# The Hedonistic Lifestyle among Students: Influence by Gratitude and Self-Control

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## Abstract

Hedonism refers to a lifestyle that emphasizes pleasure and luxury. The current trend among students is to live in luxury and extravagance. This study aims to determine the correlation between students' gratitude, self-control, and a hedonistic lifestyle. We collected a total sample of 131 students from batch 2019 to represent the Psychology student population at University X. We used the random cluster sampling technique to select the participants. The students were asked to fill in three main scales: gratitude, self-control, and hedonism. The data were analyzed using SPSS v16. This study was designed to describe statistical data accumulated into several tables. The analysis showed a significant relationship between students' gratitude, self-control, and hedonistic lifestyle. When students uphold crucial values, role models, or principles, they are more likely to have better self-control and can suppress hedonistic urges. The findings of this study provide new insights into student lifestyle, which is not as hedonistic and extravagant as initially expected.

**Keywords**: *Hedonism; Gratitude; Self-Control.*

## Introduction

The hedonism theory refers to the tendency to pursue pleasure and avoid struggle (Mendini et al., 2022). Hedonism is an individual attitude whereby a person makes pleasure and joy into their life goal. A person may be motivated to pursue pleasure in various ways. The findings of Yusi et al. (2017) on teenagers, along with the objective of this study, state that teenagers like to extensively spend their money on shopping, having fun, and hanging out in cafes.

Due to hedonism, many teenagers ignore or underestimate social values and contradict traditions and social contexts (Pavlović & Stepanović Ilić, 2022). They focus on wasting time on leisure activities such as excessively surfing the Internet, listening to or watching music concerts, dating, pornography, drinking, and others (Bagchi et al., 2015; Pavlović & Stepanović Ilić, 2022). These activities are considered negative pleasures, which are more likely to lead to harm, loss, malice, or even cruel acts like schadenfreude (Moen, 2016).

In the hedonistic view, pleasure is assumed to be the ultimate goal of human life (Remiswal et al., 2021). Thus, for hedonistic individuals, attaining true pleasure solely occupies their minds. Fatić (2013) expressed that hedonism has such adverse effects partly because it seeks pleasure without considering moral and religious values. As such, it is related to high cases of abortion from premarital sex, complications of pregnancy and childbirth, HIV/AIDS, and alcohol and drug use (Remiswal et al., 2021).

It is possible that teenagers do not identify their activities as hedonistic behavior, even though all signs seem to point to it. Yuliyasinta and Edwina (2017) consider activities such as going to the mall, shopping, watching movies at the cinema, going to a discotheque, and other entertainment activities as a hedonic lifestyle. The results of Remiswal et al. (2021) highlighted a decrease in positive behavior among teenagers in Minangkabau, such as shallow Sharia and Sunnah of the Qur'an culture, and an increase in negative behavior (e.g., crime, laziness, free sex, individualism, lack of sense of shame, unending consumptive behavior).

Solid self-control can affect one's personality and attitude when dealing with an unpleasant situation. A person can be more composed, relaxed, and confident when faced with a problem. For example, students can think clearly after having poor academic performance and try to study harder to improve their academic performance. In addition, Individuals with high self-control tend to express sound and socially acceptable behavior (Hidayah, 2021). Morality is related to self-control, so when students behave well and control themselves, it is a way to indirectly maintain morality (Hirtenlehner & Kunz, 2016; Olivares et al., 2020).

When students can impeccably control themselves, they would automatically adjust well on campus (Tangney et al., 2004). Self-control is rated the most beneficial personality trait (Hirtenlehner & Kunz, 2016; Olivares et al., 2020). Students who constantly hone their self-control can control their actions, think before acting, and make the right decisions. By implementing self-control, they can lessen the tendency to live a hedonistic lifestyle, where all actions are geared toward achieving pleasure and potentially hindering other activities. In reality, many students are unable to balance their lifestyles. Many problems could arise when students cannot survive with a hedonistic lifestyle, e.g., being in debt, lacking confidence, and

constantly feeling anxious and fearful. Therefore, students must feel grateful and exhibit self-control to overcome those adverse impacts.

