

Wordplay and Stanzas: Poetry Therapy for Non-Clinical Population

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Abstract

Poetry therapy, by the sound of it, might seem like a fairly new technique in the field of Psychology, but McCulliss (2011) highlighted that even in the 1st century AD where it was used by Soranus who prescribed it as healing words to his psychiatric patients in Egypt. Poetry as a therapeutic technique slowly gained its popularity after the 1950s and even psychologists like Sigmund Freud stated that “Not I, but the poet discovered the unconscious.”

Holding a theoretical base of psychodynamic and humanistic, it not only helps in self-expression and catharsis but also in self-discovery, promotes self-acceptance and collective healing. Despite being a part of Narrative therapy, a huge research gap has been identified in its application in India with very minimal research.

For a country rich in linguistics and poets of every dialect, it has not made its way into a therapeutic technique or an intervention. Thus, in this paper, the researcher explores the use of poetry therapy on the non-clinical population and understands the benefits of the same with the hope that it can be implemented.

Aforesaid, empirical review papers and articles were considered, and to make a coherence of it all, narrative synthesis was used. This helped the researcher find out common themes, patterns and gaps in the existing literature. This paper holds relevance in understanding a new therapeutic technique that can be explored and used apart from the already existing techniques, and paves the way for further research in the same.

Keywords: Poetry therapy, non-clinical population, narrative synthesis

Introduction

In an article by Britannica (2026) by Nemerov, Poetry is defined as the “literatures that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound and rhythm.” In another article in LaFictioner, the word poetry comes from the Latin term “poetria” from Latin poeta, a word used for anyone who wrote poetry. This word was also initially referred to as creative literature. For the longest of time poems were seen in forms of prayers, praises of kings and queens, religious stories, love songs and even as fiction. The Vedas that we read about today are also written in the form of poetry. Tracing back poetry into Psychology, it was first a Roman physician named Soranus in 1st century A.D. who prescribed poetry and drama to his patients. Later on, poetry as a therapeutic technique in 1751 was also used by

Benjamin Franklin to prescribe mentally ill patients reading, writing and publishing their work as a form of healing.

Poetry as therapy slowly started gaining more and more attention in the 1950s and thereafter. Freud also, once wrote “Not I, but the poet discovered the unconscious.” It has been defined by the APA (2018) as “a form of bibliotherapy that uses the reading or writing of poetry to facilitate emotional expression in an individual and foster healing and personal growth” with a theoretical base of both psychodynamic and humanistic psychology respectively. The psychodynamic theory works on understanding the unconscious and personal narratives of an individual, allowing them to uncover their hidden thoughts and feelings and humanistic becomes grounded in the belief that everyone has the inherent capacity for growth and the use of poetry helps in self-discovery, expression and promotes self-acceptance as well.

In India, even though poetry had not taken a therapeutic turn, it was widely used. The oldest and the most well-known epics written in Sanskrit, the Ramayana and Mahabharata are also in the form of poetry. Indian poetry today, becomes the most diverse from any other poetic culture possible in the world. Poetry is not only used for catharsis but also for devotion, love, pain, patriotism, teachings, motivation, confidence, nature and various other topics that can come into one’s mind. We have had the luck to have great poets like Kabir Das, Kali Das (Shakespeare of India), Rabindranath Tagore, Mirabai and also Indian-English poets like Kamala Surayaa writing about an array of topics and inspiring millions.

Outside of India, Poetry as therapy is well established as a therapeutic technique falling under the narrative therapy, bibliotherapy and expressive arts therapy. However, despite the rich history, researchers here have only very recently started focusing on how poetry has helped people overcome a crisis like the pandemic COVID 19 in India Raghuvanshi, (2021) and Sharma (2021). It is slowly gaining recognition and has helped deal not only with mentally ill patients having depression, anxiety, bipolar and suicidal ideations and tendencies, it has also shown improvements in case of traumatic experiences like physical abuse, harassment, rape etc. Apart from these, it has also worked in enhancing hope, empathy, self-resilience, self-compassion, confidence and reducing stress on the targeted population.

