



World of Colours for Boys behind the Walls: Malaysian prison library perspectives

Esza Rafedziawati Kamal Rafedzi, Jafalizan Md. Jali, Irwan Kamaruddin Abd Kadir, Alwi Mohd Yunus

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Information Management, UiTM, Shah Alam, Malaysia

ezza464@uitm.edu.my, jafalizan@uitm.edu.my, irwan@uitm.edu.my, alwiyunus@uitm.edu.my
Tel: +60147367321

Abstract

Colour reflects our emotions and psychology. This fieldwork qualitative study is to explore the relationship between colour in the prison library with the juvenile delinquents emotional, psychology and interest. Data were collected using field interview with 20 male juvenile delinquents living in one of the correctional schools in Peninsular Malaysia. Our field interview has led us to conclude that the male juvenile delinquents are very interested in colours available in the library, especially with the library's collection of materials/books. The findings in this research are helpful in preparing the best prison library that can contribute to forming the perceptual space and will benefit the juvenile delinquents' learning emotions, the process of thinking, psychological health and aesthetic conception

Keywords: Male Juvenile Delinquents; Prison Library; Fieldwork; Malaysia.

eISSN: 2398-4287 © 2022. The Authors. Published for AMER ABRA cE-Bs by E-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behavior Researchers), ABRA (Association of Behavioral Researchers on Asians), and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behavior Studies), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7iSI10.4116>

1.0 Introduction

Humans identify four 'unique hues' : blue, green, yellow and red; that do not appear to contain mixtures of other colours (Welbourne, L. E, Morland, A. B. & Wade, A. R., 2015). Colour is what we see and to see is to see; what things of a given color have in common is the way they look (De Long & Martinson, 2013). Colour is an interesting topic, especially for individuals interested in art and design. Colour can be defined as an art element produced when light or touching an object is reflected back to the eyes. According to Boeri (2013, pg. 43), colour is a fundamental design component in fine arts and several application sectors such as textiles, fashion, packaging and interior design. There is a connection or relationship between colour and emotion (Schachtel, 1943). Usually people will choose red colour to symbolize the emotion of anger or feelings of overflowing towards something and to show it is a crucial notice / information / symbol. According to Ekman & Friesen (1975), humans have six (6) basic emotions: angry, happy, sad, scared, surprised and laughter. Each of these emotions will manifest a change in the human face, and humans have learned this since birth (Harris, 1989). Because of the special connection between colour and human, this fieldwork qualitative study aims to explore the relationship between colour in the prison library with the juvenile delinquents emotional, psychology and interest.

The diversity of colours in young readers will impact the psychology of reading and the psychology of the soul (Liu & Chen, 2015). To attract young generation or young readers to use the library; color is not only for the collection found in the library; but it will also involve the design of the library space from the walls, ceiling and to the furniture used. Liu & Chen (2015) added that, based on physiological methods, the human mind will be easily stimulated with various colours. These various colours will be transmitted to the brain cells and it will turn evoke

eISSN: 2398-4287 © 2022. The Authors. Published for AMER ABRA cE-Bs by E-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behavior Researchers), ABRA (Association of Behavioral Researchers on Asians), and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behavior Studies), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7iSI10.4116>

perception in humans. For example, when individual A sees the green colour, it will produce a new and cheerful mood to the individual. If the absence of such colour, it will create visual fatigue among individuals. As a result, individuals will feel less interested in reading or being in the library. Individuals will also feel tired and bored with the things they face. In addition, the influence of colour varies between individuals. The experience of living and associating with many people leads to differences in the influence of colour.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Boys behind the walls

In the Malaysian context, boys behind the walls will gain formal education and are permitted to sit for public examinations under a particular program by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Prisons Department of Malaysia. Teachers are sent to prison to teach the young prisoners for the following academic programs: (a) 3M remedial classes (basic literacy classes for reading, writing and arithmetic), (b) Pre-PMR classes (lower secondary, 13 - 14 years old), (c) PMR classes (Lower Certificate of Education, 15 years old), (d) Pre-SPM classes (upper secondary, 15 - 16 years old), (e) SPM classes (equivalent to GCE O level), (f) STPM classes (equivalent to GCE A Level), and (g) Diploma/degree classes (for long distance education programs). The academic classes indirectly encourage young prisoners to use the prison library to obtain information related to their education (Rafedzi, 2015).

