



De La Salle University – Dasmariñas
College of Liberal Arts and Communication
Psychology Department

AMOK: EARLY RECOLLECTIONS OF A CULTURE-BOUND SYNDROME

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ABSTRACT

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Statement of the Problem:

This study aims to provide answers to the following problems:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents who have experienced amok in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age,
 - 1.2. Sex, and
 - 1.3. Occupation?
2. What are the early recollections of the persons identified to have experienced amok?
3. What are the patterns drawn from childhood recollections of the identified respondents who have experienced amok?

Scope and Limitations:



The research contained information about the early recollection of the identified respondents who experienced amok. It covered the early recollections and patterns of the respondents. The participants came from jails in Parañaque City and Dasmariñas City. The data from the participants were treated as confidential in nature and were used for research purposes only. This study did not cover similar amok cases outside the said places. Most of the literatures gathered from this study were foreign literature for local literatures were few while the study was being conducted.

Methodology:

The researchers used interview, childhood prompts, and a timeline exercise to gather the data needed. The researchers used descriptive case study design. This research used ten identified persons who had experienced amok as participants. The snowball sampling technique was used to gather qualified respondents needed for this research.

Major Findings:

The research shows that early recollections of amok offenders revolve around: (1) the loss of a significant person, (2) playing with cousins or friends, (3) bullies and fights, (4) accidents, (5) first times, (6) regrets, (7) harsh punishments, (8) exposures to violence and crime, and (9) family and peer-related criminality and substance abuses. The patterns that were drawn from the early recollections of the respondents are: (1) they have problems with authority figures; (2) they own toy guns, some make their own toys, some own a real one; (3) superheroes they idolize are mostly Superman and cartoon characters; (4) they have an unpleasant neighborhood, most see and hear violence; (5) the pieces of advice range from studying well to telling their younger selves where they're heading and



how to prevent it; (6) most are middle child; and (7) they have gravely ill parents and they experience being teased and bullied.

Conclusions:

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings above:

1. All amok offenders in the study are males from ages 22 to 57 and were once employed as skilled workers.

2. Their early recollections include loss of a significant person, playing with cousins or friends, bullies and fights, accidents, first times, regrets, harsh punishments, exposures to violence and crime, and family and peer-related criminality and substance abuse.

3. The patterns of early recollections among identified amok offenders are: (1) they have clubs and organizations, (2) they are taken care by their mothers; (3) they grow up with their cousins, therefore, could have not suffered from loneliness; (4) they have special talents like good at playing basketball; (5) they remember an accident due to fights, stab wounds, or shot by a gun, therefore, could have said to have reacted aggressively towards others; (6) they experience being teased and bullied which results to fist fights; (7) they are middle children; (8) they become class officers as sergeant at arms; (9) they have unpleasant neighborhood which includes exposure to criminality and substance abuse; and (10) they want to become a policeman yet ended up otherwise and all were exposed to violence.

4. Summing up the reports of the respondents and rooting out the central and common theme of the respondent's childhood recollections that led to amok, the



researchers arrived at the answer that adverse environment in which the respondents spent their entire childhood was the primary factor that led to amok. The brutal violence and criminality that surrounded the respondents as children helped them develop not only a habituation but also a lifestyle, a personality that adults do not conform with the norms of every society they would be in.

5. The researchers also found the effects of poverty in the respondents. First, if the respondents and their families are well off, they wouldn't be living in slums where people resort to criminality to obtain their physiological needs. Second, if the people living in slums are well off, they wouldn't be doing criminal deeds and violence to obtain their physiological needs.

6. A probable inference as to why the respondents are so exposed to the adverse environment outside is they are not safe inside their homes. A dysfunctional family relationship inside the homes of the respondents, along with first hand violent and aggressive experiences, gives the respondents a subconscious desire to leave their homes. Since violence and aggression are seen in the family instead of virtues and values, the respondents could have felt cornered by the adversity inside and outside their homes.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations were drawn from the conclusions above.

1. Having presented the patterns of their early recollections, amok offenders could now study and reflect to themselves the cause and effect of the events in their lives as explained by this research. It could have said that their crimes were results of previous



habituation to crime and decreased resistance to aversive events and, therefore, were not intentional crimes.

2. The patterns presented were gathered during childhood; therefore, parents who would want to see the patterns in their children’s lives could present interventions to prevent outcomes in adulthood such as amok or any kind of crime.

3. Law enforcement agencies are not able to assess the prevention or handling of amok offenders during the rampage or inside the jail with the patterns presented since it gives them the psychological perspective on the roots of this culture bound syndrome. From these patterns, law enforcement agencies could derive a new way to stop amok offenders without killing them.

4. Participants who want to further study culture bound syndromes or crime related studies could develop this study into either a wider scale study. They could devise a preventive intervention, or a risk management proposed for amok offenders to prevent further loss of human lives even in a small way.



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