

Effects of Poetry on Relaxation and Liberalism of Thoughts and Feelings: A Case Study of Poets, Poetry Readers, and Therapists

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Abstract

Poetry is the most potent expression of emotions and sentiments. The language of beauty and expression takes both the reader and the writer to another realm of imagination. Reading and writing poetry may be the most effective therapy for dealing with any emotional condition. Poetry may be utilized in various ways by therapists, readers, and writers to obtain advantages that improve their physical, social, and emotional well-being. While there has been a lot of study on poetic therapy in general, there has been very little research on how poets, writers, and therapists utilize poetry. The study hypothesizes that poetry has no impact on readers and authors to disclose their feelings. To validate this hypothesis the researcher has adapted qualitative method for analyzing data collected by means of interviews that held with, the readers, authors, and therapists. The study found 25 poetry enthusiasts including poetry readers, writers and enthusiasts in Duhok, Iraq in Nawroz University in College of language-English department. All of the participants were interviewed, both online and in-person, and their interviews have been audio recorded for the research. The answers were analyzed, and three findings were drawn: the impact of poetry on relaxation and liberalization of ideas and emotions, the effect of poetry therapy, and poetry therapy methods. According to this research, poetry is an excellent tool for readers and authors to explore emotions and feelings and offer expression. The usage of poetry therapy has also been shown to have beneficial reward for therapists while conducting it with their patients as tool for treatment. Its worthy to note that the current research does not focus on a particular type of poetry. It rather follows on eclectic approach ie taking different types of poetry written in different languages into account.

Keywords: Poetry, imagination, feelings, therapy, liberalism.

1. Introduction

Poetry is literary work in which the expression of feelings and ideas is craving by the use of distinctive style and rhythm. It is the language of beauty reading and writing poetry may be the most effective therapy for dealing with any emotional condition (Mazza, 2016). Poetry may be utilized in various ways by therapists, readers, and writers to obtain advantages that improve

their physical, social, and emotional well-being., Daz de Chumaceiro (1996, 1997, 1998) discussed the importance of prose and poetry in psychoanalytically oriented treatment. She observed that paying attention to literary processes that arise in the therapist's consciousness during treatment can result in significant therapeutic benefits. "Analyses of manifest and latent contents, as if a dream, of unconsciously induced recall of prose and poetry can serve to further understanding of patients'

conflicts and resolve transference counter transference resistances impeding progress," wrote Daz de Chumaceiro (1997, p. 242). Therapists utilize poetry with their patients to help them communicate their feelings about their condition. This is accomplished via the use of poetry in their work and it may help the patient recover more quickly. For the reader, poetry therapy may help with identification, inspiration, and understanding, which can lead to positive change motivation. By identifying with the people and ideas in poetry, readers may acquire insight into themselves. For poets, the knowledge and support they receive through writing may help them learn more about themselves and how they connect to their homes and workplaces, significant people, and society and culture in general. It may provide a reasonably secure and private means of expressing aspects of experience that are normally difficult to convey. While there has been a lot of study on poetic therapy in general, there has been little research on how poets, writers, and therapists utilize poetry. This study used a case study of poetry readers, authors, and therapists to address this issue. It is believed that reading and producing poetry promotes relaxation and mental and emotional liberalism.

2. Literature Review

History of Poetry as an Expression of Emotions and Feelings

Poetry predates the written language as an art form. The oldest forms of poetry are said to have been sung or recited to recall law, genealogy, or oral history. Poetry is often connected to musical customs. The oldest poetry may be found in the hymns (like the Sumerian priestess Enheduanna's work) and many kinds of songs (such as chants) (Sarah, 2019). Therefore, poetry is a linguistic art. Most of the early world's poems are documented prayers and tales about religious themes,