Poetry in all its form seems to be as effective as the other therapeutic techniques available in positive psychology and otherwise which pushes the researcher to explore the same on a dynamic population like India where multiple cultural as well as poetic practices exist. India becomes and land of poetry with every region and language having their own famous poets, with poetry for every form and situation. Poetry has been proven to be effective in managing and handling various crises like situations and usually leaves the writer or listener with a sense of betterment, a collective presence which reduces the feelings of distress.

Being as conceptual exploratory paper, it seeks to conceptually explore the application of poetry therapy in non-clinical populations especially in a country like India. It focuses on understanding the kind of an impact would poetry have on a culturally and poetically diverse population like such.

The purpose of the study became to put an effort towards bridging the existing gap of use of poetry not just as a cathartic technique but also as a therapeutic technique or an interventional technique in India. It primarily focuses on understanding its effects on the non-clinical population taking into consideration a wide age group. This study also helped finding effective new ways to deal with concerns like self-esteem, confidence issues, emotional regulation and other related issues. Here, it also served the purpose of understanding and instilling similar ideas into the Indian field of psychology.

Guiding questions:

1. What are the future implications of poetry in practice and research in India?
2. From a historical and theoretical perspective, how has poetry as a therapeutic technique grown in Psychology?
3. Can poetry therapy be adapted for non-clinical populations across various age groups?

Review of Literature:

Frosthoefel (2014) in his paper called poetry or the act of writing poetry to be the modern “lectico divina” which in Latin becomes the practice of reading and meditating on a particular scripture. He stated that whether it was done as a community, individually or even by poet-saints, it led them to the path of deep realization. It has both cognitive and emotional outcomes for anyone who engages in poetry in both acts of listening and reading also leading to transformative potentials. It was considered that anyone who engaged in attentive reading of sacred poetry even if they did not belong to that particular religion it still had the capacity to generate therapeutic and spiritual outcome. Thus this paper highlighted on how poetry is not just storytelling but can leave a deeper impact on those indulging in it. McCulliss (2011) in another paper discussed the history of poetry as a therapy and included multiple authors explaining how by using poetry creates a language for the user through which they can express unsaid emotions allowing one to “come as close as possible to the edge of what cannot be said” (Jones, 1997, p. 684). In the same paper, she also cited (Bell, 1982, p. 30) who explained how poetry offers a sense of uniqueness through which the soul becomes capable of communicating with the other. This paper also highlights how poetry has its root in psychoanalysis and writing a poem becomes an unconscious act to express repressed and unconscious desires and emotions.

Carroll (2005) highlighted on how poetry can take a person down the path of healing through their own voice and finding the exact words which can be used to define a traumatic experience can bring healing as well as relief. Carroll explains how poetry allows one to speak about concepts like death, dying or illnesses which aren't exactly easy conversations to have with everyone. Poetry allows a space for every taboo emotion or expression one can possibly think of.

Through his paper Wakeman (2015) highlighted central questions related to poetry and how therapeutic it can be for both the reader and the listener. While answering these questions through various literature he was able to find out that poetry does become a therapeutic process for both the readers and writers and while doing so developed a concept of poetic inquiry which referred to the notion of poetry as research. Croom in the same year (2015) compared how poetry as a practise and also as a therapeutic intervention is closely related to improving psychological well-being and also possesses most of the PERMA factors. It states that practicing poetry can positively help in enhancing psychological factors and also positively influence emotions, experiences, meaning and purpose of life and also accomplishments while increasing creative engagement of state of flow. Mazza (2016) who is also known as the father of poetry therapy, wrote a book which proves the effectiveness of use of poetry therapy which now also includes the contemporary techniques and issues which are included in open mics and slam poetry sessions. Understanding poetry and its benefits from these contemporary techniques helps create a wider understanding of its creative and expressive essence. Yücesan & Şendurur (2018) in their paper highlighted on the use of creative therapy techniques like music therapy, poetry therapy and drama therapy and the impact it had on college going students. The research was conducted in a pre and post experimental study where students answered the Coopersmith Self-esteem

questionnaire before and after attending given therapy sessions. Through this research it was found that the use of these creative techniques not only had positive impact on general self-esteem of the students but also on their social, academic and parental self-esteem.

