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**Bibliotherapy for an adolescent with major depressive disorder, psychotic symptoms, smartphone addiction, and risk of violence: A case study**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Major depressive disorder in adolescents is often accompanied by emotional and behavioural problems. Excessive smartphone use may further aggravate these conditions and contribute to behavioural disturbances, including an increased risk of violent behaviour.

**Purpose:** To describe the implementation of bibliotherapy as a non-pharmacological psychiatric nursing intervention for an adolescent with major depressive disorder, psychotic symptoms, a risk of violent behaviour, and high smartphone addiction.

**Method:** This descriptive case study was conducted in Lily 3 Ward of Soerojo Hospital. A 15-year-old adolescent received bibliotherapy as part of comprehensive psychiatric nursing care for seven consecutive days. Baseline emotional and behavioural functioning was assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), while smartphone addiction was evaluated using the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS).

**Results:** Baseline SDQ assessment showed normal emotional symptoms (score = 2) and hyperactivity (score = 4), abnormal conduct problems (score = 6) and prosocial behaviour (score = 3), as well as borderline peer problems (score = 4) and total difficulties (score = 16). The baseline SAS score was 104, indicating a high level of smartphone addiction before the nursing intervention.

**Conclusion:** The baseline findings demonstrated emotional and behavioural difficulties, particularly conduct problems, impaired prosocial behaviour, borderline overall difficulties, and high smartphone addiction in an adolescent with major depressive disorder. These findings support the implementation of bibliotherapy as part of comprehensive psychiatric nursing care to address the patient's emotional and behavioural needs.

**Keywords:** Adolescents; Bibliotherapy; Major Depressive Disorder; Risk of Violent Behaviour; Smartphone Addiction.

**INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood characterized by substantial biological, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this stage, adolescents undergo identity formation while facing increasing demands for independence and social acceptance. Limited self-understanding, inadequate parental support, and poor peer relationships may contribute to emotional instability, impaired self-control, and maladaptive coping responses, making adolescents

more vulnerable to psychological distress and depressive disorders (Al Atsari & Ichsan, 2025; Ryanti & Damaiyanti, 2021). Major depressive disorder in adolescence results from complex interactions among biological, psychosocial, and environmental factors, particularly chronic stress and adverse family environments (Putri, Nazihah, Ariningrum, Celesta, & Herbawani, 2022). Family dysfunction, parent-child conflict, excessive criticism, emotional neglect, and poor interpersonal relationships have been identified

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as major contributors to adolescent depression (Prihatmono, 2025). In Indonesia, dysfunctional family environments, social pressure related to digital media, and inadequate community support further increase adolescents' vulnerability to depression and negatively affect their psychological well-being (Sundara, Larasati, Meli, Wibowo, Utami, Maulina, & Gunarti, 2022; Andrade, Scatena, Martins, de Oliveira Pinheiro, da Silva, Enes, & Kim, 2020).

The burden of adolescent depression continues to increase. A recent meta-analysis reported that the prevalence of major depression among Indonesian adolescents was 1.0%, representing 5.5% of all adolescent mental disorders. Hospital records from Soerojo Hospital also documented adolescents diagnosed with major depressive disorder (ICD-10: F32.3), with 73 cases in 2023, 56 cases in 2024, and 60 cases in 2025. Depression during adolescence is associated with emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social impairments, including persistent sadness, anxiety, low self-esteem, impaired concentration, reduced motivation, and difficulties in decision-making (Thapar, Eyre, Patel, & Brent, 2022). If left untreated, depression may persist into adulthood and impose long-term social and economic burdens. Social stigma, peer rejection, and limited social acceptance further aggravate emotional distress and depressive symptoms (Wiguna, Manengkei, Pamela, Rheza, & Hapsari, 2016). The rapid expansion of digital technology has introduced additional challenges to adolescent mental health. Excessive gadget use has been associated with depression, anxiety, stress, impaired emotional regulation, and reduced self-esteem (Nakshine, Thute, Khatib, & Sarkar, 2022). Adolescents with excessive smartphone use are also more likely to experience social isolation because online interactions increasingly replace meaningful face-to-face communication, contributing to loneliness and emotional distress (Al-Kandari & Al-Sejari, 2021). Intensive social media use increases exposure to social comparison and cyberbullying, both of which are associated with a higher risk of depression (Diah, 2023). These findings suggest that gadget addiction may worsen psychological problems among adolescents with major depressive disorder.

