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Chapter

Emotional Creativity

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Abstract

Creativity encompasses and is influenced by several emotions. Emotional creativity is a critical component in the creative process. It is the ability to create something new through the influence of emotions evoked from the personal or experiences of others. Creative works inspired by emotions are often original and greeted with Euphoria. This chapter demonstrates how different emotions inspire different forms and levels of creativity with examples of notable artists who experienced emotional creativity. This chapter discusses research linking emotions to creativity and the explanations of how the identification and regulation of emotions, which are often referred to as emotional intelligence, make a difference in whether creativity becomes useful, helpful, or hurtful. The dark side of creativity, which occurs when creativity becomes hurtful instead of helpful, and research into its causes is also discussed in this chapter. An example of a notable figure in the twentieth century, i.e., Adolf Hitler who masterminded World War II, is used to demonstrate how emotions played a role in this phenomenon. A conclusion alluding to the fact that creativity or creative outcomes are not necessarily bad but the application of creative work and the ability to identify emotions and regulate or control the emotions to drive creative performance validates emotional creativeness.

Keywords: creativity, emotional creativity, malevolent creativity, benevolent creativity, emotional intelligence, dark side of creativity

1. Introduction

Creativity is tilted heavily toward art more than a science discipline. There are no processes, steps, medication, or ingredients to guarantee creativity or creative performance. There are, however, many factors, such as environment, emotions, expertise, intrinsic motivation, etc., that enhance or improve the creative abilities of people. The aim of this chapter is to understand the relationship between emotions and creativity. Emotions are not a button one chooses to press or not to press. It is not thought or learned; it erupts when triggered by a phenomenon or a situation. Let us consider the emotional expression of a newborn. Have you ever wondered how newborns get to know how to cry? Most newborns announce their presence into the world with shrill noise referred to as Vitalis or the cry of life. Scientists have over the years tried to understand the message being communicated by the newborns through Vitalis without success, except to indicate that it is an expression of emotions of either distress or discomfort of being transitioned from one environment (womb) where they were completely dependent on their mother to a life outside the womb where...
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the baby has to depend on their own lungs to survive. Though science has not been able to decode the message of the cry of life, science tells us that the cry of life is an important expression in the first few minutes of human life. The lack of it, how high or low, and how persistent tells on the kind of attention, urgency of attention, how intense or detailed examination the child will receive. The universality and the tender age (day one) at which this expression of emotions occur make it clear that emotions are a natural and vital occurrence in the life of every human being. It is safe to say that every human being at one time in his or her life have encountered a situation where a story, movie, photograph, poetry, artwork, and music stirred up some emotion within them [1].

While the exposure to the creative work of people spurs the emotion of their audience, followers, or collectors, we also know that for people to achieve the impactful creative performance, they try to connect to certain emotions to power their creativity. They go to great lengths to transfer that emotional power into their creative works to captivate and inspire their audience to follow them or be hooked on their work or their person. Great artists such as Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, Tailor Swift, Kojo Antwi, and Ibrahim Mahama have always been inspired by their emotions. Love, pain, fear, rejection, and several other emotions have invoked creativity in people over the years. Yet, the subject of emotional creativity is the least researched or discussed topic in creativity. Before we zoom in to what emotional creativity is all about, let us first try to understand what emotion is. Emotion is a spontaneous psychological and physical reaction, demonstration, or expression of feelings toward an experience or anticipation of a future event. A psychologist has told us over the years that emotions are solely an activity of the brain, but new evidence has shown that this is not the case. The Institute of HeartMath, a research center specializing in the study of the physiology of emotions, has identified a relationship between emotions, the brain, and the heart. The research center explains that as we encounter or anticipate an experience, erratic patterns are sent to the emotional centers of the brain by the heart and the brain responds with signals to the heart and body in forms known as feelings [2]. These findings are affirmed by the James-Lange theory, which states that witnessing or experiencing an external event leads to a physiological or physical response [3]. For instance, if you come into contact with a bear on a lonely street on a usual night walk, your body will start to tremble and then your heart will start racing, which will send signals or patterns to the brain; the James-Lange theory suggests that the brain after receipt of the signals will interpret the physiological or physical reaction as being frightened [3]. The signaling of the body to a particular emotion leads us to the making of decisions and choices. When the brain tells me that I am frightened at the sight of a bear, I then make a decision to run, scream for help, throw something at the bear, or remain calm. We make several choices in terms of what to eat, wear, where to go to, who to visit, and the tone to communicate with based on our emotions. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the intricacies of emotions, starting with the types of emotions and how they influence our actions and abilities especially in terms of creativity or creative performance.

