



# Minimalism Lifestyles Promote Well-Being: The New Paradigm

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**Abstract.** The principle of oneness of life is inseparable between mind and hearts of people that help to contribute well-being. This paper explains the key attributes of minimalism lifestyle in a modern digital society. A conceptual framework proposes the cultivation of minimalism lifestyle to motivates a person to view things based on the substance, and not merely the appearance in selecting adequacy of retirement resources to increase positive well-being. This framework encourages decluttering lifestyle by focusing on important retirement resources in life that enable one to age and live with healthy and peaceful mind, moment to moment experiences.

**Keywords:** Minimalism · Subjective Well-being · Psychological Well-being

## 1 Introduction

Promoting well-being is an essential component of the United Nations General Assembly's 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda to Transform the World by 2030 [1]. The world's ageing population has grown rapidly as a result of a lower mortality rate and rising life expectancy [2]. Malaysia is expected to be an ageing nation by 2030, with the proportion of elderly aged 60 years or more estimated 3.36 million, of the estimated total population of 32.6 million in 2019. Life expectancy at 60 is rising and birth rates are rapidly declining from 4.9 children per woman in 1970 to 1.70 in 2020 due to ageing [3]. Malaysia's health care and social welfare systems are facing new challenges as disease and mortality patterns shift and health expenditure is still a relatively new concern [4]. Inadequate savings and incomprehensive social security coverage for the working-age population may result in a severe retirement crisis. Such a rapid and unprecedented rate would have a significant impact on individuals, society, and the nation's physical, social, psychological, cognitive, and economic difficulties with increased number of retirees and the lengthened time spent in retirement [5] According to the 2017 World Health Organization (WHO) report, approximately 15% of adults over the age of 60 have mental disorder. Many adults suffer from mental disorders, neurological disorders, depression, and anxiety due to poor well-being in life. In Malaysia, there are about 24%

of the prevalence of mental health problems. It is very important that by maintaining adequate various retirement resources to improve their well-being [6]. In today's modern world, people are facing major challenges with big data, artificial intelligence and the "Internet of things" in life. People have to endure high stress not only from various aspects of retirement but failing to receive emotional support from family members, which could reduce well-being. As a result, people have to address their inner resource to meet the adversities to manage their well-being. Past study showed that more of retirement resources can contribute to positive well-being. However, maintaining high level retirement resources level is very challenging and more doesn't always mean better. Minimalism emphasis decluttering and less is more. It promotes the things that people care about the most and eliminates everything that detracts from them. It also motivates the person to view things based on the substance, and not merely the appearance [7]. Minimalism can help to accumulate quality and adequate retirement resources that contribute to positive well-being. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to propose minimalism influence between retirement resources and well-being.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Subjective Well-Being

Well-being comprised subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Subjective well-being (SWB) is "a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgements of life satisfaction" [8, p. 277]. Subjective well-being comprises an affective component of the balance between positive and negative affect, together with a cognitive component of judgments about one's life satisfaction [8] Specifically, "subjective well-being is a multidimensional construct with two fundamental components" [9, p. 106] an affective component that represents the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect, and a cognitive component. The affective part is a hedonic appraisal that focuses on emotions and feelings like positive and negative affect, while the cognitive part refers to information-based measurement of the life of an individual. It refers to how individuals evaluate their life according to their expectations and comparable to their expected 'ideal' life such as being satisfied and happy [8]. Positive affect is the level to which a person is passionate, energetic, and attentive. Positive affect is the level to which a person is passionate, energetic, and attentive. Low positive affect is characterised by unhappiness and exhaustion, such as anger, scorn, revulsion, guilt, terror, and anxiety. High positive affect is characterised by high energy, complete thoughtfulness, and pleasurable engagement, such as state of calm and tranquility [8]. Life satisfaction is known as the cognitive part of subjective well-being, whereby individuals evaluate the quality of their life using their own specific set of criteria [10]. Happiness can be defined as an average degree of satisfaction over a certain period, the regularity and level of positive affect manifestations, the relative lack of negative affect [11], and satisfaction of physically, psychologically, or socially dependent needs [12].

Subjective well-being has an essential role to generate good society with good life. It is used to measure an individual's and society's quality of life. People with subjective well-being are more content with their lives and have more positive emotions, which will

benefit them and society as a whole. According to psychologist [13], positive emotions not only foster a variety of tangible benefits but it can generate long-lasting impacts on personal growth and development, which may eliminate stress and negative emotions. Furthermore, as positive emotions can expand attention and thinking, people become more creative, flexible, and open-minded. Therefore, it motivates people to be more resilient and be able to cope with their problems. Diener, Sapyta, and Suh [14] stressed that subjective well-being is one of three key approaches to evaluate societies' quality of life together with economic and social indicators. The way individuals feel and contemplate about their own lives is crucial in comprehending well-being in any society that values not only the views of professionals or leaders but every person in the society.

