

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Amar Theliji, Laghouat
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English



Reading Novels as a Method to Treat Depression

**The Case of University Students of English at ElBashir
ElIbrahimi Library, Laghouat**

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English Language in Partial Fulfillment for
the Requirement of Master Degree in English Literature and Civilization

Submitted by:

BOURABIA Imane

Supervised by:

Dr. KORICHI Souhila

Panel of Examiners:

- President: BEN AICHA Djalel El Dine
- Supervisor: Dr. KORICHI Souhila
- Examiner: BAKHOUCHE Saleh

Academic Year: 2017/2018

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Amar Theliji, Laghouat
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English



Reading Novels as a Method to Treat Depression

**The Case of University Students of English at ElBashir
ElIbrahimi Library, Laghouat**

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English Language in Partial Fulfillment for
the Requirement of Master Degree in English Literature and Civilization

Submitted by:

BOURABIA Imane

Supervised by:

Dr. KORICHI Souhila

Panel of Examiners:

- President: BEN AICHA Djalel El Dine
- Supervisor: Dr. KORICHI Souhila
- Examiner: BAKHOUCHE Saleh

Academic Year: 2017/2018

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother, father and to my small

family: Fatima lakhdhari, Fatima Horri, Ikram,

Amina, Moka and Sarah.

Thank you all for your support

Acknowledgments

*I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciations to my supervisor: **KORICHI SOUHILA** for her patience, time, assistance and guidance during the period of my research.*

All appreciations are also addressed to the members of the jury who have accepted and devoted their precious time to read and assess my work.

Abstract

The current study seeks to consider the effectiveness as well as usefulness of reading novels to treat psychological problems that many people can suffer from. The Psychoneurotic reaction that was studied in the present research was depression, which has wide spread effects on both genders, from all the age groups. Additionally, depression is one of chronic illnesses that the diseased person could never get rid of easily and often occurs suddenly; so an attempt to reduce its impacts on the persons' daily life becomes a need. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that some pages from a certain novel could be the only companion when the depression gets so hard; reading novels would be a useful method to help the depressed patients get out of their dark hole if the novels were well selected. To this end, a descriptive method through the use of a questionnaire as measuring tool was conducted. A sample 23 students of English at Laghouat University was selected, for their habit of reading, since they used to go to the ElBashir ElIbrahimi Library frequently. Findings showed that reading novels can be an operative way to treat depression, and a means which takes patients to new and different places and worlds, and allows them experience different adventures and meet new characters that may cheer them up and change their expectations of future plans.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgments.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Table of Contents.....	IV
Table of Figures.....	VI
General Introduction.....	01

Chapter One : Depression and Novels: Theoretical Considerations

1.1. Defining Depression.....	07
1.2. Causes of Depression.....	08
1.3. Types of Depression.....	09
1.4. Suggested Solutions for Depression.....	09
1.5. The Growth of Novels.....	10
1.6. Types and Function of Novels.....	12
1.7. Novels and Depression.....	14

Chapter Two: Reading Novels as a Method to Treat Depression

2.1. Historical Evolution of using Literature as therapy to Psychological Problems.....	17
2.2. How Reading Novels Functions on the Human's Brain.....	18
2.3. Steps of Using Reading Novels as a Method to Treat Depression.....	19
2.3.1. Features of Novels used in Treating Depression.....	19
2.3.2. Prescribing Novels as a Tool of Therapy.....	20
2.4. The Effective use of Reading Novels	21

2.4.1. Graphic Novels as a Helping Tool.....	22
2.4.2. Reading Novels' Benefits.....	22
2.4.3. Reading Novels' Drawbacks of	23

Chapter Three: The Field Work of the Study

3.1. Sampling.....	26
3.2. Method and Measuring Tool.....	26
3.3 Analysis of the Questionnaire.....	27
3.3.1. Part One: Personal Information.....	27
3.3.2. Part Two: General Questions about Literature.....	28
3.3.3. Part Three: The Paticipants' Feeling during the Novels'Reading	32
3.3.4. Part Four: Reading Novels to treat Depression	35
General conclusion	38
References	41
Appendix	44

Table of Figures

Figure 3.1. The Participants' Gendre	27
Figure 3.2. The Participants' Age	28
Figure 3.3. The Participants' Feeling towards Literature	29
Figure 3.4. The Participants' Favorite Literary Genres	30
Figure 3.5. The Participants' Reading Novels' Experience	31
Figure 3.6. The Participants' Opinions about Reading Novels	31
Figure 3.7. The Emotional State of the Participants during Reading Novels	32
Figure 3.8. The Most interesting Parts in the Novel to the participants	33
Figure 3.9. The Participants' Established Connection with the Novel's Characters	34
Figure 3.10. The Psychological State of the Participants after Reading Novels	34
Figure 3.11. The Participants' Opinions about Reading Novels to treat Depression	35

General Introduction

General Introduction

Human beings go through many experiences during their lifetime; some experiences are good and others are bad. This may result in traumas which lead eventually to mental illnesses and disorders such as eating disorder, anxiety, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorder and depression. This latter is the most prevalent illness that could face any one at any age. Its causes differ from person to another depending on their circumstances.

The person who is affected by depression may prefer to be isolated and he/she sees things from a negative perspective. Because this illness is rooted deep inside the soul where even pills cannot cure, the patient may not be healed completely, since depression is unpredictable and can return at any time. In this case the depressed person needs a solution that has not necessarily an immediate effect; yet, a solution that clears his mind and calms the thoughts inside it, and nothing would be better than escaping to a different world. This world is the world of novels. Reading novels then can work with depressed readers; it may have the power to enhance their moods, open their eyes to new perspectives and give them the feeling that they are not alone, due to the diverse personalities, events and ideas that novels hold.

On this account, the present study attempts to investigate to what extent reading novels can boost the patient's mood and open his eyes toward new perspectives. It considers the point of reading novels as a useful technique to teach the patient how to deal with problems that may face them in their personal life, like enhancing the way of treating positively people around them and make them more understanding. This study is specifically concerned with depression: when the patient is known for his loss of the ability of enjoying his daily life with a feeling of loneliness and emptiness. For this reason, he/she needs remedies that breakthrough his/her soul, attract him/her, and take him/her away from his/her bad thoughts. The study looks for the effect of reading literary works, particularly novels, as a useful remedy for this type of patients. It is concerned with twenty three university students of English of those who used to read extensively and resort to reading novels in the time of their grief, at Elbashir ElIbrahimi Library in Laghouat.

Thus, the study poses the following questions:

- 1-What are the impacts of reading novels on the reader's psychological state?
- 2-How can a novel be used as a therapy?
- 3-What makes it effective?

General Introduction

Therefore, the suggested hypotheses that might fit questions posed are as follows:

1. Reading novels might have the power to make the patients (students) accept their psychological states, and boost their moods.
2. Reading stories that are similar to the depressed patients could help to deal with their illness in real life and learn from the protagonist how to combat struggles in life.
3. Reading novels could be effective to stimulate the emotions of the readers and lead them to see life from a new positive angle.

Several studies have discussed the usefulness of reading novels as method in treating depression as a human psychological problem. Novels are full of diverse themes and multiple personalities. This may make the reader curious to dig-deep in analysing these characters and knowing the meanings of symbols, which make him/her distracted and allow the depressed readers to forget about his/her illness.

In an attempt to understand how stories get into the human's brain, Berns (2013), the American neuroscientist and professor of psychiatry and writer in the University of Emory (Atlanta), made an experiment with a group of researchers from the Neuropolicy centre of the university. The objective behind his experiment is to know the effects of reading novels on the brain. After testing the brains of some students who were asked to read a certain novel for a period of nineteen days, they resulted in a change in the sensory motors regions of the brain, besides a change in language. The second result found was that reading a novel could put the reader in the body of the novel's characters not only in the figurative sense but biologically, too, because of the changes that occur on the brain. The third result had confirmed the effects of reading on the brain that would last for five days after having finishing the reading of the novel.

Brwester (2016), a lecturer in medical education at Lancaster, has declared that depressed people have the feeling of loneliness and isolation, but when they read about other's experiences even if they are fictional gives them hope. She adds that reading causes changes in behaviour by emotional response to the written word a way better than chemical meditation do. She supports the idea of prescription books instead of antidepressants or precipitin books in a company with antidepressants, and she has suggested crime novels for depression patients to read them based on research that she made arguing that when the

General Introduction

patient read a crime gives the feeling of safety and comfort when the patient knows that the crime will be solved.

Ghada Ezat Aboumahmoud (2015) has conducted a study that suggests whether specific text can be applied on a sample of depression patients to assess the authenticity of reading in treating mental illnesses in general and depression specifically. She has pointed in her study to the importance of reading in helping depression patients how to deal with life problems, and she devoted a chapter from her research to make the depression patient stop worrying and live his life happily; besides this, she tries to spread awareness about depression and its risks. Eventually, the study has found that reading books can alleviate depression. These were some attempts to examine the impacts of reading on the humans mind.

The main objective of this research is to revive the value of reading in general and literature in particular and highlight its role in improving the mental health of the individual. The other objective is to strengthen the usefulness of reading novels or bibliotherapy as a way to treat depression and other mental diseases available in the clinics of the Arabic world. The study also aims at enhancing reading novels as method in high schools and universities to help the students solve and overcome their psychological and personal problems while studying, under the supervision of the teacher.

This study has some limitations to be considered. First, we do not pretend that this inquiry has covered really depressed students or readers. Specialists on the field of clinical psychology or psychiatry would make the study more accurate with some scientific and authentic measuring tools and tests that the present study lacks. Second, the study was conducted on a sample of university students who cannot represent the total population. Only their opinions and views were considered and analysed. Findings, thus, cannot be generalised, only if similar conditions and circumstances are provided.