2. Types of emotions

Paul Eckman advocated in 1972 that there were six basic emotions in the universe: fear, disgust, anger, surprise, happiness, and sadness [4]; this was expanded to include joy and acceptance by Pollack [5] in later years. Robert Plutchik in 1980,
however, argued that humans do not necessarily exhibit one type of emotion in reaction to a particular situation all the time. He opined that in most cases, there is what is called “mixed feelings,” where two or more emotions combine as an expression over a situation. Therefore, though phycologist tells us that there are about 34,000 emotional feelings, American psychologist Dr. Robert Plutchik have argued that the 34,000 emotions are the permutations of the eight distinctive primary emotions that serve as a foundation to any form of emotion [6]. These are joy, sadness, surprise, disgust, anticipation, anger, acceptance, and fear [5, 7]. These emotions trigger certain physical and physiological activities in the body or brain such as crying, laughter, jumping, hugging, writing, dancing, or sicknesses such as depression and high blood pressure. This activity is often termed creativity depending on how unique, beneficial or detrimental, and visible the activity is to a third party, society, or the individual. When the activity is unique, visible, and beneficial and awakens the expression of joy, excitement, and surprise especially to many people, it is termed creative. When it is unique, visible, and detrimental and awakens the expression of sadness, shock, sorrow, and pain to anybody, it is termed the dark side of creativity. Continuing from the example of the bear in the last paragraph, if the person’s reaction after being frightened leads to a unique or new, beneficial, or detrimental activity or a project upon seeing the bear, there establishes a link between a person’s emotions and creative abilities. According to Hoffmann [8], emotions and feelings are intricately related to creativity, in that reactions triggered by emotions often lead to a person burying himself in work to develop a product, writing a poem, or development of “lessons learned,” which becomes a solution to other people’s problems.

2.1 What is emotional creativity?

Emotional creativity is defined as “a pattern of cognitive abilities and personality traits related to originality and appropriateness in emotional experience” [9]. It is a critical component in the creative process. It is the ability to create something new through the influence of emotions evoked from the personal or experiences of others. Creative works inspired by emotions are often original and greeted with Euphoria. More often than not, people misconstrue emotions to be feelings or moods and even use them interchangeably, thus wondering how such traits can lead to creativity. There are, however, differences in these variables [10]. These differences are determined according to the timing of occurrence of these variables when a situation occurs, warranting emotional, feeling, or mood response and also the level of involvement or interactions with certain organs of the body. Emotions are triggered as a form of response to a situation; it involves interaction between the brain, the heart, and other organs of the body. Feelings come in mostly second after emotional processes have occurred, and the person is brooding over the issue and one feels physical and emotional sensations. It does not necessarily have to involve the heart; it is the reason someone can “feel cold” because of cold or icy weather, which has nothing to do with the heart as compared to feeling emotionally cold toward someone. It usually lasts longer than emotions. Moods are usually not necessarily triggered by an event, situation, or circumstances; there are times when people just wake up from sleep and claim they are not in the mood to talk or they are in a good or bad mood. In such circumstances, they sing all day when in good mood and when in bad mood wear a frown all day and bark at the least provocation; these scientists have attributed to the activities of “mood swing” hormones such as estrogen and progesterone. In situations where it occurs because of a specific situation, it can occur before feelings or after feelings have been expressed.
In all these variables, however, the determining factor for creativity or creative performance is what Psychologist Eddie Harmon-Jones calls emotional and motivational intensity. The intensity of emotional feelings, such as joy, anger, sadness, etc., generates motivational intensity, which provides the impetus for creativity [11]. According to motivational intensity theory, low motivational intensity broadens attention leading to the search for new goals to pursue. The discovery of purposeful goals increases the level of intensity for creative performance [6]. When the search for goals to pursue under low intensity is not discovered, boredom sets in, which sometimes leads to depression, stifling creativity. High motivational intensity narrows attention and focus leading to the completion of a specific goal. High intensity, therefore, fosters a high level of creativity [6]. Many argue that motivational intensity is a more important factor and a driving force in determining emotional creativity than the positivity and negativity of emotional experience. However, critics have been quick to point out that the positivity and negativity of emotional experiences form the basis for motivation. These critics have explained that the positivity or negativity of emotions is what motivates people to behave in a certain way, which sometimes leads to creative performance, and that if negative or positive emotions were not to exist, the motivational intensity would not exist for creative performance to happen. For instance, when someone is excited, the positive emotion is what will motivate the person to act in a manner, which exudes joy, and if they have been angered, then that negative emotion will motivate them to act violently against the person who offended them.

