



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## A Theoretical Review of Poetry Therapy since the Year 2000

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jul 17, 2024 Accepted: Sep 20, 2024	This theoretical article provides an overview of Poetry Therapy (PT) development since the year 2000 with a special focus on major developments, therapeutic approaches, and education. It initiates with a review of the procedure of PT and the multiple theoretical frameworks that determine its practice. While outlining the history of PT, such essential milestones as the role of creativity in the context of therapeutic approaches and expressive poetic creation are mentioned. Particular emphasis is placed on the possibility of implementing poetry as a means of enlightening students of colleges and universities about mental health. The benefit of PT over other therapeutic interventions were discussed, including stress reduction, self-expression and transition from one life state to another, clinical uses and in therapeutic settings are also examined along with the integration of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with PT. The viability of poetry as a therapy mode of teaching and the feasibility of PT in the contemporary teaching model with an emphasis on therapeutic processes and approaches are analyzed.
<b>Keywords</b> Poetry Therapy (PT) Supportive Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Expressive poetic creation	
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### INTRODUCTION

The importance of PT, an expressive arts therapy modality in which the spoken and written word is used to effect healing, has been gaining recognition since 2000. It might be crucial to point out that the application of poetry is an innovative concept in terms of therapy. However, poetry has been employed to articulate feelings for many years (Kähmi (2022)). PT assumes that, through reading, writing, and thinking about poems, it is possible to address and work through complex psychological issues and attain self-reflective insight into one's emotions. Being a form of writing that can help people convey ideas and feelings that may be difficult to express otherwise, poems are used in therapeutic interventions to help people recover, let out their emotions, and grow as individuals (Gilmour et al. (2020)).

PT was established as a professional practice in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it is presently utilized in a variety of locations and institutions, including mental health clinics, schools for children, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers (Ramsey-Wade and Devine (2024)). However, with the dawn of the twenty-first century, there has been a drastic change in the assessment and practice of PT, particularly due to advancements in technology, increased inter-disciplinary practice, and a better understanding of the role of the body in mental health therapy. Technological advances, increased online platforms, and the professional development of creative techniques have contributed to redefining PT for a contemporary culture (Nyfors et al. (2024)).

Narrative therapy is one of the main theoretical frameworks used in PT, which is a form of psychotherapy based on the stories people provide about their lives. Similar to narrative therapy, PT allows the subject to rewrite his/her life story more positively by engaging in poetry creation (Fathurohman et al. (2023)). By using poetry, it is possible to accomplish socialization of self-experiences and re-narration of life's narratives in terms of metaphor images and symbols, resulting in powerful therapeutic interventions to help people to deal with otherwise unexpressed and not

easily verbalized emotions in everyday conversations (Lorenz (2020)). Difficult emotions enhance self-esteem, foster resilience, and promote emotional healing.

Despite these advancements, PT has remained quite problematic in the following ways even if it has evolved a lot since 2000 in terms of standardization and empirical support. It is difficult to accurately measure the effectiveness of PT due to versatility as well as feelings, which are inherently immeasurable in similar forms of art such as other creative arts therapies (Holopainen and Ihanus (2024)). However, there are several studies investigating the efficacy of PT, which can be seen as having a positive impact on mental and emotional well-being. Further development of standardized measures and assessment tools and the consistent use of such assessment tools and techniques are critical for the continued movement toward empirical support for PT (Firoozi and Karimi Riabi (2024)).

## 1. Understanding PT and Its Impact on Well-Being

PT is a marginalized form of treatment and prevention for both people and communities that focuses on well-being. Feeling pleased, healthful, comfortable, protected, and possessing an intention are only a few of the many positive characteristics of mental health that interest practically everyone (Salisbury (2022)). The term "*PT*" refers to a broad range of activities, including the participatory employment of literature (bibliotherapy), therapeutic writing, and the use of written and creative poetry. The collaborative method is essential to the person's specific, therapeutic, and academic development. Bálint and Magyari (2020) focused on how being a part of the world and not alone enhances the "*I*" in PT, allowing for the development of self-esteem. Being a significant multidisciplinary and global expressive art form, PT offers many advantages and may be methodically applied to improve the lives of people that are strived to assist in a quantifiable way.

### 2.1 The PT Process

There are three main phases that patients go through when they interact with fiction or nonfiction books in PT. The fundamental framework for PT, developed by Naz et al. (2024) with an education in psychology, is built on verification, catharsis, and insight. Numerous writers have since expanded on the fundamental ideas.

