

ANALYZING THE KNOWLEDGE, INTERESTS, PERCEPTION OF THE MINIMALISM LIFESTYLE AMONG MUSLIM STUDENTS AT AN ECO-FRIENDLY SCHOOL IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Eco-friendly schools are currently popular among Malaysian middle and upper classes. because they teach youngsters about minimalism and provide an eco-friendly learning environment. They teach children about minimalism and provide an eco-friendly learning environment. The trendy minimalist lifestyle is the opponent of overconsumption. In Islam, a minimalist lifestyle is considered as an effort to raise muslim knowledge of environmental issues while respecting Maqasid al-Sharia values (Hifz al-biah). In education, students' knowledge, perspectives, and interests determine overall understanding and acceptance of minimalism. 74 students from three Eco-high schools in Kuala Lumpur participated in our quantitative study, which was evaluated with SPSS 20. Respondents must be Muslim, and the majority are Malays. The questionnaire has four sections, one for demographics and three for factors. The study found high total average knowledge (Min=3.86, SP=.573), perception (Min 3.90, SP=.477), and curiosity (Min 3.86, SP=.573). The study found that pupils had good stage awareness. The majority of students believe that minimalism is the implementation of Zuhd (asceticism) that always feel Qanaah (always feel enough) and is vital to increasing awareness toward zero-waste.

Keywords: Minimalism, Knowledge, Perception, Interest, and Eco-school

1) INTRODUCTION

When we do not value our own nature, the nature in which we are born, this price will become bad things such global warming, a forest fire, a flood, ice, contamination, and poison, said Peşîn Tolhildan, a Kurdish environmental activist in his article entitled Nature Talks Back, which is distributed in zines in activist networks in southern Turkey (Personal interview,2020). Since the scientific revolution begin, taking a term Yuval Noah Harari on his book entitled “ *Homo sapiens*”, relation between human and ecology entering alienated phase into a phase that many experts refer to as anthropocene (Harari,

2020; Piper & Richard, 2016).

The Anthropocene epoch is distinguished by the following characteristics: (1). The human imprint on the global environment has now grown to such a size and intensity that it now matches some of the world's most powerful natural forces in terms of its influence on the operation of the Earth system (Steffen et al., 2011), (2). The paradigm shift is in relation to nature, which has shifted from being a subject to being an object (Folke et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2018), and (3). extinction of the largest of the world's megafauna (Chandler & Pugh, 2021), research written by Dirzo et al (2014) conclude Since 1500, 322 terrestrial vertebrate species have gone extinct, and populations of the remaining species have declined by 25%. Either way, invertebrates suffer: Sixty-seven percent of observed populations exhibit a 45 percent. But, s we have to differentiate between human activity to destabilize the Earth System with human activity who just for changes the landscape or interacts with only an ecosystem (Lewis & Maslin, 2015).

Education plays an essential role in fighting environmental damage by changing individual behavior towards the environment. For example, the term " environmental education" has been applied in educational curricula in various countries since 1980 (Castellanos et al., 2020; de Andrade Guerra et al., 2018; Ikhsan et al., 2019). Although the principles and strategies related to environmental education differ in each country due to geographical differences, it aims to increase awareness of caring for, repairing, and even fighting all forms of ecological damage (Condeza-Marmentini, 2020; Nurhayati et al., 2020).

Because the goal is to raise awareness, the process needs to be nurtured from the start, especially from junior to high school even until higher education (university). There are four roles that environmental education plays : (1).Preparing the future generation for green development (Boca & Saraçlı, 2019), (2).Promoting ecological literacy among students (Ardoin et al., 2018; Ardoin & Bowers, 2020), (3). A method to enhance future citizens' awareness of the current environmental situation and develop constructive behavior (Edsand & Broich, 2020), and (4). To empower democratic citizenry committed to protection of the environment (Kury, 2009). According to Haryati Shafii (2009) The approach and content in environmental education contains 3 aspects, namely the approach through Education About the Environment, Education in the Environment, and Education for the Environment.