According to Conrad (2012), the prison library should address the inmate's requirements for information on institutional policies; to enable inmates to maintain contact with the outside world and enhance vocational skills; to provide educational materials; to provide support rehabilitation; to provide reading materials for personal recreation; and to provide information on re-entering the community after parole. Eze (2014), in highlighting the nature of the prison environment, found out that prisoners who undergo stress, anxiety, fear, insecurity, boredom and lack direction would get relief from emotional and psychological instability by using the prison library.

The problem of dropping out of school has become something of a national obsession (Finn, 1989). According to Winters (1977), poor academic achievement is a significant factor in crime and delinquency. The stressors include unfulfilled expectations of parents, scholastic demands, school failure, difficulties encountered with peer-group acceptance and lack of finances (Chiam & Chan, 2011). The transition period from childhood to adulthood has resulted in them making their own decisions without proper assessment and understanding; once they begin to respond to the demands with their style and appearance.

2.2 Prison Library and Colour

The prison library is one of the facilities provided to juvenile delinquents under the Malaysian Prisons Department. Juvenile delinquents who use the school library facilities or public libraries while in the community will usually remain using library facilities in prison (Rafedzi, 2016).

The situation inside the prison is described as an area surrounded by high and barred fences. There are no colours, no paintings; on the left and right of the wall as on the mall or school wall. The Prisons Department sets the small world of juvenile delinquents behind the walls. They have their times to classes, either academic classes (according to level from primary school to secondary school and university studies) or carpentry/barber/sewing skills classes. In the evening, they can go to the library after school hours or attend religious classes, music/singing, sports, etc. On the one hand, they avoid entering the cell (bed); as the conditions inside the cell will cause them stress (Rafedzi, 2016).

Focused group sessions were conducted in February 2018 with ex juvenile delinquents, focusing on only one topic; colour.

"The colour that I have only seen is my thin black mattress to sleep in the cell. Every morning, we are required to take the mattress and dry it at badminton court." (ex K1)

"I was depressed while in the cell. Not just me. Everyone is depressed. We only saw two colours. There is no other color." (ex K2)

"That's the reason why if we want to see other colours and entertain ourselves, we have to go to the library. It feels good." (ex K3)

"I am not good at reading. I never entered per... aaa .. aaa .. per... pus .. pus..paan [library = library]. But .. I've heard from my senior said that, if you want to be happy, you need to go to that place." (ex K4)

"I can only see green colour for a second. Look at the grass. But, once you enter the library, you can see so many colours. But, it's just that time is very limited." (ex K5)

To attract the attention of library users especially among the younger generation, libraries should be planned in detail, not only to the facilities and services of the library but also the selection of appropriate and attractive colours to build a comfortable, calm, fresh and harmonious environment.

For the younger generation, the first visual impression of the library is colour, and following are the shapes, the material and other factors (Liu & Chen, 2015). Because the library used to be stiff and monotonous, the young generation lacked consciousness of using the library. Liu & Chen added that a systematic colour impression could contribute to forming the library's perceptual space and benefit the young readers' learning emotions, thinking process, psychological health and aesthetic conception.

Based on the library design by Liu at An Hua County First High School, he decorated the public zone with red, the reading zone with green and yellow and the transition zone with soft burlywood colour. And this created harmony and balance colour for the students. The green colour in the middle of the spectrum can eliminate negative emotions such as fatigue, bring equilibrium and tranquillize man (Liu & Chen, 2015).

3.0 Objective and Research Methodology

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between colour in the prison library with the juvenile delinquents, emotional, psychology and interest: How the diversity of colours will impact the psychology of reading and the psychology of the soul of the juvenile delinquents?. The research was primarily qualitative, with field research systematic study of ordinary activities in the setting in which they occur (Bailey, 2007). The primary goal of field research is to understand the activities and their meaning to those who engage in them. Neuman (2006) added that through interaction over months or years, the researcher learns about participants, their life histories, hobbies and interests, habits, hopes, fears and dreams. The research used field interviews to obtain feedback from the sample about their opinions, feelings, knowledge, sensory data, and background information (Genzuk, 2003). According to Neuman (2006), the field interview involves asking questions, listening, expressing interest and recording what was said. The interview session will be conducted in a unique situation whereby researchers use simple and appropriate language to communicate with the sample in an emotionally supportive and comfortable environment. The researcher will ask truly open-ended questions, and clear questions and make observations while interviewing the sample.

3.1 Research sampling

Quota sampling is one of the standard sampling strategies in qualitative research. According to Neuman (2006), quota sampling is a non-random sample in which the researcher first identifies general categories into which cases or people will be selected and then they select cases to reach a predetermined number of cases in each category. The researcher that used quota sampling need to decide how many people and with which characteristics they needed as participants.