- **Catharsis**

The main goals of this stage are emotion cleansing or tension release. As emotions and memories re-connect throughout the identification stage, catharsis happens. Batini et al. (2021) readers frequently have "*aha*" moments or "*I get it*" moments, which denote epiphanies. Though feelings might not be as strong when reading nonfiction, it's vital to consider the principles that the individual's life has to offer.

- **Insight**

The character that the reader most closely identifies with the protagonist is instructed to enumerate the methods they employed to overcome challenges. After that, a practical method of problem-solving can be built around this list. One way a reader (Bergqvist and Punzi (2020)) could choose to help a character who is struggling financially is by cutting back on their expenditures. Practicality and concreteness are typically key factors that determine the effectiveness of these techniques.

Psychotherapy is commonly perceived as an extended outpatient endeavor, consisting of weekly or even daily sessions that center around prior experiences, specifically related to relationships with parents (Campbell (2021)). Since therapy was administered in this way, many things have changed. These days, psychotherapy is frequently shorter, more goal-oriented, and more interactive. Naturally, inpatient therapy is a more condensed, targeted, and collaborative procedure. PT has benefited troubled people in a variety of ways, such as by cultivating the ability to deal with frustration, anxiety, sadness, and loss and by supporting the growth of insight and self-expression (Pearson et al. (2024)). It has also helped people through life's transitions. PT shares traits with crisis intervention therapy, CBT, supportive treatment, and short therapy in the inpatient medical context.

Time constraints, timely interventions, specific objectives, intense concentration, and high levels of therapist intervention are some of these traits. During the first mental health interview, problems

that are treatable through therapy are frequently identified as individuals who are open to this kind of care (Knill et al. (2020)). The patient is given suitable poetry or poems to read and discuss by the psychiatric nurse practitioner. Patients usually meet physicians two or three times during their brief hospitalizations, although sometimes only one appointment can be scheduled. Writing exercises are frequently recommended as ways to improve rehabilitation (Jusslinand Höglund 2021). Enrolling interested patients in journals and writing activities enables them to begin the process while in the hospital. A little grant was given to the psychiatric consult service for patient journals. Every patient has short-term goals that are tailored to their developmental stage and pressing needs. Typical objectives of concentrated PT are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Important components of PT in mental health environments**

## 2. Perspectives on poetry and theoretical frameworks

The definition of poetry and art are similar. It is possible to argue that defining poetry is an oxymoron in and of itself, given how difficult it is to put a clear definition on a concept as dynamic, creative, fluid, and dynamic as poetry. Expanded definitions of poetry are required for this exploratory investigation, as opposed to the most restrictive definitions that limit it to line-by-line rhyme. Once sent, the definitions of poem are as follows: ***"Fine poetry is the distillation of experience that captures the essence of an object, thoughts, or feelings"*** and ***"Talk with a little luck in it, that's what poetry is just let the words take you where you want to go."*** Children's poetry is typically associated with rhyming solely and is therefore clichéd, however, this example defies that notion.

To document learners' live experiences, case studies, and ethnographies, two classic qualitative approaches have been used a lot in the last few years. The theoretical framework for investigating this art-based investigation and offering a distinctive perspective for conversation about individual reactions to educational experiences is provided by mosaic theory and social semiotics (Malchiodi 2020). Two of the field's pioneers, Elliott Eisner and Tom Barone, started the focus on using the arts as a strong and alternative kind of inquiry, which is known as arts-based inquiry. Their work was founded on qualitative inquiry. Many believe that because entire academic journals have changed and currently include qualitative inquiry, arts-based research significantly advances the field. Autoethnography and content analysis are key notions in poetry as an arts-based investigation. ***"Art-based research is defined by the presence of aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and its writing"***.

## 3. History of PT

Poetry as therapy is as ancient as the first chants chanted by primitive peoples around their tribal fires while being a comparatively recent development in the expressive arts. The heart and soul are healed by the chant, music, or poetry (Parker 2022). The very word psychology implies as much psyche being the soul and logos being speech or word. Legend has it that Oceanus told Prometheus, ***"Words are the physician of the mind diseased"***.

