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**POSITIVE ORIENTATION, HOPE FOR SUCCESS AND  
ACQUIRING BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC COMPETENCES**

Kamil Kuracki (a)\*  
\*Corresponding author

(a) The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Warsaw, Poland, [kkuracki@aps.edu.pl](mailto:kkuracki@aps.edu.pl)

*Abstract*

The article presents the results of research on positive orientation, hope for success and the acquisition of bibliotherapeutic competences by students of special education. With respect to Caprara's (2012) concept of positive orientation and Snyder's (2000) concept of hope for success, it was assumed that both variables may be related to the assessment carried out by students of special education of substantive preparation for conducting bibliotherapy classes, evaluation of independently conducted bibliotherapy, and supervision of own work. Research was carried out in a group of N=60 people aged 21-28, studying pedagogical therapy and early support development participating in a one-semester university course in the field of educational bibliotherapy. The research project was conducted between 2016-2018, attempted to identify the relationship between the psychological variables indicated and the student's sense of being prepared to conduct educational bibliotherapy, i.e. the assessment of their own substantive preparation, supervision, and independently conducted workshop classes. The data was analysed using a correlation procedure. The obtained results revealed statistically significant relationships between the hope for success (overall result, willpower and finding solutions subscales), positive orientation and the acquisition of bibliotherapeutic competences; in particular in the assessment of independently conducted classes. This study can contribute to further exploration and reflection on various aspects of the preparation of future educators to include in their own work the educational bibliotherapy method.

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**Keywords:** Hope, success, positive orientation, bibliotherapy.



## 1. Introduction

According to the Rubin concept (1978), bibliotherapy is defined as an activity program in which a librarian or other specialist (e.g. special educator, psychologist, therapist) cooperates with a client using printed and unprinted reading materials, striving to gain insight into normal development and making changes in emotionally disturbed behavior. To fully understand the issue, however, it seems appropriate to extend the proposed definition to the constitutive features of bibliotherapy emphasized in Polish and foreign literature such as: its processual nature of interaction (mutual interaction of elements such as the reader-literature-bibliotherapist), dynamics, or striving for implementation of therapeutic, prophylactic and general development goals during the bibliotherapy sessions.

The empirical studies on bibliotherapy carried out so far in Poland and in the world have focused mainly on measuring the effectiveness of bibliotherapeutic programs in working with people with diverse psychological problems. Bibliotherapy, with varying degrees of efficiency was used, among others, as one of the forms of help for people with mental disorders: depression (Moldovan et al., 2013, Jakob and De Guzman, 2015; Naylor, Antonuccio, Litt et al., 2010), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Leininger, Dyches, Prater et al., 2010), anxiety, (Winship, 2010), emotional and behavioral disorders (Regan and Page, 2008), social phobia (Carlbring, Furmak, Steczk et al., 2006), and interpersonal aggression (Shechtman, 2006). Bibliotherapy has been used many times in the therapy for people struggling with internal conflicts and stress (Hazlett-Stevens and Oren, 2017). The literature also points to the wide possibilities of using educational bibliotherapy in working with students with special educational needs, i.e. people with disabilities, with specific learning difficulties, and socially maladjusted and endangered with social maladjustment (Kuracki, 2015).

In the empirical studies on bibliotherapy conducted so far, however, aspects related to the ways of preparing students for the role of bibliotherapists were not explored. The works more often focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the carried out bibliotherapy programs, and less often on specifying the factors determining the effectiveness of bibliotherapy. Therefore, explorations directed at searching for factors that may facilitate the student's acquisition of diverse bibliotherapeutic skills, both at the level of substantive preparation (including knowledge of texts, techniques, bibliotherapeutic means, etc.), personality, and the acquisition of practical competences (the ability to organize the bibliotherapy process) appear to be justified. These data may contribute to the filling the gap in knowledge in the area of psychology, pedagogy and special education, particularly important due to the visible need to define standards for preparing students to use the educational bibliotherapeutic methodology in pedagogical work. This task seems to be particularly significant in many European countries, including Poland, where the separate profession of a bibliotherapist has not been established so far.

The factors that can significantly facilitate the process of acquiring bibliotherapeutic competence seem to include positive orientation and hope for success. Both variables may be conducive to gaining self-confidence and flexible adaptation to changing conditions at various stages of the process of shaping bibliotherapy skills (working on own competences, working with clients, working with a supervisor). Positive orientation is connected with a favorable self-esteem, optimism, and high life satisfaction, which can not only facilitate the human adaptation mechanisms (Caprara et al., 2012), but also favorably affect the commitment to work and self-efficacy (Alessandri et al., 2015), which seem particularly important in