Further, Amos (2019) in her paper illuminated on the poetic journey her readers went through and how they all could reflect on the impact of each one of them. Through the paper it was found that poetry was able to bring in much considerable meaning to their experiences to the readers who participated in the study. Here, poetry was also highlighted as an epiphany that can be carried forward and considered to be more than what simple words could say or express. Later on Knill & Atkins (2020) in their book, *Poetry in Expressive Arts* very beautifully explained how it slowly helps to create hope and confidence in the individual practising poetry and that it helps not only with healing but also problem solving, personal and professional development. This book emphasizes how poetry brings in more positive changes in one's life and how it fits very well in the expressive arts therapy. Not only that, this book also shed light on the various ways in which one can engage in poetry and how each one have their own benefits for the user. For example: when used in written form, poetry helps establishing a connection with their inner and outer selves and find more comfort with the possibility of transformation from suffering to relief and hope.

Uppal (2020), spoke about poetry as one of the creative processes which allows one to understand the constructiveness of life by using OP Bhatnagar's poetry as a form of catharsis. This paper focused on how Bhatnagar used poetry as a tool to overcome the hurdles of life, hurt feelings, suffering, understanding nation and even concepts of god and men. This shows us how poetry is not only limited to emotional expression but can also expand to the more abstract ideas that occur in one's life time.

With the pandemic on uproar, a paper by Acim (2021) brought into light the flourishing of lockdown poetry and how poetry in times of a global pandemic became a form of self-reflection and also a form of escape from anxiety and panic. Not only did poetry provide an escape from human suffering it also helped form a connection or a network society which was mainly together for verses and rhythmical prose. This paper had a qualitative research method and helped exploring the variables of anxiety, healing stress and excessive fear during the pandemic. These lockdown poems were also the ones that went quite viral and connecting millions globally and virtually with relatable words and prose. In a similar paper by an Indian author, Sharma (2021) spoke about how reading and rewriting poetry helped survive the COVID 19 pandemic. The author shared his own experience of how it was to go back to reading and writing poetry during the lockdown which helped him understand and make sense of everything that was happening around him. Even though life had come to a halt, poetry helped him understand how he could see movement in the same stillness of life and understand the after effects from a personal, social and professional point of view. In another paper by the same author Sharma (2024) related to COVID 19 he shed light upon the difficult times that people had to go through during the pandemic and this was when they turned to poetry to find solace. It included both reading and writing of poetry during the lockdown that seemed to help individuals process, understand and make sense of their lives. Here as well the concept of lockdown poems or poetry came into being where people took to poetry to express themselves, their isolation and pain. Poetry, according to the author became a tool for hope building among many during the lockdown and especially students whose poetic work was taken into a collection here to decipher.

Chavis (2022) in another paper portrayed beautifully how the use of poetry therapy can also provide relief from feelings of loneliness; it can also inculcate feelings of empathy for those suffering from

isolation. It helped cope with the loneliness that stems in from transition phases, discrimination, chronic dysfunctional patterns and works well with both clinical and non-clinical populations. Using poetry therapy facilitates better expressive writing and enhances appreciation of solitude in a healthy manner. Rolfs (2023) provided a professional and personal point of view on poetry therapy. In her paper she keynote speech she addressed how poetry therapy promoted healthy transitions and helped the clients work with their difficult emotions as well as helping them find profound beauty and a new sense of well-being which also helped them connect with self and the nature and others. This paper included a wide variety of reviews as well as personal poems and those by other published poets. Stanley, Stanley & Nguyen (2024) in a very recent paper highlighted how biblio-poetry therapy helped in enhancing the resilience in undergraduate students. The study was a quasi-experimental research with 25 students who went through six weekly online one hour poetry therapy sessions with a trained facilitator. This therapy technique showed multiple benefits for the participating students improving their psychological well-being as well leading to better mental health.

Going back to a slightly older paper written by Heimes, S. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis research on the state of poetry therapy which showed that poetry as a therapy has already been more deeply integrated as a therapeutic technique in United States than in any other country and that within the coming 10 years of research, the scope will be diversified even more stretching to other nations. This can be supported by the variations and origins of studies and articles we can see from other countries. Thus, this shows us that the research on poetry as a therapeutic technique has been increasing and gaining awareness across the world. Along-side all these positive findings, Mcardle & Byrt (2001) highlighted a very important gap in the use of poetry therapy which researchers are still trying to comprehend and measure the effectiveness of the multiple expressive and therapeutic or interventional uses of literature. This gap has been addressed by Heimes (2011) who explained how research in poetry will be expanded in coming years. There needs to be more interdisciplinary collaboration in this area to bring about more refined techniques for the use of poetry as a therapeutic tool.