2.2 Positive versus negative emotions

Positive and negative emotions are inevitable in life; life experiences impose such emotions as part of human development or maturity. A positive emotion can be described as a pleasant feeling in reaction to a situation or a circumstance, while a negative emotion is explained as an unpleasant and undesirable feeling in reaction to a situation or a circumstance. Some examples of situations or circumstances that awaken some pleasant or unpleasant are discussed in the following. Let us consider a situation where one loses a loved one. The act of losing the loved one is the person's situation or circumstance; the expression of the emotion of sadness, sorrow, or emptiness is the feeling in reaction to an unwanted experience described as a negative emotion. Similarly, the joy of earning one's first paycheck after school is the person's circumstance, and the expression of the emotion of ecstasy is the feeling in reaction to a beautiful experience described as a positive emotion. As has previously been discussed, emotions are not always experienced or expressed in their pure forms as posited by Robert Plutchik; people sometimes experience a mixed form of these emotions [4]. For instance, getting married could invoke several different emotions, such as joy, anxiety, and fear of the unknown, in one person at the same time or at the varying time; in other words, the person is experiencing or is in a certain situation but experiencing different emotions. The mixed feeling, however, often occurs when the situation or circumstances are either within a period of expectation or situation not in finality. When the issue invoking the mixed feeling comes to finality in most cases, the individual experiences either a positive or negative emotion.

On March 10, 1999, Paul Njoroge kissed his wife Carole, three children Ryan, Kelly, Ruby, and his mother-in-law who were on board Boeing 737 Max goodbye. They were taking a short trip and were expected to return soon. He had barely made his way out of the airport when he heard from news update that the plane had crashed. He was in a state of fear and anxiety but at the same time filled with hope that God
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will intervene and keep members of his family alive. All these mixed emotions engulfed his being as he drove defenselessly to the airport. A crowd of anxious relatives of persons on board the plane was mounting up. As information flow stagnated and the confirmation of survivors delayed, anger began to consume Paul’s being, yet he hanged on to the slim rope of hope. He edged away from persons who had given up hope and were wailing even before hearing from officials. He did not want to entertain the thought of losing his entire family. When official confirmation reached Paul that there were no survivors and all 149 passengers had died, all hope of seeing his family immediately disappeared. He moved from fear, anxiety, and hope to anger and now pain and loneliness. Paul has since then been living with friends; he cannot bear to return home to see the shoes of his children at the living area where they had left them that day. He has a flashback of their tiny feet in those shoes, but he knows he will never see them running around the house or making noise again. Paul declared that he could never return to his house; the pain and the loneliness come alive whenever he pictures his family in that house. How Paul decides to channel this highly intense emotional trauma will determine an outcome that would be categorized as a creative performance or not. If the outcome is categorized as a creative performance, then we say his emotion has powered creativity; thus, emotional creativity has been fostered through his experience.

Negative emotions often power creativity in solitude or are championed as a solo project, while positive emotions often occur within a team. While the creative outcome of positive emotions is very helpful and impactful, it does not often strike a deep emotional chord in third parties as negative emotions do. Think about it, how many songs, artwork, architectural work, and discoveries that captivated the world were inspired by positive emotion, very few. However, if we were to survey many organizations to find out the number of groundbreaking inventions that were carried out because someone had the confidence, hope, and passion to invent, it will be numerous. Examples of creative performance or creative work inspired by positive performance though existing and prevalent, the outcome is often not traced to a specific positive emotion because positive emotions are difficult to sustain for a long period and often not centered on one person. The creative performance or creative works of negative emotions, however, gain popularity very easily, mainly for two reasons. First, negative emotions linger longer than positive ones; hence, the required intensity to motivate or inspire a creative work is often sustained until the completion of the work. Second, in many cultures around the world, people are brought up or trained to be empathetic and conditioned to think that empathy is feeling another person’s pain. So, although empathy is understanding and sharing the feelings of others, the “feelings” in the definition of empathy have been replaced with pain. Therefore, when someone develops a creative piece and shares his source of inspiration for the work and has a tint of negative emotions, such as pain, rejection, loneliness, etc., there is the tendency for the work to enjoy the widespread expression of empathy leading to acceptance and popularity.

