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The influence of religiosity, parental and peer attachment on hedonistic behavior among Malaysian youth

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Abstract

Drawing from ecological system theory, the current study addresses the connection between environment and youth development and what they actually engage in. This study examined contributors of hedonistic behavior among youth in Malaysia. A sample of 103 undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds participated in the study. Using a quantitative survey methodology, self-administered questionnaires measuring parental and peer attachment, religiosity personality and worldview were used to identify predictors of hedonistic behavior among youth. The finding showed both, parental and peer attachment behavior moderated the relationships between religiosity and present-hedonistic values and behavior.

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1. Introduction

The influence of parents and peers on prosocial and antisocial behavior has been well documented in prior research, particularly studies on parenting and peers roles. Although current findings indicate both positive and negative impacts on adolescent, there are still much to study on the processes underlying the influence of parental and peer attachment on adolescent behavior.

To date, youth are more likely to adopt a luxury and materialistic lifestyle. This trend has led social scientists to conclude that adolescents today are "...the most brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialistic generation in history" (Schor, 2004, p. 13). They see that pleasure and happiness play an important role in their way of life. This new culture requires youth to seek sensual and material-driven pleasure become the goal of life itself and influences their thinking and lifestyle choices which could be hedonism behavior. Previous studies showed that hedonism is a negative behavior based on youth involvement in activities such as sexual promiscuity (Weichselbaumer, 2012; Veenhoven, 2003) drugs and alcohol addiction (Hutton, 2012) excessive entertainment (Andersson, 2011) unhealthy eating habits (Coccorello, D'Amato & Moles, 2009) obsession with branded and luxury goods and being overly materialistic (Scarpi, 2012). Studies have showed that youth cannot provide the necessary contributions and responsibilities in developing countries due to lack of potential, not qualified or do not meet the requirements, failed to perform in duties, immoral attitude and are more concerned with personal needs (Wils, Saba, Waxin & Labelle, 2011). Many of the causes to this problem are due to behavior that can lead to hedonism (Sidek, 2009; Veenhoven, 2003).

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2. Youth in Malaysia

Youths comprise the largest group of Malaysia's population which consists of more than 11.6 million people or 43.6 percent of the total population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). The Ministry of Youth and Sports, Malaysia has defined youth as individuals aged 15 to 40 years old of and are those who are considered mature and are able to participate meaningfully in all development plans with a positive impact. The study of culture and youth subcultures carried out by Universiti Putra Malaysia reveal the existence of new cultural values and patterns such as the value of individualism, materialism, religious orientation, the orientation of western culture, a change of identity, communication behavior and media habits, leisure activities, health care habits, patriotism and career aspirations (Azimi, Turiman & Ezhar, 2000). Several studies have been conducted to reveal the trend and status of youth in Malaysia. In 2005, a study was conducted on youth religiosity and personality indexing of young people and the implications on nation building comprised of seven risk activities aiming at assessing the frequency of engagement in different at risk activities. Youth were involved in alcohol and substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, and smoking) and sexual related risks such as exposure to phonographic materials, sexual intercourse, and lesbianism (Ezhar, Wendy, Fazilah & Azimi, 2005). In 2006, a study on youth culture with the focus on scales to understand the at risk behavior of young people showed that about 37.8 percent of these youth were involved in substance abuse, law breaking and sexual related activities. In 2007, the group of researchers extended the study and looked at the type of assets which contribute to at risk behavior and the implications of young people to be effective partners in development (Azimi & Zanariah, 2007).

2.1. Factors that influence youth behavior

Youth behavior has been formed by the growth and development process in the human ecological system especially the environment (psychologically, physically and socially) and these core entities serve as the youth's initial platform to learn about the world. Referring to the theory of human ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), the youth is in the middle of the micro system and exposed to the environmental factors such as family, peers, school and religious setting. These factors will be influenced and become a part of the elements for the behavior development.

2.1.1. Religiosity

Religiosity is important in human life because it exerts great influence on the formation of behavior and personality, calm emotions, increased self-esteem and happiness in. The term religiosity used by the west refers to religious practice, ritual and prosocial activities. In Malaysia, Islam is the main religion and from the Islamic context, religious life is associated with Islam as *Addin* a way of life (Sajjad, 2012). Religiosity is one of the aspects of spiritual needs and the main pillars for youth growth and development (Imam, Nurullah, Makol-Abdul, Saodah & Hazizan, 2009). The combination of religious belief and the spiritual needs with the environment will develop and instill a sense of psychology and sociology to give meaning and value in life and to develop an individual's behavior.

2.1.2. Worldview

For this study, religiosity is not only measured by the Islamic world view and religiosity personality, but also the worldview which is believed to have influence on the religiosity formation of youth. According to Dewitt, Deckard, Berndt, Filakouridis, & Iverson, (2003) there are three important factors which influence youth worldview which are theology, science, and age. Theology aspects will encourage a belief system to appreciate nature and participate in the cycles of the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). The role of youth and their responsibility will nurture a strong and spacious worldview to help the growth of behavior.

2.1.3. Parental attachment

Three basic essential factors of parental attachment which influence the development of youth behavior are trust, communication and alienation. Trust is the relationship between youth and parents who nurtured them from birth through physiological needs such as food and drink, safety and security needs including personal, financial security and health and well-being. Studies by Wyn, Lantz and Harris (2012) showed that the relationships between parents and youth assist in meeting the needs of sociology such as material, social, emotional and economic. Furthermore, communication is an intermediary tool and is the platform that best serves to attract attention and recognized the voice of youth in every opinion. Youth aged between 18 to 21 years undergo changes leading to the development of

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