An interview with five female students revealed that they exhibit consumptive behavior, such as going to cafes, malls, or cinemas and going on vacation. This consumptive behavior leads students to have high curiosity and be easily influenced. They readily accept spending money without much thought on what they are spending on, highlighting their consumptive behavior. This is the current trend of student culture with a hedonistic lifestyle. Hedonism causes students to be selfish in exerting efforts to satisfy their pleasure (Ertina & Ibrahim, 2019).

Some students set aside their allowance to buy trendy clothes and shoes. These behaviors are closely related to hedonism. Intense shopping activities can trigger students' motivation or desire to continue shopping from time to time (Mai et al., 2021). Consumptiveness is not a behavior that students should retain. Its relation to a hedonistic lifestyle that puts pleasure first may result in increased pleasure that is not based on needs, an unfulfillment of primary needs, and constant dissatisfaction with what they have.

Consumptive behavior that results in a hedonistic lifestyle can be reduced by mediating supporting factors such as gratitude and self-control. As Wang et al. (2015) stated, gratitude has an inverse relationship with hedonism. According to Froh et al. (2011), the more grateful a person is, the lower their hedonistic tendencies. Their results show that gratitude can control one's materialistic urges so that life satisfaction increases, social integration improves, and jealousy and depression decrease. The findings of Liang dan Kiang (2018) revealed that individuals could show prosocial behavior by being grateful for their lives. When individuals express gratitude, their hedonistic nature becomes suppressed. Gratitude stimulates individuals to control their hedonistic tendency, which could also trigger changes in oneself to become a better person.

Personality is an essential factor that determines the hedonistic lifestyle of a person (Azizah & Indrawati, 2015). One part of the personality is self-control, which greatly influences overcoming and responding to a hedonic lifestyle. Finding from a previous study supports this claim, namely that self-control has a negative relationship with hedonism (Istianingsih & Kamil,

2017). This suggests that self-control helps reduce or even stop the spending or compulsive buying rate so that the hedonistic lifestyle changes. Azizah and Indrawati (2015) highlighted the importance of self-control because it may shield people from the temptation or desire for a hedonic lifestyle. Individual resilience is crucial to prevent one's desire to live a hedonic lifestyle.

Unlike previous research, this study explores college students' complex problem of wasting money and time to satisfy their hedonistic needs. When evaluating the phenomena, we considered students' activities, interests, and opinions. Past studies have not profoundly explored participants' opinions. However, the current study will investigate students' opinions on what motivated them to be hedonistic and the activities (e.g., hanging out and going to cafes) that maintained the behavior. This information could provide insight into students' attitudes and knowledge about hedonistic behavior, which prior studies have not investigated. Hedonistic behavior needs to be studied further because of the adverse impact it could have on students when the behavior is continuously repeated. Therefore, we would like to extend current knowledge of it by investigating self-control and gratitude as potential predictors of hedonistic behaviors.

## Method

### Research Design

This study was based on a quantitative design. It investigates the effect of gratitude and self-control on hedonistic lifestyles. Findings from this study are expected to be used as a resource for evaluation for future studies.

### Population

The population in this study was the class of 2019 Psychology students from Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, amounting to 320 students. The population consisted of five classes: class A (n= 64), class B (n= 64), class C (n= 64), class D (n= 64), and class E (n= 64). This study collected all 2019 students to be used as the research population regardless of skin color, ethnicity, race, gender, cumulative achievement index (GPA), achievements on and off campus, community, academic supervisors, or marital status.