Poetry and medicine have not always been closely linked, even though a Roman physician in the first century A.D. is known to have recommended poetry and play for his patients. Interestingly, though, the first mental health institution in the American colonies offered reading, writing, and the publication of their articles in a newspaper called the *Illuminator* as an adjunct therapy for their patients (MCLAINE 2021). Compared to PT, which gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s and refers to using literature to assist or serve, the term "**bibliotherapy**" is more widely used it was not Freud who found the unconscious, but rather the poet.

Another time he said, "***The mind is a poetry-making organ***". Subsequently, a large number of other theorists wrote about how studying poets could benefit science.

A poet, chemist, and attorney started a "***poem therapy***" club in the 1950s, and in 1969, PT, the first official book on the subject was released. It contains writings by many of the early pioneers in the discipline. Around this time, an increasing number of individuals working in helping professions started incorporating poetry into group processes (Damayanti and Pranoto 2022). Among them were those who established the PT Institute on the West Coast in the 1970s and wrote poetry in the *Therapeutic Experience* in 1976.

#### 4. Key Developments and Trends in PT

##### 5.1 Expressive poetic writing

In PT, expressive writing plays a crucial role. The ability of written language to convey ideas has long been recognized throughout cultural history. It emphasizes on the insightful recording of feelings, worries, and recollections that help reduce stress and advance growth, health, and well-being. Research has shown that expressive writing has the same healing properties as the physique's innate ability to repair injuries. Numerous researchers (Novalis et al. (2022)) have identified creative writing as an intervention. Research has indicated that writing can have optimistic psychological impacts and healing qualities. Individuals who have written about their personal traumatic experiences have shown substantial importance in various physical health evaluations and a decrease in medical visits when compared to control groups.

Metaphors, imagery, melody, beat, and rhyme all elements of poetic expression are employed in expressive poetry writing. In essence, it is an organic, focused method for continuously bringing opinions, sensations, and feelings from the inside out. The use of metaphors, which act as a mirror displaying the inner images of ourselves, living things, and others, is said to be crucial to developing a comprehension of both internal and outward reality by those who value the organic movement of life, which is represented in language. Metaphors serve as a link between spoken language and visual imagination. In an editor's note, McBrown (2022) discussed the connection between producing natural poetry and well-being: "***The evaluation of poetic inquiry, practice, education, and evaluation***" in PT describes PT as "***Involving the use of language, symbols, and story in therapeutic, education, growth and community building capacities***". Writing poetry in an organic, impromptu manner taps into a deep part of our souls as human beings. As a component of our educational system, the methodical "*Practicing*" of this type of writing should be optional since it fosters wellbeing (Sarnjai and Kaowiwattanakul (2023)).

##### 5.2 Creativity and the Writing Paradigm

But at this point, the way academics talk about creativity and the arts has changed. Many have claimed that the writing paradigm findings emphasize the importance of layers. Bullock (2021) has several studies to back up their assertion. A substantial amount of research has currently been done to show the connection between mental diseases or susceptibility to them and very creative work. The writing paradigms has observed that poets are especially prone to affective problems. A more balanced combination of emotional and cognitive experience may be possible with narrative writing, as opposed to the intensive involvement with emotional experience that can follow poetry. It has been (Satterfield 2023) suggested that poetry lacks this narrative, leaving poets to flounder aimlessly in a puddle of emotions and other experiences that they can't work through.

### 5.3 An examination of the viability of using poetry to educate mental health in higher education

A significant percentage of behavior problems and personality disorders in students can be attributed to psychological factors, which are largely related to their experiences. Throughout history, a great deal of in-depth conversation had to address people's emotional disorders (Hanauer 2021). Poetry is a special kind of linguistic expression that has vivid features and a strong, intuitive effect on the human psyche. As a result, poetry has evolved into a specific psychiatric technique. Universities and colleges serve as vital educational foundations for society. The research (MAKOKHA 2022) on fully optimizing an important advancement in the field of mental health education is the use of poetry to improve students' psychological health.

Recreational therapy is frequently utilized in conjunction with medicine when a person acquires a psychological disorder. With a lengthy history, the term "**recreation therapy**" describes a wide range of leisure pursuits (such as dancing, gaming, playing chess, and card games, practicing singing, viewing movies, watching TV, attending dramas, and listening to music). As an art form, literature serves as entertainment, as evidenced by (Zhang 2022) its very beginnings. The initial purpose of writing was to serve as a means of entertainment, relaxation, and conversation. Poetry is viewed as a kind of recreation that has the power to relieve mental tension and depression, lessen feelings of enslavement, help people get over negative emotions, calm their bodies and minds, and overcome negative emotions. To a certain degree, poetry might be considered products of entertainment and this is evident from the literati's identities. Poetry (Sharma 2020) could alleviate psychological damage and control emotions because it is a pleasant activity that also can calm emotions. Poetry's ability to heal human emotions is becoming more widely acknowledged and applied in the medical domain. To enhance college students' psychological well-being, this work developed (Stahlschmidt 2024) and incorporated poetry interpretation into the education of mental health in colleges and universities. It has the potential to greatly advance both individual college improvement and mental health education.