Considerably old yet a significant article by Silverman (1988) states how poetry therapy is not just a single disciplinary tool but is interdisciplinary in nature combining behavioural science, philosophy, literature as well as psychology. It explains how poetry can be used to understand the underlying anxiety of an individual, to assess any emotional malfunctions as well as help understand the underlying attributes and shape the individuals personality. Here, poetry therapy is utilised as a clinical tool and expands onto the counselling aspects as well. Alfrey et al, (2022) went ahead and synthesized a replication case study on poetry therapy and its perceived effects on the participants. The two cases comprised of video recorded poetry therapy sessions with 4 to 5 interview sessions with the participants. When the study was further replicated, it was seen that there were no new findings and both the cases had adequate description of participant experiences. They found that there is good empirical evidence to support the current techniques of poetry therapy and can be further studied and implemented.

Rationale:

The rationale behind this study becomes to identify the existing research gap for the use of poetry as a therapeutic technique on Indian non-clinical population. Mcardle & Byrt (2001) highlight a very important gap in the use of poetry therapy which researchers are still trying to comprehend and measure the effectiveness of the multiple expressive and therapeutic or interventional uses of literature. Through this paper the researcher tried to explore its benefits and effective application in India.

Objectives:

1. To understand the therapeutic application of poetry and its impacts specifically on non-clinical population
2. To understand the history and current status of poetry as a therapeutic practice
3. To understand the research on therapy in India and on Indian population and existing gaps
4. To assess interdisciplinary application of poetry in philosophy, psychology, literature and other applicable areas.

Identified Themes:

1. A transformative and contemplative process: Poetry in the above reviews by Frosthofel (2014) and Wakeman (2015) are seen as both transformative in nature and contemplative. Frosthofel's study shows that anyone who engages in poetry has both cognitive and emotional transformations and despite it belonging to a particular religion, it can lead to both therapeutic and spiritual benefits as well. Wakeman's paper highlighted a similar idea of how poetry can be therapeutic process by which both the reader and listener develop poetic inquiry.
2. Medium for the unsaid emotions and expressions: Poetry has been seen to have a constant theme in which it gives words to the inexpressible or unsaid emotions and feelings an individual goes through. The paper by McCulliss (2011) quotes Bell (1982) who states that one can come as close as possible to the "edge of what cannot be said." In a similar idea Carroll (2005) explained how poetry allows one to express supposed taboo topics of the society like death or illness. Finally, in a paper by Uppal (2020) we can see him decoding how OP Bhatnagar, used poetry to speak of those unsaid wounds that he carried going through the hurdles of life. Poetry here becomes a safe symbolic container which allows emotional release, expression, catharsis with creative chosen words.
3. The Unconscious dimension and Psychoanalytic roots: Through these papers it has been understood that poetry helps an individual uncover and bring to surface, their unconscious thoughts, feelings or desires. The papers highlighting this idea most prominently are McCulliss (2011) and Silverman (1988). Silverman (1988) further explained how the use of poetry can help uncover the anxieties, emotional dysfunctions as well as underlying personality attributes of an individual. This can work well with both clinical and non-clinical population. This shows that poetry is not merely a creative outlet but can work as a bridge between expressive arts and psychological frameworks.
4. Improvement of psychological well-being: Considerable number of studies in the reviewed papers have highlighted on how the use of poetry as an intervention of as a therapy has led to improved psychological well-being, better self-esteem, confidence and even resilience among participants. Croom (2015) showed how poetry possesses all the PERMA factors and leads to an improved psychological well-being, enhancing state of flow as well as positively impacting meaning and experiences of life. Yücesan and Şendurur (2018) highlighted on the use of these creative techniques not only had positive impact on general self-esteem of the students but also on their social, academic and parental self-esteem. Amos (2019) through their paper reflected on the meaning making process which comes alive with the help of poetry and allows readers to process pain and loneliness and to move from a state of suffering to relief and hope. In her research Rolfs (2023) mentioned about how the use of poetry helped clients work with their difficult emotions and find profound beauty and a new sense of well-being which also helped them connect with self and the nature and others. One of the latest studies by Stanley et al. (2024) concluded that the use of a well-structured biblio-poetry therapy intervention allowed increased resilience in undergraduate students.