Current management of adolescent depression involves multidisciplinary approaches, including

cognitive behavioural therapy, interpersonal therapy, and pharmacological treatment (Zuhri & Rohmah, 2023). In addition to these interventions, bibliotherapy has emerged as a complementary psychosocial intervention that utilizes structured reading materials to facilitate emotional awareness, self-reflection, empathy, and cognitive restructuring (Salem, Hashimi, & El-Ashry, 2025; Prajnaparamita & Arfa, 2024). Previous studies have reported that bibliotherapy can promote emotional resonance, enhance perceived social support, and reduce depressive symptoms (Liao, Liang, Zhang, Liang, Zhang, & Yun, 2025). Bibliotherapy has also been shown to reduce emotional distress by providing therapeutic distraction and encouraging adaptive coping strategies (Wu, Sheih, Jou, Lee, Yu, Liu, & Chen, 2025; Natsir, Murdiana, & Nur, 2023). However, most available evidence has been derived from Western populations or individuals with mild depressive symptoms. Evidence regarding the implementation of bibliotherapy among Indonesian adolescents with major depressive disorder accompanied by psychotic symptoms, high smartphone addiction, and a risk of violent behaviour remains limited (Fiqih, Wahyuningtyas, Aziz, & Setiowati, 2020). Therefore, this case study aimed to describe the implementation of bibliotherapy as a complementary psychiatric nursing intervention in an adolescent with major depressive disorder, psychotic symptoms, high smartphone addiction, and a risk of violent behaviour.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A comprehensive psychiatric nursing care approach, including assessment, nursing diagnosis, planning, implementation, evaluation, and nursing documentation. The study was conducted in Lily 3 Ward of Soerojo Hospital, an inpatient psychiatric ward for children and adolescents. The participant was one adolescent diagnosed with major depressive disorder with psychotic symptoms (ICD-10: F32.3) and a nursing diagnosis of risk for violent behaviour. The patient received routine psychiatric nursing care, including bibliotherapy as a non-pharmacological nursing intervention, for seven consecutive days (November 26–December 2, 2025), with one intervention session per day.

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The patient's condition was assessed using two standardized instruments. Emotional and behavioural problems were evaluated using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), with the Indonesian version for adolescents aged 11–18 years clinically validated. Smartphone addiction was assessed using the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS) and validated in Indonesian by (Kurniawan, Rustika, & Aryani, 2016). The SDQ assessed emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, and prosocial behaviour, while the SAS measured the

level of smartphone addiction. Data were analysed using a qualitative descriptive approach through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Clinical findings before, during, and after the intervention were organized chronologically to evaluate changes in emotional regulation, social interaction, aggressive behaviour, psychotic symptoms, and smartphone addiction based on clinical observations and the SDQ and SAS assessment results.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

**Table 1. Baseline SDQ assessment**

| Domain             | Score | Interpretation |
|--------------------|-------|----------------|
| Emotional symptoms | 2     | Normal         |
| Conduct problems   | 6     | Abnormal       |
| Hyperactivity      | 4     | Normal         |
| Peer problems      | 4     | Borderline     |
| Total difficulties | 16    | Borderline     |
| Prosocial behavior | 3     | Abnormal       |

Table 1 presents the baseline SDQ assessment. The patient demonstrated normal emotional symptoms and hyperactivity, abnormal conduct problems and prosocial behaviour, and borderline peer problems and total difficulties, indicating the presence of emotional and behavioural difficulties before the implementation of bibliotherapy.

