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Perceptions of Bibliotherapy: A Survey of Undergraduate Students

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Human Development and Family Studies

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Introduction

Students spend about 14,000 hours (Elmore, 2009) in the K-12 setting. Presenting teachers with the challenge of managing both academic and non-academic issues (i.e., divorce, moving) of K-12 students. Bibliotherapy is one approach to systematically address students’ issues through the utilization of quality literature to transform traditional reading into an instructional strategy that meets the unique needs of students.

Research Questions

- RQ1.** What are the experiences and current understanding of bibliotherapy of pre-service teachers and other undergraduate students?
- RQ2.** What purposes do pre-service teachers and other undergraduate students perceive as acceptable for classroom teachers to use bibliotherapy in the classroom?
- RQ3.** How comfortable are pre-service teachers and other undergraduate students at implementing bibliotherapy in the classroom?
- RQ4.** What factors influence level of comfort in implementing bibliotherapy as an intervention in the classroom?
- RQ5.** What concerns do pre-service teachers and other undergraduates hold in regards to bibliotherapy implementation?

Participants & Setting

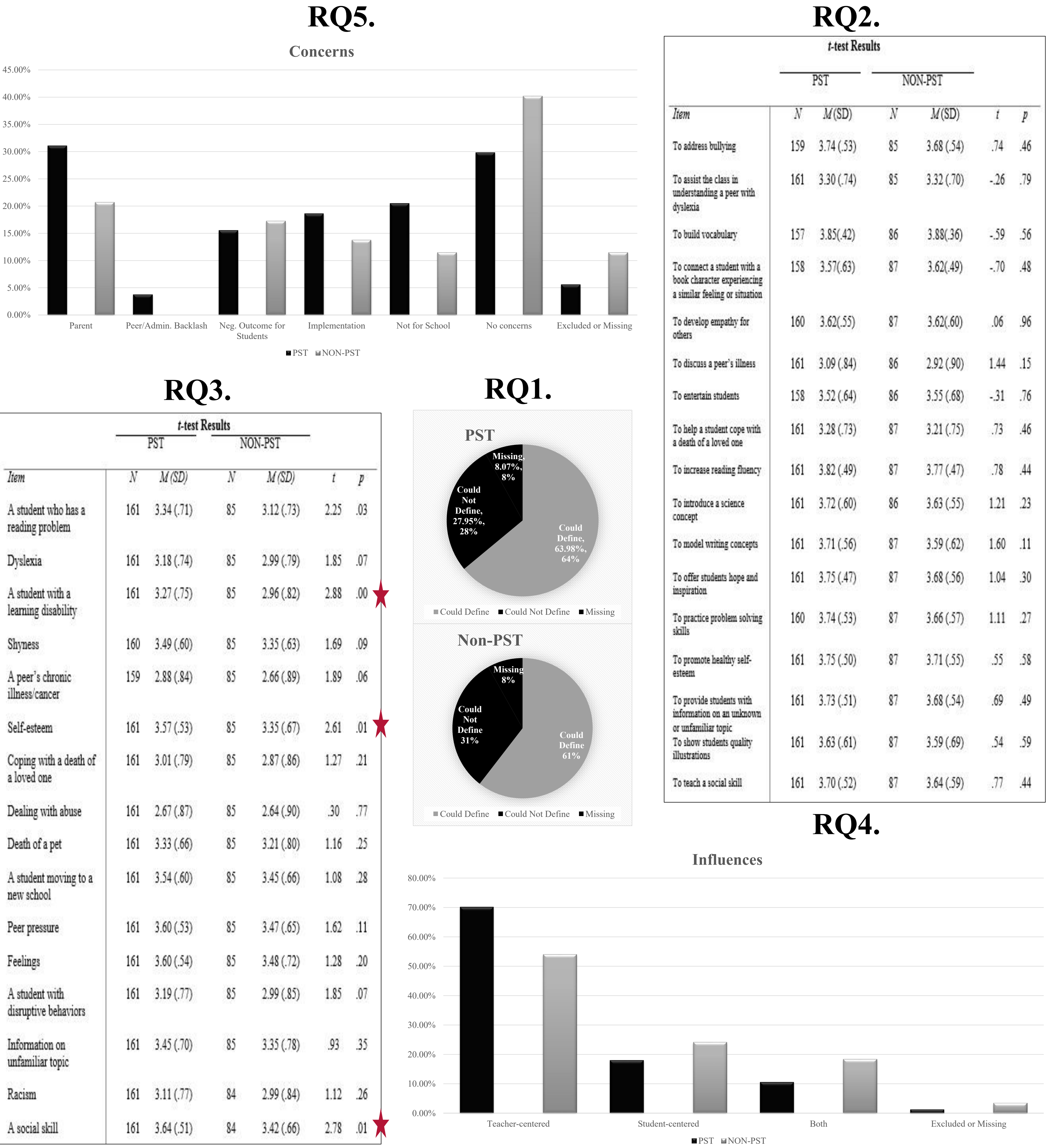
- The study was conducted at a four-year, large state university in the Midwest.
- Participants were **64.9% (n=161) preservice teachers (PSTs)** and **35.1% (n=87) non-preservice teachers (non-PSTs)**.
 - The racial composition of the sample included **91.9% White**, 0.8% Asian, 1.6% Black, 0.4% Hispanic, 0.4% Latino, 2% Other, and 2.8% Unreported respondents.
 - The participants were 13.7% male, **83.9% female**, 0.4% other, and 2% unreported.

Methods

Data collection method: A survey research design was created and implemented by Randie Camp. The paper-pencil survey (rating scales & open-ended questions) was given to undergraduate students in face-to-face lectures.

Data analysis methods: Descriptive analyses, independent sample t-tests, cross tabulation analyses, and content analyses were performed on the data to analyze the numerical and narrative data obtained from the surveys.

Results



Discussion

- RQ1.** The PSTs in this sample were not yet distinctly different from non-PSTs.
- RQ2.** These results illustrate a general acceptance of bibliotherapy implementation with children and adolescents in classroom settings to address a wide range of purposes for both groups.
- RQ3.** This finding is consistent with the literature and is logical because future educators would be more comfortable with helping children and adolescents cope with social, emotional, and learning challenges than participants who may not be planning to work or interact with children and adolescents. The items illustrating perceived discomfort from participants’ rating of purposes could be perceived as more clinical and not comfortable for teachers implementing developmental bibliotherapy to address purposes that are developmental and common for the majority of children and adolescents (Forgan, 2002).
- RQ4.** Greater priority of personal comfort (teacher-centered) over student needs is concerning and may demonstrate a low professional maturity in new and beginning teachers (Hyun, 2006).
- RQ5.** Of the reported concerns, fear of upsetting parents was the highest for both groups. This finding was unexpected but is consistent with the literature, as others have noted new and beginning teachers expressing concern in how others perceive their teaching ability (Shook, 2012).

Future Directions

- Need for more research studies (teacher action research) in K-12 classrooms to assess efficacy.
- Once a body of evidence exists and more teachers have been trained in bibliotherapy, replication studies focused on measuring perceptions of bibliotherapy in teacher training programs, and follow-up studies of participants to evaluate bibliotherapy implementation of practicing teachers could be performed.