5. Meaning making, healing, coping and connecting with poetry: Poetry emerges as a multidimensional component that brings about connecting with self, nature and others in various context and situations as well as it brings about healing, coping, meaning making and finding purpose in one's life. It functions in relation to other psychological aspects like empathy, emotions and shared understandings. Authors Knill and Atkins (2020) and Amos (2019) have both written researches through which one can reflect on the meaning making process which comes alive with the help of poetry and allows readers to process pain and loneliness and to move from a state of suffering to relief and hope.
6. COVID 19, loneliness and, empathy and social engagement: Poetry has also worked its way through people when life in the outside world had halted. This was also the time when poetry in India was widely being studied and understood. Papers by (Acim 2021; Sharma 2021, 2024; Raghuwanshi 2021) during COVID 19 have very beautifully presented how writing poetry has connected people globally in times of pandemic crisis, reducing the feelings of loneliness and despair among many. Other papers written by Chavis (2022) and Rolfs (2023) portrayed paper portrayed beautifully how the use of poetry therapy can also provide relief from feelings of loneliness and how it can also inculcate the feelings of empathy and appreciation of solitude. It also highlighted how poetry leads to enhanced emotional awareness.
7. Contemporary and interdisciplinary Practice: Poetry as a therapeutic and an interventional technique belongs to not one but multiple disciplines like philosophy, spirituality, literature, behavioral sciences while integrating psychology along the process. This interdisciplinary relation shows the flexibility that poetry therapy carries where it can also be used across every age group and adapted across educational, group and community based contexts. Poetry is also seen to be adopted in contemporary contexts like slam poetry and open mics which have gained a lot of popularity among youth. Poetry crosses over boundaries with art, therapy and philosophy. Papers by Wakeman (2015), Heimes (2011), Sliverman (1988) and Mazza's book (2016) all reflect this theme with empirical evidence.

Limitations and expanding scope of poetry therapy and its research: McArdle & Byrt (2001) highlighted a very important gap in the use of poetry therapy which researchers are still trying to comprehend and measure the effectiveness of the multiple expressive and therapeutic or interventional uses of literature. This gap has been addressed by Heimes (2011) who explained how research in poetry will be expanded in coming years through a meta-analysis study. There needs to be more interdisciplinary collaboration in this area to bring about more refined techniques for the use of poetry as a therapeutic tool. Another paper by Alfrey et al. (2022) expands on the scope of poetry therapy by presenting replicable studies which compared case studies that presented adequate description of participant experiences.

Method:

1. Databases Searched:

Google Scholar, Science Direct, Sage Publications, Taylor and Francis, Indian journals, Research Gate, Brill Academia Publishers, Wiley Online Library

These websites have been used as they hold essentials papers related to psychology for variables like poetry as therapy for non-clinical population.

2. Search Terms/ Keywords:

1. Poetry as therapy

2. Poetry for catharsis
3. History of poetry therapy
4. Poetry as a narrative therapy
5. Poetry in counselling

3. Search Limits/Filters:

Time frame: 2000-2026

Language: English

Study type: Qualitative Review paper with Narrative Synthesis

4. Inclusion and Exclusion criteria:

Inclusion: Studies related to poetry as therapy and form of catharsis on non-clinical population were included.

Exclusion: Any studies based on these variables on the clinical population were excluded informal review of literatures were also excluded.

5. Analysis:

Analysis of the papers were done using Narrative synthesis wherein all the studies were amalgamated to understand the patterns, similarities, difference, insights and gaps with existing studies.