Negative emotions at the workplace are often not welcomed in organizations. Such negative emotions, like jealousy and envy, could be detrimental to the creative and general performance of an organization [12]. A person envious of a colleague could frustrate efforts at developing a creative process or product just so recognition for good work does not go to someone other than him or her. Positive emotions that are highly desirable in organizations tend to inspire, engage, and empower the team to creative performance. Joe Forgas, a social psychologist, asserts that though negative emotions are often assumed to be detrimental to creativity or humanity, they
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sometimes catalyze creative production [11]. He explained that although both positive and negative emotions take varying paths, they can both lead to creativity. Joe Forgas posited that while positive feelings stimulate creativity out of the satisfaction of life, negative emotions such as sadness sharpen attention, making a person more focused and diligent toward creative performance [11]. Happenings around the world tell us that creativity and creative performance are not always an outcome of positive emotions; negative emotions can also generate creativity depending on where the aggressiveness that usually characterizes such emotions is channeled. Let us consider some notable examples of how negative emotions inspired some artists to capture the attention of the world with their creative work.

2.2.1 You’re beautiful (song): James Blunt

“You’re beautiful” when released in 2005 as a single reached number 1 and 2 on music charts in the UK and Australia, respectively. It reached number 1 in music charts and airplay in Canada and the USA leading to the song-winning Ivor Novello award for airplay in 2006. The song sold 625,000 copies in the UK and over three million copies in the USA [13]. It is the first single to reach number 1 on music charts in 10 major cities in the world, including Spain, Mexico, Canada, the USA, the UK, and The Netherlands. It was the first American Idol song to become the number 1 song on the USA billboard hot 100 [13]. The song received three Grammy nominations in 2007 and won the BMI Internet Award for most plays on BMI-licensed websites in 2007. This song that received global subscriptions and airplay was inspired by a negative emotion experienced by the writer and singer, James Blunt [13]. Blunt confirmed on Oprah Winfrey’s show on March 8, 2006 that the inspiration for the song was from a place of misery. He told the audience of how he spotted his ex-girlfriend at the Underground in London with her new boyfriend; this stirred in him an unwanted emotion, which inspired him to write a song that reached number 1 in major countries and sold over 3 million copies in the USA alone in just 2 minutes [13].

2.2.2 Candle in the wind (song): Elton John

When Elton John, a UK artist, heard of the death of Princess Diana, his close friend, he went into a devastating depression. Elton John felt he had to pay tribute to his friend through a song, but the time was too short; he, therefore, contacted his writing partner Bernie Taupin, and the words of Candle in the Wind originally performed in 1973 were rewritten to depict the pain of losing his friend Princess Diana [14]. To date, Elton John has performed the song only once at the funeral of Princess Diana, but when the song “Candle in the Wind” was released as a single after the funeral, it broke records by being number 1 in a large number of countries, which was affirmed by the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest-selling single of all time [14].