The framework of the study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to clarifying depression as psychological problem, its types, symptoms, causes and suggested solutions to control it, in order to give some information about the nature of this illness and how it affects the human's brain. It also seeks to consider the relationship between depression and novels, displaying how mental issues are discussed in novels and the role of the writing in producing effective paper to help the reader. The second chapter highlights the importance of novels in the human's life in general. It aims to illustrate how reading novels could be effective in reducing depression through explaining how the brain's mechanism changes

General Introduction

during the reading process, step and techniques used in it as method of healing mental problems. The third chapter will be practical; it exhibits the effectiveness of reading novels through making a field work, using a questionnaire to a selected sample, aiming at answering the research questions. Conclusions, then, are drawn and summarised.

Chapter One: Depression and Novels: Theoretical Considerations

When a person is invaded by sadness, stress, and depression episodes, what is often recommended is visiting a psychiatrist, doing physical activities, engaging in group workshops, doing favourite hobbies, spending much more time with people, and there is who chose antidepressants to have an immediate medication. Reading literary works especially novels has been suggested to be one of the solutions to cure depression. On this basis this chapter will discuss deeply depression and its causes, types and its relation with novels. The same steps will be followed in reviewing the background of novels, their types, function and their relation with mental problems.

1.1 Defining Depression

According to the American Psychiatric Association depression or ‘major depressive disorder’ is a medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think, and act. It causes feelings of sadness and loss of interest in activities; it also leads to an emotional and physical problems. Depression decreases person’s ability to function at work, and at home. Depression has been defined as a serious illness caused by changes in brain chemistry. Besides other factors, including genetics, changes in hormone levels, and other medical conditions, like grief, stress or difficult life circumstances (Roth, 2016).

The term ‘depressive reaction’ is also used to be reserved to cases in which the person seems grief- stricken after in appropriately long time, or being depressed for no apparent reason, as explained by Morgan & King (1975, p. 496). Ullmann & Kasner (1969, p. 310) explained that depressed persons may respond with disinterest to stimuli that the majority of people find pleasant or interesting; they proposed the following behavioural description:

There is slowness of movement and speech, and every voluntary act seems, both to the observer and subject, to require great effort. Nothing seems worthwhile or interesting. (...) The person is sad; he may weep, moan, wring his hands, eat little, sleep poorly, and sigh frequently.
(Cited in Morgan & King, 1975, p. 497)

The term *depression* appeared first in 19th century. However, the disease engraved across the ages and in different civilizations. In 1918, the German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin was the first one who used the term ‘depression’ and distinguished it from Schizophrenia¹.

¹ Schizophrenia is a serious disorder that affects the person’s thinking, feeling and acting, i.e. apparent disturbances in thinking, incomplete thoughts and loose associations with real events and places; it is the

Among those who analysed and cared about this illness Sigmund Freud. He believed that person's unconscious anger over his loss leads to self-hatred and self-destructive behaviour. He felt that psychoanalysis could help a person resolve their unconscious conflicts. Depression is not a contemporary disease. Nevertheless, it is a chronic disease since the age of the Greeks, middle ages, ages of enlightenment, till the recent periods. Doctors at that time depended on many ways to heal it; such as exercise, diet, music and talking to friends or to a doctor (Schimelpfening, 2018).

The most important thing about this illness is that it affects people differently. Because not everyone will feel the same or have the same symptoms, it depends on the stage of illness. For example depression is known more among women than men; this fact may be due to biological, hormonal, life cycle, and psychosocial factors. On the other hand, men experience it in a different feeling like; tiredness, difficulty in sleeping, and loss of interest, while women have feelings of sadness, worthlessness and excessive guilt next to the depression of children and teens. For instance depression increases during puberty because of the changes which occur physically and in personality too (Depression what you need to know, p. 6). The causes of depression, as well, differ from a person to another lean on many factors.

1.2. Causes of Depression

There may be several reasons behind increasing depression that vary from one person to another according to his personal environment, age, sex as well as psychological and physical nature. Biologically speaking, several studies have investigated the biological factors to understand the contribution of their mechanism in stimulating depression, in an attempt to know how these biological factors exist, leading to depression. Three major biological causes are generally agreed upon, which are physical change to the brain, neurotransmitters, and hormones. For the physical change it happens when some parts of the brain show less activity than normal when stimulated, and even some parts in the brain reduce in volume. As for neurotransmitters, it is a central nervous system disruption in nor-epinephrine and dopamine they are likely to be causes of depression. The third factor is hormones .changes in hormones could fuel depression (Depression what you need to know, pp.1-9).

The second main cause is environmental influence. The reasons lay behind it are stressful life events, next to the traumas in early life especially for teens and children. There

difficulty of distinguishing reality from imaginary and expressing normal emotions in social situations; (see Morgan & King, 1975, p. 502; Mental Health America, 2018;)

are other factors too, like death of loved ones, loss of a job, failure in studies, financial problems; for example after pregnancy and menopause for women and low testosterone for men (Tracy, 2018). The notion depression is a vague term; since depression has many types and each type has its features and symptoms and that is what will be presented in the next subtitle.

1.3. Types of Depression

Depression has several types; each type varies according to its severity. Major depression is the most type that people are exposed to. Major depression is marked by bad mood all the day, loss of interest in doing activities and relationships; in addition to insomnia, gain of weight or loss, restlessness, and negative feedback at work and school. Major depression may occur only one time in person's life. But it may appear as episodes in different times. The other type is persistent depressive disorder, which is a type that accompanies the patient for a period that lasts two years with less severe episodes. Other types can be mentioned as psychotic depression, postpartum depression, seasonal affective depression, bipolar depression. Each of which type has specific symptoms and causes. Such as the psychotic types consists of depression symptoms plus other mental problems; like delusions and hallucinations. While in postpartum depression, women are more susceptible because of the changes in hormones after giving birth. As for seasonal depression, it is characterized by bad mood during winter when natural light is reduced patients are treated by light therapy with antidepressants. The final type is bipolar disorder, which is also known as '*manic depression*' (Robert et al., 2009, p. 1), is different from the other types, because the persons with bipolar experience extreme high moods, but the patient also goes through depression episodes (Depression what you need to know, p.5).

These types show that depression is beyond a simple grief or sadness. It could be a really dangerous malady that may have a negative impact on the patient's mental health and personal life.

1.4. Suggested Solutions for Depression

Despite the difficulty of this illness and its complications, there have been some suggested solutions to treat it. Firstly, getting support is considered as one suitable remedy, because depression patients often like being isolated, which makes their state worse than before. So, it is better for the patient to stay closer to his/her family and friends. The second suggested solution is adopting a healthy life style, like getting eight hours of sleep, getting

sunlight each day, practising relaxation techniques (yoga, deep breathing). The third solution proposed is exercise; this may also seem exhausting and an unwanted activity for the patient; although it is a very useful way to walk for 10 minutes in a day or instead of using an elevator, stairs would be better. The final suggestion is reducing stress and eating healthy, this would be done by making a plan to avoid all what causes stress. Eating a balanced meal contains protein, fruits and vegetables and minimizing sugar, it works in reducing depression those were a suggested solutions for depression and there is still more (Depression and anxiety: there is a solution, 2014, p.2).

Depression is an illness that could infect anyone and at any age; that is why it is necessary to treat it in different manners even by pages of a book or a novel can be beneficial. Before exploring the relation between depression and reading novels, and how they work together, the second part from this paper will be devoted to the history of the novels, its evolution, type and function.

1.5. The Growth of Novels

To define novels, it is a must to be familiar with the definition of literature. Literature has been defined as mainly the written works distinguished by the artistic and imaginative touch; it is a means that humans use to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas (Esparagoza, 2013). It has many classifications depending on language, origins, historical eras; topics covered, genres and forms, whether it is a poem or prose. According to the 11th edition of Merriam Webster's collegiate dictionary literature is "Writings that have an excellence of a form or expression or expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest". In another definition by Walter Pater, literature is an artistic representation of life, that is, of varied human experiences in different form of expression. Literature is broad and manifold field that needs to know about its all aspects.

As it was mentioned previously, literature has two main forms: poem and prose, which are different from each other in terms of form and the way of reciting. Prose has several types, for instance short stories, essays, biographies and novels which are the core of this paper. The word « novel » has its origins from the Latin word « Novellus » which means "new". It is a narrative prose with specific measure like the length. It stimulates the human's imagination; it is also the product of his experiences (Resroth, 2018). Novels usually contain several components, including coherent events, different personalities which are the characters that are arranged in the setting of the story. In addition novels have multiple genres that involve

many types and style. Furthermore, each geographical area has its own history in the beginnings of writing novels. In Europe it started with the Elizabethan prose fiction and French heroic romances, where novels were characterized by lengthy detailed plot and noble characters; thanks to the emerge of the middle class in the end of 1700s, novels became more known and literary works became accessible to everyone (Burgess, 2018, p.1) Moving to the Arabic area as an example, literature is very rich and the literary genres differ from an era to another. Arabic novels spread mostly in the time of “El nahda”² where literary traditions rediscovered. Yet, there are other opinions which suggested that Arabic novels have been newly created as a result of the Western Narratives that flourished in the 19th century in terms of style and structure (Moussa, 1970)

The final area is Japan; it is probably the origin of novels. The first Japanese novel was *The Tale of Genji*; it was the first lengthy novel. Beside this, it was written by a woman called Murasaki Shikibu in the beginnings of the eleventh century. The tale of Genji is based on the real experience of the author that describes the aristocratic life in Heian period; it also pictures the romantic life the protagonist of this masterpiece ‘Genji’. For these reasons it is the first psychological novel (Murasaki, 2014).