*Sample*

This study's sample was chosen based on several groups or classes with identical or homogenous characteristics. This study used a cluster sampling technique in collecting the sample. It is a sample collection technique according to a predetermined population area. It consisted of two stages: area sampling and subject selection within the area sampling. Sampling was performed by making paper rolls containing five classes: A, B, C, D, and E. The paper rolls were combined and randomized, and the three selected papers were the study's sample used. The sample consisted of 192 psychology students of University X.

*Research Instrument*

This study employed three research instruments: hedonistic lifestyle, gratitude, and self-control scale. First, the hedonistic lifestyle scale was compiled to determine students' level of a hedonistic lifestyle. The statements in this study were drawn up based on aspects of a hedonistic lifestyle according to Engel et al. (1994), namely, (a) activities, (b) interest, and (c) opinion. The hedonistic lifestyle scale trial produced 24 valid items with the highest item discriminatory index of 0.857 and the lowest of 0.249. The scale had a reliability coefficient of .849. The weight of each aspect (i.e., activity, interest, & opinion) was 33.33%. There were nine favorable items, compared to 15 unfavorable items. Some examples of the items include: "I am easily attracted to trending items", "I am interested in visiting famous cafes", and "I think items that are trending among students are a must-have".

The gratitude scale was compiled to determine students' level of gratitude. The statements were drawn up based on aspects of gratitude according to McCullough et al. (2002): (a) Intensity, (b) frequency, (c) span, and (d) density. The gratitude scale trial produced 28 valid items with the highest item discriminatory index of 0.756 and the lowest of 0.362 with a reliability coefficient of .923. The weight of each aspect (i.e., intensity, frequency, span, & density) was 25%. There were 19 favorable items and nine unfavorable items. Several examples of the items include: "Getting older, I started to learn to be a simple person", "I am happy every time I help others", and "I am grateful for everything I get".

Lastly, the self-control scale was compiled to determine students' self-control levels. The statements were drawn up based on aspects of self-control put forth by Averill (1973): (a) behavioral control, (b) cognitive control, and (c) decisional control. The weight for each aspect

was 33.3%, with 21 items (i.e., 13 favorable items and 8 unfavorable items). The highest item discriminatory index was 0.660, while the lowest was 0.292, with an alpha reliability coefficient of .889. Item examples include: "I can control myself when a friend invites me to go for a walk", "I will consider the advice given by friends or parents", and "I choose to complete the task first and then do the activities that I enjoy".

*Data Analysis*

We used regression analysis to test the proposed hypothesis. Data that had passed the prerequisite tests were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis tests the significance of the relationship between two or more independent variables against one dependent variable. All data were analyzed using SPSS version 16.0 for Windows.

**Result**

*Descriptive Data*

The descriptive analysis aims to describe respondents' answers' tendencies and categorize the research variables: hedonistic lifestyle, gratitude, and self-control.

Table 1

*Descriptive statistical data for the hedonistic lifestyle, gratitude, and self-control scale*

| Variable | Hypothetical Scores | | | | Empirical Scores | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Min | Max | *Mean* | *SD* | Min | Max | *Mean* | *SD* |
| Hedonistic Lifestyle | 24 | 96 | 60 | 12 | 30 | 74 | 50.68 | 7.293 |
| Gratitude | 28 | 112 | 70 | 14 | 75 | 112 | 96.08 | 8.469 |
| Self-Control | 21 | 84 | 51 | 10,5 | 53 | 84 | 68.06 | 6.584 |

Note: Min=minimum value, max=maximum value, *SD*=standard deviation

Table 2

*Results of research subject categorization based on hypothetical scores*

| Variable | Interval | | | Frequency | | | Percentage | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | Moderate | High | Low | Moderate | High | Low | Moderate | High |
| Hedonistic Lifestyle | X < 48 | 54 ≤ X < 72 | 72 ≤ X | 39 | 90 | 2 | 30% | 69% | 1% |
| Gratitude | X < 56 | 56 ≤ X < 84 | 84 ≤ X | - | 12 | 119 | - | 9% | 91% |
| Self-control | X < 42 | 42 ≤ X < 63 | 63 ≤ X | - | 22 | 109 | - | 17% | 83% |