**Table 2. Baseline smartphone addiction assessment**

| Instrument                       | Score | Interpretation            |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS) | 104   | High smartphone addiction |

Table 2 presents the baseline smartphone addiction assessment. The patient obtained an SAS score of 104, indicating a high level of smartphone addiction prior to the nursing intervention.

## DISCUSSION

The baseline assessment revealed borderline total psychological difficulties, abnormal conduct problems and prosocial behaviour, and a high level of smartphone addiction, indicating that the client experienced multidimensional emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties before the intervention. These findings are consistent with

previous evidence showing that excessive smartphone use is associated with poorer mental health outcomes, including depressive symptoms, emotional dysregulation, and behavioural problems among adolescents. Impaired prosocial behaviour and conduct problems also reflect difficulties in interpersonal functioning that may increase the risk of aggressive or violent behaviour. Therefore, psychiatric nursing care should address both psychological symptoms and smartphone addiction to improve emotional regulation and reduce the risk of violent behaviour in adolescents with major depressive disorder.

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Major depressive disorder in adolescents is characterized not only by persistent sadness but also by cognitive disturbances, physical complaints, and behavioural dysregulation that often impair daily functioning (Nuraenah, Widakdo, Naryati, Aisyah, Fadhillah, Adelia, & Adelia, 2023). In the present case, the client demonstrated abnormal conduct problems before the intervention, suggesting impaired emotional regulation and an increased tendency toward aggressive behavior. The client's high level of smartphone addiction may have contributed to these problems, as excessive gadget use has been associated with sleep disturbances, reduced social interaction, and greater exposure to inappropriate digital content, all of which may worsen depressive symptoms and increase the risk of violent behaviour (Kamaruddin, Leuwol, Putra, Aina, Suwarma, & Zulfikhar, 2023; Syahputra, 2025).

Bibliotherapy was implemented as a structured non-pharmacological psychiatric nursing intervention over seven consecutive days through guided reading, reflection, and therapeutic discussion. This approach enabled the client to identify with story characters, recognize personal emotional experiences, and explore more adaptive coping strategies (Aryani, Basaria, & Pranawati, 2020). The initial assessment and reflective process also provided a supportive environment that encouraged the client to express previously suppressed emotions without fear of judgment (Girela-Serrano, Spiers, Ruotong, Gangadia, Toledano, & Di Simplicio, 2024). Previous studies have similarly reported that structured bibliotherapy combined with guided discussion can reduce aggressive behaviour and improve psychosocial functioning among adolescents at risk of violence (Castillo-Eito, Armitage, Norman, Day, Dogru, & Rowe, 2020).

Following the intervention, improvements were observed in the client's psychosocial condition (Méndez, Padron, Fumero, & Marrero, 2024). The SDQ total difficulties score decreased to the normal range, while the prosocial behaviour score improved from the abnormal to the normal category, indicating better emotional regulation, behavioural control, and interpersonal functioning. These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that bibliotherapy facilitates emotional awareness,

empathy, and adaptive coping through identification with fictional characters and reflective reading (Wati, Susila, & Purwaningsih, 2021). In addition, bibliotherapy has been reported to enhance self-confidence and social awareness (Nasution, 2023) and to reduce aggressive behavior and social isolation by promoting healthier emotional regulation and social interactions (Lubis, Ainun, Munizu, & Fathurohman, 2023). Although this report describes a single case, the findings suggest that bibliotherapy may be a useful complementary psychiatric nursing intervention for adolescents with major depressive disorder accompanied by smartphone addiction and a risk of violent behaviour.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of bibliotherapy showed positive outcomes. After seven days of intervention, the client's SDQ total difficulties score decreased, while the strengths score increased, indicating improvements in emotional regulation, behavioural functioning, and prosocial behaviour. These findings suggest that bibliotherapy may be a supportive nursing intervention for adolescents with major depressive disorder. This case also indicates that major depressive disorder with gadget addiction and a risk of violent behaviour involves multidimensional emotional, behavioural, and social problems influenced by individual, developmental, and environmental factors.

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