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Lifestyle and Spiritual Practices of Generation Z

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Abstract

Lifestyle reflects how a person spends his time in daily routine and life. A lifestyle which does not adhere to spiritual values may compromise a person's well-being such as engaging in illegal street racing, free sex and gangsterism. This research aimed to identify the lifestyle activities of Generation Z, study their spiritual practices and analyze the relationship between the lifestyle activities and spiritual practices among Gen Z. This research is designed as a survey study. The main research instrument is questionnaire. Respondents are selected by stratified random sampling involving 673 Malaysian adolescents. The results showed that Gen Z are very concerned with personal hygiene. The spiritual practices most observed by Gen Z are *solah*, fasting, *doa* and being grateful. The research found that there is a significant relationship between lifestyle activities and spiritual practices among Gen Z. Spiritual practices have a positive impact on Gen Z's lifestyle and well-being.

Keywords: Lifestyle, Spiritual, Religion, Well-Being, Adolescent, Gen Z.

Introduction

The word lifestyle appears only in the modern world. It describes a combination of knowledge, thought, perception, experience, emotion and actions of a person (Adler 1956; Brunso et al., 2004). It is defined as a way of life and how a person spends his money and time (Engel et al., 1995). In other words, lifestyle usually reflects a person's attitude, values and views of his world. Basically, there are various human lifestyles such as modern, hedonistic and consumer lifestyles (Tarigan, 2015; Safuwan, 2007; Puaca, Theanderson & Carlen, 2017). A modern lifestyle is more concerned with the latest, a hedonistic lifestyle is more concerned with entertainment and a consumer lifestyle refers to an individual who spends excessively causing wastage and buying less needed items.

Spiritual practices are also frequently known as religious practices. The spiritual entity according to al-Ghazali is signified by each of the four elements, that is, *al-ruh* (soul), *al-qalb* (heart), *al-'aql* (Intellect/reason) and *al-nafs* (desire-nature) (al-Ghazali, 2000). All of these terms explain that the spiritual aspect is *ma'nawi* (meaning-related), not visible but

concealed in the human heart and psyche. Hence, spiritual practice is related to the heart and psyche which is not visible to the eye but its implementation may be seen by the senses, for example, *solat* (prayer), recitation of al-Quran, fasting, paying *zakat* (charity tax), *qiyamullail* (night prayers) and so on. Gen Z in Malaysia refers to individuals born between the years 1994-2010. This generation is said to be as if genetically internet from birth. The reason is that they were born when internet first began to be widely used in the whole world (Manap et al., 2015). They are internet and IT application literate. Generally, Gen Z is between age 8 to 24 years old in the year 2018. On average, Gen Z is in lower primary school up to almost or has completed university education. In a study by Tapscott (2008), Gen Z was born between the years 1998 to 2009. Gen Z is a technology generation. Those in the Gen Z started surfing internet and web since before they were able to talk, having been exposed, guided and encouraged by parents to use world or social networking site since young. Gen Z is more inclined to grow up in a world where everything is through technology from an early developmental stage of their lives.

There are various lifestyles practised by Gen Z today. This is alarming as among them are those who are stuck with a bad lifestyle and are involved with social problems such as LGBT (Ahmad et al. 2015; Hafford-Letchfield et al. 2018; Raifman 2018; Almeida et al., 2009), drug addiction (Don, 2000; Jaafar et al., 2014), prostitution (Hasan, 1998; Tohri, 1998), illegal street racing (Tahir et al., 2017; Wong, 2011), baby dumping (Abdullah, 2014; Mohd & Alkali, 2015) and so on, which affect their well-being and social harmony. Unhealthy lifestyles were shown by students through findings in a study by Hong et al. (2011) at 11 secondary schools in Sarawak. Research findings showed that a high number of students were involved in substance abuse such as alcohol and cigarettes, involving a quarter of the whole population of 6798 students. However, not all of Gen Z lead an unhealthy lifestyle, in fact many among them lead a healthy lifestyle and emphasize on spiritual practices in their lives on the assumption that such practices may bring peace and happiness in the face of whatever challenges in life (Dedeli et al., 2015; Carr & Kroth, 2017; Egan et al., 2017; Klinge & Van Vliet, 2019). Hence, this research generally aims to determine if there is a relationship between lifestyle and spiritual practices of Gen Z as basically human well-being depends very much on lifestyle.

Generally, there have been researches done on lifestyle but mostly on lifestyle relating to medical and healthcare. For example, a study was done on lifestyle and human cardiac health (Papaioannou et al., 2017; Kapelios et al., 2017; Li et al., 2016), osteoporosis (Lotfi, 2017), diabetes (Fareed et al., 2017), Parkinson's disease (Ueki & Otsuka, 2004), and cancer (Spitz et al., 2017; Bilal & Padilla, 2016; Mourouti et al., 2015). Still about health, more researches have been done relating to the obesity problem. One of them is a study by Miri et al (2017) which found that obese teenagers were less likely to perform physical activity in their lifestyle. In another study, Pjanic et al (2017) found that the obesity problem may be overcome through emotional management skills and reducing of depression symptoms. A study by Hou et al. (2017); Lau et al (2019); Yusop (2018) found that a change in lifestyle especially in selection of foods and doing physical activities may reduce obesity and heart problems. A study by Shinohara et al. 2017 found that lifestyle and eating habits affect the quality of life and learning attitude of children.