Note: X= the hypothetical values of the research subjects after being calculated from the hypothetical test formula

Table 2 reveals the following findings: 39 (30%) participants have a low-level hedonistic lifestyle, 90 (69%) has a moderate-level hedonistic lifestyle, and 2 (2%) participants have a high-level hedonistic lifestyle. Furthermore, no participant with low gratitude was found. As many as 12 (9%) participants showed moderate-level gratitude, and 119 (91%) showed high gratitude. For self-control, 22 (17%) participants had moderate self-control, and 109 (83%) showed excellent self-control. No participant has poor self-control.

*Assumption Testing*

We carried out an assumption test before testing the hypothesis. The assumption test includes a normality test to determine whether there is a difference in data distribution between the sample and population, a linearity test to ensure that a straight line can connect the data on the variables, and a multicollinearity test to ensure that no overlap exists between the independent variables.

Table 3

*Normality Test Results*

| Variable | (K-SZ) | (p) | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hedonistic Lifestyle | 0.899 | .394 | Normal |
| Gratitude | 0.811 | .526 | Normal |
| Self-Control | 1.219 | .102 | Normal |

Note: K-SZ=Normality Index, *p*=significance level

Table 3 shows that the hedonistic lifestyle variable has a normality index (K-SZ) of 0.899 and a significance level of .394 ($p>.05$), meaning that it is normally distributed. Gratitude has a normality index (K-SZ) of 0.811 with a significance level of .526 ($p>.05$), meaning it is normally distributed. Lastly, self-control has a normality index (K-SZ) of 1.219 with a significance level of .102 ($p>.05$), indicating that it is also normally distributed.

Table 4

*Linearity Test Results*

| Variable | Sig. $_{linearity}$ | Sig. $_{Deviation\ from\ Linearity}$ | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hedonistic lifestyle and gratitude | .017 | .735 | Linear |
| Hedonistic lifestyle and self-control | .000 | .087 | Linear |

Table 4 shows that the relationship between hedonistic lifestyle and gratitude has a *p* (Sig. linearity) of .017 ($p<.05$) and *p* (Sig.Deviation from Linearity) of .735 ($p>.05$), meaning that the relationship is linear. Furthermore, the relationship between hedonistic lifestyle and self-control has a *p* (Sig. linearity) of .000 ($p<.05$) and *p* (Sig.Deviation from Linearity) of .087 ($p>.05$), meaning that the relationship is also linear.

We conclude no multicollinearity when the independent variables have a VIF value of less than 10 and a tolerance value greater than 0.1.

Table 5

*Multicollinearity Test Results*

| Variable | VIF | Tolerance | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gratitude | 1.482 | 0.675 | No Multicollinearity |
| Self-Control | 1.482 | 0.675 | No Multicollinearity |

The results of the multicollinearity test above show that gratitude and self-control have a VIF value of 1.486 ($<10$) and a tolerance value of 0.675 ($>0.1$), meaning that there is no multicollinearity between the independent variables.

We conducted the hypothesis testing after all assumption tests were cleared. Our findings reveal that students' gratitude and self-control significantly affect hedonistic lifestyles (R= .451, $p< .005$). In other words, gratitude and self-control reduce students' hedonistic lifestyles.

Table 6

*Results of Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing*

| Variable | ® | (p) | Description |
|----------|-----|-----|-------------|
| Gratitude and Self-Control, & Hedonistic Lifestyle | 0.451 | 0.000 | Significant |

Note: R=Correlation coefficient, $p$ = significance level

The effective contribution of students' gratitude and self-control on their level of hedonistic lifestyle is 20.4%. The remaining 79.6% is affected by other factors outside the scope of this study (e.g., family, environment, culture, values, beliefs, and intelligence in managing finances).

