engage in conversations or reading-related activities. Pupils who struggle with reading may have low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy, which can negatively affect their confidence and willingness to learn (Haque, 2019).

Enhanced Anxiety: The dread of reading might cause heightened anxiety in other academic contexts as well as when reading. Pupils may exhibit avoidance behaviours that impede their ability to learn. According to Hann (2018), fear of reading can lead to generalised anxiety related to academic contexts and homework.

Avoidance Behaviors: As a coping strategy for their reading anxiety, kids may engage in avoidance behaviors, which can impede their social and academic development. Children who struggle with reading may find it challenging to engage in activities connected to books or to read aloud with their peers. Their social development may be hampered by this and they may become socially isolated.

Strategies to Address Bibliophobia in Ilorin Metropolis

Addressing bibliophobia in primary school pupils in Ilorin Metropolis requires a multi-pronged approach that addresses the root causes and fosters positive reading experiences. Here are some potential strategies:

Create Engaging Learning Environments:

Well-stocked classroom libraries with diverse and culturally relevant books can spark children's interest in reading. Including age-appropriate graphic novels, audiobooks, and high-interest nonfiction can cater to different learning styles and preferences. Schools can create inviting and well-resourced reading spaces stocked with a diverse range of age-appropriate and culturally relevant books (Hanemann & Krolak, 2017).

Include Fun Activities: Children's reading can be made more interactive and engaging by incorporating technology such as interactive whiteboards, educational applications, or online reading games. To make reading fun and interesting, incorporate games, storytelling sessions, and other interactive activities into the curriculum (Tobar-Muñoz et al., 2017).

Encourage a Love of Books: Establishing special reading areas with cosy furnishings and dim lighting can encourage a quiet and pleasurable reading atmosphere. To pique kids' interest in reading, teachers should share their favourite books with them, model good reading habits, and promote character and plot discussions.

Parental Involvement and Support:

Read aloud to Your Children at Home: By reading aloud to their children regularly, parents and other caregivers can encourage a love of reading and introduce them to new words and ideas (Merga, 2020). Establishing a Reading Routine requires giving children a specific time to read at home helps them to associate reading with good things and emphasizes the value of reading as a regular activity. Giving children access to reading materials can increase their access to reading materials, parents can set up a modest home library filled with books that are appropriate for their age or plan trips to nearby libraries.

Teacher Training and Development:

Equipping Teachers: It is essential to give educators chances for professional development and training in areas such as bibliophobia identification, accommodating a varied student body, and effective reading instruction. Teachers can be better prepared to provide welcoming learning environments and use tactics to support struggling readers if they receive training on bibliophobia identification and treatment (Rubery, 2022).

Differentiated Instruction: Teachers can address the unique needs of students with bibliophobia and accommodate distinct learning styles and approaches by using differentiated instruction strategies.

Positive Reinforcement: Highlighting children's accomplishments and celebrating their reading development might help them feel more confident and inspired to keep reading.

Community Outreach Programs:

Partnership with Libraries: Establishing a solid partnership between educators and librarians may maximise the utilisation of school libraries and produce captivating reading initiatives. To foster a strong reading culture in the neighbourhood, schools and libraries can work together to plan book fairs, author visits, and reading groups (Ali et al., 2024).

Organizations Promoting Literacy: Parents and caregivers can be empowered by planning community seminars or activities that emphasize the value of reading and tactics for fostering children's literacy development. In order to boost reading initiatives in schools and communities, partnering with literacy organizations can give access to resources, training programs, and volunteers.

Parental Workshops: Creating plans to support good reading habits in your family can have a big impact on how your kids feel about reading. This could entail providing parents with materials on setting up a home that encourages reading and participating in events including shared reading. Parental empowerment can be enhanced by holding workshops that teach them how to support their children's literacy development at home.

Handling the Underlying Fear:

Early Identification: It's critical to recognize children who show early indications of bibliophobia. Teachers and counsellors can identify children who might benefit from additional support by using screening instruments and observations. Developmental bibliotherapy is a useful tool to adopt before any problem arises.

Personalised Approaches: Interventions designed to specifically target a child's fears can be helpful. This could entail doing deep breathing exercises, engaging in cognitive-behavioural therapy, or consulting a reading specialist. Clinical bibliotherapy is solely used by qualified personnel or professionals in a therapeutic setting.