and they also contain historical records, directions for daily tasks, fiction, and love songs. Various academics, especially those who study the Homeric legacy and the Balkan oral epics, believe that early writing bears obvious remnants of earlier oral traditions, such as recurring phrases as the main building blocks in greater poetic units (Rhys, 2021). Before writing was accessible as a reminder, a rhythmic and repetitive structure would make a lengthy tale simpler to recall and repeat. Many prehistoric and ancient writings, from the Vedas (1500 - 1000 BC) to the Odyssey (800 - 675 BC), seem to have been written in poetry style to assist oral transmission and memory. Poetry may be discovered on early stelarc, runestones, and monoliths, and is among the ancient documents of most literary civilizations. Poetry has a long history in Africa, with hunting poetry going back to ancient times, while elegiac court and panegyric poetry evolved significantly throughout the Nile, Volta, and Niger River valley empires (Ruth, 2018). The Pyramid Texts, which were written in the 25th century BC, include Africa's oldest recorded poetry, while the Epic of Sundiata is one popular instance of the griot court poetry.

Evolution of Poetry as Therapy

Words have been recognized to have a therapeutic impact for a long time. As early as 4000 BCE, Egyptians wrote texts on the papyrus, dissolving them in a liquid form, and administered them to unwell people as medication (Brazier, 2018b). In recent years, expressive writing and reading have been utilized as additional treatments for those suffering from emotional or mental distress. According to Aristotle, people were able to turn their troubles into power and their sorrow into strength via writing poetry (Bressler, 2011). A Roman physician was the first poetry therapist documented. Soranus, a physician in the first century AD, advised his manic patients to read tragedy, while those who were sad should read comedy (I.E.,1951). Writing, according to

American poet Bukowski, is the "Ultimate Psychotherapist." In the United States, this technique was allegedly used as early as the mid-1700s at Pennsylvania Hospital, the country's first hospital. Dr. Benjamin Rush offered poetry as a method of treatment to people being treated in the early 1800s. Eli Grierfer, a poet and pharmacist, initiated giving poems to patients filling prescriptions in 1928, and with the help of psychiatrists Dr. Jack L. Leedy and Dr. Sam Spector, he ultimately established "Poem Therapy" groups at two separate hospitals. After Grierfer's death, Leedy and many others continued to integrate poetry into the therapeutic group process, ultimately forming the Association for Poetry Therapy (APT) in 1969.

Librarians were very instrumental in the creation of this therapeutic method. One of the early pioneers in this field was Arleen Hynes, a hospital librarian who learned about poetry therapy and started reading stories and poems loudly, enabling dialogue paving the way for discussions on the topic and its significance to each person to better reach out to those being treated and encourage healing (Mazza, 2017). Around the same time that she was developing a training program for poetry therapy, others were doing the same. All field leaders were called to a conference in 1980 to codify training and certification standards. The National Association for Poetry Therapy (NAPT) was established from the APT at that conference. Berger also suggested poetry as a means of self-discovery for both instructors and students. To get them to write, he utilized rock, blues songs, and "Jazz Cinquains." When Schloss merged poetry and drama, he coined psychometry, which allowed for even more innovation in poetry therapy. Poetry and theater therapy were merged by Reiter, a licensed poetry and drama therapist (Dahlia, 2020). Children's school programs have also been investigated in the past, as an example. In the California-Poets-in-the-Schools initiative, Fox and

Longo were extremely engaged. "Poetry CamMirriam-Goldberg Organized Poetry Camp" for low-income youngsters and ran the "Midnight Poetry League," a program that helped teenagers create, perform and play poetry.

The Center for Journal Therapy was founded by Kathleen Adams, who blended poetry therapy with journal writing. Poetry and diaries, according to Adams, complement one other. The nature of poetry is to disclose and conceal, to exhibit and hide at the same time. As a result, composing a poem may be a powerful tool for expressing the inexpressible (Gilmour et al.,2020). Another compatibility point is the poet's ability to create a strong sensation or convey a powerful emotional experience in just a few words or lines, whether current or classic. Those who struggle to find words to describe overwhelming ideas, emotions, and experiences may find that articulation to be a blessing. Internal turmoil may be helped by writing down important lines or imagery from a poem and utilizing them as springboards for diary entries.