Table 7

*Minor Hypothesis Test Results*

| Variable | Partial Correlation | Significance Level (p) | Description |
|----------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Gratitude and hedonistic lifestyle | .057 | .522 | Not Significant |
| Self-control and hedonistic lifestyle | -.407 | .000 | Significant |

A correlation is considered significant if the significance level is below 0.05. Table 7 shows that gratitude has a partial correlation value of .057 ($p>.05$), indicating no significant relationship between students' level of gratitude and hedonistic lifestyle. This finding suggests that gratitude cannot independently influence students' hedonistic lifestyles. It would appear that hedonistic lifestyle is of greater value than gratitude, to the point that gratitude cannot balance the hedonistic lifestyle of students.

Next, we discovered that self-control could significantly predict one's level of a hedonistic lifestyle. This finding is indicated by the partial correlation value of -.407 ($p<.05$). Self-control is a weapon that can be forged individually and internally, making it a powerful tool for reducing and balancing hedonistic lifestyles. Self-control and hedonistic lifestyles are negatively

correlated; thus, it can be concluded that the higher one's self-control, the lower one's tendency to adopt a hedonistic lifestyle, and vice versa.

## Discussion

This study' primary hypothesis is that gratitude and self-control significantly positively affect students' hedonistic lifestyles, meaning that self-control and gratitude help students control their hedonistic behavior. These variables would prevent students from being easily influenced to follow friends' invitations, buy trendy items, or watch movies at the cinema. Instead, students would spend money more efficiently and avoid hedonistic behavior. The first minor hypothesis proposed by the researchers is rejected, indicating no relationship between gratitude and students' hedonistic lifestyle. This absence of a relationship between gratitude and hedonistic lifestyle may be attributable to the lack of criteria for gender limitation between men and women.

Even though the first hypothesis is not significant, 119 students (91%) have high gratitude, which to some extent plays a role in suppressing the urge to live a hedonistic lifestyle. Our findings differ from those of Przepiorka and Sobol-Kwapinska (2021), where gratitude affects hedonistic lifestyle. The hedonistic point of view is on the pleasant and positive side. Individuals seek new things and sensations to increase their life satisfaction. The positive effect is also found in the study by Desmyter and De Raedt (2012), contradicting the results of our study. They found that individuals are grateful for what they have and then count the positive daily experiences to know what they are grateful for. Gratitude may mediate hedonistic lifestyles by analogizing one's life with the various good and positive things they have (Wood et al., 2010).

Hedonistic behavior is reduced by being grateful. Gratitude helps students to be aware of those less fortunate, encouraging them not to waste money or buy something they do not need. In addition, self-control in students helps maintain their confidence or self-esteem. They can confidently be themselves without having to look like celebrities. High-level of gratitude is also found in Gabana et al. (2017) research on athletes. According to their research, athletes with high-level gratitude experienced fewer fatigue symptoms. Our study on a different population did not result in a significant relationship between gratitude and hedonistic

behavior. This condition could be due to most participants having a moderate hedonistic lifestyle. Having a moderate-level of hedonism meant that individuals have hope, optimism, enthusiasm to engage in meaningful activities, and a strong desire to achieve their goals. The statement is supported by Bazargan-Hejazi et al. (2021) results, stating that hedonism is correlated with life satisfaction that involves hope, optimism, gratitude, enthusiasm, supportive relationship, and a strong desire to achieve goals.

We found no participants with a low-level of gratitude. It can be concluded that the students are open-minded and optimistic, slightly contradicting the results by Sánchez-Álvarez et al. (2020), which state that many pessimistic individuals have low gratitude and increased symptoms of depression. However, a stabilizing factor (e.g., self-control) may be behind the hedonistic lifestyle. The results of the linear analysis test indicate a correlation between self-control and hedonistic lifestyles. The partial correlation of -0.407 ($p<.05$) indicates that the hypothesis is accepted. Namely, a significant negative relationship exists between college students' self-control and hedonistic lifestyle. This is in line with Azizah dan Indrawati (2015), demonstrating a negative relationship between students' self-control and hedonistic lifestyles. The higher the student's self-control, the less hedonistic they are. The previous explanation can answer one of the minor hypotheses, namely that students' self-control influences their level of hedonistic lifestyle.