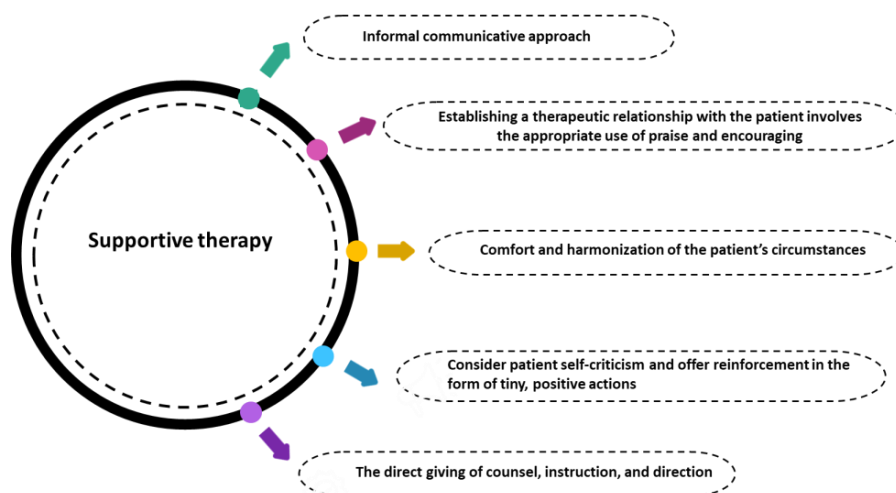
## 5. Clinical Approaches and Applications

### 6.1 Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

Employing a framework from PT, brief-focused PT combines the goals and methodologies of crisis management treatment, CBT, sympathetic treatment, and brief treatment (Gillihan 2022). Solution-focused brief treatment, solution-oriented treatment, and solution-focused treatment are some other names for brief therapy. Talking about the past is not as important as talking about the present and the future, a strict emphasis Brief therapy includes end dates, assignments for the patient to perform treatments, and information about symptoms. There (Constantino et al. (2021)) was more to brief therapy than a few clever tricks. It takes a qualified and experienced therapist to evaluate the patient, help choose goals, and maintain the patient and their problem at the center of each session. There can be one to thirty sessions, with one to six being the most typical. After receiving brief therapy, some people decide to come back for more sessions when new issues surface.

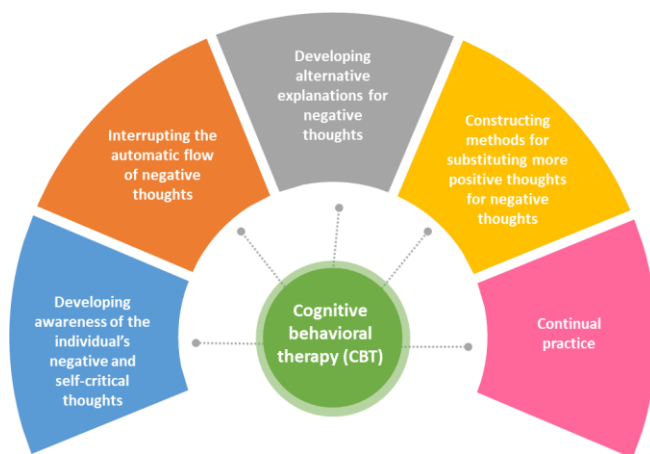
1. There are four general steps in the procedure.
2. The patient describes the specific problem they are experiencing.
3. The goals of therapy for that specific issue are decided.
4. The therapist and the patient talk about previous, less severe cases of the problem.
5. Once potential solutions have been identified, the patient develops a plan for fixing their problem.