Results:

The aim of this paper was to study the use of poetry as a therapeutic technique in India for non-clinical population. For the same, empirical review papers and articles were considered. This paper sheds light on the importance of concepts like poetry as a therapeutic technique and as an intervention, its interdisciplinary and contemporary contribution and its role in healing, meaning making and finding purpose in life among many other related concepts. Over time, researchers have established entire therapeutic techniques to use poetry in various situations and conditions where the technique has worked well with both clinical and non-clinical population. These techniques include receptive, which is reading or discussing existing work, expressive which is to create original work and symbolic, which can be done using metaphors. It allows one to see how poetry is not simply a tool for catharsis but when used in a therapeutic sense it can help enhance self-esteem, better emotional understanding, and exploration of the unconscious and also feelings of hope and confidence, redefine complexities via changing narratives, get deeper insights and also instil a sense of self-awareness by making sense of the world around them. It uses narrative synthesis to summarize research and articles to make coherence of the variables and understand any existing research gaps.

Through the use of narrative synthesis, the following themes were identified: 1. A transformative and contemplative process, 2. Medium for the unsaid emotions and expressions, 3. The Unconscious dimension and Psychoanalytic roots, 4. Improvement of psychological well-being, 5. Meaning making, healing, coping and connecting with poetry, 6. COVID 19, loneliness, empathy and social engagement, 7. Contemporary and interdisciplinary Practice and, 8. Limitations and expanding scope of poetry therapy and its research. With the help of these themes, the author was also able to answer the guiding questions that are:

1. What are the future implications of poetry in practice and research in India?
2. From a historical and theoretical perspective, how has poetry as a therapeutic technique grown in Psychology?
3. Can poetry therapy be adapted for non-clinical populations across various age groups?

Alongside the found themes and answering the guiding questions, the study was also able to understand the existing limitations and gaps for the same. McArdle & Byrt (2001) highlighted the same gap explaining the use of poetry therapy which researchers were trying to comprehend and measure the effectiveness of the multiple expressive and therapeutic or interventional uses of literature. This gap was addressed by Heimes (2011) and by Alfrey et al. (2022) who explained how research in poetry will be expanded in coming years through a meta-analysis study and through replication studies respectively. Both these studies showed how poetry therapy has expanded and hold enough empirical evidence to establish as a therapy.

Discussion:

The aim of this paper was to study the use of poetry as a therapeutic technique in India for non-clinical population. It shed light on the importance of concepts like poetry as a therapeutic technique and as an intervention, its interdisciplinary and contemporary contribution and its role in healing, meaning making and finding purpose in life among many other related concepts. In the study primarily, the researcher tried to understand on how poetry as a therapeutic technique can be used on the non-clinical population of India. These variables were studied through a qualitative review with a narrative synthesis analysis to identify themes, similarities, contradictions and gaps in the research.

As defined by APA, poetry therapy is “a form of biblio-therapy that uses the reading or writing of poetry to facilitate emotional expression in an individual and foster healing and personal growth.” In India, even though poetry has not taken a therapeutic turn, it was widely used. The oldest and the most well-known epics written in Sanskrit, the Ramayana and Mahabharata are also in the form of poetry. Indian poetry today, becomes the most diverse from any other poetic culture possible in the world. Poetry is not only used for catharsis but also for devotion, love, pain, patriotism, teachings, motivation, confidence, nature and various other topics that can come into one’s mind. Even Mazza (2016) in his book showed how poetry today is not just limited to the traditional forms of expression but has expanded to contemporary spaces such as slam poetry and open mics which is also a very prevalent practise in India among the youth.

This paper also tried to understand the research scope of poetry therapy in India, what has been done so far and what more can be done in the future. The same has been answered through the guiding questions:

1. What are the future implications of poetry in practice and research in India?

In India, the research on a concept like poetry as therapy or a stand-alone therapy technique is in its very initial phases where a lot of the studies have come out after (Sharma 2021, 2024; Raghuwanshi 2021) COVID 19 and have very beautifully presented how writing poetry has connected people globally in times of pandemic crisis, reduced the feelings of loneliness and despair among many. Another form of research that is being done in India is via decoding poets and their work like that of in Uppal (2020) decoding how OP Bhatnagar, used poetry to speak of those unsaid wounds that he carried going through the hurdles of life. Poetry here becomes a safe symbolic container which allows emotional release, expression, catharsis with creative chosen words. Even the contemporary implication explained by Mazza (2016) in his book showed how poetry today is not just limited to the traditional forms of expression but has expanded to contemporary spaces such as slam poetry and open mics which is also a very prevalent practise in Indian youth which can also be widely researched. The work is primarily qualitative and exploratory in nature.