The participants were selected based on their unique characteristics when using the prison library in X prison. Only 15 juvenile delinquents were selected once they entered the prison library. The other five (5) participants were ex-detainees whom the researcher met before in 2012. To avoid confusing identification, all participants are referred to by code numbers. There was no detailed information about the participants observed reported in this paper.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The interview session with participants is beneficial in knowing the importance of colour in their rehabilitation process.

4.1 Colours to relieve stress for juvenile delinquents

Life in prison is different from the outside world. Life outside the bar, they will be mingled with all sorts of human beings and were free to do whatever they wanted. In prison, their lives are set according to the schedule from the Malaysian Prisons Department. Because of the schedule, most juvenile delinquents have chosen to resume their studies at the school level. The support and encouragement were given by prison staff, and among them (juvenile delinquents); to some extent, it has pushed them to continue their studies even though some have left school since they were 9 years old! (Rafedzi & Abrizah, 2016). Male juvenile delinquents who return to continue their studies will usually use the prison library to complete their assignments or tasks or seek information to discuss during school sessions.

"I hate library. Even when I was in school, I would not go to the library. But, when being here (K12 observing the library environment); I feel that I am losing something special. This place is soothing. Colourful" (K12, 2018).

"I must go to the library every day. This is a place that can calm me down after being by prison staff" (K8, 2018).

"They always got angry with me. It's either the prison staff got angry with you or the other juvenile is angry with you (while pointing a finger at a juvenile delinquent who was sweeping in the library). I want to beat him. But .. this is the place [library], this colourful place that can prevent me from acting like that. It is useless for me to retaliate because at the end, they will send me to the dark room" (K4, 2018).

4.2 Colours give a good mood.

A life schedule from morning to night causes male juvenile delinquents to be more sensitive; in some circumstances, they can quickly become depressed. From the interviews conducted, it is clear that colour plays a significant role in their emotional health.

"It's fun to be here [library]. I can see a variety of colors. There are red, blue, green.... orange. If in our cell, I can only see the same color. Black, white or gray." (K3, 2018).

"You want to be happy? Please come here [library]. Just take that thick book (pointing to the encyclopedia collection). 1001 colors available. If you cannot read the book, you can feel happy by seeing the colours" (K12, 2018).

4.3 Colours give a high motivation to be a better person.

The prison community is "a microcosm of the wider society with an increasingly diverse population"(Shirley, 2003). Lehman (1997) said that most inmates are motivated to pursue more knowledge and higher education for personal satisfaction. According to Reagen and Stoughton (1976), Gendreau & Ross (1979) and Warner (1999) (as cited in Ubah & Robinson, 2003); there are theorists say that the correctional-education programs suggest that inmates' completion of or participation in education in prison will enhance their psychological development

of cognitive and physical abilities that could enable them to relax better than before, release tension more maturely, express themselves more constructively and build self-esteem and a favourable self-concept that can help them work toward a crime-free future.

"While living outside, my sisters told me to go to the library. They always reminded me every day to stop by the library after school. But, I didn't go there. I went to see my friends who was involved with drugs. I remembered she said; you do evil thing or you be good friends of evil; it will not give you any benefits. But once you go to the library, to read books and maybe to see the colors in the book or reading cartoon magazines; it will give you strong mind and change you to be better person" (K5, 2018).

"There is a book [biography] that inspires me and my friends. In fact, we often talk to each other about the stories in the book before sleep. There is a story about the public figure that wake up from poverty and the fighting spirit of the figure. We want to be like that. We want to help people. And the best part is that... the book is very colourful. I even know that Ferrari car can be in blue color instead of red colour as their trademark (smiling)" (K7, 2018).

"I am not good at reading. I came in here to see only colored books. It doesn't matter what book. Thick or thin. As long as the book is colored, I will be happy. From there, a desire arose for me to learn how to read. My friends are always angry with me for bothering them when I often ask 'what is this story all about?'" (K2, 2018).

4.4 Colour encourages juvenile offenders to learn to recognize letters.

Asher (2006) stated that a significant body of research indicates that education reduces the chances of an inmate's returning to prison after release. In Malaysia, male juvenile delinquents involved in drug crimes will usually return to prison with the same criminal cases. They may be detained after 2 years of being released from prison or maybe 6 months after release (Rafedzi, 2016). As for other criminal cases, such as bullying, rape, theft, gangsterism and murder, there is less risk of returning to prison unless juvenile delinquents are not interested in going to school.

