



Happiness in the Perpetrators of a Minimalist Lifestyle

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Abstract. Happiness is an important aspect of every individual's life. Therefore, each individual has their efforts to achieve happiness. This study aims to determine the description of happiness in the perpetrators of a minimalist lifestyle. The criteria for informants were selected based on three conditions: men/women aged 20–30 years, reduced ownership of goods voluntarily and lived a lifestyle of at least 1 year. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The data collection technique used a semi-structured interview technique. While the data analysis technique uses three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Findings from the study can be seen from tin themes related to happiness, individuals feel more present for their families and themselves, appreciate every effort that comes from themselves, have peace of mind, be honest heart their emotions, enjoy simple things, and feel love for God increases. The factors that affect the informants' happiness include internal factors, namely satisfaction with the past, optimism, and happiness in the present, while external factors include finance, social life, positive emotions, age, and spirituality. The impact of happiness includes living life more consciously, focusing more on the desired life goals, appreciating the simple things in life, increasing emotional control, building a healthier family environment, contributing to environmental sustainability, managing finances better, and feeling more connected to God.

Keywords: Happiness · Minimalist Lifestyle · Qualitative Descriptive

1 Introduction

Happiness is very important for every individual in the world [1]. This is understandable because when a person is happy, he feels that his life is safer, more confident, able to make good decisions easily, healthier, more energized, and feels satisfied with life [2]. Therefore, each individual tries to achieve happiness in various ways, from spending time with family, going on vacation, and buying or collecting things m they liked.

Various efforts to achieve the happiness cause feelings of pleasure or joy. However, happiness itself is not just a feeling of pleasure. Based on a research conducted by Kahneman et al., feeling happy or cheerful is only 'temporary' [3]. On the other hand, feelings of pleasure will be increased significantly only for a short time (starting from

the morning to the midday), and after that the feelings will be decreased and become to the 'initial position'.

The statement above becomes a strong reason to underline the problem that ownership of property does not necessarily make someone gets the happiness easily [4]. This is supported by the previous researches. The research conducted by Nickerson states that even though a person has reached a sufficient financial level, his life is not necessarily filled with happiness [5]. In line with the previous statement, a research conducted by Kasser also states that when a person focuses too much in achieving happiness through materialistic things, he actually feels stressed and unhappy [6].

The existence of this problem gives an interesting question that is if possessions, fame and money have not been able to make a person feel happy, then what things than can make a person happy? If the hedonism avoids a person from happiness, then what lifestyle can make a person achieve the happiness?

The minimalist lifestyle is known as an alternative lifestyle that has recently been popularly recognized by many people who offer a unique approach to achieving happiness. Based on a research conducted by Dopierala, individuals who follow a minimalist lifestyle try to gain happiness by reducing their attentions from the materialist things and changing them to other aspects of life [7], such as spending more time with family, playing social media, or get rid of their possessions, so their times can be used optimally [8].

According to a research conducted by Hausen, subjects of a minimalist lifestyle claim that the happiness they feel can be longer [9]. Besides, the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle also stated that they could find the 'real' value they wanted [10], so the life they live can be full of happiness [9].

Based on the explanation above, the aim of this research is to find out how the description of happiness experienced by the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle through exploring their experiences in living a minimalist lifestyle. The results of this research are expected to be a motivation for further researches related to the study of happiness.

1.1 Happiness

Defining the meaning of happiness concretely is difficult. This is due to the differences of perceptions that continue to develop from time to time about the meaning of happiness. For example, in the Homeric Era, a happiness was defined as luck. In the Classical Age, happiness was defined as virtue. In the Middle Ages, happiness was defined as heaven. In the Age of Enlightenment happiness was defined as enjoyment. Whereas in the Modern Era (currently), happiness can be interpreted from an ownership of goods. This diversity of definitions occurs due to overlapping between one definition and others [11].

According to Seligman, happiness is the presence of positive feelings in every individual (such as feelings of joy) or positive conditions that do not contain any emotions, but it leaves meanings that can not be forgotten (such as absorption or involvement) [12]. In line with this, Lopez & Snyder define happiness as a psychological condition that contains positive emotions that are subjectively felt by individuals [13].

The aspects contained in happiness are explained through the concepts proposed by Seligman, including positive emotions, involvement, and meaning [14]. Positive emotions can be recognized through positive feelings that come from individuals, such as joy,

cheerfulness, and comfort. Involvement is a condition in which the individual experiences a deep appreciation to their activities, so they feel like they are ‘flowing’ or ‘washing away’ [15]. According to Seligman, this condition makes the individual do not feel an emotion because their attentions are focused on the activity. However, even though they do not feel emotions, individuals still feel the presence of a positive impression that makes an impression after the activity is completed [15]. Meanwhile, the meaning referred to in this case is the ‘final conclusion of a long and tortuous life story’ [12]. A meaning allows people to see the directions and purposes in their lives clearly, so their lives are not useless.