## 2.2 Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is conceptualised as having six components, including “positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, purpose in life and personal growth” [15, p. 720]. Ryff and Keyes [15] conducted telephone interviews with a total of 1108 adults aged 25 and older who reside in 48 states in the United States. The telephone interview took about 30 min for each respondent who were randomly selected. The results were examined via confirmatory factor analysis, followed by a second-order analysis. The results confirmed six distinct dimensions for psychological well-being. They are namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relatedness. Autonomy refers to a sense of self-determination and independent, while personal growth is described as a sense of continued growth and development of a person. Self-acceptance refers to positive evaluations of oneself including good and bad qualities as well as one's past life. The purpose in life where one has goals in life and a sense of directedness to create a meaningful life. Environment mastery refers to the capacity to effectively manage one's life such as making effective use of surrounding opportunities. Finally, positive relations refer to the having quality relations with others such as warm and trusting relationships.

Past studies have shown that subjective well-being alone is not sufficient to ensure lasting happiness and life satisfaction as a whole. More importantly, it is crucial to everyone who have undergone various life experiences and challenges. Hence, it is not surprising that they perceive the significance of six dimensions of psychological well-being and subjective well-being in achieving the overall well-being. Furthermore, a life that is rich in both hedonic and eudemonic pursuits do not only contribute to the highest level of personal well-being [16] but also promotes a happy and good society. Therefore, happy people create a society that promotes well-being. As a whole, it is important to integrate both psychological well-being and subjective well-being because it may be considered as a great deal of interest [17].

## 2.3 Retirement Resources and Well-Being

In the past several years, evidence suggesting that subjective well-being can be enhanced by potential retirement resources in later life has been growing. Wang et al. [18]'s study has indicated that retirement resources such as financial, health, emotional, cognitive, and motivational resources can increase subjective well-being. On the other hand, people's

well-being will decline when retirement resources decrease. There are three reasons resources are needed by everyone to overcome the high risk of mortality and mortality. Firstly, when age increasing, they will not only lose stable financial resources but also lose work-related roles, social roles, and social networks. Secondly, the resources will be affected as they are forced to change and adapt to new conditions that could modify their lifestyle [19]. Thirdly, health problems, decline in physical functioning, high frequency of mobility limitations, and decline in cognitive functionality due to ageing are also widely reported.

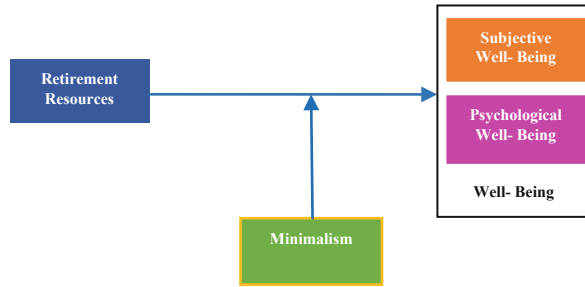
Hansen, Buitendach and Kanengoni [20] have stressed that conservation resources theory (COR theory) emphasises resources (comprising but not restricted to personal characteristics, conditions or energies) that effect an individual's capability in coping with stressors. The main aim of this research was to scrutinise the connection between psychological capital, subjective well-being, burnout, and job satisfaction. A total of 103 educators from four chosen education institutes in the Umlazi region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa were surveyed. The findings have indicated that when people are stressed, even when that stress is only perceived, due to issues that could possibly reduce their resources, they try to sustain their retirement resources to enhance their well-being.

However, Lloyd and Pennington [21] is contradicted point of view. The objective of the study is examining the experiences of people living a minimalistic lifestyle. A total of ten respondents, age 24 to 52 was collected from United Kingdom, Australia, the United States of America, Canada, and German, via online via videoconferencing. The data analysed revealed that participants who were pursuing a minimalistic lifestyle enable them to become more aware of their values and align their actions, improving sense of control to develop life skills to improve well-being. Participants manage to improve awareness of their values, learning, developing, and growing the new insights. According to Rich et al. [22] the study supported that voluntary simplifier improve well-being. Voluntary simplicity doesn't mean that simply reducing the number of possessions, but the person need to maintain the most important and quality possession to increase well-being. It may not only create mindfulness of a person to make right decision making to select quality possession, but it helps fulfilment of the needs of security, autonomy and competence of a person that contribute to higher level of well-being. There is a need to discover new ways to integrate retirement resources with more intrinsically meaningful values. Therefore, minimalism plays an essential role to create awareness by selecting quality retirement resources to improve well-being.

### 3 Conceptual Framework

Past studies have revealed that everyone may face risk, they may experience life stressors such as biological changes, social connectedness changes and loss of social identity. When age increases, they may experience a decrease in mobility, chronic pain frailty and other health problems. Besides, they may experience events such as bereavement after the loss of a partner. As a result, all these stressors can result in social isolation and mental issues that would be detrimental to their well-being [23].