There are also studies done on lifestyle and psychology such as that by Gonzalez-Hernandez et al (2017) which found that human psychological well-being and personality are related to physical activity. In line with technology era, there are also studies done on lifestyle and cyberworld internet addiction, such as that by Shrivastava et al (2018) which found that internet addiction affected productivity and work procrastination. In addition to health, psychology and communication, studies were also done on lifestyle related to socio-economy and oral hygiene such as that done by Cankovic et al (2016). In addition to studying aspects of lifestyle, this research also studies spiritual practices among adolescents of Gen Z. Past research shows there have been studies on spiritual practices such as that by Egan et al. (2017) which found that spiritual practices are needed as palliative by terminal patients to achieve peace of mind. This finding is in line with a study by Dedeli et al (2015) which found that spiritual practices are important among cancer patients to achieve peace of mind in the final moments to face death.

Other studies also clearly showed the importance of spiritual practices in various life situations such as that done by Wendt et al (2017) concerning spiritual practices among the homeless which found that respondents who were increasingly frequent doing spiritual practices became increasingly less addicted to alcohol. A study by Carr & Kroth (2017) found that spiritual practices such as *solah* (prayer), fasting, *ibadah* (acts of devotion) helped a person to get closer to God and this was self-transformation process. Besides that, a study by Ramachandran et al (2017) found that spiritual intelligence of academic women leaders gave a positive impact on the sustainability of the institution, high moral values and reduced ethical issues. On the whole, spiritual practices improved work situations to become more meaningful and harmonious. Generally, findings of past studies show that spiritual practices are important in various life situations including patients with chronic diseases (Egan et al., 2017; Dedeli et al., 2015; Guz et al., 2012; Corn et al., 2012; Thune-Boyle et al., 2012), workers (Ramachandran et al., 2017), the elderly (Whelan-Gales et al., 2009; Kawahara & Yuki, 2001), trainee counselors (Ghazali et al., 2017) students (Musa, 2015) and so on. Findings of past studies show that no study has been done to relate lifestyle with spiritual practices among the Gen Z. This clearly shows that such a study needs to be done more in-depth. Thus the objectives of this research was to analyse the relationship between lifestyle activities and spiritual practices among Gen Z.

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

Respondents were selected by stratified random sampling according to zones in Malaysia. Research involved 755 adolescents aged between 13 to 21 years. They can divided into three categories: lower secondary school, upper secondary school and college/university student. Most of them comes are Malay and comes from lower income family group (B40). In order to conduct this research, informed consent was taken from all the participants. The participants were briefed about the research. Anonymity of the participants as well as confidentiality of the data was maintained. Pilot test have been made before the actual test. The reliability scale for healthy lifestyle is 0.67, meanwhile the reliability scale for spiritual practice is 0.91.

Measure

This research is designed as a study survey. Questionnaire is the main research instrument. It forms part of the Gen Z Profile (G-Z) questionnaire constructed by Jamiah et al. (2016).

Measurement of Healthy Lifestyle comprises of six items. The item focus on cleanliness, eating habit, sleeping pattern, physical activity, and health screening. The response for the items were answered using 5 point Likert Scale, i.e., Very Frequently, Frequently, Sometimes, Occasionally and Never. Spiritual practices contain 13 items and response was answered in the form of 10 point scale, i.e. 0-10 to represent level of frequency i.e. never to very frequently. The items focus on religious ritual and religious practice in daily life.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistical technique that are percentage, frequency and mean. In this study, data were coded to identify activities of Gen Z and analyse relationship between lifestyle and spiritual practices among Gen Z. The data from questionnaires were coded into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. Research results were interpreted in a table containing percentage, frequency and mean.

Results and Discussion

Adolescents in this research are very much concerned with personal hygiene which achieved the highest mean value (mean=3.97), followed by concern for a balanced diet (carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, according to food pyramid) (mean=3.52) and keeping sufficient sleep hours (mean=3.43) as their lifestyle activities (Table 1). This finding shows that Gen Z in this research are concerned about personal hygiene (mean=3.97). This practice, if continued as lifestyle of Gen Z adolescents, promises success for their well-being. This finding, however differs from the situation in Nepal, particularly in the aspect of personal hygiene among menstruating women during a natural disaster. Shortage of sanitary supplies caused personal hygiene to be neglected (Budhathoki et al., 2018). This finding also differs from that in a study by Peltzer & Pengpid (2014) concerning oral hygiene and cleanliness of hands of students aged between 13 to 15 years in four South-east Asian countries, i.e., India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. The research found that only 22.4% of school-children brushed their teeth twice daily and 45.2% did not wash their hands before eating. This finding shows that adolescents in South-east Asia are still weak or neglectful in keeping cleanliness of hands and mouth. This situation is uncommon in Malaysia because of cleanliness campaigns which are continuously held since kindergarten and primary school. Malaysia once celebrated *World Hygiene Day 2016* at the National Level with the theme *See Your Hand: Hand Hygiene Supports Safe Surgical Care* to raise awareness among her citizens to keep their hands clean as a simple first step in prevention and avoiding disease infection (Zin, 2016).