1.2 Minimalism Lifestyle

A minimalist lifestyle or commonly called as a minimalism is a lifestyle trend that encourages a person to reduce the number of possessions of goods to a minimum level [8]. The purpose of their efforts to minimize their goods is as a form of criticism of the Western view that the source of happiness comes from the things they have [4]. In addition, they also want to prove that money can’t buy their happiness [16].

Minimalist lifestyle is a specific form of a more general term, that is Voluntary Simplicity [9]. Voluntary—which literally means voluntarily—is a form of awareness from individuals regarding the problems of the current destructive consumption culture, so individuals try to escape from the shackles of the consumption culture. Meanwhile, Simplicity—which is literally defined as simplification—is a process in which individuals try to reduce ownership of goods or other things that are not substantial in their lives. Therefore, generally, a minimalist lifestyle is a lifestyle that encourages individuals to reduce their excessive consumption of materialistic goods to be able to focus more on other important aspects of life.

2 Method

This research uses descriptive qualitative research method. In the process of collecting data, the researcher used semi-structured interviews online. This online interview was carried out by the researcher considering that the Covid-19 pandemic was not over yet. In addition to the interviews, the researcher also used personal documents in the form of blogs/life journey notes as the supporting data/secondary data. The selection of informants needed in this study was carried out through a snowball sampling technique with some criterias of informants, such as: (a) men/women aged 20–30 years, (b) had their own income, and (c) had lived a minimalist lifestyle for more than 30 years. 1 year. There were two informants selected in this study, such as GR and MIA.

3 Result and Discussion

This study found various descriptions of happiness experienced by the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle, such as feeling closer to their family, feeling closer to themselves, appreciating the efforts, feeling peace of mind, sharing emotions naturally, enjoying

simple moments, and feeling that their loves to the God becomes higher. In addition to the description of happiness, the researcher also revealed various factors that influence the happiness of the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle.

The things that become the factors that affect happiness are explained in two types of factors, such as internal factor and external factor. Internal factors that can affect the happiness of the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle include personal success and achievement, having clearly oriented activities, a valuable personal life, and mature attitudes and thoughts. While external factors that affect the happiness of minimalist lifestyle's subjects include the management of time, emotions and finances, fulfilled basic needs, a prosperous family, a positive environment of friendship, and the existence of communication, affection and principles that are in line with life partners.

Furthermore, the researcher also found a positive impact of happiness for the personal lives of minimalist lifestyle's subjects. The positive impacts are feeling that they are living life more consciously, more focused on their life goals, appreciating the simple things in life, being able to control emotions, being able to create a positive environment in the family, being able to manage finances more efficiently, able to contribute to the environmental sustainability, and feel more connected to God.

This research was conducted to find out how the description of the happiness of the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle. As explained above, the description of the happiness is implied by the positive emotions that come from themselves personally, such as feeling closer to their family and themselves, feeling peace of mind, and feeling their love for God becomes higher. In addition to the presence of positive emotions, the minimalist lifestyle's subjects also experience full involvement in the activities as implied in how they share their emotions naturally and can enjoy the simple moments in life. These findings are in line with previous researches, such as in a research conducted by Lloyd & Pennington, in which the subjects of the minimalist lifestyle get many benefits for their lives after adopting this lifestyle [7].

People who live a minimalist lifestyle say that they feel they can spend better time with their families and themselves. This is because the restrictions on the number of ownership of goods, and the determination of life priorities makes them able to focus more on the life around them. This result is in line with the research conducted by Alexander [17]. Furthermore, the description of the happiness of the minimalist lifestyle's subjects in this research shows significant results as evidenced by the suitability of the characteristics of happy people based on the theory proposed by Myers [2].

In addition, this research also presents unique findings, namely the existence of religious values that also represent the pictures of their happiness. These findings are in line with research conducted by Mustofa, where religious values possessed by individuals have a positive and significant relationship to one's happiness [18].

4 Conclusion

Generally, the description of happiness experienced by the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle is the result of their efforts to reduce the consumption of materialistic goods, so their time and 'mental energy' can be used optimally for other aspects of life. Furthermore, the findings from the research are still far from perfect, so it still needs a following up for the development of the future research.

First, the limitations of the informants used in this research are still not able to represent a wider description of the minimalist lifestyle. Therefore, the future research can capture related communities or groups in society. Second, the data collection process used in this research was still limited to the interview and documentation analysis stage because it was hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. For the future, the researcher can explore further how the subjects of a minimalist lifestyle feel happiness through face-to-face observations. Third, the development of a more comprehensive research is needed for the further research, considering that this research is limited to a qualitative descriptive approach.

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