Moreover, in the digital era, some people are facing a higher risk of digital gap. Some persons lack expertise, skills, social support, and access to digital tools, and they



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual Framework (Adapted: Millburn & Nicodemus (2014)).

may confront a variety of challenges in properly utilising this technology. Some people's professions do not require them to use new technologies, which may diminish their drive to adopt new technologies in their spare time. Finally, the baby-boom generation did not grow up with modern technologies and may not use them to socialise. This could increase the risk of adults perceive that the digital environment is exclusionary rather than seeing the digital environment as stimulating. Finally, from a developmental standpoint, people become more vulnerable, which has an impact on their quality of life and well-being. They must put in more effort to learn how to use new technologies, and they frequently must overcome stress and the barriers that come with having fewer cognitive, physical, financial, and social resources [24].

Furthermore, with the individual needs, wants and the available technology that enables people to access unlimited amount of information with a single click and causes people easy to consume idly or buy unnecessary stuff mindlessly driven by advertisement or promotions. Allowing too much importance to material possessions is problematic because human's endless goal will never be satisfied. Thus, pursuing material possessions does not satisfy intrinsic human desires [25]. Well-being will be affected if individual unable to manage retirement resources properly. Hence, society needs to address these issues by developing preventive management to determine quality retirement resources that contribute to well-being.

This conceptual framework mainly adapted the minimalism of Millburn & Nicodemus [26]. It is based on the principle that everyone should take full responsibility of their lives. Minimalism is a mindset-shifting practise. It provides the opportunity to consciously separate one's wants from one's needs. It motivates the person to view things based on the substance, and not merely the appearance. Decluttering is a key element of voluntary simplicity. Voluntary simplicity prioritizes personal values [27]. As minimalism is a tool for increasing awareness of what we have, and how we live. People can see the world through different eyes, noticing details and nuances, helps people to get rid of their excess material possessions. By constantly decluttering, a person becomes more conscious of his or her spending, which may result in changing habits of spending and debt elimination. People who own less, focus on fewer tasks, and resulted they have more time, freedom, and then they will focus on the most important meaning in their lives, a person can create more by spending less [7]. Therefore, as shown in Fig. 1, minimalism

may moderate between retirement resources and well-being that consists of subjective well-being and psychological well-being.

## 4 Discussion

The literature findings align with the minimalism lifestyles who are generally found higher well-being. While past studies focus revealed that higher the personal resources contribute to higher well-being such as life satisfaction, happiness, and positive affect. The current study has provided additional insight into how minimalism may enhance well-being.

In this modern technology world, people can connect to each other irrespective of locations. The world is moving at a faster pace than ever before. Life is full of stress with deadlines. More retirement resources are needed to improve quality of life and well-being. However, today most people searching for more materialistic resources in lives, such as more money, more friends, or things. However, more resources without quality doesn't always mean better. People should choose to let go of the meaningless things in life to increase positive well-being.

In a world driven by materialistic, a lot of people fail to realise inner self is important. A lot of rich people own a lot of material possession, but they fail to realize that having a lot of material possessions does not necessarily can achieved happiness and meaningful of life. When people having less is better by selecting quality resources such as holding adequate financial resources, quality friends and maintaining a good health. People will have more time to concentrate on "important things" instead of wasting time and efforts to maintain non-important material possession or activities. Such as, by maintaining a few quality friends is better than many friends. People can obtain quality social support that contribute to higher well-being. People will feel better sense of clarity, peace when having less, manage to differentiate between what's truly important to them. Hence, life will be more contentment that contributes to higher well-being.

In general, more financial resources contribute higher well-being. A lot of people know how to make saving, but they fail to create value for financial resources. It is important to concentrate on simple and quality financial resources instead of owning many complex material possessions. With minimalism, people enhance competent by building life skills such as making right investment to increase profit and saving money to meet the un-expectancy urgency needs and wants. Liquid and quality assets not only can sustain normal daily life, but quality and valuable assets manage to resources that will help improve quality life. As complex and non-liquid assets is difficult to convert into cash and it might take time to sell and difficult to convert into cash. Hence, stress and worrying about their life will increase the negative emotions and affect well-being [21].

However, the literature finding is contracted with Matte et al. [28]. The author has argued that minimalism did not increase wellbeing, such as happiness. The study is to examine relationship between minimalism, happiness, life satisfaction, and experiential consumption. A survey with 395 Brazilian amateur runners was conducted. The results of structural equation modelling technique showed that minimalism did not influence happiness. As people generally do not increase their happiness by choosing a simple

lifestyle, they can decrease consumption by incentives other than happiness. The findings can educate individual to understand and select the quality retirement resources that is truly importance and bring more well-being to them.

## 5 Conclusion

It is important to understand the people' perception of the best retirement resource that would ensure their well-being. The significance of psychological well-being of individuals apart from their subjective well-being. It is important that subjective well-being alone is not sufficient to ensure lasting happiness and life satisfaction. More importantly, it is crucial to note that everyone who have undergone various life experiences and challenges. Hence, a life that is rich in both hedonic and eudemonic pursuits does not only contribute to the highest level of personal well-being [16] but also promotes a happy and good society. Therefore, happy people create a society that promotes the importance of well-being. It is recommended for future research to integrate both minimalism into retirement resources that improve psychological well-being and subjective well-being because it may be considered as a great deal of interest.

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