



I drink alcohol; therefore, I am creative? A phenomenological inquiry

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Abstract

Creativity is always associated with those individuals who are in normal condition. Moreover, creativity is commonly linked with the intellectually and technically superior individuals. It is unfamiliar to many that people who are intoxicated with alcohol could also produce amazing and wonderful things. This qualitative study aimed to determine the first-hand experiences of intoxicated individuals in relation to their creativity. It also sought answers to the reasons why the participants intoxicate themselves; what creative things the participants could perform when they were drunk; and what significant experiences they could share to others. This qualitative-phenomenological study purposively chose five self-confessed drunkards. In-depth interviews were to gather pertinent information. Results of the study implicate that different individuals have their own personal reasons why they drink alcoholic beverages; thus, we should not judge them according to our bias. Drunkards have their own story to tell and they need our ears to listen to them. Their experiences have given us the idea that there are people who need the help the spirit of alcohol in order to perform or deliver their tasks. For them, alcohol is a catalyst, fuel, friend, and companion. May be intoxicated beverages do not give these drunkards creativity but boost of confidence to be daring, to be bold, to be dauntless, and to be courageous. But whatever it is, they drink because they want to express their inner self and their secret desire. Not everyone is gifted with self-confidence.

Key words: Alcohol, creativity, phenomenology, SPAMAST

Introduction

Creativity is always associated with those individuals who are in normal condition. Moreover, creativity is commonly linked with the intellectually and technically superior individuals. It unfamiliar to many that people who are intoxicated with alcohol could also produce amazing and wonderful things. Large numbers of literatures had presented the negative effects of intoxication; that it can lose earnings (Crow & Hartman, 1992); can increase the stress level of the brain (Crews et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2017); can trigger 200 diseases and causes 3.3 million death all over the world (Spanagel, 2018); and optimize depression and anxiety (Coleman et al., 2018).

On the other hand, Henriksen et al., (2016) averred that creativity has become increasingly essential skills in the 21st century. According to Rosaldo et al., (2018) creativity reshapes the traditional forms. It also concerns the generation of effective solutions to the problem (Cropley, 2016). With alcohol intake, a person's mind wandering increases (Sayett et al., 2009; Fairbairn et al., 2020); boost creativity (Jarosz et al., 2012); and decrease social boredom (Fairbairn & Sayette, 2013). Likewise, it was also found that alcohol consumption is associated with interest in creative writing (Brien, 2020). Hence, many people decide to be drunk because of its benefits such as relaxation, increased creativity,

escape from reality and enhanced sexual performance (Osisiogu & Mmahi, 2020). Several literatures in the nineteenth century have indicated the link between creativity and drunkenness (Grossman et al., 2020).

Locally, it was observed that drinking alcohol was a prominent past time among males. These individuals usually drink intoxicated beverages whenever they were with friends after work, when celebrating birthdays, fiestas, or even without any especial occasions. When these people were drunk, they do choral singing, throwing high jokes, telling funny created stories, solving riddles, and asking opinions. For someone with an inquiring mind, he would be left in wondering what made these people able to perform such creative acts. Thus, this study was conducted.

There were already numerous experimental studies conducted on the effect of alcohol in rates and in human cognition and automation; however, few of those studies indulged into the human experiences. Moreover, those researchers did not tackle the influence of alcohol to the creative tasks of the alcohol-drinkers. Thus, this study may add new knowledge existing knowledge on alcoholism and drunkenness.

Research objectives

This qualitative-phenomenological study aimed to determine the first-hand experiences of the intoxicated individuals in relation to their creativity. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions.

1. What are the reasons why the participants intoxicate themselves?
2. What creative things the participants can perform when they are drank?
3. What significant experiences they can share to others?

Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored on two theories. The first theory was the *creativity-relevant processes* developed by Amabile (2012). This theory contends that creativity includes a cognitive style and personality characteristics that are suitable for independence, risk-taking, and taking new challengers on problems, as well as a disciplined work style and skills in formulating new ideas. These cognitive processes include the ability to use wide, flexible categories for synthesizing information and the ability to break out of perceptual and performance “scripts.” The second theory was the *investment theory of creativity* proposed by Sternberg and Lubart (1991). This theory presents six resources of creativity - intellectual processes, knowledge, intellectual style, personality, motivation, and environmental context where creative output from a confluence of these elements. Moreover, this study was also founded in Beveridge and Yorston’s (1999) proposition of manic-depressive illness. They pointed out that a person’s manic-depressive ailment is significantly associated with creativity. They contended that with the numerous numbers of alcoholic artists, there is an underlying genetic basis that links creativity and alcohol dependence.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study may be of interest to the following individual or group of persons:

Community members need to support those individuals who are addicted of alcohol. Local Government Units may provide counselling services or program which are beneficial to these individuals.

The family has a big role in the development of their children. Thus, children’s behaviors reflect the family’s image. If the parents want their children not to be drunkard, then they must set as model. Drinking intoxicated beverages is not bad; however, a person needs to take responsibility of his action. Thus, parents can set values to their children of becoming responsible whenever they drink alcohol.

Students must be reminded that intoxicated drinks are not appropriate for them. Thus, they should understanding that there are things which are not intended for them. Instead, they should explore literature readings on the bad and good things alcoholic beverages can bring to the human body.

Methodology

Research design

This study used the qualitative-phenomenological method. According to Rust et al., (2017), qualitative method is used to explore complex phenomenon from the participants’ point of view while

decreasing the investigators' intervention in knowing unrelated topics. On the other hand, Rosenthal (2016) and Holtrop et al., (2018) mentioned that qualitative method is used to unveil and understand the reasons why and how such event happens. On the other hand, phenomenology was used because it illuminates the importance of the participants' experiences (Christensen et al., 2010; Pereira, 2012); understands the process of knowing the experiences (Armstrong, 2017); understands the meaning of human experiences or explores concepts from new and fresh perspectives (Lin, 2017); and elaborates non-technical issues (Van Manen, 2017). Moreover, qualitative method and phenomenological approach were used in this study because the main objective of this investigation was not to measure the level of intoxication of the participants rather to cull their individual meaningful experiences when they were under the spirit of alcohol, personal thoughts, and ideas. Likewise, there was not rigorous use of statistical data.

Research Instrument

The instrument used to obtain the pertinent information was the researcher-made interview guide questions. DBM and San Jose (2015) said that usually interview guide questions are used in a focus group to 'dig information' significant to the study. In this study, the guide questions were based on the research questions and composed of three questions. Generally, the questions were crafted to determine the personal experiences of the intoxicated persons in relation to their creativity. Moreover, it identified the reasons why the participants intoxicated themselves; the creativity they could perform; and the significant of their experiences which were worth sharing to others.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were five self-confessed male drunkards. The first participant was *Mr. Mechanic*. He was 25 years old. He drank three to four times a week or sometimes every day if he had many customers. He started drinking alcohol when he was in high school. The second participant was *Mr. Drummer*. He was 23 years old. He usually drinks when he performed in front of an audience. He was 18 when he started drinking alcohol. The third participant was *Mr. Tattoo Artist*. He was 28 years old. Both his parents were drunkard; hence, he too became one. He drinks when he does his work. He started his vice when he was 18. The fourth participant was *Mr. Guitarist*. He was 24 years old. Similar to Mr. Drummer, Mr. Guitarist drunk when he performed in front of an audience. He started drinking at the age of 18. Lastly, the fifth participant was *Mr. Chef*. He was a middle-aged man. His wife died 8 years ago, then he started his drinking spree.

Procedures of the Study

In the conduct of this study, the researcher followed San Jose's (2019) four steps. These are asking permission, formulation of proposal and research questions, conduct of focus group, and analysis of information.