almost every profession related to professional, specialized helping others. The optimism constituting an integral part of the construct in the light of the studies of F. Sezgin and O. Erdogan (2015) is one of the significant predictors of the teachers' sense of effectiveness. Moreover, optimism, along with other psychological variables, is a significant factor helping to achieve academic success (Bressler et al., 2010). Hope for success, on the other hand, is understood as the belief that you have the competence to be successful. It is a motivational state, which consists of the conviction about one's strong will and own agency, as well as the belief about the possibilities of finding solutions to implement one's own pathways (Snyder et al., 2000). Therefore, hope for success seems particularly desirable for future therapists, who face the difficult task of seeking effective ways to support the development of others, including children and young people with special educational needs.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The research focuses on determining the importance of positive orientation and the hope for success in the acquisition of special bibliotherapeutic skills by students of pedagogy, both in terms of knowledge, as well as the ability to independently conduct workshops and subjecting them to supervision. Considering the results of previous empirical studies, it was assumed in the project that both psychological variables can be important factors determining the students' acquisition of educational and therapeutic competences, including bibliotherapeutic competences. The research was created as a result of courses conducted in the years 2016-2018 in the field of educational bibliotherapy, conducted for first-cycle students preparing for professions such as special educator, pedagogic therapy and early support of child development specialist. As part of the one-semester university classes, students had the opportunity to develop bibliotherapeutic competences by participating in lectures and workshops, independently conducting classes in a special kindergarten, and consulting the course and effects of their own work.

## **3. Research Questions**

The project poses the following research questions:

- 3.1. At what level is the hope for success and positive orientation shaped for students taking part in the course on educational bibliotherapy?
- 3.2. How do students assess their own substantive preparation, supervision, and independently conducted bibliotherapy classes?
- 3.3. Are there any relations between the positive orientation, the hope for success and the evaluation of substantive preparation, supervision, and independently conducted bibliotherapy classes by students of special education participating in the course on educational bibliotherapy?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the study is to recognize the level of positive orientation and hope for success in students of special education and the relationship between these psychological variables and the student's feeling of being prepared to carry out educational bibliotherapy, i.e. the assessment of their own substantive preparation, supervision, and independently conducted workshops.

## 5. Research Methods

The research group consisted of 60 students of special education (undergraduate studies) taking part in 2016-2018 in one-part courses in the field of educational bibliotherapy. The age of the subjects was within 21-28 years ( $M=22.12$ ,  $SD=1.637$ ). The research used the diagnostic survey method. Three questionnaires were used as research tools: the Polish version of the Positivity Scale by Łaguna, Oleś, and Filipiuk (2011), the Polish version of the Hope Scale by Łaguna, Trzebiński, and Zięba (2005) and the questionnaire on bibliotherapeutic competences as developed by the author.

The Positivity Scale (P-Scale), consists of 8 diagnostic items and is used to study positive orientation understood as the basic tendency to notice and pay attention to the positive aspects of life, experience, and self. A 5-point Likert scale was used for each statement. Psychometric characteristics of the Polish version were developed on a sample of 905 people. The tool has satisfactory internal consistency ( $\alpha=0.77-0.84$ ) and confirmed convergent validity.

The Hope Scale (KNS) is a tool consisting of 12 statements expressed on an 8-point scale and serves to measure the hope for success understood as the power of expectation of positive effects of own actions. This variable is formed by two components, i.e. the belief in having a strong will and the belief in the ability to find solutions (awareness of own knowledge and intellectual competence). The questionnaire has a high internal compliance rate ( $\alpha=0.82$  for the entire scale,  $\alpha=0.72$  for the finding solutions subscale,  $\alpha=0.74$  for the willpower subscale).

The bibliotherapeutic competences questionnaire consists of 7 questions, i.e. 3 items with a 5-point Likert scale, 2 open questions and 2 multiple-choice questions. It is used to identify such factors as: assessment of own substantive preparation for conducting bibliotherapy classes, evaluation of independently conducted classes and evaluation of supervision of the classes. The nature of the questions contained in the questionnaire enables quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

## 6. Findings

As illustrated in Table 01, with reference to the Polish standardization test, students participating in the course in educational bibliotherapy received average results in the field of hope for success within the 6th sten - overall result ( $M=50.28$ ,  $SD=7.531$ ), 6-7 sten - willpower ( $M=24.5$ ,  $SD=4.057$ ) and 6th sten - finding solutions ( $M=25.78$ ,  $DS=4.088$ ). Positive orientation level ( $M=30.6$ ,  $SD=3.361$ ) with reference to the Polish standardization test also corresponds to the 6th sten.

**Table 01.** Hope for success and positive orientation in students participating in the course on bibliotherapy (N=60)

| Variable                             | M     | SD    |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Hope for success – overall result    | 50.28 | 7.531 |
| Hope for success – willpower         | 24.50 | 4.057 |
| Hope for success – finding solutions | 25.78 | 4.088 |
| Positive orientation                 | 30.6  | 3.361 |

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS 24.0

According to the results presented in Table 02, the surveyed students similarly assess their own substantive preparation for conducting bibliotherapy classes (M=4.47, SD=.596), as well as supervisory work. Only slightly worse do the students assess the independent conduct of bibliotherapy classes (M=4.32, SD=.725).