So far, we have discussed creativity in terms of tangibility. Often when we talk or think about creativity, what comes to mind is Mona Lisa paintings, iconic buildings, or beautiful songs or poetry, things we can see, touch or hear but what of the process of ideation? How does our emotion relate to or influence our ability to generate new or fresh ideas to solve problems. The answer is creative thinking; it is not very different from what we perceive creativity to be because before one will decide to write lyrics to a song inspired by a particular emotion, the development of the idea is first constructed in the mind before it is written and sung. Researchers at the World Economic Forum suggest that creative thinking is one of the most essential skills needed by
work professionals or skilled workers and future leaders [15]. Creative thinking has been described as nurturing one's imagination to perceive possibilities aimed at developing ideas to solve problems or create something new. The emotions impact creative thinking in similar ways as has been previously discussed. It is instructive to note that, while negative emotions are not desirous at workplaces and positive emotions are perceived to be idle for creative performance at the workplace, this line of thinking could be misleading. If positive emotions necessarily lead to creative performance at the workplace, then all advertised job vacancies would indicate a preference for sanguine personality trait as a key job requirement since it is perceived to spur positive emotions, an assertion shared by Bojanowska and Zalewska [16], who have categorized the sanguine personality trait as a happy temperament. While emotions such as happiness, enthusiasm, and confidence inspire creativity and increase productivity, those same traits could become a source of destruction in the organization. Some employees in expressing happiness or joy go about drinking, playing loud music, chitchatting, and gossiping, which tend to destruct others from working and make the company lose productive time. Negative emotions such as anger and resentment borne out of being denied promotion if controlled can be used as motivation for personal improvement [17]. This presupposes that, that not all emotions whether positive or negative lead to creativity and creative performance, there must be a deliberate attempt at controlling or stirring the emotion toward a creative outcome; to do this, one needs a special skill referred to as emotional intelligence.

2.3 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the mindfulness and evaluation of one's own emotions and that of others to control those emotions for purposes of influencing emotional outcomes for greater creative and productive performance [18]. The findings of recent research by Anderson [15] indicate that our ability to use our mind to understand emotions within our space or impact on our environment and control that emotion to the extent of developing new ideas or solving problems creatively is an art of emotional intelligence and application toward the achievement of organizational objectives [19]. Moore [20] posits that people who have a high level of emotional intelligence can manage the relationship in a manner that fosters creativity by showing a high level of emotional constraint and empathy, which correlates with leadership effectiveness, team success, and employee performance [20]. Emotional intelligence provides the opportunity for people to be aware of how emotions influence creativity and performance to harness specific emotional states of the person or employee for developing creative solutions within the organizational or personal goals. This is affirmed in a study conducted on young business professionals [21], where it was established that emotional intelligence improves moods, and persons with emotional intelligence can turn good moods into creativity at the workplace. The findings of this study collaborate with a Yale-led study reported in the Journal of Creative Behavior, which explains that leaders who possess emotional intelligence have the tendency of fostering happy moods and creativity in the organization [22]. The Yale study conducted by research scientist Zorana Ivicevic and colleagues at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence surveyed close to 15,000 people in the USA to assess the level of emotional intelligence of leaders and the impact on the work of employees [22]. The research, which was conducted in 2017, indicated that 70% of employees whose leaders showed little or no emotional intelligence described their emotions and moods in the work environment in negative terms and showed no signs of being intrinsically
motivated to either work or be involved in any creative work at the workplace [22]. This was in sharp contrast in work environments with emotionally intelligent leaders. Employees with emotionally intelligent leaders appeared to be happy, fulfilled, intrinsically challenged to be more creative and contribute toward the achievement of work goals [22]. Emotional intelligence empowers a leader with the right skill to create a conducive work environment to accommodate varying views, ideas, and to refocus employee emotions to drive creativity and innovation [23]. The leader or organization does not always embrace the drive for creativity at the workplace, which sometimes leads to negative emotions such as disappointment, pain, or betrayal.

A story is told of how Spencer Silver, a scientist at 3M in 1968, set out to create adhesive for aircraft, but the adhesive turned out to be weak, and his creative work was rejected and put aside by the company [24]. Years later, when Art Fry, a chemical engineer in the same company 3M, experienced negative emotions of frustration, disappointment, and pain of losing his place in the choir, he used some of Spencer’s adhesive to coat one side of a paper to mark some pages of the hymn book. He realized that after unconsciously pasting and removing the paper with Spencer’s adhesive at the same spot in the hymn book, the page of the hymn book was not destroyed. When he realized the potential value of the paper with adhesive, he quickly brought it to the attention of his superiors; surprisingly, he was ordered to stop work. Art Fry, however, ignored the orders of his superiors, bypassed laid down procedures, and continued working on the project using the company’s equipment without permission. The company eventually identified the usefulness of Art Fry’s creative work, which became known as Post-it and manufactured it [24]. In this story, we realize that the creative performance led to the profitability of the company, but the act of defiance of superior orders and scholars [24] categorize dishonesty in use of the company’s asset at the time when the project was a personal one as the dark side of creativity. According to Professor Francesca Gino, of Harvard University, and Professor Dan Ariely, of Duke University, creative thinking makes people justify wrongdoing or dishonesty as long as they aim to or achieve creative performance (e.g., “I am not stealing this; I am just borrowing it; I will return it as soon as I am done”) [24]. They posit that this behavior is a slippery slope: once an individual begins to justify or make the excuse for such wrongful behavior, they are likely to engage in the dark side of creativity [24].