Counselling Interventions for Addressing Bibliophobia in Children

The dread of reading or bibliophilia, can impede a child's growth and scholastic achievement. There are therapy strategies that might assist kids in getting over this phobia. Here is a thorough analysis of some of the best techniques:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Children with bibliophobia can benefit greatly from the well-researched treatment technique of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) (Korgeski, 2009). It functions by assisting kids in recognizing and disputing unfavourable ideas and perceptions related to reading.

Bibliotherapy: Using books to treat a child's anxiety is a novel component of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for bibliophobia (Rubery, 2022). Age-appropriate novels about conquering fears or worries can be suggested by the therapist, giving the kid a chance to see themselves reflected in the narrative and gain confidence.

Exposure therapy: Simple stories or picture books are good places for the therapist to start when they are brief and easy to read. The reading material's degree of difficulty can be progressively raised as the youngster shows progress. By using a methodical approach, the youngster can gain proficiency and feel less nervous when reading. In a secure environment, exposure therapy progressively exposes kids to the things they are afraid of (Craske et al., 2013). This would entail gradually exposing the child to reading materials in the event of bibliophobia.

Relaxation techniques: When it comes to reading, children who experience anxiety can benefit from relaxation techniques. This will help in the management of their emotions. Children can learn mindfulness activities, gradual muscular relaxation, and deep breathing exercises from therapists. Children can stay calm and focused by using these strategies before, during, and after reading sessions.

Positive reinforcement: Therapists can advise caregivers and educators to recognise kids' accomplishments, no matter how tiny, and to give them credit for their efforts. Children are encouraged to keep practising reading by this positive reinforcement, which also helps them form a pleasant link with the activity.

Parental involvement: For any child's therapy to be successful, parental involvement is essential (Breinholst et al., 2012). Parents and therapists can collaborate to create plans on how to support their kids at home. This may be establishing a welcoming environment for readers, coming up with reasonable reading objectives as a group, and incorporating reading into everyday routines. To instil a love of books and storytelling in their kids, parents should be encouraged to read aloud to them.

Age-appropriateness: It is critical to keep in mind that the particular counselling strategy should be adapted to the age and developmental stage of the child. While older children might benefit more from more conventional CBT procedures, younger children might benefit more from play-based therapy or bibliotherapy.

Collaborating with Educators: Teachers and therapists can work together to make sure the child's treatment plan is consistent (Knapp & Berghuis, 2010). This could entail creating plans for helping the student who suffers from bibliophobia in the classroom and giving educators the tools they need to foster a supportive learning environment for all students. They will collaborate with the child and their family to address any potential underlying causes.

Evaluation: It is critical for a therapist to carry out a comprehensive evaluation to determine the extent of the child's bibliophobia and any underlying causes prior to putting any counseling strategies into action (Korgeski, 2009). Standardised tests, observations, and conversations with children and parents may all be part of this evaluation.

Managing Underlying Causes: According to Juan (2011), bibliophobia may occasionally be a sign of an underlying condition such as a learning deficiency or visual impairment. A therapist will collaborate with the child and family to address any underlying issues they believe may be present.

CONCLUSION

The research examined bibliophobia in primary school pupils in Ilorin Metropolis demonstrates a complex interaction of sociocultural, psychological, and educational factors that notably influence children's attitudes toward reading. This position paper emphasizes the necessity of addressing bibliophobia as a collective challenge, necessitating the engagement of multiple stakeholders, such as parents, educators, and policymakers. The findings indicate that promoting a love of reading is crucial for alleviating bibliophobia and improving academic performance. It is essential to implement comprehensive strategies that enhance reading experiences, including the integration of reading programs in schools, the encouragement of parental involvement, and the provision of training for teachers to support reluctant readers. This research highlights the necessity of ongoing dialogue and awareness concerning bibliophobia. Engaging in discussions regarding reading anxiety and its implications can foster a more supportive environment for young learners. Addressing bibliophobia is crucial for enhancing literacy rates and fostering a generation of confident, lifelong learners who appreciate the value of reading. Collaborative efforts and targeted interventions can establish environments that enable children to surmount their fears and cultivate a sustained enthusiasm for reading.

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