**Table 02.** Assessment of student satisfaction with substantive preparation, supervision, and independently conducted bibliotherapy classes (N=60)

| Variable  | M    | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| Assessment of substantive preparation                       | 4.47 | .596 |
| Assessment of supervision                                   | 4.42 | .829 |
| Assessment of independently conducted bibliotherapy classes | 4.32 | .725 |

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS 24.0

Aiming to explore the relationship between the hope for success, positive orientation and the assessment of substantive preparation, the evaluation of supervision, and the assessment of independently conducted bibliotherapeutic classes in the study, r-Pearson correlations were carried out. According to the data contained in Table 3, the analyses showed statistically significant moderate positive correlations between positive orientation and hope for success - overall result ( $r=.452$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), hope for success - willpower ( $r=.454$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), hope for success - finding solutions ( $r=.382$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The analysis also showed weak positive correlations between the assessment of substantive preparation for carrying out bibliotherapy and the hope for success: overall result ( $r=.340$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), willpower ( $r=.295$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), finding solutions ( $r=.335$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), as well as weak positive correlations between the assessment of independently conducted classes and the hope for success: overall result ( $r=.267$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and finding solutions ( $r=.313$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Weak positive correlations were also found between positive orientation and the assessment of independently conducted classes ( $r=.371$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The studies did not reveal statistically significant relationships between positive orientation and the assessment of supervision, as well as between the assessment of supervision and the hope for success.

**Table 03.** Correlations (r-Pearson) of the variables studied: hope for success (overall result, willpower factor, finding solutions), positive orientation, and assessment of substantive preparation, assessment of supervision, and assessment of independently conducted bibliotherapeutic classes (N=60)

| Variables  | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| 1. Hope for success- overall result              | -      |        |        |        |        |        |   |
| 2. Hope for success – willpower                  | .924** | -      |        |        |        |        |   |
| 3. Hope for success – finding solutions          | .925** | .710** | -      |        |        |        |   |
| 4. Positive orientation                          | .452** | .454** | .382** | -      |        |        |   |
| 5. Assessment of substantive preparation         | .340** | .295*  | .335** | .196   | -      |        |   |
| 6. Assessment of supervision                     | .063   | .052   | -.064  | .138   | .413** | -      |   |
| 7. Assessment of independently conducted classes | .267*  | .180   | .313*  | .371** | .549** | .530** | - |

\*\* correlation significant at the level of  $p<0.01$  \* correlation significant at the level of  $p<0.05$

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS 24.0

The analysis also showed moderate positive correlations between the assessment of independently conducted bibliotherapeutic classes and the assessment of substantive preparation ( $r=.549$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and own assessment of supervision ( $r=.530$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and also between assessment of satisfaction from supervision and assessment of substantive preparation ( $r=.413$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

## 7. Conclusion

Students of special education taking part in the course in the field of educational bibliotherapy presented the average level of both positive orientation and hope for success, both in relation to the overall score and distinguished subscales. However, studies have shown the existence of moderate positive correlations between these variables. Obtained results are a confirmation of previous empirical studies indicating that both psychological variables, although they are separate constructs, are significantly related to each other.

In the light of the analyzes carried out, the hope for success and the constituent factors, i.e. willpower and finding solutions, are significantly related to the student's assessment of their own substantive preparation for carrying out the bibliotherapy, as well as the assessment of the classes conducted on their own. Hope for success, however, is not connected with the student's assessment of supervision. The more students acquiring bibliotherapeutic skills are convinced of having a strong willpower, knowledge, and intellectual competence, the more they see the effects of multistage substantive preparation and the better they assess the independently conducted classes. However, it should be noted that favorable assessment of one's own activities in the examined group does not mean a lack of criticism in relation to the disclosed competences. As the qualitative analysis of the students' answers to the open questions of the Questionnaire has shown, over 90% of the respondents indicated at least two elements that should be improved in their own bibliotherapeutic work. The most often indicated was the need for better matching of bibliotherapeutic and didactic texts as well as the need for more adequate adaptation of the text to the needs of children with special educational needs. The lack of significant relations between the hope for success and the assessment of supervision of one's own therapeutic work may be the result of the need for the students to receive reliable feedback from the consultant and the desire to avoid disappointment resulting from the criticism of the supervisor. However, this issue requires further exploration.

Although the analyses did not show a connection between the positive orientation and the assessment of the substantive preparation for the classes and the assessment of supervision, the research showed that positive orientation is also significantly related to the assessment of independently conducted classes. Along with the increase in the tendency to notice positive aspects of the surrounding world and self in the surveyed students, there was an increase in their self-confidence and satisfaction with their own substantive preparation, which, according to the obtained results, may later contribute to a beneficial though realistic assessment of independently conducted classes and their supervision.

In the presented project, statistically significant correlations were indicated between the studied psychological variables and the assessment of the process of acquiring bibliotherapeutic competencies by students participating in the course on bibliotherapy. The obtained data allow concluding that shaping internal resources such as positive orientation and hope for success seems to be an important element in

the process of shaping special bibliotherapeutic skills in students of special education. Perhaps, therefore, it is worth enriching the course in the field of bibliotherapy with workshops developing the analyzed constructs and other personality traits of future bibliotherapists.

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