A novel changes depending on the changes of time and societies and in the serve was tyrant at that time on literature is the romanticism that focuses on nature and imagination rather than emotion and reason. Romantic ideas centred “around art as inspiration, the spiritual and aesthetic dimension of nature, and metaphor of organic growth” as explained by VanSpanckern (1994, p.26). Some examples about the famous novels of that movement are *Moby Dick* (1851), and *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte. The movements that followed romanticism were realism and naturalism. These two movements are part of each other, they rose during industrial revolution. Romanticism and naturalism both portray the harsh reality of the society by rejecting idealism and romanticism such as the adventures of *Huckleberry Finn* (1876) by Tom Sawyer.

The other movement is modernism; in this movement that started in 20th century, topics that have been addressed in novels were the nature of human, existence of God, and the supremacy of reason. Novels also pictured the hard circumstances of that era, like the Second World War, communism, and Cold War. The famous novels of that period were *To the Light*

² El nahda was a cultural renaissance that began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Egypt, then later moving to Ottman-ruled Arabic speaking regions. It is regarded as a period of intellectual modernization and reform.

house (1927) by Virginia Woolf, The Sound and the Fury (1929) by American novelist William Faulkner. The last movement is postmodernism, which started from 1945 till now; novels became surrealist with reflective characters. The post-modern novel includes new techniques such as magical realism, meta-fiction, and graphic novels. The postmodern novel emphasizes the idea that humans are controlled by supernatural power that cannot be explained by reason alone. Novels which were the output of postmodernism are The Colour Purple (1982) by Alice Walker, In Cold Blood (1966) by Truman Capote, and The non-fictional novel (1976) by Alex Hally and there are still other famous novels (Tracy, History of Novel)

Novels are essential materials that have different types, each type has its aims and functions depend on the reader and his needs. The following subtitle will clarify these types and their functions.

1.6. Types and Functions of Novels

Novels have different types; each type has famous writers and writings. These types have also different functions. The first type of novels is the historical type. In the historical novels characters are taken from real events that happened in the past. It makes these historical events and their issues as the main concern of the narrative. The novel Ivanhoe by Walter Scott and A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens are examples of this type. The other type is the Gothic novels. They knew a wide spread in the second half of 18th century; they were characterized by the gloomy atmosphere, and the setting of the story often centred in medieval castles, ruined or isolated places and the characters find themselves under the control of supernatural force (Stefan, 2018). Among the famous gothic novels there are The Castle of Ortanto written by Horace Walpole, Mysteries of Odlpho by Ann Radcliff, and Absalom! Absalom! by William Faulkner

The third type is social novel; this type appeared between 1830 and 1850 to criticize the effects of the industrial revolution on the low class. The novel Oliver Twist of Charles Dickens is the vivid example about this type.

The next type is the science fiction. Burgess (2018) explains that this type can be in two forms: long novel or short story; its topics talk about the quests of aliens to earth, and how scientific change affects societies. The well-known examples about this type are Frankenstein by Marry Shelley, and George Orwell 1984. Epistolary novel, however, is about exchanging letters only like Samuel Richardson's Pamela. Also, there is the romantic novel; it is about

idealization of characters, good setting, and the plot is about adventures. The last type is meta-fiction. It focuses on the relation of fiction and reality, and the example about it is the Golden Notebook by Doris Lessing (Sarkar, 2016).

Novels have different functions to convey according to their types, also different messages and specific objectives to be reached. Sometimes, these objectives could be related to education issues, and other times they are related to cultural ones. To illustrate, science fiction novels count on scientific machinery to invent a future society which parallels own. While for the social novels are found to display the effects of economic status on social conditions through characters and the events of the novel .for historical novels take us to the past cultures. Next to this it facilitates teaching history (Burgess, 2018).

Novels also are tools to restrict morals and convey philosophy of life by showing that good characters, have happy ending, and bad characters will be punished and have bad endings. Novels have another use or function, which is the escape for humans and their source of entertainment when life gets rough whatever the reason is: family problems, financial, personal or social problems; the reader may choose to hide between book pages.

Novels play an important role in the educational field. Novels are used to teach materials such as history as it was mentioned before, languages and other materials (A Guide to the Study of Literature, 2009). For the use of novels in teaching languages, the procedure is done through extensive reading or free reading to enhance reading and writing skills. In addition to this, reading especially helps the student build his/her vocabulary due to the richness of novels with new words which make the student understand the words in their context. Next to this, novels provide the student with new ideas, and different cultures. Huckleberry Finn, as an example makes the student experience how it was life in 1800's, how they acted, talked, and thought at that period of time.

At the social level, novels have a purpose too. Based on the literary theorist victor Shlovesky, literature makes the reader see life from various aspects and allows him to have a new look to the world. Additionally, it strengthens the ability of connecting with others, ask questions and build intuitions. Moreover; it increases critical thinking because novels are full of symbols, themes which makes the reader look for their indications and meanings; this deepens the thoughts and makes the reader read between the lines. Novels have the force to make the reader connect with his humanity by making him accept himself and accept

uniqueness and different authenticities. Those were only few roles that literature in general and novels particularly plays in different areas in societies.

1.7. Novels and Depression

Novels have two sorts to deal with depression either by writing or by reading. Some choose writing as a solution to their depression, or write to make their writing as a solution to the ones who choose reading to find a solution to their depression. There are a lot of famous writers who wrote about depression and other mental illnesses. Among the most known authors who were interested in such themes one can mention Virginia Woolf, F.Scott Fitzgerald, Sylvia Plath and Ernest Hemmingway.

Woolf's Mrs Dalloway is a good example of this type of writings. In her novel, Woolf exposed the effects of the war on the human's mental health through Septimus who suffered from shell shock and trauma because of the Second World War which made him in instable state, seeing nightmares, and flash backs. The second thing that Woolf has represented is the maltreatment and misdiagnose by the doctors in the 20th century; when doctor Holmes said 'nothing the matter with him "when did not know exactly the source of the mental problem that Septimus suffer from". The third thing that Virginia Woolf declares in her novel is that spread of awareness can make a change (Frdera, 2018).

The other example is the writings of Hemmingway that covers psychological problems; such as fear, suffering, anxiety, and alienation which are mainly the causes of depression. In his novels Hemmingway also has described the painful experiences of soldiers and the influence of war on their mental health. The Frame well Arms is from his successful novels in portraying the misery of mental illnesses (Rani, 2016).

Fitzgerald in his novels Tender is The Night clarified the risks of excessive alcohol drinking and their harm on the personality as it was the case of Dick Diver the protagonist of the novel and Abe North the other alcoholic character who lost his career as musicians and was the reason behind the death of two people to show that living recklessly without control will take to a psychological decline (Harvard college, 1999).

All these illustrations show some important points to be considered. The first matter is that in order to reach an effective writing the author needs to feel what the reader fills to touch his soul and all those writers embody that. As an example the writer Virginia Woolf reflected her own depression through the Shell Shock of the character Septimus. Hemmingway almost

all his literary works were based on his real experience in the war; he pictured the real feeling of the soldiers during and after war. Scott Fitzgerald in his novels talked about excessive drinking of alcohol which was his issue in the real life; he was addicted on alcohol. This shows that writing can be a treatment for the writer to escape from his mental problems; thus writings can heal the reader.

Moreover, it can be shown to the depressed reader that depression can be a positive thing that has some benefits in improving creativity; to strengthen such a point, a study done by Professor Christa Taylor in the Albany state university has confirmed that there is a relation between depression and creativity (Christensen, 2013).

The other proof is that all the writers mentioned and many others had suffered from depression and other mental problems like Tom Tolstoy, Edgar Allen Poe, and the list is still open. The depression patient should take these figures as role models in making their depression their source of inspiration: even if they did not get rid of it, they learn how to live with it. In other words, novels can be the most suitable solution for depression through writing or reading what have been written and that what strengthens the relation between them.

To put it briefly, depression is a severe mental illness that has serious consequences. For that reason many solutions were found to control it. Among the suggested solutions there is healing by reading novels. That is why this chapter was devoted to dive in some details of both depression and novels. The first part of the chapter was about defining depression, mentioning some historical facts about it, in addition to its types, causes and common suggested solutions in the hope to make the reader aware of this illness. In the second part, the focus was on novels, their development through time. Besides their types, functions and their relation with depression were discussed. Novels, whatever the type is, play an important role in humans' life, especially in terms of dealing with their psychological states.

Chapter Two

Reading Novels as a Method to Treat Depression

Reading is an activity that has been the favourite advice for all people from different ages in all cultures thanks to its benefits on the reader. It enables him to know about himself and the world around, and the best way to build his personality and mind especially if it became a habit from a young age. Reading has the ability to change the human's thoughts and his orientations in life. It has an impact on the emotions of the reader as his mind too. The reader can use it to do tasks in studying, knowing about other cultures, spending time and other uses. Yet, the most important use that the reader benefits from most is treating his mental problems, especially if what he is reading would be novels. Reading novels can be a tool to heal psychological issues such as depression with the supervision of psychologists or experts. This chapter will explain this method, its evolution through years, how it works, how it can be effective, and its positives and negatives.

2.1 Historical Evolution of using Literature as therapy to Psychological Problems

Using literature as a healing method spread widely in America since 100 years ago. It is considered as an effective method since it was used as treatment to the soldiers who suffered from trauma from what they witnessed in the world war. From that moment, it became practical for everyone at any age and in any profession (Eliasa, 2015). The origins of using literary works as a solution to mental and psychological issues dated back to 300BC, when the Greeks named libraries "healing for the soul". The philosopher Aristotle believed that literature has many benefits, and reading fiction can be a good way to heal mental problems.