Poetry therapy is now being used by a rising number of doctors and therapists to assist their patients in dealing with the emotional elements of their disease. The therapeutic value of poetry, according to Gorelick (Heller, 2010), is that it allows patients to see the reality of their own experience mirrored back to them in a manner that they can understand.

Poetry has long been utilized as a tool for understanding mental illness and the experiences of those who are mentally ill and for rehabilitation, development, and healing. In *Knots*, Laing Ronald David, 1927-1989, used poetic language to examine the mechanics of mental disease. His collection utilizes the metaphor of "The Knot" to depict a range of self-reflection and interpersonal interactions that most

individuals experience. The capacity to restrain self-expression may be used in poetry (Wiktor, 2016). Emotional repair, conflict resolution, and a sense of well-being may occur when feelings and perceptions develop into a deeper knowledge or are changed.

3. The Methodological Approach

The purpose of this study was to conduct a qualitative research survey by interviewing poets, poetry readers, and therapists to learn how poetry helps the writer and the reader. The research procedure began with identifying participants from the Kurdistan, Iraq who had a passion about poetry and had experience using it. The research selected 43 people who were initially interested in participating as target participants. Following an explanation of the research's aim and methodology, 25 of the 43 participants agreed to participate in the study by providing an interview. Seven of the twenty-five were poets, thirteen were poetry enthusiasts and readers, and five were therapists. Two therapists were cognitive-behavioral therapists, with a psychiatrist, psychologist, and a certified professional counselor rounding out the group. The interviews were done both online and in-person at several places. The interviews were scheduled according to the participants' availability and when they felt most at ease. They may also select whether to do the interview online or in person. They also chose the venue for the interview based on their comfort level. A questionnaire with 15 open-ended questions was used throughout the interview. For each participant, the interview sessions were planned for an average of 30 minutes.

The interview questions utilized in the study are as follows:

1. Do you consider yourself to be a fan of poetry?
2. How do you show your enthusiasm for poetry?

3. What kinds of poetry do you like reading or listening to?
4. If you compose poetry, what genre do you like to write in?
5. Can you tell me about a time when you utilized poetry to communicate your thoughts and feelings?
6. Do you find that reading and composing poetry helps you relax?
7. Do you believe poetry has been beneficial in providing you with a means of successfully expressing yourself?
8. Do you find poetry to be liberating?
9. Can you provide any instances of times when poetry has aided you or someone else in overcoming adversity?
10. How do you feel about poetry therapy?
11. Do you believe poetry is a useful technique that therapists may use to help patients heal?
12. (For therapists) Do you utilize poetry with your patients regularly?
13. (For therapists) Do the patients realize you're employing poetry on purpose when you present it to them?
14. (For therapists) Would you advise other therapists to use poetry in their practice?
15. Is there anything more you'd want to say about poetry's usage and practice?

A recording device was utilized throughout the physical interviews to verify that all answers were properly recorded. Throughout the whole interview procedure, notes were taken. The notes contained the respondents' nonverbal signals during the interview. The

online interviews were also captured utilizing recording software that guaranteed a complete video and audio capture of the interview session.

4. Results

Because this was qualitative research, the data was analyzed by going through the answers to the open-ended questions in the interview. All of the respondents gave good responses to the usage of poetry in their everyday lives, including communicating views and emotions. Love, identity, beauty and nature, suffering, and politics were major topics recognized in poetry. Furthermore, respondents associated with various well-known and classic poets, including Faqi Tayran, Ahmede Nalband, Sherko Bekas Ahmede Khane, William Wordsworth, Maya Angelo, Robert Frost, William Shakespeare, and Oscar Wilde were mentioned as contemporary figures. The therapists went through the many ways they utilized poetry to assist patients in great detail. All of the participants also grasped the idea of poetry therapy. The findings of the interviews are described in the discussion below to meet the study goal and to test the hypothesis that reading and producing poetry leads to improvements in relaxation and liberalism of ideas and emotions.

