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Psychological Painting Analysis in Cross-Cultural Research Context

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Abstract: Psychological painting is a common method of psychological analysis and healing, which can help testers understand the psychological state of the subjects and provide more targeted psychological services. However, practice has shown that different cultural backgrounds may have an impact on the habits and outcomes of psychological drawing among subjects. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the various differences in drawing among subjects in different cultural environments in a cross-cultural context, in order to enhance the pertinence of relevant psychological counseling services. Based on this, the article analyzes participants from different cultural backgrounds from a cross-cultural perspective, in order to discover the potential impact of cultural factors on psychological painting and provide corresponding suggestions.

Keywords: cross-cultural; Psychology; Psychological Painting Analysis.

1. Introduction

The psychological painting combines knowledge from psychology with the art of painting. It serves as a way to provide psychological assistance and guidance through painting. In this process, individuals engage in painting based on a specific theme, and their personality traits, psychological states, and emotions are explored through comprehensive analysis of their artwork. This exploration facilitates psychological counseling and healing. In the endeavor to uncover the practical value of psychological painting and to continuously explore new directions in psychological painting research, it has been observed that there are certain differences in the psychological paintings of participants in cross-cultural contexts. Their personality traits, emotional states, and inner worlds may yield different results in various cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully consider cultural factors' influence on individuals' psychology and behavior when conducting experiments.

1.1. Background Introduction

Psychological painting is primarily a method that explores individuals' inner worlds through the analysis of their artwork, integrating artistic creation with psychological principles. In the process of psychological counseling or therapy, psychologists often ask individuals to engage in painting creations, such as "house-tree-person" drawings. These paintings often reflect individuals' personality traits, psychological states, and emotional changes. These inner worlds and subconscious thoughts are manifested through symbols, colors, composition, lines, shadows, and light and dark contrasts in individuals' paintings. In the most natural form of painting, the creators' psychological activities are showcased through pen and paper, expressing thoughts and needs they cannot articulate, providing a more intuitive display of their psychological well-being. With the advancement of psychology, painting as a non-verbal form of expression is gradually being applied and gaining attention.

1.2. Research Purpose and Questions

1.2.1. Why Conduct Cross-Cultural Psychological Painting Analysis

Conducting cross-cultural psychological painting analysis involves collecting samples from different cultural backgrounds to explore both the differences and commonalities in individuals' psychology across diverse cultural contexts. In a diverse cultural environment, psychological painting analysis serves as a non-verbal means of communication, enabling accurate analysis of individuals' personality traits, emotional inclinations, and inner worlds by analyzing the artwork produced on various cultural themes. In the current context, exploring the implementation of cross-cultural psychological painting analysis for different groups helps provide more scientific and humane psychological services, assisting in overcoming language and cultural barriers to better serve individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

1.2.2. Key Issues in the Study

In conducting psychological painting analysis for different audiences in cross-cultural contexts, the main approach involves recruiting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to complete psychological painting tests. Analyzing the data from the completion of psychological painting tasks, including symbols, colors, lines, composition, etc., and conducting research tailored to their cultural backgrounds through painting cognitive analysis, interviews, and other forms. Implementing cross-cultural psychological painting analysis and drawing corresponding conclusions. Using painting tests to analyze the relationship between psychological painting and emotional expression in different cultures, thus providing certain recommendations and directions for the future development of psychological painting.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intersection of Psychology and Painting

2.1.1. Previous Methods of Painting Analysis Used in Psychological Research

Currently, painting analysis methods are widely used in psychological research and come in various forms, such as the commonly used House-Tree-Person test, self-portrait test, tree-drawing test, and landscape composition test. For example, the House-Tree-Person drawing test requires subjects to freely draw a picture including a house, a tree, and a person on a piece of paper. This test primarily applies projection theory and perceptual reaction theory to analyze the subjects' psychological conditions. By analyzing the structure of the house, one can infer the emotional relationship between the individual and their family members. Analyzing the trees can suggest the individual's personality traits and developmental experiences, while the person drawn often reflects the individual's self-image, allowing for direct inference of the subject's current emotional and affective state. The content of the House-Tree-Person drawing is rich, and capable of reflecting the subject's psychological condition, personality traits, and emotional state from different perspectives. Corresponding research and interpretation methods are also relatively scientifically diverse, primarily employing comprehensive analysis through combination analysis of the artwork.

2.1.2. Quantification and Standardization of Psychological Painting Analysis in Different Cultures

Psychological painting analysis varies across different cultural environments. Since psychological painting analysis was introduced from abroad to China, there are differences in the quantification and standardization of psychological analysis between Eastern and Western cultural environments. Quantifying and standardizing psychological painting analysis requires the establishment of corresponding standardized guidelines, determination of scoring dimensions, formulation of quantified scoring criteria, adoption of standardized scoring processes, and extensive statistical analysis and interpretation throughout the analysis process. For example, to ensure that subjects paint under similar mental states, unified guidelines need to be established to avoid influencing their painting content. Meanwhile, relevant scoring dimensions need to be selected based on the painting test method, often involving the structural, content-related, and dynamic aspects of the artwork. Clear quantified standards, such as using a five-point scale, are needed. Statistical analysis of the collected scoring data, combined with relevant clinical experience and research background, is employed to comprehensively interpret the results. Currently, the application and practice of psychological painting analysis both domestically and internationally are diverse. There are differences in the quantification and standardization of psychological painting analysis in different cultural environments, each presenting its own characteristics.

2.2. Current Research Status

2.2.1. Application of Psychological Painting Analysis in Clinical Practice in China

The application of psychological painting analysis in clinical practice in China is gradually gaining recognition and development. It not only provides individuals with a platform for expression and self-exploration but also offers mental health professionals an effective assessment and intervention tool. Currently, in the clinical field of psychological counseling and therapy, it has wide-ranging applications. For example, in group psychological counseling, it serves as a tool for collective discussion where participants can analyze and discuss their artwork together, thereby enhancing mutual understanding and support.