Asking Permission. Before the formal conduct of the study, the researchers asked the permission of the Chairperson of the Department of Arts (DAS) to conduct the study. Melnyk and Fineout-Overhott (2002) averred that asking permission is a critical first step in the evidence-based practice research. On the other hand, Howes (2011) said that asking permission is part of protocols pose for humanities researchers.

Formulation of Proposal and Research Questions. After the request for permission was granted, the researchers crafted the proposal and research questions. The proposal format composed of the introduction and methods. Moreover, the research questions were focused on determining the first-hand experiences of the selected participants on their intoxication. The proposal and research questions were given to the Department chairperson for checking and verification.

Conduct of Focus Group Discussion. After the interview-guide questions based on the research questions were validated, the researchers conducted the face-to-face interviews. However, the researchers were mindful of the ethics in the conduct of the interviews. Protocol was observed before and after the interviews. The participants were interviewed at different times and venues. San Jose (2019) mentioned that interviewing separately allows the maintenance of consistency and partiality.

Analysis of Information. After the conduct of the interviews, the researchers transcribed the information obtained and the same was subjected to thematic analysis. Following the Nvivo manual

format, the data analyst came up with the themes, frequency of responses, and core ideas. Those themes were presented in the results and implicated in the discussions.

Results

In presenting the findings of this study, the researchers followed San Jose (2019). The findings were put into a table with three columns. The first columns draw the themes from the gathered information. Then these themes were classified into General, Typical, and Variant. It was considered General if the pattern of responses reached 50% and above; Typical if it reached 21% to 49%; while Variant if it had less than 20%. Moreover, the verbatim with tags were presented to further elaborate the participant's answers.

Table 1. Themes and Core Ideas on Creativity of Drunkards

Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
Motivation for drinking	Typical	- expressing inner self
	Variant	- doing task easily and quickly - situating in the family of drunkard - collaborating companion
Proportion of drinking	General	- becoming drown to alcohol
Duration of drinking	General	- craving for drinks every time
Realization of the experience	Variant	- drinking is not bad at all
		- freeing life to be happy

Source: Data analysis of the information gathered the in-depth interviews

Motivation for Drinking

Typically, the participants revealed that being intoxicated by alcoholic beverages helped them express their inner self. The spirit of alcohol made them confident and gave them courage to show their emotion. Also, they felt that they become part of the things they do.

"I can express my emotion and feelings. I can feel the beats through my veins, every single note in my heart and music in my mind" (Drummer Pg2L20-21).

"I can release my feelings and emotion throughout my guitar and I think that could be better" (GuitaristPg4L12-13).

Interestingly, other participants divulged that they drink alcohol because it fuels them to be efficient in the performance of their jobs.

Exactly, it triggers me to finish task and what is needed to fix on. If gasoline is the fuel of motorcycle to run then alcohol is mine (MechanicPg1L22-23).

Hmm. Drinking alcoholic drinks are somehow helpful to me. It helps me contribute to the quality of my play (DrummerPg2L19).

Variantly, another participant admitted that he was motivated to drink because he was surrounded by drunkard.

Well, maybe I grew up to a drunkard family (TattooArtistPg3L9).

He also confessed with alacrity that he usually drunk alcohol alone in his room. It became his leisure and later he became interested to become a tattoo artist. He drank whenever he did tattooing. He mentioned,

No it's fine... Since then, the situation teaches me to drink intoxicated drinks and maybe I am surrounded with drunkard people. I am drinking alone inside my room; art and alcoholic drink are past time. I'll always do it all day long. Later on, I'm interested in tattoo designs and decided to make it as a career today (TattooArtistPg3L22-25).

"I feel like more imaginative when I'm drunk. The spirit of imagination and emotion helps me produce wonderful output (TattooArtistPg3L31-32).

On the other hand, Chef declared that he become drunkard after he became a widower. He considered alcoholic beverages as his companion which helped him to be creative in cooking.