2.4 The dark side of emotional creativity

Can a person’s emotion lead to bad or dark creativity? There is a current debate as to whether creativity can be considered bad or dark or whether it is the intent of the use of the creative idea or product, which can lead to creativity being categorized as dark. Several research studies, such as [25, 26], argue that creativity does have a dark side if we consider not only the harmful application but the moral or ethical processes of creative ideation or performance as well. The argue that the excitement, passion, joy, or desperation of creating something new or achieving something that can transform a person from an unknown figure to a celebrity or public figure motivate people to use all means, including dishonesty, to attain a creative performance goal [25]. Such people tend to have high moral flexibility (i.e., making excuses to make unethical behavior appropriate) [25] and use it to cure themselves of guilt. If we were to go by this assertion, then most people may have engaged in the dark side of emotional creativity without even knowing. Reflect over the number of times, you were late for an appointment, and out of fear of losing a contract, you conjured and told a very beautiful and believable story to your client. Or the time when someone with amorous
feelings toward you gifted you with something valuable, and when your spouse found
out, you told her a story of how you were going to surprise her with it. In all these
scenarios, the lie may be original, creative but did not harm anyone; hence, some
will say, this is pure ingenuity and there is nothing dark about it since it did not harm
anyone. However, persons who believe creativity has a dark side argue that the use of
creative thinking to tell lies or deceive someone into acting in a certain way or believ-
ing something that does not exist has demonstrated the dark side of creativity.

The argument then arises that, if a notorious criminal uses deceptive but creative
means to lure another wanted criminal to aid in police intelligence, will that be con-
sidered as purely creative or still darkish? Some scholars [27] assert that some creative
performance adjudged as dark creativity should simply be described as creativity and
that there is nothing like bad or dark creativity. This is because a creative idea or a cre-
ative piece in itself is not bad or dark, but the application of the same is what makes
it bad; hence, discussions of the dark side of creativity should be centered around
malevolent creativity [27]. Jia et al. [6] explain that often when people talk about
creativity, they are referring to benevolent creativity, which has to do with developing
or coming up with new, original, and useful ideas or products, but what is often left in
the back burner is the malevolent creativity, which involves the application of the new
or original idea for harmful purposes. The aspects of change or novelty, which we cat-
egorized as creativity, are those that brought improvement into our lives, business, or
the world, and creators of such novelty are referred to as creative geniuses [28]. Some
notable persons who readily come to mind are Michelangelo, Mozart, and Picasso who
are recognized for their wonderful work of arts and Thomas Edisons, Henry Fords,
Albert Einsteins, and Marie Curies who are lauded for their groundbreaking discover-
ies in science which changed the way the world operates [28].

Prof. Susan Krauss Whitbourne in her article titled “Does Creativity Have its Dark
Side?” explains that a creative piece may not have an original intent of causing harm,
but someone can apply creative thinking to that same creative piece to cause harm
[28]; hence, describing the dark side of creativity from the perspective of its malevo-
Ient situates the dark side of emotional creativity in proper context. She cites the
example of Facebook to describe how developers of the app created a novel product
to promote social interaction, but some users use the app for cyberbullying. The app
was developed for a good purpose and most people use it for the good purpose of
marketing their products or social interaction, but some use it for the evil purpose of
cyberbullying and circulating false news. Would such a creative product be said to be
darkish just because some people are applying it in a harmful way? Runco [27] posits
that in such situations, the act of causing harm should be categorized as malevolent,
but the creative piece or the creative thinking behind the harm is simply creativity
and not dark. It is, however, clear from most contemporary research, including that
of Prof. Susan Krauss Whitbourne, a Professor Emerita of Psychological and Brain
Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, that the description of the dark
side of creativity or emotional creativity is about malevolent creativity.