2. From a historical and theoretical perspective, how has poetry as a therapeutic technique grown in Psychology?

McCulliss (2011) traced back poetry into Psychology. It was first a Roman physician named Soranus in 1st century A.D. who prescribed poetry and drama to his patients. Later on, poetry as a therapeutic technique in 1751 was also used by Benjamin Franklin to prescribe mentally ill patients reading, writing and publishing their work as a form of healing. Poetry as therapy slowly started gaining more and more attention in the 1950s and thereafter. McArdle & Byrt (2001) highlighted a very important gap in the use of poetry therapy which researchers are still trying to comprehend and measure the effectiveness of the multiple expressive and therapeutic or interventional uses of literature. This gap has been addressed by Heimes (2011) who explained how research in poetry will be expanded in coming years through a meta-analysis study. There needs to be more interdisciplinary collaboration in this area to bring about more refined techniques for the use of poetry as a therapeutic tool. Another paper by Alfrey et al. (2022) expands on the scope of poetry therapy by presenting replicable studies which compared case studies that presented adequate description of participant experiences.

3. Can poetry therapy be adapted for non-clinical populations across various age groups?

Poetry as a therapeutic and an interventional technique belongs to not one but multiple disciplines like philosophy, spirituality, literature, behavioural sciences while integrating psychology along the process. This interdisciplinary relation shows the flexibility that poetry therapy carries where it can also be used across every age group and adapted across educational, group and community based contexts. Poetry is also seen to be adopted in contemporary contexts like slam poetry and open mics which have gained a lot of popularity among youth. Poetry crosses over boundaries with art, therapy and philosophy. Papers by Wakeman (2015), Heimes (2011), Sliverman (1988) and Mazza's book (2016) all reflect this theme with empirical evidence. . Papers by (Acim 2021; Sharma 2021, 2024; Raghuwanshi 2021) during COVID 19 have very beautifully presented how writing poetry has connected people globally in times of pandemic crisis, reducing the feelings of loneliness and despair among many. Croom (2015), Yücesan and Şendurur (2018), Amos (2019), research Rolfs (2023), Stanley et al. (2024) and other authors showed how poetry leads to an improved psychological well-being, enhanced state of flow positive impact on meaning and experiences of life, positive impact on self-esteem, ability to process pain and loneliness and to move from a state of suffering to relief and hope, to also find profound beauty and a new sense of well-being which also helped them connect with self and the nature and others and also an increased resilience in undergraduate students.

With the help of these review papers, the researcher was able to find answers to the guiding questions and further understand the concept of poetry therapy.

Limitations:

- The studies around poetry therapy are qualitative based which makes it difficult to generalize them on larger samples.
- As studies are based on personal experiences, they bring in subjectivity of context.
- Poetry therapy is still a very western concept and studies done in India are also majorly qualitative in nature mostly based on decoding other poets.
- Variability of different/multiple techniques being used makes it difficult to have a standardized measure to assess the outcome of the context.

Conclusion:

This study examined the use of poetry therapy on non-clinical population taking in consideration Indian demographic and whether or not poetry as a therapeutic technique will work here. The study was done using narrative synthesis which took out common themes and similarities in the study and research gaps as well. It presents poetry therapy as a complex, interdisciplinary and contemporary technique which can be used to enhance empathy, social engagement, increase meaning and purpose of life as well as make a safe space for its readers and writers to express their feelings on supposedly taboo topics in the society with carefully creatively chosen words. Poetry emerges as a technique that allows deeper understanding of one's own life and that of others.

Poetry has come a long way from just being considered as a creative tool to being considered as an interdisciplinary therapeutic tool which shares space with literature, philosophy, behavioural sciences as well as psychology. The growing empirical evidence and scholarships in the field show and confirm poetry's relevance within psychology and the therapeutic framework.

Further recommendations for the study would include more longitudinal studies and studies on larger sample sizes to allow generalizability of the results. As poetry therapy still relies heavily on western context, more work can be done to introduce culturally fitting techniques which can be used on a diverse population like India.

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