Alcohol is my partner in life Cooking is my expression of love. When I heard lot of good feedbacks from others, it recalls all happy memories we'd been together. That's why I'll always give the shot in every situation like this (ChefPg5L11-14).

In summary, the participants had their own motivations why they indulged into drinking alcoholic beverages. It was also evident that whenever they were drunk, they became dauntless, stout-hearted, and daring.

Proportion of Drinking

Generally, all the participants confessed that they were drunk whenever they performed their tasks. This means that they intentionally made themselves drown of alcohol. However, one of the participants mentioned that even if he were drunk; he remained in control of himself. This means that he was still aware of what was happening in the surroundings.

"For me, even if I'm drunk I still have to stay on focus because I have my job. However, I better jam out the band when I'm drunk" (GuitaristPg4L11-12).

The other participant even challenged the researcher to witness how he performed before and after he got drunk. He said,

"Anyways, try to watch our third set later. You will understand what I'm trying to say about my performance on or before I get drunk" (DrummerPg2L27-28).

In summary, the participants purposely made themselves drunk; but they were conscious of what they were doing. The fact the participants were able to recall their performances were manifestations of their awareness. It implies that they had already developed the skill of intertwining drunkenness and consciousness for a purpose.

Duration of Drinking

Generally, all participants craved for alcoholic beverages every time. Alcoholic drinks had become part of their existence. At average, they had drunk for eight years. Specifically, Mechanic started drinking since he was in high school. Drummer, now 23 years old started drinking when he was 18. Tattoo artists recalled started drinking when he was 20, now he is 28. On the other hand, guitarist estimated that he had been drinking alcohol six to seven years ago, while chef thrown into intoxicated drinks seven to eight years ago.

These results indicate that the participants had long been into drinking and there were aware of it; that they were already addicted to drinking alcoholic beverages; that they want to continue drinking because they loved doing it because they gained from doing it.

Realization of the Experience

The participants had no general answers to this theme. This was an indication that the participants weigh differently the important of drinking. One of the participants realized that becoming a drunkard was not necessarily bad because it enhanced the creativeness of a person. He thought that if he were not a drunkard, he would not achieve the things the he has right now.

"Yes, maybe other people look drinking as bad influence to me because of my drunkard activity. However, these people give me opportunity to boost and develop my skills and ability. Somehow being drunkard is not bad in all time" (GuitaristPg4L24-27).

Further, other participant mentioned that becoming a drunkard was an expression of freedom and choice. For him, being a drunkard did not define someone's personalities and competencies.

"But look, I just wanna live a simple life. This is how I dress, how I spend money, and how I used to do. I'm a drunkard man and this is how I looked. But I had a heart to feel, have the right of freedom to live and I just wanted a happy life" (ChefPg5L23-25).

In summary, the participants' realization was drinking intoxicated beverages was not at all bad. It was a matter of individual choice and personal reason.

Discussion

Motivation for Drinking

Although the participants have typical pattern of response to this theme, one thing is clear, there are reasons why they drink alcoholic beverages. Whenever they are in the influence of alcohol, they become motivated, confident, and fearless in performing their individual task. This result is contrary to

the previous findings of Abbey et al., (1993); Ostafin and Palfia (2006) who identified two reasons why persons consume alcohol – coping with stress and accepting the pressure of social influences. On the other hand, Ostafin and Marlatt (2008); Farris et al., (2010); Ostafin et al., (2012) pointed out that several evidence have shown that there is an automatic mental processes in taking alcoholic beverages. This might be the reason of the participants why they drink alcohol because whenever they are intoxicated their minds are able to control them. Thus, they can do freely what they want – fixing the machine, beating the drums and guitar with accuracy and musicality, composing a new design for the tattoo, and inventing a sumptuous recipe. Moreover, the results confirm Amabelle's (2012) theory of creativity-relevant processes because the participants are willing to take risk in drinking alcohol for them to adventures in their skills and abilities. Besides being drunk, the participants are able to control themselves. The findings also confirm Beveridge and Yorston's (1999) proposition that those individuals who have manic-depressive illness are creative.

