

Psychology of Colors: A Review

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Abstract:

This review paper focuses on the role of colors on various aspects of our psychology such as our emotions, our personality, arousal levels, etc. It is essential to read about this neglected yet very crucial aspect of our life. Over a period of time we all have noticed that color is the first thing that we spot when we see anything. Thus it's important for us to see its value in our lives and if we can use it for our betterment and for our survival. At the same time it is crucial for us to realize that not all cultures view a particular color in the same way, there are various cultural differences in our perception of colors and its meaning and importance in our lives.

Keywords: Color, Psychology, Emotions, Personality and Mental health.

I. INTRODUCTION

Everywhere we go we see colors around us, helps us to express our individuality, they make our environment more pleasing and inspiring. Without colors the life would be like a black and white movie with no flavor, though for some of us even that black and white movie is tasteful. Colors are so essential and have become such an important part of our lives that researchers have got busy analyzing and studying this stimulus full-fledged and its impact on us, our surroundings and our world.

Color and emotions:

Researchers have shown that various colors have different impact on our emotions and feelings (positive or negative), for an instance purple is seen as signifying dignity, green is seen to have a relaxing and calming effect, it is seen to be associated with refreshment, naturalness and guilt; blue is associated with security and comfort, orange signifying distress and red with excitement, warm, strong and violence (Ballast, 2002, Davey, 1998).

Research by Boyatzis and Varghese (1994) contributed that according to individuals n dark colors signify negative emotions such as disgust, sadness and distress while light ones signify positive emotions such as happiness and purity not only emotions; colors seem to influence the way we perceive temperature around us, colors like yellow, orange and red are perceived to be causing heat, while on the other hand green, blue and purple are considered to be cooling and comfortable (Ballast, 2002).

Color doesn't only impact our impacts it also seems to leave a lasting impact on our personality. Researchers have shown that extroverts are more drawn towards various different colors, they prefer making their life colored with various shades of bright colors with longer wavelengths; while introverts on the other hand avoid colors in their lives, they do not indulge into making things quite colorful around them.

Color and its impact on arousal and memory:

Researches by (Faber Birren, 1950; Greene, et al. 1983)

found that color has an impact on our arousal levels such that colors which are considered to be warm (red and yellow) increases arousal more than cool colors (green and blue). In another experiment by (Wilson, 1966), individuals arousal level was assessed using biofeedback for GSR and it was seen that individuals exposed to colors like red, orange etc. had increased levels of arousal as compared to blue, green and white.

Research by (Roosendaal, 2002) has shown a clear link between arousal and memory; through an experiment where individuals of different age groups were exposed to situations causing extreme levels of arousal and then were asked to recall this event after a period of weeks and months, and it was seen that, despite of age difference between the subjects, individuals who were exposed to highly arousing stimulus recalled the events vividly than those who were exposed to not so arousing information; this shows arousing stimulus lead to enhanced memory capacities.

Consequently, if color can increase arousal, and arousal can increase memory, then it is possible that we could find that color can increase memory.

Color and its impact on mental and physical health:

So far we focused on the obvious facts of color and emotions, etc., etc. now we will cover the most essential part of our lives, i.e. our mental well-being. Researchers have seen over a period of time that colors impact our mental and physical health. All the way through in the past, color has been understood to have an effect on health. The Babylonians and the Egyptians all used various forms of color and light therapies for healing (Demarco and Clarke, 2001). A study conducted by (Moore, 2000) showed that in some hospitals patients are placed in various colored rooms according to their illness, so that for relieving migraine, patients are placed in blue colored walls and for healthy spirit, they are placed in a room with pink colored walls. According to Vernolia (1988); different colors have an impact on different functions of our body such as yellow has an impact on our blood pressure,

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pulse and respiration; it is also seen to have an impact on reducing depression, anxiety, and panic. Green on the other hand is seen to have an impact on our entire nervous system, it helps in soothing our minds and tend to have a calming effect; red stimulates the entire body and impact sexual functioning, blood pressure, heart rate and tension; purple is seen to improve sleep and lowers body temperature and lastly color orange is associated to have an impact on our appetites.

II. CONCLUSION

As we have seen various researches over time on the effect of color on our lives we can conclude that color has a huge altering effect on our lives, emotions, personalities, memory, our moods etc. as we now know that color can be implemented into the therapeutic process in various forms, such as through chromo therapy and applying it to the physical environment, hence we as psychologists can use this information for our advantage and work with mentally ill patients to improve on their psyche and alter their positive and mental well being. However at the same time we need to keep in mind that these researches have been conducted over small and limited subjects; hence generalizing from these for the whole population is not a healthy choice and researches have shown that color is such a personal aspect for every individual that it holds varied significances in their lives, therefore assuming the same meaning of color for all is not justified and we as therapists and mental health professionals should keep it as caution in our minds.

III. REFERENCES

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