5. Discussion

The discussion is split into three parts to facilitate the reader's understanding and flow of ideas:

- The Effects of Poetry on Relaxation and Liberalism of Thoughts and Feelings
- The Effects of Poetry Therapy
- Poetry Therapy Techniques

Effect of Poetry on Relaxation and Liberalism of Thoughts and Feelings

Poetry offers a creative method to explore ideas and emotions due to the musical quality and beautiful images it presents. One of the poets Dr. Muhammadali Taha who is the vice president of administrative affairs in Nawroz University, and one of the most influential members of previous Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament, and also a very creative and unique stylist poet too. During the interview held with him in Nawroz University campus in the first academic semester, he said that poetry was a key to unlocking and investigating one's soul to comprehend one's ideas and emotions. He added that he writes to express the beautiful images and feelings he explores in his imagination about naturalistic world. However, he believes that poetry should be free of expressing pains and wounds because he believes that poetry is a wonderful world of imagination it should be kept pure, lovely, and giving positive feelings to the readers. Through positive images the reader heals better than to be shared with painful memories.

Moreover, when Another Kurdish writer and poet Abdulrahman Shingali interviewed by the researcher, Abdulrahman who has a very effective style of expressing writing said that "expressing one's feelings and sharing it among the readers may affect many readers who explore the same situation whether it's a joy or a pain." He added that writing a mourning poem and sharing it with readers is also very helpful as it connects the readers with the same experience, agony and feelings.

As a result, poetry offered a means of assisting people in focusing their ideas and avoiding cyclical thinking. They were able to see life from a new viewpoint as a consequence of poetry. In elaborating on this issue, one of the participants who was a student in college of languages, English Language and literature department who is a poetry lover referenced Faqi Tayran's poem that has been converted to a song as well by one of the very famous Kurdish singers Hassan

Shreef, he said one cannot feel better unless going through his poetry that he spends his entire life serving humanity for better feelings of each other during the sorrowfulness, war, lose and peaceful times:

“Ey Av Û Av Ey Av Û Av
Ma tû bi 'eşq û muhbetê
Mewc Û Pêlan Davê Belav
Bê Sekne û bê rahetê
Şevan û rojan bê Xewî
ji muhbeta kê ditewî
Şev tariyan qed nahewî
to ji emrê kê hû bi lez ketê
Ew reng dibê ava zelal
borîn li min çend meh û sal
qed kes nekir ev reng sûal
heta geha vê sa'etê.

Moreover, poetry also serves as a reflective activity for individuals, developing self-awareness while interacting with others. Poems may also be used to educate and explore contemporary scientific, artistic, and philosophical problems (de Almeida et al., 2016).

One of the therapists said that poetry offered rhymes and rhythms that helped children learn to speak from an early age by drawing attention to the auditory aspects of language and communicating meaning via emotion. Some of the feelings' impressions may not be strictly logical, but they are in tune with the human intellect and soul. In addition, the third participant, Viyan Tahar, stated that poetry allowed them to engage in self-reflection and inquiry, allowing them to redefine their circumstances and perceptions of reality. Although

some of the situations were unpleasant, the writing process provided therapeutic benefits.

The poetess stated that composing poetry required sincerity, honesty, or transparency regarding emotions to express them via pen and paper properly. The challenge presented by poetry is that it requires a person to dig deep within themselves, and as a consequence of this process, they will be able to overcome whatever problems they may have had in expressing some of their innermost emotions. They also said that the greatest poetry was produced in the middle of an emotional battle to achieve clarity. This is consistent with the idea of using poetry to offer to heal, as shown by poems written during the American Civil War. During both world wars and the American civil war, poems were read to troops to help them deal with trauma and the brutalities of battle (Stout, 2016). Doctors, in fact, would compose poetry for their patients to emotionally connect with them.

Furthermore, one of the poetry readers said that it provided a feeling of peace by conjuring up pictures that allowed them to connect with nature. The participant stated that various poems made them realize how swiftly life passes them by and that poetry enabled them to live in the present. They were able to pause and reflect on their life at the moment. She cited a poem by Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken.”

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;”

As a result, poetry is an essential instrument for understanding life's meaning, no matter what language

or culture is written by, which leads to a better articulation of what a person is thinking and what their perspectives on life are.