The second minor hypothesis proposed is accepted, meaning that self-control is considered an essential internal factor that affects hedonistic lifestyles. Students with high self-control can control their behavior, including hedonistic behavior. Self-control is an individual's ability to direct behavior in acting and making decisions (Chaplin, 2015). The percentage of self-control in this study is relatively high, meaning that students can control themselves and be prudent in managing their finances and personal life to avoid low income and poverty (Yang et al., 2022). Self-control affects the tendency to live a hedonistic lifestyle. Students with good self-control are likely to display positive behavior, always contemplate every event, and determine their actions based on various considerations.

Xu et al. (2020) stated that Chinese consumers' impulse buying using social networking sites negatively correlates with self-control. Having self-control would invoke students to make careful decisions. This research shows that college students are more capable of controlling

their needs and not falling into hedonistic behavior, which is the exact opposite of Uzarska et al. (2019). In their study, respondents could not make the right decisions in shopping and ended up addicted to shopping. They are highly motivated to pursue prestige and an enjoyable hedonistic life. Thus, disregarding the importance of productivity and the effectiveness of their purchases.

In addition, contrasting research results were also presented by Jiang and Shi (2016). In their study, the inability to control and direct oneself away from consumptive behavior arises due to a lack of self-confidence and constant self-questioning regarding one's competence. There is a turbulent period when individuals do not feel confident and are not grateful for what they currently have. A lack of self-control and responsibility triggers individuals to mindlessly spend their money (Taufik et al., 2019). Prospective buyers and students need to reflect more on themselves, strengthen self-control, and be consistently grateful for being a modest person and not excessively imitate the hedonistic style of people they idolize.

## Conclusion

Our findings conclude that a significant relationship exists between students' gratitude, self-control, and hedonistic lifestyle. Between the two independent variables, self-control was found to have a significant negative relationship with hedonistic lifestyle, while no significant relationship was found between gratitude and the latter. Only self-control contributes effectively, which was 21.6%. Self-control and gratitude are variables that can predict and mediate hedonistic lifestyles in students. In the future, hedonistic lifestyle should be directed to positive activities to benefit oneself, others, and the campus.

*Strengths and Limitations*

In general, studies on the effect of self-control on consumptive behavior showed a moderate effect (Anggreini & Mariyanti, 2014; Chita et al., 2015). However, this study demonstrates a significant effect of self-control in suppressing hedonistic lifestyles. Self-control plays a vital role in our hypothesis testing. It lessens the extent of hedonistic lifestyle, especially consumptive behavior. This study does not thoroughly review negative problems or events experienced by

the subjects because we focused on measuring the scales from each aspect. Meanwhile, other studies used both qualitative and experimental methods.

Whereas the current study uses simple regression, future research could aim to explore similar themes using more complex analysis (e.g., AMOX, LISREL, PLS, and JASP) so that it could increase data variation. Another limitation of this study is that it does not reveal what consumptive behavior students display. There is an array of consumptive behavior (e.g., traveling abroad, traveling to famous places, posting activities on social media with glamorous clothes) considering that the context of pleasure differs from student to student. Gratitude is a weak factor in overcoming the problems of hedonism. Our findings reveal that gratitude is not significantly correlated with hedonism ($p>.05$). It has no partial effect on students' hedonistic behavior. The next researcher's new task is to examine gratitude's weaknesses more deeply. Although gratitude is a weak predictor in this study, it could still be a decisive factor in different studies with different samples and predictors.

## Acknowledgments

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