In Malaysia, Environmental Education isn't taught as a lesson in Malaysia like it is in Scandinavian countries. This means that the stages of knowledge, interests, and perception among students can't be entirely measured (Haliza Abdul Rahman, 2018; Yusof et al., 2011). But, environmental education has been intertwined into every subject at both the primary and secondary levels in Malaysia (Ahmad & Abdul Razak, 2007; Haryati Shafii, 2009). A lot of ideas for educational activities in the environment have been suggested and added to the syllabus description. This study then tries to examine the relationship between learning related to pro-ecological lifestyles such as minimalism in schools and student acceptance, perception, knowledge to implement it. Environmental-based schools, or in popular terms, what we call "*eco-friendly schools*," that provide a beautiful environment and learning related to the climate, are now starting to be of interest, especially among the middle class, such as in Malaysia.

Majority of eco-friendly school is international school that facilitate curriculum based on environmental education and eco-friendly facilities, according to Muafiah et al (2021) the concept of eco-friendly school is to providing science and applying it to the environment beside internalizing pro-ecology behaviors among student. So, the purpose eco-friendly school is not only to create green generation but also to dealing with absenteeism, teacher-retention rates, and health-care costs (Ju et

al., 2017; Prabawani et al., 2017; Whelan, 2007).

But in Malaysia, when we teaching about environmental issue, we need to realize if Islam play important role to environmental education, as we mentioned before, Minimalist lifestyle is one of the teachings that is often conveyed. Before we talk about what is minimalism and how Islamic world-view toward minimalism, let's look again what is the Islamic world view on environmental damage. According to Foltz (2005) quoted Seyyed Husein Nassr, the main reason environmental damage because The separation of science and religion due to Western influences. Still according to Seyyed Husein Nassr, to solve the problem we need return to traditional Islam teaching because Islam gives importance to nature, which is considered the reflection of God (Assya'bani, 2017; Davary, 2012; Foltz, 2005).

So what is Minimalism? basically minimalism as an example of anti-consumer-oriented social practices ('Minimalism – a New Mode of Consumption?', 2017). Currently minimalism become trend among youth (Kang et al., 2021; Pangarkar et al., 2021). The expanding consumerist movement known as "minimalism" encourages people to disconnect themselves from their material demands and possessions (Boutroy, 2021). Minimalism emphasizes conscious behaviors including thrifting, recycling, upcycling, and cautious consumption (A. Sandlin & Wallin, 2022; Rathour & Mankame, 2021).

Where the accumulation of objects once conferred the status of wealth and prosperity under capitalism, minimalism aims to rethink the object as a spiritual extension of our inner lives (A. Sandlin & Wallin, 2022). When we interview Maria Condo, author *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* (2022), emphasize

“Simple living makes us question our supposed “need” to consume. Minimalism may seem unattainable to a materialist. Minimalism helps us enhance happiness by redirecting our emphasis from immediate pleasure to real lifelong contentment” (personal interview, 2022).

Islam view about minimalism as part of moderation behaviors toward needs to protect nature. Basicly Islam encourages moderation, balance, and cautions its followers not to be too extravagant or extreme in any area of their lives. In holy Quran, Allah Swt, emphasize in surah Al-A'raf (7:31):

“O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.” Al-A'raf (7:31)

Islam view minimalism as way to encourages people to meet their basic needs in moderation and not waste any resources. It can also be said to be a form of zuhd (known in English as Ascetism). According to Ibn Manzur (t.t), those who are zuhud are those who have little wealth but are the best people in the sight of Allah SWT (Fudholi, 2015; Hidayati, 2016). The same opinion was also expressed by al-Razi who stated that the word zuhud is the opposite of liking the world. In carrying out the sustainable development of Islam, the perpetrators of the development of the zuhud concept are viewed as crucial to be used as the core of the development being carried out. Human awareness as *khalifatullah* encourages a sense of human responsibility which is closely related to nature, namely taking care of our earth (Assya'bani, 2017; Foltz, R. C., Denny, F. M., & Azizan, 2003; Mardiana, 2017)

The pinnacle of all the goals of a minimalist lifestyle, namely happiness, is actually very closely related to zuhud, where people who apply the zuhud lifestyle correctly will be happy not only because they have a pro-ecological attitude but also because they have a spiritual side because they know and understand the nature of the world (Firdaus, 2019; Fudholi, 2015; Hidayati, 2016; Saripah et al., 2017). But, the attitude of zuhud is not a pessimistic attitude towards worldly life, nor does it regard it as something that must be left behind. However, Zuhud is a mental attitude that reflects a simple lifestyle,

does not attach too much importance to the world's life, but does not forget it altogether. The world is not a destination but a stopover and a place to devote oneself to Allah SWT (Firdaus, 2019).