In 1916, an American minister gave this method a name which is "Bibliotherapy"³ which is a combination of the Greeks' words which are *Babylon* which means 'book' and *therapiea* which means 'healing'. The American minister Samuel Crothers described this notion as "a process in which specific literature, both fiction and nonfiction, was prescribed as a medicine for a variety of ailments". During the 20th century libraries established in European and American psychiatric hospitals by the end of the war many libraries were set in American hospitals and using literature became officially to treat soldiers from emotional trauma. (Maclaine, 2009)

In the 1970's, bibliotherapy continued its success and it became used in other fields including libraries, general medical practice, psychology, criminal justice, nursing, social

³Bibliotherapy is a therapeutic approach that uses literature to support good mental health

work, education and pre-occupational therapy. Also, what made this method more valid and give it more credibility is that in 1950's the writer Carolyn Shrodes developed a theory said that people are greatly influenced by the character they identify with in the story (Dai, 2014).

According to Beatty, both Benjamin Rush (1815) and John Galt (1853) were the first American physicians who recommended reading as a part from treatment in hospitals. He argues that history can be evidence about the impact of books on nations, their histories and their societies. These are some samples about the changes that can books bring: The Prince by Machiavelli, The Wealth of nations by Adam Smith and Common Sense by Thomas Paine (Beatty, 106). This was an over view about the historical evolution of this method and the main figures that contributed in its success. Yet, how it works in the human's brain in a more scientific way remains questionable.

2.2 How Reading Novels Functions on the Human's Brain

Neuroscientists suppose that reading could make the reader's or the patient's mind believe that he/she is experiencing in reality what a fictional character experience in the events. Some researchers made experiments to prove that novels have influence on the brain; eventually, they found that powerful story has the force to create 'muscle memory'⁴ in the brain as if the events happened in reality to the reader. Researchers also found that who read extensively biological changes happen in their minds. Gregory Berns a neuroscientist professor in the University of Atlanta said that stories can shape our lives and in other cases can help to know more about people; that is why researchers want to understand how stories reach readers' minds. He added that the neural changes that he found associated with physical sensation and movement suggests that reading can transport the reader into the body of the protagonist, not only on the figurative sense but biologically too (Griffiths, 2013). The conclusion that they reached is that stories have the power to alter the way the brain works and that the neurological effects can still affect the brain even after having stopping reading.

Other researchers, however, who are interested in this field, made experiments and found different conclusions. Natalie Philipes was among them; she is a professor of 18th century literature and culture at Michigan State University. She made a study when the volunteers were reading; Phillips and her group scanned the readers' brains while simultaneously tracking their eyes' movements, breathings and heart rates. They found that

⁴ Muscle memory is a term used to motor learning which is a form of procedural memory that involves consolidating a specific motor task into memory through repetition. When a movement is repeated over time, a long-term muscle memory is created for that task. This decreases the need for attention and creates maximum efficiency within the motor and memory systems (<http://en.m.wikipedia.org>).

close reading activated parts of the brain, that are often more active in movement and touch than what happens when the readers place themselves in the story. This research belongs to the literary neuroscience field. Researchers from this field also looked at how poetry, rhythm and metaphors would affect and excite sensory regions.

All these researches and studies may be the proof that reading literature has the ability to change the brain and not only the emotions. Thus, the functions of reading novels are numerous and the benefits drawn from them on the human's brain are inevitable, and the development of this field depends on giving it more importance.

2.3. Steps of Using Novels as a Method to Treat Depression

The first step that the patient should start with, in the therapy, is that the patient should relate himself with a specific character or situation in the novel; then he would share the feelings and the thoughts of the character chosen before. The reader would figure out that he can deal with his situation in a better way by adopting the ideas of that character, and the therapist should give the patient enough time for reading. Also, the facilitator should start the session with introductory activities for the purpose of motivating the patients, and asking them questions to make them recall information through analysing, application, and evaluation of the information (Barcelo-Macahilg, 2012).

2.3.1. Features of Novels used in Treating Depression

Novels are the core of the treatment, and the keys of its success. For this reason, they should be selected carefully based on the needs and the state of the patient. The Russian psychologist Maria Molicka declared that the novels must supply the readers with support and motivation, help them in combating their fears, changes their views about the world and show their places in it. She also added that literature, in general, makes the readers understand their situations and pushes them to make changes, too; it really increases the readers' self-confidence (cited in Janaviciene, 2014, p.12). This fact implies that the novel must have the elements that make readers change their attitudes.

For the American writer Stanlay, there are novels which are able to help patients to solve issues; so, he divides novels into groups according to their types, like historical, fiction, mysteries, romance, fiction and science fiction, she offers them depending on the situation and on the aide that this novel would offer (ibid, p.13).

Hence, features of novels are consistent with the needs of the patient. Further, the written texts should be rational with the psychodynamic effects and without being in need to the constant need of the supervisor (Janaviciene, 2014:15).

By the same token, in the University of Tanta (Egypt), Doctor Ghada Ezat (2015) made an experiment to examine the effectiveness of reading on depression; she offered a novel to the students who took them as a sample to make his experiment. The qualities of the novel presented were as follows: simple language to make it easy to understand for people from different educational levels, suitable and beneficial to people of different age groups, and discusses the symptoms of depression and anxiety which make the reader attracted to read it, because the reader will feel like the novel is describing his situation and helps him find solutions. Regarding the form of the novel, it is distinguished by its small size which can be carried anywhere, and also it may not seem boring to the reader. More importantly, the book displays ideas that give the reader solutions to his problems thanks to its realistic stories; stories of people who suffer from real hardships.

On the whole, features of novels that are directed to depressed patients, as examples of those who suffer psychoneurotic problems should have a simple language, be practical for all ages from different educational levels, besides the form to make the reader hooked to the book, next to the realistic suffering of the characters and the reality reflected in the plot of the story to make the patients understand more their issues and find solutions too. Moreover, the novels should be of good prices to make any reader able to buy one.

2.3.2. Prescribing Novels as a Tool of Therapy

When giving a person a novel without knowing the state of his/her psyche, the reader may have side effects; so there must be certain people who would offer the novel. The ones who offer novels should usually have a degree and some experience at psychology; they work with people who don't suffer from any mental issues, but they are trained to recognize if someone has symptoms of trial or grief. They work in schools, libraries and in mental health settings with the supervision of professionals. These trained clinicians, libertarians, psychologists and teachers play a major role in making the therapy successes. They should be effective and they should show the reader the common points between him and the character in the novel, to make the reader recognize his problems and find a solution.

The other quality of the person who prescribes novels is that he/she should be a good listener, empathises with the readers and does not judge them. Moreover; he/she should be familiar with literature to know exactly what the needs of the patients would be and guide

them correctly. Yet, there are many useful techniques used in these therapeutic sessions to make healing process go faster (Good therapy, 2016).

2.4 The Effective Use of Reading Novels

In order to reach effective and successful results in treating depression by reading novels there must be a suitable use for the treatment depending on the different needs of each patient, taking into consideration the factor of age. Some general techniques generally agreed upon that are available to anyone who suffer from depression episode can be summarised as follows. The first technique is rereading the novel that had made you smile the first time; through doing so, it is like renewing the positive feelings that were felt in the first reading. The second way is giving a friend a novel, and then talking about it, which ameliorates communication and gives the chance to open up and share personal experiences. After that, the third technique is discovering novels that contain the same situation that the reader is facing and is not necessary that all novels used should be funny and comic all the time, the reader can pick what suits him. For efficient reading, the patient should know his or her particular purpose; i.e. what for he/she is reading, and then selects the right material (Nuttall, 2005). The fourth technique is riding an inspiring novel to take better decisions, because when the reader lives with the characters in their fictional world, at the end the reader will change his behaviour that matches the fictional character in the novel (Literature Hand, 2017).

Furthermore, there is another technique adopted by Ella Berthoud and her friend Suzan Elderkin the authors of the bestselling book *Novel to Cure*; they ask the patient about the challenges that he or she have been through and their reading habits since childhood, after knowing the personal and mental state of the patient, they prescribe the book that fulfil his needs. They talk with patients in the real world or online.

There are other specific approaches to use this method. For instance, shared reading circles is basically about reading loudly literary works, in small groups, where readers participate in reading, and the patient is not forced to read; he has the right just to listen. The duration of the session is an hour and a half weekly. In reading circles, the patients are allowed to share memories and ideas, or if a passage from the story was related to someone from the group, he could interfere. The purpose from the circle is not grasping literature, rather the personal response. The positives of this technique are self-awareness, social engagement and cognitive stimulation (Literature Hand, 2017).

Using reading literature, in general, can be a useful technique in education as well; it would be helpful for the teacher to know the needs of his/her students, in addition to helping

them develop their mental health. Through reading the teacher can guide them to avoid problems related to their age from the last experiences of teenagers and children (Eliassa, 2007). This was a small sample about useful techniques to make the depression patient feel relief.

2.4.1. Graphic Novels as a Helping Tool

To avoid any obstacles that may weaken the treatment, therefore taking precautions is a must. Among these problems that may occur during the treatment, for instance the struggle of the patient with literacy, which makes his dealing with literary works difficult or when the patient has problems of speaking or listening. For that reason, another type of novels can be used to face such problems, which are ‘graphic novels’.

Graphic novels are a type of text where words and images are combined. The term ‘graphic novels’ first is coined by Richard Kyle in an essay that he wrote in 1964. Graphic novels gained popularity in 1980’s, when two books from this type were published, A Contract with God, and Other tenement stories (1978) by Eisner (Murray, 2017).

This paved the way to other graphic novels to emerge; for instance, Frank Miller’s The Dark Knight Return (1968), and Maus (1980-86) by Art Spiegelmane that won the Pulitzer Prize. In the 21st century, graphic novels made a huge progress. They achieved the complexity and the intensity of the normal novel. Graphic novels like the common novels can be useful to reduce depression and treat other issues like drug abuse and posttraumatic disorder. A lot of researchers signalled the effectiveness of graphic novels in improving literacy and communication problems, beside other problems such ‘dyslexia’ which is the difficulty in reading and interpreting words. The thing that might make graphic novels as an effective tool to help in treating mental issues is mixing the visual with literary and cinematic techniques that stimulate the reader to pull in the story. Graphic novels could be a good solution too for the depression patient thanks to its integrated elements that make the patients use his visual and auditory senses next to activating his cognitive functions and literacy cannot be an obstacle that prevents the treatment of depression (ibid).