Proportion of Drinking

In the story of Alejandro Roces entitled, *We Filipinos Are Mild Drinkers*, he characterizes that Filipinos were not drunkard. Filipinos usually drink when there are special social occasions. Probably this idea had already changed. It is a common knowledge among contemporary Filipinos that someone intoxicates himself with alcoholic beverages because he wants to somehow release the pain he felt, celebrates success, or he just a pass time, but never because he needs to accomplish something. In this study, participants intentionally make themselves drunk so that they could perform their usual tasks with passion. The clinical study of Schröder and Campanella (2019) revealed that heavy drinkers tend to display a general hyper-activation of the brain areas, suggesting the achievement of the task requires more cognitive efforts than for controls, even with the small amount of alcohol. It implies that since the participants can still perform their tasks such as repairing the machine, tattooing, beating the drums, plucking the guitar, and cooking, they remain mentally sound. This probably because the participants have been performing their tasks habitually. On the other hand, Chmielewski et al., (2020) found that relationship between control and automatism is less impaired by alcohol than control alone. This suggests that alcohol may not be a factor for the participants to do their tasks. Despite the alcohol intake they have, automaticity of their senses permit them to perform.

Duration of Drinking

Several health studies have shown that prolonged alcoholic beverages consumption may result to low level of serum (Zhou et al., 2016); morbidity (Praud et al., 2016); cancer (LoConte et al., 2018). The researchers assumed that the participants may be aware of the consequences of their large amount and prolonged alcoholic beverages intake; however, none of the participants had ever mentioned of the consequences they may get into. This may be because most of the participants are under 30 years old. They haven't felt the effect of the alcohol in their bodies. Ferretti et al., (2018) said that young people are the frequent consumers of alcoholic beverages to get high. Fernandes et al., (2019) added that alcoholic beverages are usually higher among young males. In terms of creativity, Benedek et al., (2017) found that alcohol consumption improved creative problem solving ability. Butkovic and Rancic-Dopudj (2017) observed that metal musicians are associated with high alcohol consumption. Moreover, Kim and Kipper (2016) mentioned that artists have expressed a flash of inspiration through alcohol consumption.

Realization of the Experience

This theme was unpopular for the participants. However, they have varied realization on drinking alcoholic beverages. It is not bad at all and it is a way of getting out for freedom. It is a common knowledge among Filipinos that drunkard are bad and ill-mannered. In the story of Aida Rivera-Ford entitled, *The Chiefest Mourner*, Aunt Sophia tied her husband on a chair because he was drunk again. The poet, a national artist, was known for his genius skills in composing poems when he was under the spirit of alcoholic beverages. As a result, the poet left Aunt Sophia and never come back. The story defects how alcoholic people are treated. Chandy et al., (2017) found that alcoholism is a social evil and a bad habit. Worse, Donev and Kaluderović (2017) mentioned that alcohol is the father of liars. For the participants, when they are under the spirit of alcohol they are free – free to express what they feel.

Conclusions

Does consuming intoxicated beverage really contribute to the creativity of a person? The answer depends. Different individuals have their own personal reasons why they drink alcoholic beverages; thus, we should not judge them according to our bias. Drunkards have their own story to tell and they need our ears to listen to them. Their experiences have given us the idea that there are people who need the help the spirit of alcohol in order to perform or deliver their tasks. For them, alcohol is a catalyst, fuel, friend, and companion. May be intoxicated beverages do not give these drunkards creativity but boost of confidence to be daring, to be bold, to be dauntless, and to be courageous. But whatever it is, they drink because they want to express their inner self and their secret desire. Not everyone is gifted with self-confidence. These findings give us the realization that we define ourselves and no one is more knowledgeable than ourselves.

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