This research aims to identify the level of knowledge, perception and interest of high school students in eco-friendly school towards minimalism lifestyle. Overall, there are three objectives in the study to be achieved, (1). To identify the level of students' knowledge toward minimalism lifestyle, (2). To identify the level of student' perception toward minimalism lifestyle, and (3). To identify the level of student' interest toward minimalism lifestyle

This study will focus on the subject of religion-based schools that apply the environmental curriculum that has been regulated by the Malaysian Ministry of Education around the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and our subject is Muslim student from three international eco-friendly school in Kuala Lumpur.

2) METHODS

In this study, the survey method was chosen by using a quantitative approach to collect data. The quantity method used is very practical and has effectiveness in obtaining data accuracy. The survey study used can be performed on the sample flexibly. Moreover, the study design used did not interfere with the actual task. The design of this study uses a questionnaire -shaped instrument as a research tool that aims to obtain data in the form of quantitative research. This method is very important in this study because the information will only be obtained directly from the study respondents. The sample of this study was selected by simple random sampling. In this study, consisted of 74 Muslim students (100 % Malay ethnics) in three eco-friendly schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia that consist of Regent international school, Austin Height private & international school, and the Alice Smith School.

The data were obtained through the method through the Google Form application. The 'Google Form' application is used to be accessed by each respondent so that the respondent can easily access the online questionnaire and the respondent can answer the question in a calm state and free time. With the sophistication of technology, the questionnaire form of the 'Google Form' application has been distributed through digital media, namely WhatsApp. A total of 74 respondents answered the questions online using the Google Form application. The questionnaire has three parts. Part A deals with the demographics of the sample. Part B deals with student knowledge. Part C is related to students' perceptions and Part D is about the interest of secondary school students towards Minimalism lifestyle.

3) RESULTS

All data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed using SPSS 25.0 software using descriptive statistical analysis to see the mean value and standard deviation.

Table 1. Mean score interpretation for test data

Parameter	Score mean interpretation
1.00- 2.33	Low
2.34 - 3.66	Medium
3.67 - 5.00	High

Statistical analysis processed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26.0 will break down into four sections marked with Sections A, B, C and D. Among the sections describe the respondents' information, level of knowledge, perception and interest of students towards minimalism lifestyle among Muslim student in three eco-friendly school in Kuala Lumpur.

A. Respondent Demographic Information

The study was conducted on 74 Muslim students in eco-friendly school, majority of them currently being in high school between the first and second years. The profile data of the study sample was obtained based on a questionnaire that was conducted on students. Research ethics were observed when completing the questionnaire on the students, i.e., they did not disclose the details of the respondents' information except for the study. Table 2 shows the analysis findings of the respondents' demographic information.

Table 2. Respondent demographic

No	Categories	Sub-categories	Frequency	Percentage (%) / .
1	Gender	1) Male	1). 29	1). 39.2 %
		2) Female	2).45	2). 60.8
2	Gred	1) Gred A	1).12	1).16.2 %
		2) Gred B	2).45	2).60.8 %
		3) Gred C	3).14	3).18.9 %
		4) Gred D	4). 3	4). 4.1 %
3	Parent occupation	1) Government officers	1).33	1).44.6 %
		2) Private company	2).22	2).29.7 %
		3) Entrepreneur	3).16	3).21.6 %
		4) No job	4). 13	4). 4.1 %

B. Pupils' Knowledge Level on the Minimalism Lifestyle

The scope measured in this section is regarding the level of students' knowledge of the minimalist lifestyle among Muslim Students. In this study, five-question items have been presented to obtain responses on students' knowledge of the minimalism lifestyle. Respondents answered the question item in the form of a Likert scale by selecting the appropriate response from five answer choice scales, namely from scale 1 to strongly disagree and then disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree on scale 5. The following is the data obtained from respondents through instruments.