2.4.2. Reading Novels’ Benefits

Reading literature in general and novels in particular has many positives due to its available use to all people from different ages (children, teenagers and adults), with different issues such as anxiety, mild alcohol, sexual abuse, problems of communication, bullying and

other issues. Reading to treat mental and psychological problems is beneficial on the aspect of mental health and on the personal aspect (Wally, 2016).

At the level of personal and social side reading novels helps in enhancing focus, and reducing stress after a day full of activities and tasks in work or in studying, which makes the mind distracted; reading a novel, then, eliminates stress and destruction. A study conducted in the University of Sussex has shown that reading can be more effective in reducing stress, better than listening to music or taking a walk. Further, a depressed person may suffer from lack of sleep; so, reading a page from a novel makes the reader more relaxed and calm and prepared to sleep (ibid).

Also, among the benefits of reading novels that plays an essential role in improving the social life of the patient is making him more empathetic. This happens when the reader put himself in the place of the character, which leads the patient or the reader to understand other's perspectives and their emotions thus refine his social relations. Furthermore, reading makes the patient understand his/her problem and gives him the right words to express to his family or friends. Most importantly, reading novels gives to the patient the feeling that he is not alone and he is not the only one who is suffering. Not only that, it can be a good way to boost the academic capacities of the students as readers. Concerning mental health, reading enhances concentration and focus; additionally, it increases the ability of solving problems and understands them in their right pattern (Oppong, 2018).

2.4.3. Reading Novels' Drawbacks

Everything has its positives and negatives; the same thing for this method. Initially, reading in general may seem a boring task for a depressed; so the first obstacle is the unwillingness of the depressed person in reading. In addition to that, the patient may refuse to talk with the facilitator about personal issues, which may slow the process of recovering. Moreover, the patient may not be able to identify the characters. Beside this, if the patient took a novel that does not suite his/her state, it may cause side effects, like increasing depression. The final drawback is the limited knowledge of the therapist about literature and human development, which spoils the treatment process (Barcelo-Macahilg, 2012).

Finally, using reading novels to cure depression can be a good solution, even if it's temporary. So, this chapter was mainly about reading, how it works on the brain, and steps of using novels as a method to treat depression. Techniques to make this method effective are introduced too, highlighting the responsible of offering novels as a therapy to patients, and his major qualities. Besides that, reading novels is beneficial in terms of improving the personal

and mental health of the patient, if he is willing to read and accept this method to solve his psychological problems.

Chapter Three

The Field Work of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effectiveness of reading novels as a therapeutic method to treat the readers' depression. This chapter is the practical side of the study. To this end, data is collected from the answers gathered from a questionnaire selected as a measuring tool devoted to a selected sample of university students of English at the University of Laghouat. Data gathered will be presented and analysed, and the hypotheses of this study will be tested.

3.1. Sampling

The study took place in the reading-club named Tanwin Laghouat, at Elbashir ElIbrahimi Library in Laghouat, on August 13th. The sample selected consisted of twenty three students available on that day at the library. They were all studying English at the University of Laghouat but of different levels. They had a common feature which is the fact that they used to go to the library and read extensively, and resort to reading novels in the time of their grief. This sample is selected, thus, according to the frequency of reading habit. Few of them were diagnosed by temporary episodes of depression. In general, the participants were honest in answering most of the questions; the way that may serve the study in getting accurate results.

3.2. Method and Measuring Tool

The researcher conducted a study using the descriptive method and not the experimental that normally would suit this type of research. The researcher cannot have the time or measuring tools to conduct an experiment, testing the biological changes that would occur while reading. Just the Qualitative technique is used through analysing the responses gathered from a questionnaire devoted to the sample of readers selected to know their opinions. All the participants (23=N) responded to the questionnaire, and there answers were used in part to provide data for analyses. Thus, the questionnaire conducted was a main measuring tool to the researcher and the essential part in results interpretation.

This administered questionnaire is divided into four parts. The first part consists of two questions about the participants' personal information, including gender and age. Part two is a set of three questions devoted to know more about the opinions of the participants about literature and novels in general regardless the language. The third part of the questionnaire; however comprises three questions. This part is designed to know which parts of the novel attract and interest the participants most, and their feelings during and after reading. As for the fourth part, the questions directed to participants are about the effectiveness of reading the

novel, next to their opinions about making it as a solution to treat depression as a psychological disorder in our societies. Graphics and diagrams are used to present the data gathered.

3.3. Analysis of the Questionnaire

3.3.1. Part One: Personal Information

In this section, the researcher has asked about the informant's personal information: gender and age. The need for such a section is to know if these two features can be regarded in interpreting any results about the habit of reading and the depressed persons in society.

Question 01: What is your gender?

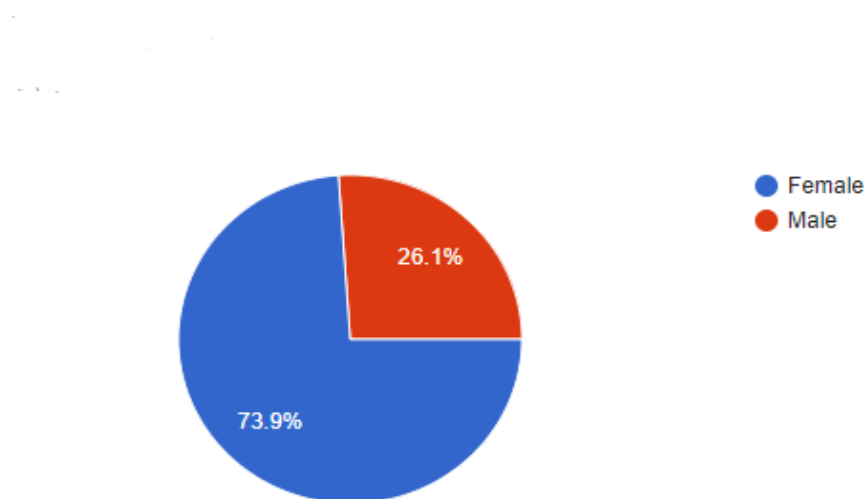


Figure 3.1. The Participants' Gendre

As it is clearly noticed in this figure, the majority of the participants were women in percentage of 73.9%. While 26.1% were men. This finding reflects the reality of the Algerian population these days; in that the number of female citizens is bigger than male. Another reason can be attributed to his finding is the fact that women may love reading novels more than men.

Question 02: How old are you?

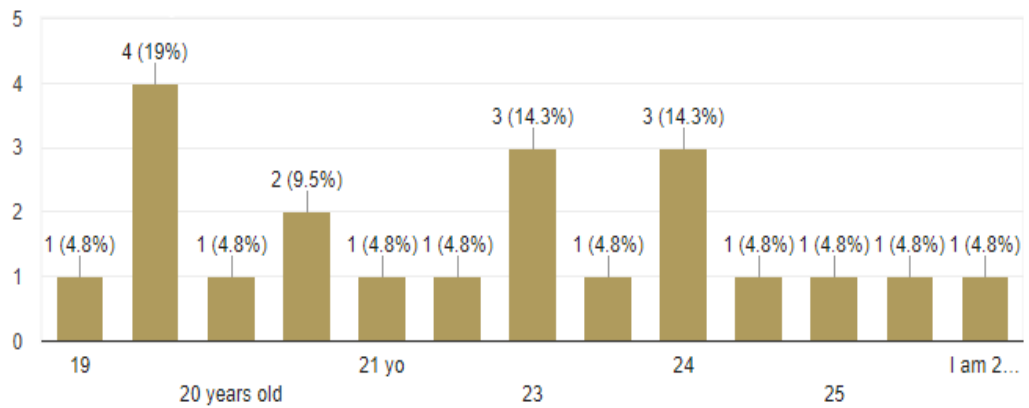


Figure 3.2. The Participant's Age

This graph reveals the participants' age; it appears that their ages are between 19 and 23 years old, which indicates that the participants are homogenous. The finding also shows that young generation are still reading, despite the prevailing of modern technology, and this means that reading still has a value, which leads to its use in different fields as a facilitating tool for many educational, social or psychological problems.

3.3.2. Part Two: General Questions about Literature

This section is designed to get knowledge about the students' background, feeling and interest towards literature in general and novels in particular. It is the window through which the researcher can get into the participants' approaches to novels' reading. The section is composed of four questions about their feeling towards literature in general regardless the language, their literary genres preferences, their experience about reading novels practice, and their opinions about reading novels. Responses are presented and analysed in the light of the main theories underlining literature.

Question 01: Do you like literature? Why?

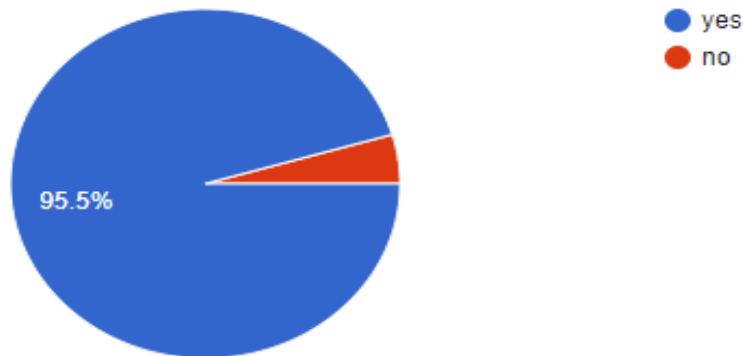


Figure 3.3 The Participants' Feeling towards Literature

The figure 3.3 shows that 95.5% of the participants do like literature. Their justifications varied from one to another. Their responses were divided into two: some (20 %) saw it as a helping tool in improving their writing and reading skills; they also added that literature developed their critical thinking; besides this, they pointed that literature of any type and in any language would provide them with knowledge and enrich their vocabulary that can be useful to their studies. The other half of the participants considered literature as their window to the imaginary world, where they can meet new persons and new characters who boost or adjust their mood as they mentioned in their answers. Further, they pointed that literature aid them in expressing their feelings and see life from new perspectives plus activating their imagination and become more creative. Just one student (4,5%) who dislikes literature though he was there in the library; this shows that either he was with another colleague following him only; then he is not interested in literature at all; or he cannot understand the question to reply honestly.