Maintaining adaptive coping methods helps patients retain their mental health, avoid relapse, and efficiently deal with new issues (Hayes 2022) was the aim of supportive therapy. It is often understood to mean bolstering the patient's existing defense systems, enhancing their capacity for adaptation, and reducing worry. It is thought to be appropriate for patients who resort to archaic defense mechanisms including blame and denial, as well as for patients who show signs of having trouble reflecting on their behavior. Supportive therapy frequently helps patients get crucial insight. It is the most often used type of psychotherapy in use today, utilized in all contexts and by all mental health practitioners. Supportive therapy is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Overview of supportive therapies**

CBT is an interventionist form of therapy designed to help clients rethink their experiences. Anxiety, sadness, personality problems, and illicit drug use are among the conditions that CBT can help with (Joshi et al. (2022)). People who are unable to combine the meanings from both polarities and realities can benefit from CBT. Hospitalized patients frequently discover that their medical condition has created a new world for them, and they are unable to use coping mechanisms that have helped them cope well their entire lives in this new setting. Individuals may experience emotional vulnerability and emotional dysregulation, momentarily losing their capacity for self-compassion and problem-solving. Furthermore, kids might not have enough coping mechanisms or confirmation of their emotions in this (Dargis 2020) artificial setting. The following steps in using CBT are shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Steps in CBT for Emotional Regulation**

**6.2 Applications to PT**

Writers should listen to the vibrations of life around them and give witness to their energy and message, according to Reynolds (2020). Although it's not certain, it's possible that eventually, a slightly modified version of "Youth" entered the public domain without proper credit and had an effect on one or more readers. These readers may find it interesting and forward it (Yurkovich 2022). When "Youth" elicited a critical reaction, PT's receptive/prescriptive mode inadvertently came into play for any reason. It is conceivable that (Kuriakose and Jena 2024) admirer was struck by the poem's emotion and took an active step with it, even though no one expressly assisted this process as is done in PT practice. By delivering the poem to a person of some significance, arguing, effectively and creatively, that believed the poem's message could be useful above reaction, even though there is no record of responding with any other writing that is expressive or creative.

### 6.3 Clinical Considerations

It is important to exercise caution while using poetry to treat abused children. When talking about the use of printing, Hurford (2023) pointed out that those children who have been abused worry about getting smacked for doing things incorrectly. Out of dread of punishment, the abused youngster often inhibits curiosity and independent initiative. The song "*Flowers are Red*," by Miller (2023), is about a young child who is excited to start school and draw, maybe the best example of this idea. "**He put colors all over the paper / for colors was what he saw**" but receives criticism from his teacher later on for choosing the incorrect colors for the flowers and foliage and for painting during an inappropriate period. "**There's no need to see flowers any other way than the way they always have been seen**". The boy objected, "**There are so many colors in the rainbow**," is punished by being positioned in an awkward position till "*you get it right.*" The terrified youngster eventually passes away "**Flowers are red, green leaves are green There's no need to see flowers any other way**". Any new endeavor may be hindered by this performance problem, thus when presenting poetry, it is crucial to place more emphasis on sounds, visuals, and feelings than on literary devices. Youngsters are innate poets who will express themselves if given the right environment and support. Writing poetry is a distinctive means of self-expression. A distinct poetic expression is also the child's response to earlier poetry. Every poem is unfinished and the child adds his or her unique reaction to finish the poem. The emotionally damaged child who feels broken is helped by the poem's portrayal of completeness (Garcia 2022).

The therapist must expect the child's reactions and be open to exploring them while using poems that have already been established (Creely and Southcott 2020). The therapist could start by considering how they responded to the poetry. It is feared that the youngster may experience corrosive, silent contractions (such as guilt). Any specific poetry may also trigger emotions in a child that they are not yet ready to handle. Facilitating dialogue and exploring alternative resolutions or modifications for the original poetry can also support the evaluation procedure and additional problem-solving exercises. In essence, the poetry serves as a platform for the expression of emotions. Youngsters can be asked to react to a single line, picture, or the entire poem.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Most specifically since the year 2000, PT has been found to have considerable potential as an effective therapeutic intervention. PT is known to offer a range of benefits within mental health care settings. In this theoretical review, the main modifications from expressive poetic writing to the integration of PT with clinical practices such as CBT have been discussed. There is evidence to suggest that poetry leads to empathy, change, and analysis alongside enhancing coping, thought processing, and resolve when utilized in inpatient and brief therapy. Additionally, there are proven and effective methods that involve poetry in mental health education at universities, and thus, it is an effective integration. The described applications of PT, the mentioned popularity of PT in educational and clinical practice proves its effectiveness in enhancing mental health and resilience.

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