Table 3. Knowledge level on the minimalism lifestyle

No	Question	Min	Standard deviation	Min level
1	I was once taught a minimalist lifestyle	3.81	.655	High
2	I once applied a minimalist lifestyle in class	3.99	.561	High
3	I understand the concept of a minimalist lifestyle	3.76	.701	High
4	I know the characteristics of pro-ecological behavior	3.88	.791	High
5	I know and understand urgency why we need implement pro-ecological behaviors.	3.88	.791	High
	Total	3.86	.573	High

In this study found that the level of students' knowledge of the minimalist lifestyle as a whole is at a high level. This indicates that students have a high knowledge of ecologically friendly lifestyles.

These findings are in line with the findings of previous studies that stated that formal and informal education is important to change human attitudes so that they have the ability to assess and cope with sensitivity to sustainable development (Noraziah Mhd Yusop & Latipah Sidek, 2010)

C. Level of students' perception of a minimalist lifestyle

The scope measured in this section is with respect to students' perceptions of the minimalist lifestyle. In this study, five-question items were presented to obtain responses about students' perceptions of the minimalist lifestyle taught by their teachers. Respondents answered the question item in the form of a Likert scale by selecting the appropriate response from five answer choice scales, namely from scale 1 to strongly disagree and then disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree on scale 5. The following is the data obtained from respondents through instruments:

Table 4. Level of students' perception of a minimalist lifestyle

No	Question	Min	Standard deviation	Min level
1	I can implement minimalism lifestyle properly	3.74	.741	High
2	I often implement minimalism lifestyle after school	3.80	.758	High
3	I Fell joy when implement minimalism lifestyle	3.89	.610	High
4	Become minimalist person make me aware with ecological issue and be good Muslim	3.96	.607	High
5	Become minimalist person make me care with ecological issue	4.11	.653	High
	Total	3.90	.477	High

Overall, high school students' perceptions of the minimalist lifestyle were at a high mean score level. So, it can be concluded if students have strategic thinking and behavior that cares about environmental issues so that they implement a minimalist lifestyle not only at the level of academic competition but also actions outside the classroom as *insan kamil* (Good Muslim)

D. Level of Student Interest in a minimalist lifestyle

The scope measured in this section concerns students' interest in a minimalist lifestyle. This study has presented five-question items to respond to the interest in a minimalist lifestyle among Muslim students. Respondents answered the question item in the form of a Likert scale by selecting the appropriate response from five answer choice scales, namely from scale 1 to strongly disagree and then disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree on scale 5. The following is the data obtained from respondents through instruments:

Table 4. Level of students' perception of a minimalist lifestyle

No	Question	Min	Standard deviation	Min level
1	I am interested with minimalism lifestyle	3.88	.791	High
2	As Muslim, we need to implement minimalism	3.88	.791	High
3	I am active implement minimalism outside classroom	3.76	.701	High
4	My religion play important rule to giving me direction become green generation	3.81	.655	High
5	Be minimalist person make me interest with ecological issue	3.99	.561	High
	Total	3.86	.573	High

Based on the findings of the study, the interest of high school students towards the minimalist lifestyle is at a high mean score level and they realize that Islam is the driver of the growth of interest, especially in Islamic teachings, the solution of environmental problems is very complete. Therefore, schools need to continuously integrate Islamic eco-ethical values that are integrated with scientific elements and disciplines in order to form a generation that cares about the environment (Noraziah Mhd Yusop & Latipah Sidek, 2010; Norizan Hassan et al., 2017).

4) DISCUSSION

Previous studies that discussed the effect of ecologically-based schools on students' awareness of having a pro-ecological attitude tended not to find significant results due to several factors. (1). Weak led by example, (2). schools' do not facilitate a pro-ecological lifestyle, (3)—the absence of rules that encourage and even force students to adopt a pro-ecological lifestyle (Pea, 2012), and (4). the application is not holistic (Adawiah, 2019). But our finding found that Muslim students from three eco-friendly in Kuala Lumpur have level of knowledge, interest, and perception of the minimalist lifestyle has been well-formed, and Islam has played a role in strengthening it. When we asked five students from each school, they answered, on average, that their teachers always teach ecological protection through Islamic solutions that see the universe as a trust from God Almighty that must be cared for, repaired, and taken care of. Of course, the level of knowledge, interest, and perception of an environmentally friendly lifestyle is related to the development of a positive attitude towards the environment and of course the school is said to play a very important role in the formation of this attitude.