Effect of Poetry Therapy

Poetry therapy, according to therapists, is an essential therapeutic method for a range of issues. Borderline personality disorder, suicidal thoughts, perfectionism, identity issues, and grief were among them. They claimed that the technique had positive outcomes throughout the therapy procedure. According to the therapists, poetry was also helpful in offering relaxation for individuals suffering from anxiety and depression, and as a consequence, it was effective in alleviating depressive symptoms. They were able to assist their patients to enhance their self-esteem and self-understanding by using words in poetry, which also promoted emotional expressiveness. Aside from that, they claimed that poetry was especially helpful with individuals who had been diagnosed with a terminal disease. It allowed them to think about the events of their lives and the reality of their situation as a consequence of the fatal disease. One of the therapists, a certified professional counselor, said that one of his patients was a young soldier a Peshmarga during the ISIS war in 2015 the therapist stated that it's not pills that are healing their sorrow but rather their writing their poetic expression about their loss, and penitent, as well as, their strong determination on saving their country.

The therapist added that, their patients were able to integrate their emotions, reinterpret painful situations, and create a more optimistic perspective for the future by using poetry. This exemplifies how poetry may have a liberating impact on the psyche. Another therapists also said that poetry helped treat individuals with schizophrenia, although they had language and emotional impairments. The therapists were able to

explain mental events through poetry, which allowed them to understand the individuals they were treating. Consequently, they were able to assist people with schizophrenia in improving their social skills and having better and more ordered thinking processes. This was thought to be crucial in the whole process of guaranteeing their recovery. This significant therapeutic impact clearly shows the value of poetry in assisting individuals in recovering from severe illnesses.

As a result, poetry may be utilized to guarantee that people suffering from various ailments get assistance. When poetry is used in conjunction with other therapeutic techniques, it offers therapy that allows patients to have a more positive perspective on life. Consequently, they are better prepared to face the difficulties presented by their diseases. For the therapist, witnessing the progress that the patients experienced due to the usage of poetry may give a great deal of pleasure.

Techniques Used in Poetry Therapy

Three of the therapists stated that they primarily utilized the paradigm presented by Nicholas Mazza concerning the usage of three primary components: receptive, expressive, and symbolic when using poetry to assist patients (Mazza, 2017). The therapists mentioned that they allow the patients to share their writing as well as to present literature or poem and invites the individual in treatment to respond in the receptive component. Material is usually chosen for its capacity to define, explain, and highlight problems that are important to the session's topic. The therapist or the individual in treatment typically reads selected material aloud so that the tone and rhythm of the poetry may be properly appreciated. While the poetry is being read aloud, the therapist observes the person's nonverbal and vocal responses, which the therapist subsequently investigates

to assist the individual. One of the therapists highlighted that they didn't expect that the females who went through dramatic situations were able that much to express their sorrow in a poetic way mentioning their ambitions vs society's determination.

The expressive component entails the evaluation and therapy of patients via the use of creative writing poems. The therapist noted that writing might be both cathartic and powerful, as it can help to release repressed memories or emotions giving voice to any worries and strengths. Finally, the ceremonial symbolic component includes the employment of various rituals, metaphors, and narratives as change agents in poetry. The metaphors, which are symbols, assist people in explaining complicated experiences and feelings in a concise yet meaningful way. The rituals may be very beneficial to people who may have suffered a loss.

6. Conclusion

This research study has handled poetry as an essential tool that writers, readers, and therapists use to explore feelings and emotions and improve emotional and mental well-being in the process. We can connect and make sense of our experiences by reading poetry, and express our emotions and ideas on a topic by writing it. Poetry may also help youngsters understand social and emotional issues. Poems are used by the therapist to assist the patient comprehend their own and others' emotions. In the current study, an attempt has been made to discover whether poetry has any role to play in bringing about readers' relaxation and emotional stability. This has been carried out by interviewing a sample of poetry readers and writers and posing a set of queries pertinent to the topic under investigation. It has been found out that poetry does impact its readers and writers in terms of getting relaxed and experiencing emotional wellbeing.

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