Question 02: What are the genres of novels you prefer to read?

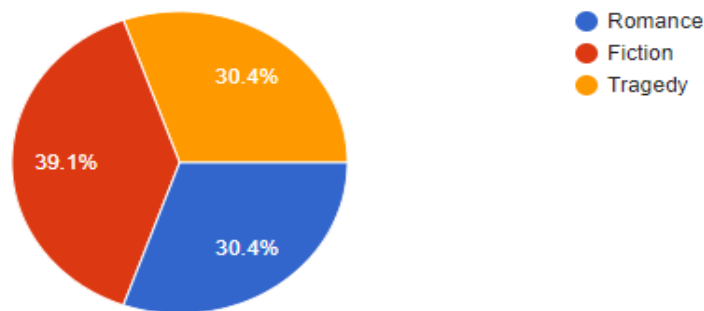


Figure 3.4 The Participants' Favorite Literary Genres

As it is presented in the figure 3.4, answers vary; yet they are almost three types. 39, 1% of the participants preferred to read fiction, while tragedy and romance gained an equal rate of 30.4% for each. The participants who preferred fiction considered it as a source of their imagination; in that reading fiction texts may give them the chance to live the adventures of the story, giving them refreshing feelings. Those who preferred tragedy clarified that this type of novel would help them feel how the characters can feel throughout the events of the story. As for romance novels, it remains the favourite choice of some girls who confirmed that this type touches their feelings of love and makes them live in a world of sweet dreams. These answers clarify that all types of novels could be effective and beneficial to the reader.

Question 03: How many novels have you read till now?

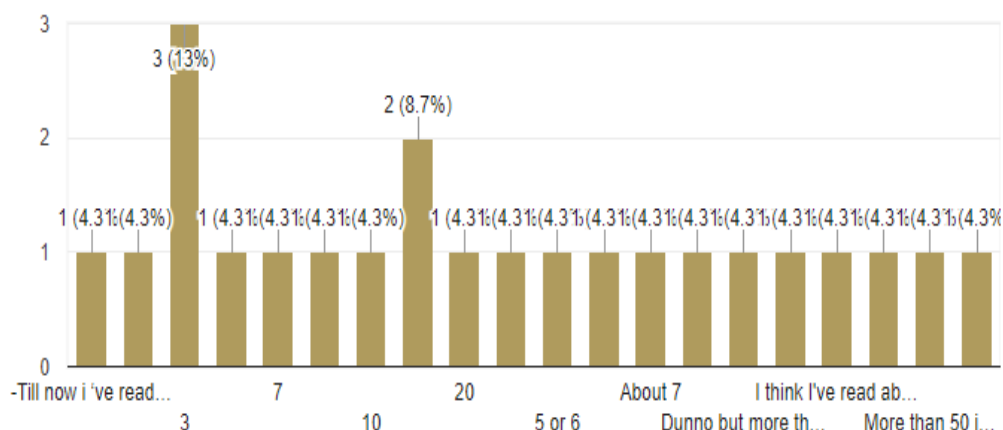


Figure 3.5 The Participants’ Reading Novels’ Experience

The results in the figure 3.5 demonstrate that reading is not practised frequently by the students. In that, only 4.31% of the participants appear have read more than 50 books; 13% of the participants, however, have read three books, while 8.7 % read two books only. These numbers may confirm the idea of reading is not enjoyable activity for most of the students. It is really an activity that should be admired first to be practised as a habit. It is also worth to note that improved first language reading habits can transfer to foreign language reading (Nuttall, 2005). That is why in our study language of novels is not taken as really a factor of difference.

Question 04: What do you think about reading novels?

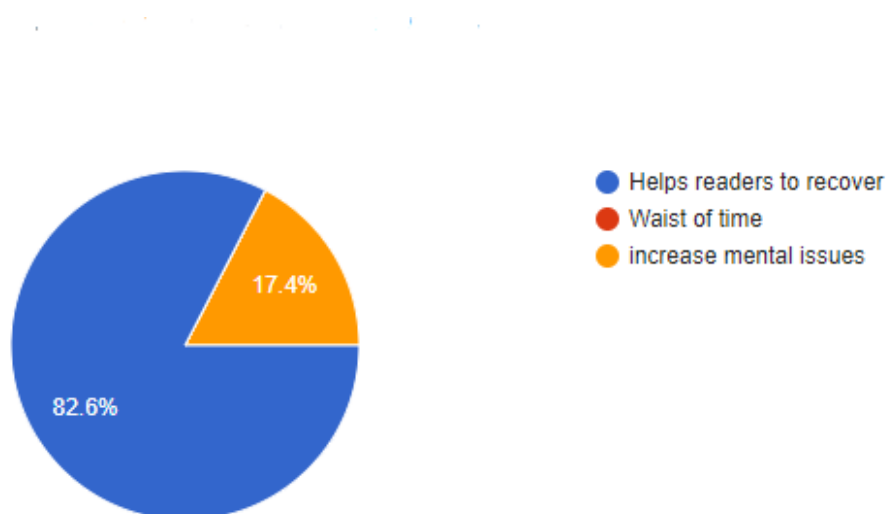


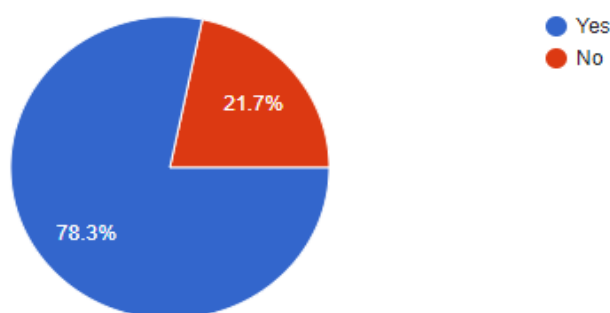
Figure 3.6 The Participants' Opinions about Reading Novels

This question is designed to know whether novels could provide any help to the reader to get rid of some problems he/she may confront. The question seems open to leave the participant the space to express whatever he/she wants. The figure 3.6 shows that most of the answers confirmed that reading can help the reader to recover from some psychological states, and mainly depression and sadness as explained in the participants' responses. Yet, some answers regarded novels as having a negative effect and considered them as a cause of increasing mental issues, in percentage of 17%; when no one had considered it as a waste of time. This finding shows that reading novels can have positive and negative effects on the readers' real life, depending on the opinions of the sample.

3.3.3. Part Three: the Participants' Feeling during the Novel's Reading

In this section the researcher attempts to consider the feelings and emotions as well as the psychological states that the participants would have during their reading process. Four questions were designed to this end. They are about their emotional states during and after reading, the parts of the novel attract them most, and their established relationships with the main characters of such a novel. Responses are presented as follows.

Question 01: Do find yourself in the novel's pages? Explain how!

**Figure 3.7. The Emotional State of the Participants during Reading Novels**

Concerning this question, the researcher wants to get an idea about the participants' personal feelings and emotions while reading their preferred novels. Results show that 78.3%

of the participants had found themselves in the novel and became emotionally attached to it; they explained this by saying that when they used to read a novel, they used to travel to its world, where they would meet the characters and share with them their joy and sadness; especially when the reader finds common points between him/her and the character, like facing the same problems and having the same way of thinking. Similarly, some participants find themselves in a novel due to the deep words of the author that touched them, as if these words were directed to them; while others said that they used to imagine themselves as the protagonists of the stories. In contrast, 21% of the participants answered with “No”; they could not find themselves in novel; they explained this by saying that they sometimes misunderstand the ideas of the novel. Thus, the style, the topic and language may have a considerable effect on the readers’ understanding, and hence, increases or reduces their personal emotions.

Question 02 :Which part of the novel attracts you the most ? Why?

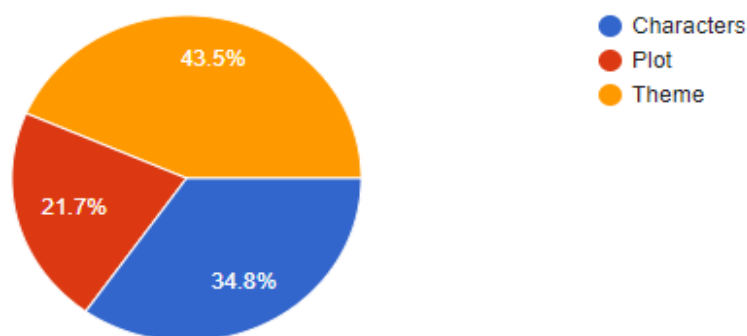


Figure 3.8. The Most interesting Parts in the Novel to the participants

Figure 3.8 displays that answers vary as the participants vary in their personalities. Around 34.8% of them are attracted more to the characters, seeing that characters enable them to know different personalities and persons. 43% % of other participants reveal that they are interested more to the theme; they think that the themes are the main elements of the novel, arguing that themes provide a better understanding, and writers would grasp the attention of the reader by these themes. The rest, 21, 7 %, said that they are attracted to plot; for them it is interesting how stories are structured in a unified and coherent way; and the successful writer

for them is the one who orders the events in a good way to attract the reader's attention and make him/her follow, predict or even imagine the coming scene of the story. All these responses are in their way honest to be considered.