Every religion encourages a sustainable environment, notably Islam, which is rich in normative sustainability and beliefs (Norizan Hassan et al., 2017; Rekan et al., 2016). In Islam, human life is not just restricted to human interactions but human beings are also expected to build good relations with nature. The well-being of life enjoyed by human beings is the result of the harmonious relationship between human beings and their environment. Every time a human inhales, the substance breathed is oxygen gas. This oxygen gas is produced by plants. On the other hand, plants themselves synthesize oxygen gas from carbon dioxide found in people and animals (Cholili, 2016; Markom & Hassan, 2014). Man's gratitude to Allah and His commandments to assure respects or honor for the rights of other animals is vital to preserve a state of balance in the environmental system through the rational and responsible use of environmental resources (Najib et al., 2020).

The Qur'an expresses the environment as a creation (*kehalq*) and a pointer to God as the Creator (Fatir). Allah has integrated nature (*fitra*) into all of creation, from humans to inanimate objects, according to Islamic scriptures. This is God's nature. Humans, as a flawless created entity, should be able to contribute positively, too. This goodness is done in conjunction with God's will because human ability to do good or evil involves responsibility.

Humans as servants (*'abdullah*) and caliphs (*kehalifatullah*) on earth. Humans have impacted divine values. Curiosity characteristics associated by encouraging transcendence. Curiosity characteristics associated by encouraging transcend principles. Humans have a harmonious connection with other humans, please aid (*ta'awun*) and cooperate to prosper the world. Humans with environment is a method to get knowledge, gratitude, and spiritual ('An Essay on the Ethics of Islam towards Environmental Resources', 2016). Basically, Islam emphasizes ecological problems from the side of deep ecology, which by Fritjof Capra would be opposite for Shallow Ecology. Shallow ecology is a thought that is anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism is also known as homocentrism which carries the meaning of being human is the ultimate goal to the whole that happens. while in ecology, the

question of value is often the main issue in ensuring equal rights for human and non-human life in line with Islam which views humans and nature as a unity and human ethics in cultivating nature is the emphasis of Islamic teachings (Anderson, 2020; Ikeke, 2020; Koprina, 2012; Rothenberg, 2012).

Back to education context, basically Knowledge gives meaning to the understanding of the minimalist lifestyle, perception is understood as human values and sensitivity to its nature. While interest is personal investment, responsibility and active involvement in personal relationships with the environment. From the results of our interviews, teachers' commitment, creativity, and example, as well as the existence of school rules that condition an environmentally friendly lifestyle in the three schools mentioned, played a role in shaping students who are aware of a pro-ecological lifestyle, not only in Muslim students, from the results Our brief interviews with some students from other religions stated that they adopted a minimalist lifestyle because they knew and were aware of the ecological impact, but the Islamic teachings often conveyed by religious teachers played an essential role in the formation of the three components in our study. Zuhd concept is play important rule to increase awareness toward minimalism lifestyle among Muslim students, they have progressive teacher who can related zuhd concept with ecological issue.

5) CONCLUSION

The study found high total average knowledge (Min=3.86, SP=.573), perception (Min 3.90, SP=.477), and curiosity (Min 3.86, SP=.573). The study found that pupils had good stage awareness. The majority of students believe that minimalism is the implementation of Modern Zuhd (asceticism) that always feel *qanaah* (always feel enough) and is vital to increasing awareness toward zero-waste. In this context, a pro-ecological lifestyle needs to continue to be taught here teacher dedication, school policy, and innovation in transforming the environment-based curriculum into a necessity in addition to fulfilling to connect ecological spiritual awareness. However, a more extensive study of minimalist lifestyles in particular and pro-ecological behaviors in the field of education has to continue to be implemented.

Appreciation

The research was carried out due to the support of friends of environmental activists in Malaysia and our colleagues who are teachers in the three schools of the study, hopefully a simple study can contribute to further studies.

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