2.2.2. Major Findings and Limitations of Existing Research

Current psychological research has fully recognized the significant role of psychological painting as an intervention method in psychological research and therapy. Studies have shown that psychological painting has positive effects in dealing with emotions and psychological trauma. Research indicates that painting can be an effective psychological intervention method, helping individuals deal with emotional issues and psychological trauma. Through artistic creation, individuals can express and explore deep-seated feelings, aiding in emotional release and mental healing. Additionally, painting helps participants manage emotions, enhance self-esteem, and improve social skills among patients with psychological disorders. Some studies affirm the cognitive benefits of psychological painting, stating that painting activities can promote language development and cognitive function improvement. They can stimulate symbolic language development, tap into profound spiritual experiences, and creatively integrate them into the personality, thereby inducing therapeutic changes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

3.1.1. Recruitment Methods

Participants were recruited from a certain university through the dissemination of recruitment information, inviting students to voluntarily participate in psychological painting assessments. This included both Chinese students and international students. Participants were divided into two groups: Chinese students and non-Chinese students, and a uniform psychological painting test was planned for both groups.

3.1.2. Description of Sample Characteristics

The participants were primarily university students, with the average age of Chinese students ranging from 18 to 24 years old and the average age of international students ranging from 22 to 26 years old. Both groups consisted of undergraduate or graduate students, with a balanced gender distribution. Overall, factors such as age distribution, educational background, and gender ratio were not statistically significant. The study focused on considering the influence of different cultural backgrounds on participants' involvement in psychological painting tests.

3.2. Experimental Design

3.2.1. Specific Steps for Implementing Psychological Painting Tasks

The objective of the psychological painting test was to investigate the differences in expression among participants from different cultural backgrounds during the test and to explore the potential psychological meanings of their painting results. Furthermore, the study aimed to analyze any deficiencies that may exist in psychological painting tests in a cross-cultural context.

Participants were provided with a relatively quiet and

comfortable testing environment. They were given simple instructions regarding painting time and requirements: "Please complete the painting on this paper using the provided paints according to your own ideas. There is no time limit, but try to avoid making corrections." Participants were then allowed to start painting without much interference in their creative process. Their behavior and expressions were observed, and important information such as the order of paint usage, erasure marks, and colors used were recorded during the painting process. After completing the test, participants' works were collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

3.2.2. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The paintings of participants from both groups were collected and interpreted. Relevant data, including important erasure marks data and the frequency of appearance of paints in the artwork, were statistically analyzed. The participants' works were analyzed in terms of overall composition, painting process, and content. Based on the analysis of the artwork, appropriate feedback was provided to the participants, and discussions were held with them regarding the potential psychological meanings implied in their artwork.

4. Results

4.1. Main Features of Participants' Psychological Painting

4.1.1. Emotional Expression

Through interviews with participants, it was observed that international group students were significantly more extroverted in emotional expression compared to Chinese group students, who tended to be more reserved during interviews. When questioned, most Chinese group students indicated a preference for reserved emotional expression, while international group students were more accustomed to direct emotional expression.

4.1.2. Use of Shapes and Colors

The most commonly used colors by participants in the international group were red, orange, and green, while Chinese group students often used blue, red, and yellow. International group participants tended to use bright, large blocks of color, while Chinese group participants used softer colors with fewer large blocks filled.

4.2. Statistical Analysis Results

Statistical results showed that, based on the results of the mandala painting test, most participants tended to use bright colors such as red and orange to express emotions such as passion, positivity, and vitality, while using green to express calm and soothing emotions, and blue, black, and other cool colors to express calm or low emotions. Overall, both groups of participants had a consistent understanding of the connotations expressed by colors, but there were some differences in usage habits.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Results

5.1.1. Relationship between Psychological Painting and Emotional Expression in Different Cultures

Due to differences in emotional expression and language expression habits across different cultural backgrounds, there are significant differences in the results of psychological painting. Psychological painting is directly related to emotional expression, and participants' habits of emotional expression directly influence their psychological habits. For example, while Chinese group participants used red pigments less frequently, many still exhibited enthusiastic, lively, and positive conversational orientations during interviews, indicating a preference for reserved, stable emotional expression. Conversely, international group participants had different understandings of colors such as green and blue, associating them with melancholy or low emotions in their emotional expressions. It is evident that the colors in psychological painting directly reflect the differences in emotional expression and cognition among participants from different cultural backgrounds.

5.2. Comparison with Previous Research

5.2.1. Similarities and Differences between New Research and Existing Studies

Previous studies often focused on conducting psychological painting tests on a specific group, without considering cross-cultural backgrounds. This study recruited students from different cultural backgrounds to conduct psychological tests, aiming to explore the differences in emotional expression habits and psychological painting habits among participants from different cultural backgrounds.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Contributions of the Study

6.1.1. Contribution to the Field of Psychological Painting Analysis

Psychological painting, as an effective method for psychological testing and therapy, holds vast potential for application. In the era of globalization, exploring the implementation methods of psychological painting analysis for different groups in cross-cultural contexts not only contributes to providing more scientific and humane psychological services but also helps overcome language and cultural barriers, thus better serving individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Taking a cross-cultural perspective in research also contributes to the further development of psychological painting, enabling accurate and scientific analysis of test results and improvement of testing methods and standards.

6.1.2. Possible Future Research Directions

In the future, regarding the practical application of psychological painting, exploring new psychological painting tests or constructing new evaluation criteria and assessment scales could be attempted, with a focus on cross-cultural backgrounds as a starting point for research.

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