"I am not good at reading. I don't have time to learn how to read; to learn the letters. I was expelled from school since I was 9 years old. While here [in prison], I wonder why some juvenile delinquents like to come here [library]. When I asked, they just said 'come in'. Now I know why they are here. We will be happy once we can hold the book" (K2, 2018)

"When I told them that I was not good at reading, they kept patting me on the back and replied that they were also not good at reading at first. But, the colors found in the book made them interested to learn how to read. Learn A, B, C's. Now, I can read with their help and my teacher. There is one book that I am still trying to 'finish' it up (read to the end)" (K6, 2018)

"Before this, I was not ashamed at all because I did not know the letters and even numbers. I was scolded by Grandpa for going to school but still not good at reading. Until he knows that I was quit from school when I was 10 years old. The only reason.. fighting (laugh). Fighting like a man (laugh). Here [prison], I regretted myself not knowing the letters from before. I love to read this book. The book is very interesting because it is full of pictures. But (crying).. oh. God. ... I can't read" (K1, 2018; currently attending 3M class).

"I only follow my friends into the library because I am bored. I'm not as good at sports as other people. I was intrigued by the books in the library because of the many pictures of the scenery. Pictures of the sea. Picture of a river. Pictures of fish. Pictures of animals. But, just like K1; I'm not good at reading either. I'm just kind of skeptical of what the book is about. Only, after feeling jealous of friends who are good at reading; I began to learn to recognize letters little by little. Now, every day I have to enter the library just to read and see the pictures in the book" (K9, 2018).

5.0 Conclusion

According to Stevens (1995), prison is a highly structured, artificial environment with very few of those things that, on the outside, make criminals seem so objectionable. Thus, the inmates are subject to strict behavioural controls and are usually on their best behaviour to achieve their earliest release date (p. 124). Juvenile delinquents enter correctional settings with various interrelated academic, social, emotional, health, and behavioural needs (Vacca, 2008). The rehabilitation program is essential to juvenile delinquents and re-entry into mainstream society because being rehabilitated sets the foundation to lead a healthy lifestyle in the community once out of the juvenile justice system (Darbouze, 2008). Based on the findings, the researcher found that colour plays a vital role in juvenile delinquents' emotional, psychological and reading interests. Vezzani (2013) found that the interest in colour has increased in recent years; because it surrounds us and has a strong influence on our lives, it has a unique role in the market's mechanisms and affects the research and project activities in any disciplinary field. And it is essential to know that colour also plays a vital role for consumers in deciding what they like and dislike (Shin, Westland, Cheung, & Cassidy, 2012). Colour is key in designing a unique high school library to meet a particular group's psychological, sociological, mental and material demands (Liu & Chen, 2015). The colour of an interior environment is related to children's visual, perceptual and cognitive development and closely related to their emotional and physical reactions. As Liu & Chen (2015) concluded, with the colour collocations principles and rules, the young readers can enjoy reading and learning in a comfortable, quiet, fresh and harmonious library and create a sense of belonging. And their thinking, aesthetic conception and learning efficiency will be improved.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to extend their gratitude to all respondents who participated in this study and also Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for providing the necessary funding for publication.