Question 03: Do you establish any social connection with the characters of a novel?

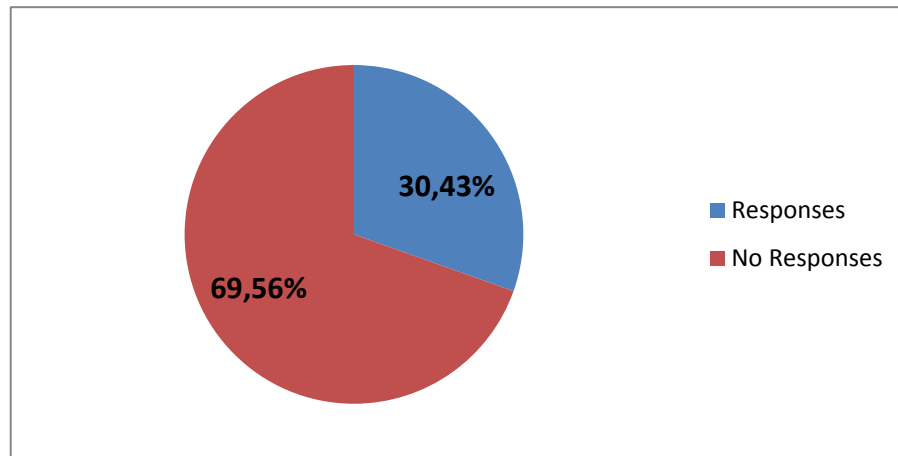


Figure 3.9 The Participants' Established Connection with the Novel's Characters

Only seven participants (30,43%) out of 23 who could answer this question. They asserted that they used to establish such an emotional and social and link with the main characters of the novels they had read; this happened when they could share the same personality traits, feelings and experiences with the characters. These were only the opinions of the respondents. The other participants, however, could not answer this question with a percentage of 69, 56%.

Question 04: How would be your psychological state when you completed reading the novel?

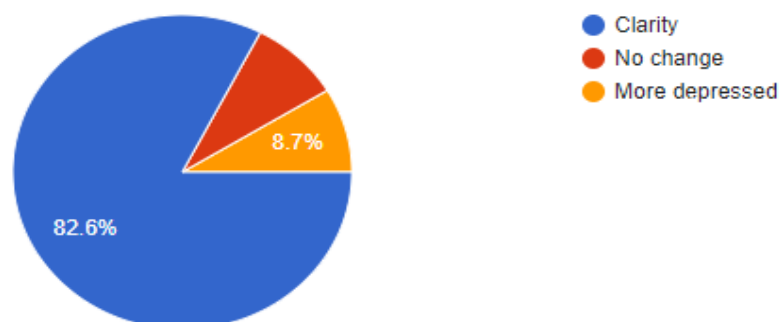


Figure 3.10: The Psychological State of the Participants after Reading Novels

The figure 3.10 shows that 82.6% of the respondents answered that after having finishing reading a novel, they would feel clarity and boosted in mood; they would feel less depressed and stressed; while 8.7% of the participants declared that after reading the novel, they would feel more depressed, since the characters of the story had left bad impressions in facing problems which may result in increasing the reader's sadness and sorrow. Thus, not all novels read could help in getting rid of depression or any other psychological problems the reader may have; this depends on the type, style and the issue dealt with in the novel and how it would be solved.

3.3.4. Part Four: Reading Novels to treat Depression

This part of the questionnaire helps the researcher to clarify the usefulness of novels as a method to treat depression as a psychological problem that a reader may live in. The participants were asked about their experiences, views and opinions about the effectiveness of this method of treatment.

Question 01: Do you agree that reading novels can treat depression?

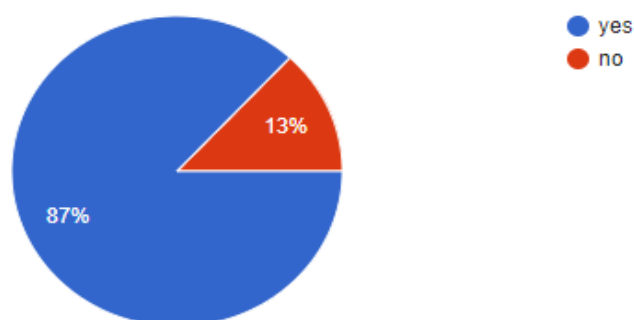
**Figure 3.11 The Participants' Opinions about Reading Novels to treat Depression**

Figure 3.11 exhibits that 87% of the answers do agree that reading novels could treat depression, while 13% do not agree about this suggestion. This implies that the method proposed to treat depression may prove its effectiveness. Yet, there are some participants who found useless, which may be attributed to the lack of reading habit in our societies; or the bad choice of the novel to be taken as a cure.

Question2: How can we make reading novels effective in treating psychological problems?

The opinions varied from a participant to another, and their views concerning this question can be illustrated as follows. First, some of them suggested that to make more effective novels, they should be written to deal with depression as the main topic; in that, when putting the character in a position where he tries hard to find a solution to his problems and cope with them, this gives the target person or the reader hope and motivation to find a solution too. As a second suggestion, the respondents proposed to create novels that are full of adventures and experiences, to make the patient learn more from these facts. The third suggestion given is choosing the suitable novel for each case.

Question 3: What do think about changing depression pills by reading novels?

This question is also concerned with the opinions of the participants. 74% of the participants agree and welcomed the idea of changing depression pills by reading novels, and they considered it as a solution that would protect the patient from the side effects of consuming pills. However, 26% of the respondents disagree, saying that novels do not have such a long term effect, and can fail to cure the problem, because not all depressed people like reading and mainly reading novels that needs patience and time.

As a conclusion, the current study is concerned with exploring the effectiveness of reading novels as a therapeutic method to treat depression. To this end, the researcher advanced the hypotheses that (1) reading novels might have the power to make the patients the students in this case accept their psychological states, and boost their moods; (2) reading stories that are similar to the depressed patients' could help to deal with their illnesses in real life and learn from the protagonist how to combat struggles in life, and (3) reading novels could be effective to stimulate the emotions of the readers and lead them to see life from a new positive angle.

To check these hypotheses, the study was conducted on students majoring in English language at the University of Ammar Theliji, in Laghouat, Algeria. They are students of different levels following LMD system during the academic year 2017-2018; they used to attend the El Bashir El Ibrahimi Library for reading sessions. They are both male and female students within the age range of 19-23 years. They share the same cultural background since they belong to the same region. The data collection tool of this study consisted of a questionnaire of four categories of questions divided according to the concerns of the study.

Based on the analysis of the responses gathered from the questionnaire, findings revealed that some participants would feel boosted in mood, less depressed and less stressed when they used to read novels; this happened when they could share the same personality traits, feelings and experiences with the main characters of the story; mainly if the protagonists succeeded in finding solutions in the end and solve their problems. Moreover, using reading novels to treat depression is a welcomed idea among the students; yet, the number of reading sessions the students had received cannot be sufficient to get a clear idea about the usefulness of such a method. The reason for adopting the findings of such an analysis is to take part in directing future research towards meeting the special needs of students in particular and readers in general.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The main objective of the current study was to explore the effectiveness of reading novels to treat depression and indicate its benefits as a method in dealing with psychological problems. The use of this method dated back to the Second World War, when doctors of psychology used it with soldiers to relieve them from the shock of war; since then, using novels to cure mental problems became official in European psychiatric hospitals and then other areas like education, nursing, rehabilitation and so on. For this reason, the present dissertation was an attempt to investigate how depression and reading novels could work together.

This study highlighted in the first chapters the notions of both depression and novels, and the relationship between them was brought up. The researcher tried to represent the historical background of depression; since the time that it was labelled in to its emergence in the ancient civilizations, to show how people used to deal with depression throughout time. Depression was known as a separate disease different schizophrenia only in 19th century, and this facilitated the way of understanding it more; thus, causes and types of depression were discovered, which paved the way to come up with several solutions to combat it. The study also provides a theoretical background about novels and their historical growth, types and functions to highlight their role in human life, After presenting some facts about novels and depression, the relation between them become clearer in terms of how depression used to be one of the majors theme of popular novels, which had considered the role of making effective writing to help giving solutions to the readers who used to suffer from mental illnesses; that is what fuelled the spark to introduce reading as a possible solution for depression.

For this sake, the theoretical part was dedicated to provide information on how to use reading novels as a tool to cure depression through presenting all its components as therapeutic method; it involves steps and techniques that can be used in different places such as psychological clinics, libraries, schools or in reading workshops, under the supervision of experts, psychology doctors, librarians and teachers. This process can be accomplished by mainly engaging the patients in events and characters of stories that are similar to their state, so that the patients can understand their issues and face them, or the patients can express their feelings and the mental problems that they faced through fictional characters to make it comfortable for them to communicate properly.

Accordingly, the novels prescribed during reading sessions are offered depending on the needs of the patients. These novels are usually characterized by having simple language and suitable content, fitting different ages.

General Conclusion

To assess the probability of reading novels as method to treat depression, a questionnaire was designed to gather different views from university LMD students majoring in English language at the University of Ammar Theliji, in Laghouat during the academic year 2017-2018. They are interested in literature and used to resort to reading novels in their free time and mainly when they experienced the feeling of sadness, stress or depression. As measuring tool, the questionnaire contained different questions about reading novels, like how many novels they had read, which part of the novel interests them most, and how they used to feel after reading novels, in addition to their opinions about using reading novels to heal depression and in their society.