2.4.1 Malevolent creativity

Malevolent creativity refers to creative ideas, creative thinking, creative per-
formance, and creative works aimed at harming someone or with destructive
consequences only [6, 28]. Malevolent creativity manifests in many actions such as
telling lies, dishonesty, terrorism, spreading false information, theft, bullying, and
any form of abuse. Research into factors influencing malevolent creativity indicates
that while social climate, cultural atmosphere, and environment affect a person's malevolent tendencies, emotional manifestations of childhood neglect are a major cause. According to Jia et al. [6], the results of the research indicate that persons who experience childhood neglect or grow in antagonistic family settings are more likely to develop malevolent creativity in their adulthood. The findings also indicated that such individuals have difficulty in emotional recognition and regulation and, hence, have low emotional intelligence [8]. The study also found that such persons are reflective, analytical, and tenacious in their cognitive processes [6, 29], making it possible for them to draw on emotions from their childhood to inspire or motivate them to generate novel and expedient ways to attain their objectives of inflicting pain on people or damaging society as a form of revenge [8]. This finding was consistent with social information processing theory, which suggested persons whose childhood was characterized with destructive behaviors perceive neutral social information differently and interpret them as threatening, hence making them prone to acting aggressively that could induce hostile decisions, making them ready to fight [6, 30]. In all this narrative, emotions come into play. The emotions of loneliness, pain, and anger lead to a desire for revenge. When the desire for revenge meets opportunity or power, malevolent creativity is created to show the dark side of emotional creativity. This reflects the story of Adolf Hitler.

2.4.2 Example of the dark side of emotional creativity: Adolf Hitler

New York Times of 1986 reported details of a play by Niklas Raadstrom, a Swedish poet, based on a childhood story of Adolf Hitler written by Alice Miller, which depicted how Adolf Hitler's personality and deeds were influenced by emotional and physical abuse suffered in his childhood [31]. The story recounts how Adolf’s father, Alois, constantly beat and humiliated him. Aside from the beatings received, he was trained by his father to hide his pain by forbidding him from crying or showing pain when abused or humiliated [31]. Adolf Hitler’s memoir recounts times when he proudly counted the strokes received from his father without shedding a tear and shared it as an achievement with his mother [31]. With his mother grieving over the death of three other children, she never had time to protect Adolf or care for him. He, however, loved his mother because on a few occasions she shielded him from the tyranny of his father out of fear of losing another child. It is mentioned in his memoir how he cherished the few times he slept on the same bed with his mother when his father was away. He often longed for that closeness but did not get much of it. He felt more neglected than belongingness. He had no one to turn to when the pain from the abuse or humiliation was unbearable or when confused, he was lonely, unhappy, and grew in that positive emotionally deficit state [32]. How this person who struggled with his grades in school except drawing and even getting a job later in life managed to scheme his way through the army and later lead Germany and the greater part of Europe baffles many. Hitler who was known as a propaganda genius relied on his oratory skills and capitalized on widespread discontent, political infighting, and economic instability in Germany at the time to develop strong propaganda leading to Hindenburg naming Hitler a chancellor in 1933 and later gaining absolute power. Upon assuming power, his government passed a law, making Germany a one-party state (Nazi Party the only party in Germany). When that objective was achieved, he turned his focus on Europe where he invaded Poland in 1939, which led to the outbreak of World War II. He spread his tentacles, and by 1941, Nazi forces occupied most of Europe and murder over six million Jews. He committed suicide in 1945.
Hitler was not born evil as most people describe him to be; he was born innocent like any other child. However, his destructive upbringing, which not only led to negative emotions but also encouraged concealment of these emotions, made him deny pain just so he could survive [33]. The emotions of powerlessness felt throughout the years of having to endure pain and denying the truth of pain, shame, and loneliness turned the innocent baby Hitler into a malicious person who equipped himself with the skill of designing schemes to amass power and inflict pain on human beings. Hitler’s action was creative as most people could not discern his objectives and was dazzled with the depth of wickedness and contempt for human beings [33]. The emotions of hatred, anger, and revenge inspiring or motivating his actions were so intense; his aggression was merciless making his creative thinking and outcome stand out with far-reaching consequence.
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