References

- Asher, C. (2006). Interlibrary loan outreach to a prison: Access inside. *Document Delivery and Electronic Reserve*, 16 (3), 27-33.
- Bailey, C.A. (2007). *A guide to qualitative field research*. 2nd. ed. California: Thousand Oaks
- Chiam, H.K. & Chan, S.G.(2011). A profile of delinquents in an approved school. *Akademika*,81 (1), 101
- Conrad, S. (2012). Collection development and circulation policies in prison libraries : An Exploratory survey of librarians in US correctional institutions. *The Library Quarterly*,82 (4), 407 –427.
- Darbouze, K. (2008). Rehabilitative methods and the effect on juvenile delinquents. Retrieved on August 16, 2013 from <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/1903/10097/1/Darbouze,%20K%20K%20K.pdf>
- De Long, M. & Martinson, B., eds. (2013). *Color and design*. London : Berg.
- Droit-Volet, S., & Meck, W. H. (2007). How emotions colour our perception of time. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 11(12), 504-513.
- Ekman, P. & Friesen, W. V. (1975). *Unmasking the face : A guide to recognizing emotions from facial clues*. New Jersey : Prentice Hall.
- Eze, J. U. (2014). Information needs of prisoners in Southeast Nigerian prisons. <http://idv.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/16/0266666914538042>
- Finn, J.D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research*, 59 (2), 117 –142.
- Garrity, J. & Watters, A. (2020). Emotions and agency in prison research. *Methodological Innovations*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2059799120926341>
- Genzuk, M. (2003). A synthesis of ethnographic research. Retrieved on May 28, 2010 from http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~genzuk/Ethnographic_Research.html
- Harris, F., Hek, G., & Condon, L. (2006). Health needs of prisoners in England and Wales: the implications for prison health care of gender, age and ethnicity. Retrieved on July 29, 2012 from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2006.00662.x/pdf>
- Harris, P. L. (1989). *Children and emotion : The development of psychological understanding*. Oxford : Basil Blackwell.
- Lehmann, V. (1999). Prison librarians needed : A challenging career for those with the right professional and human skills. 65th IFLA Council and General Conference, 20-28 August 1999, Bangkok, Thailand
- Liling Jiang, L. , Cheung, V., Westland, S. Rhodes, P. A., Shen, L. & Xu, L. (2020). The impact of color preference on adolescent children's choice of furniture. *Color Research and Application*, 45 (4). pp. 754-767. <https://doi.org/10.1002/col.22507>
- Liu, H. & Chen, F. (2015). The study on color design of the interior space in the high school library. 5th International Conference on Civil Engineering and Transportation. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/25845404.pdf>
- Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Basic of social research : Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston : Pearson.
- Proverbio, A.M., Burco, F., del Zotto, M. & Zani, A. (2004). Blue piglets? Electrophysiological evidence for the primacy of shape over color in object recognition. *Cognitive Brain Research*. 18(3):288-300.
- Rafedzi, E.R.K., Abrizah, A. & Yu, H. (2016). The challenges in making library services accessible to incarcerated male juveniles in five correctional schools. *Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science* 21 (2) : 95 – 110.
- Rafedzi, E.R.K. (2016). Information needs and behavior of male juvenile delinquents in Malaysia. Unpublished Thesis. Universiti Malaya.
- Reagan, M., & Stoughton, D.M. (1976). *School behind bars: a descriptive overview of correctional education*. Methuchen: The Scarecrow Press
- Schachtel, E. G. (1943). On color and effect. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1943.11022473>
- Shirley, G. L. (2007). Maryland prison libraries prepare for the new population. Retrieved on February 3, 2010 from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/ascla/asclapubs/interface/archives/contentlisting/volume29a/marylandprisonlibrariesprepareforthenewpopulation/mdprisonlib.cfm>
- Stevens, T. (1995). The role of the prison library in the reform and rehabilitation process. Published theses. Retrieved on April 15, 2013 from http://www.etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/5982/2/245696_vol1.pdf.
- Terwogt, M. M. & Hoeksma, J. B. (1995). Colors and emotions : Preferences and combinations. *The Journal of General Psychology*, 122, 1, 5 – 17.
- Shin, M. J., Westland, S., Cheung, V., & Cassidy, T. (2012). Colour Preferences of the Korean Young Generation. <https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/30953775/shin-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1655554943&Signature=HsPtGnK-qB-FCHSbp-wyOxWDSFiIjIMbOpFnrVQZZrbiBxUmRXjSC6p3iRarS7juUJf5G4fDFazS2hl-U51IGqosCcF3PLAHA->

wjfm67bn3x3GOq0GkStoxTrXnrKGA7UCAjauNa3XAhFjhPhHKHU0bmlWPQp2wsUCqGa6fYLBt4TEmreStfeq7nyqajB5SHbXdxLNNuG6kCumoWuPnf35wXiElhzwKfM7Vdby78KkC9lzmTRW3kDQb6K7Rgp6fdOjK03U8-gl2XYNfiT38LykcSbT6tBANodYFzfU8FVE3T5O41moBqqPjyXT8m8tjxXur6kppqDnvlhdg9g__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA

Vacca, J. S. (2008). Crime can be prevented if schools teach juvenile offenders to read. *Children and Youth Review*, 30 (9), 1055-1062

Vezzani, V. (2013). CDES—Colour design edu. system. An educational tool for a creative, systematic and interdisciplinary colour knowledge. In in AIC, 12th Congress of the International Colour Association, Newcastle, UK.

Warner, S. L. N. (1999). Kuleana : The right, responsibility and authority of indigenous people to speak and make decisions for themselves in language and cultural revitalization. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 30 (1), 68-93

Welbourne, L. E, Morland, A. B. & Wade, A. R. (2015). Human colour perception changes between seasons. *Current Biology*, 25, 15 <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0960982215007241?token=5829A735980F7A40C7BAE0799DC9392898DE5DD7C0AFB5FA4443AAACBCFA5D3A89A223FCE174C8B9F6DFCABD798DAB44&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20220618115324>