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of the questions directed to the participants, the proposed idea was welcomed, and the researcher, hence, validated the hypotheses that reading novels might have the power to make the patients accept their psychological states and moods, mainly if the stories are similar to the depressed patients' experiences which could help in dealing with their own illnesses, and learn from the protagonist how to combat struggles in real life. Thus, reading novels could be effective to stimulate the emotions of the readers and lead them to see life from a new positive angle.

Yet, there were some comments showed that reading may not be the right solution in treating psychological problems in Arabic societies, especially the Algerian one, because the habit of reading is not wide spread. This may lead to the failure of reading as therapy for depression; so, according to the participants the value of reading should be revived.

To conclude, reading novels can be a suitable treatment for depressed patients; in that, it can be a means which takes them to new and different places and worlds, and allows them experiencing different adventures and meeting new characters without leaving their places.

References

References

- Barcelo-Macahilig, Heidi. (2011) “ Bibliotherapy As A Process”. Retrieved on Sept 2018 from <https://fr.slideshare.net/PAARLOnline/bibliotherapy-as-a-process>
- Dali, Keren (2014) “On Bibliography” Retrieved on Sept 2018 from <https://www.ebscohost.com/novelist/novelist-special/on-bibliotherap>
- Eliasa, Imania. (2007). “Bibliotherapy as method of meaning full treatment.” Yogyakarta University State (web).
- Ezat, Ghada. “Treatment of Depression by bibliotherapy” Egypt, 2015:12. Diss.
- Griffiths, Sarah. (2013). How book change your life, Retrieved on Sept 2018 from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2529855/How-book-really-change-life-Brain-function-imprng-novel.html>
- <https://fr.slideshare.net/osfarizal/bibliotherapy-14950453>
- <https://www.britannica.com/art/literature>.
- Kanapton, Sarah. (2014). “Great novels can change your life and your brain”, retrieved on Sept 2018 from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/10553579/Great-novels-can-change-your-life...and-your-brain.html>
- Kenneth, Rexroth. (2018) “Literature”, retrieved on August 2018 from <https://www.britannica.com/art/literature>
- Maclaine, Suzan. (2013). “What is bibliography”. Retrieved on August 2018 from <https://wordsthatheal.com.au/about/>
- Morgan, Clifford, T., and King, Richard, A. (1975). *Introduction to Psychology*. Japan: McGraw-Hill Kogakusha, Inc.
- Murray, Christopher. (2017). “Graphic novel”. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. retrieved on Sep. 2018. From <https://www.britannica.com/art/graphic-novel>
- Nuttall, Christine. (2005). *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
- Opong, Thomas. N.d Retrieved on Sept 2018 from <https://medium.com/@alltopstartups/the-reading-brain-why-your-brain-needs-you-to-read-every-day-f5307c50d97>
- Rani, Usha. “The theme of Alienation in The selected novels of Hemingway”. India: University of India, 2016
- Sankar, somanth. (2016). “Different types of literature”. retrieved on Sept 2018 from <http://www.eng-literature.com/2016/01/different-types-of-novel.html>

References

- Schimelpfening, Nancy. (2018). "History of Depression". Retrieved on August 2018 from <https://www.verywellmind.com/who-discovered-depression-1066770>
- Stefany, Tracy. (2018). "History of novel", retrieved on August 2018 from <https://penandthepad.com/history-novel-6305937.html>
- Walley, Maria. (2016) "5 Surprising ways reading fiction benefits your mental health", Retrieved on Sept 2018 from <https://verilymag.com/2016/04/benefits-of-reading-mental-health-stress-sl>
- ____ "Depression what you need to know". US department of health and human services: National institute of mental health, 2015
- ____ "A biographical Analysis of Verginia Woolf: The impact of mental illness in Woolf's life, marriage, and literature". Hubpages. Updated on January 2018. Retrieved on August 2018 from <https://owlcation.com/humanities/A-Biographical-Analysis-of-Virginia-Woolf-The-Influence-of-Mental-Illness-on-a-Stable-Marriage>
- ____ Bibliotherapy. Good therapy. N.d. Retrieved on August 2018 from <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/bibliotherapy>
- ____ "Reading as a therapy". The literary Hand. N.d, Retrieved on Sept from <http://www.literaryhand.com/how-does-bibliotherapy-work/>
- ____ Depression and Anxiety: there is a solution. Patient Education Tool. 2014:2. Print.

Appendix

Questionnaire for Readers
in Tanwin ELaghouat Reading club

Dear reader,

I am a Master Two student of English. I am conducting a study about reading novels as a method to treat depression. This questionnaire is about observing the benefits this method could bring to people. Your answers are going to contribute to gather different opinions and views. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Part One: Personal Information

1- What is your gender? Male Female

2- How old are you? _____

Part Two: General Questions about Literature

1- Do you like literature?

Yes No

Why?

.....
.....
.....

2- What are the genres of novels you prefer to read?

Romance Fiction Tragedy

3- How many novels have you read till now?

.....

4- What do you think about reading novels?

Helps readers to recover Waste of time increase mental issues

Part Three: Participants' Feeling during the Novel's Reading

1- Do you find yourself in the novel's pages?

Yes No

Explain:

.....
.....
.....

2- Which part of the novel attracts you the most?

Characters Plot theme

Why?.....
.....
.....

3- Do you establish any social connection with the characters of a novel?

.....
.....
.....

4- How would be your psychological state when you completed reading the novel?

Clarity No change More depressed

Part Four: Reading Novels to treat Depression

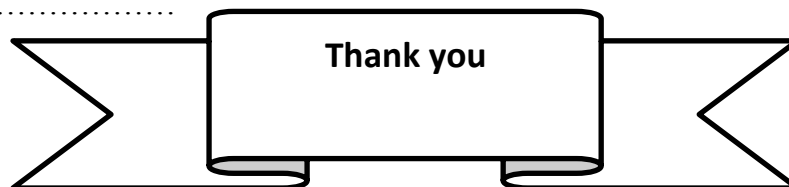
1- Do you agree that reading novels can treat depression?

Yes No

2- How can we make reading novels effective in treating psychological problems?.....
.....
.....

3- What do think about changing depression pills by reading novels?

.....
.....
.....
.....



Abstract

The current study seeks to consider the effectiveness as well as usefulness of reading novels to treat psychological problems that many people can suffer from. The Psychoneurotic reaction that was studied in the present research was depression, which has wide spread effects on both genders, from all the age groups. Additionally, depression is one of chronic illnesses that the diseased person could never get rid of easily and often occurs suddenly; so an attempt to reduce its impacts on the persons' daily life becomes a need. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that some pages from a certain novel could be the only companion when the depression gets so hard; reading novels would be a useful method to help the depressed patients get out of their dark hole if the novels were well selected. To this end, a descriptive method through the use of a questionnaire as measuring tool was conducted. A sample 23 students of English at Laghout University was selected, for their habit of reading, since they used to go to the ElBashir Ellbrahimi Library frequently. Findings showed that reading novels can be an operative way to treat depression, and a means which takes patients to new and different places and worlds, and allows them experience different adventures and meet new characters that may cheer them up and change their expectations of future plans.

Résumé :

Cette étude cherche à savoir si la lecture de textes littéraires a la capacité de traiter les maladies mentales, par exemple en raison de sa propagation parmi les hommes et les femmes et de ses effets sur différents groupes d'âge. En outre, la dépression a pris l'exemple d'une étude en raison de la maladie mentale chronique qui peut accompagner le patient tout au long de sa vie, cette maladie a besoin d'un moyen d'atténuer les crises, il est un événement soudain de ce qui peut être les seules pages du roman émerge lorsque le patient épinglé par la dépression. Le premier chapitre traite des informations générales sur la dépression et les romans et clarifie la relation entre eux. Le deuxième chapitre est consacré au côté théorique des romans en tant que technique de traitement et son fonctionnement et son impact sur le cerveau humain. Et les méthodes utilisées pour les rendre plus efficaces. En outre, ce chapitre a défini le responsable du traitement, les caractéristiques des livres proposés dans le processus de traitement et, finalement, les avantages et les inconvénients des nouveaux lecteurs. Le dernier chapitre était l'aspect pratique de l'étude en utilisant un questionnaire pour déterminer s'il était possible de lire des romans avec succès comme technique de traitement de la dépression.

ملخص:

تسعى هذه الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة ما إن كانت قراءة الروايات الأدبية لديها القدرة على علاج الأمراض النفسية، وكان الاكتئاب المثال المدروس نظرا لانتشاره الواسع بين الذكور والإناث وتأثيره على مختلف الفئات العمرية. علاوة على ذلك اتخذ الاكتئاب مثالا للدراسة لأنه من الأمراض النفسية المزمنة التي قد تلازم المريض طوال حياته فهذا المرض يحتاج وسيلة تخفف من أزماته لأنها فجائية الحدوث لهذا فقد تكون صفحات من رواية المؤنس الوحيد للمريض عندما يحاصره الاكتئاب. وللمزيد من المعلومات فيما يخص الاكتئاب والروايات خصص في هذه الدراسة ثلاث فصول. الفصل الأول متعلق بالمعلومات العامة لكل من الاكتئاب والروايات وتوضيح العلاقة بينهما. أما الفصل الثاني فقد خصص للجانب النظري من الروايات كتقنية علاج وكيفية عملها وتأثيرها على مخ الإنسان وأيضا وضع هذا الفصل كيفية استخدامها والطرق المعتمدة لجعلها أكثر فعالية، إضافة إلى ذلك هذا الفصل حدد المسؤول القائم عن العلاج، خصائص الروايات المقترحة في عملية العلاج وفي الأخير تم عرض إيجابيات وسلبيات قراءة الروايات كطريقة علاج. أما الفصل الأخير من الدراسة فقد كان الجانب العملي للدراسة وذلك عن طريق استخدام استبيان لمعرفة ما إن كان هناك احتمال لنجاح قراءة الروايات كتقنية علاج الاكتئاب.