Even though this research finds respondents keep their sleeping hours, this finding seems to contradict another study by Chang et al (2018) which found that many adolescents face difficulty in sleeping at night. A study by Van der Schuur et al (2018) found that adolescents involved in media multi-tasking also faced sleep disorders. Adolescents who experienced sleep disorders also have a higher relationship with anxiety disorders (Palmer et al., 2018). This finding clearly shows that adolescents who are still young already have sleep disorders whereas usually sleep disorder is often experienced by adults and elderly people (Amir, 2007; Yu et al., 2017; Sagayadevan et al., 2017).

Table 1: Lifestyle Activity

Lifestyle activity	Never	Once	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently	Respondent did not answer	Mean
Personal hygiene	29 3.8%	32 4.2%	123 16.3%	261 34.6%	298 39.5%	12 1.6%	3.97
Eat balanced diet (carbohydrate, protein, vitamins according to food pyramid)	18 2.4%	34 4.5%	333 44.1%	256 33.9%	110 14.6%	4 0.5%	3.52
Sufficient sleeping hours (7-8 hours nightly)	23 3.0%	39 5.2%	365 48.3%	215 28.5%	107 14.2%	6 0.8%	3.43
Eat on time	36 4.8%	61 8.1%	324 42.9%	219 29.0%	109 14.4%	6 0.8%	3.38
Do physical activity at least 30 minutes daily	39 5.2%	124 16.4%	316 41.9%	177 23.4%	92 12.2%	7 0.9%	3.18
Eat health food	27 3.6%	108 14.3%	389 51.5%	158 20.9%	68 9.0%	5 0.7%	3.15
Health screening checks	94 12.5%	196 26.0%	369 48.9%	64 8.5%	25 3.3%	7 0.9%	2.61

This research also finds that many respondents among Gen Z (366 persons, 48.5%) admitted to frequently and very frequently taking a balanced diet. This shows research respondents are very concerned with taking a balanced diet for healthcare. This finding differs from a study by Patimah et al (2016) in Indonesia which found that 41 % of respondents had a low knowledge about balanced diet and 46.5% of them had a very low practice of taking a balanced diet such that an intervention approach about balanced diet needed to be done for female adolescents to create awareness of the importance of healthcare through a balanced diet. Research results finds that Gen Z are also concerned about physical health because a

number of them eat their meals on time (mean=3.38) and do physical activity at least 30 minutes daily (mean=3.18). There are among them who also take health foods (mean=3.15) and do health screening checks (mean=2.61). Research findings are in line with findings of a study by Husain (2009) which found that respondents had a positive perception of healthcare and nutrition in a healthy lifestyle in line with Islamic teachings. They also gave a good feedback on implementation of healthcare and nutrition such as health food, recreation, prayer, and fasting in daily life.

Research results shows that majority of Gen Z take their meals on time (mean=3.38). This is a good life style because eating on time has direct influence one’s health. One should not leave the breakfast because missing breakfasts has been associated with the incidence of childhood obesity (Thompson-McCormick et al., 2010). In Islam, a healthy body is paramount as the means to worship Allah in order to achieve both religious and worldly achievement. Therefore, it is crucial for a muslim to take care of his body and organs to the best of his abilities (Ahmad, 2019).



Table 2: Spiritual Practices of Gen Z

Practice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	No Answer	Mean
Prayer	3 0.4 %	5 0.7 %	8 1.1 %	4 0.5 %	60 7.9 %	22 2.9 %	44 5.8 %	88 11.7 %	138 18.3 %	34 7 46 %	36 4.8%	8.22
Fasting	13 1.7 %	7 0.9 %	1 0.1 %	6 0.8 %	57 7.5 %	22 2.9 %	41 5.4 %	102 13.5 %	121 16.0 %	34 3 45. 4%	42 5.6%	8.07
Supplicatory Prayer	5 0.7 %	5 0.7 %	6 0.8 %	12 1.6 %	60 7.9 %	35 4.6 %	66 8.7 %	92 12.2 %	132 17.5 %	30 4 40. 3%	38 5.0%	7.97
Being Grateful	5 0.7 %	5 0.7 %	11 1.5 %	13 1.7 %	52 6.9 %	48 6.4 %	84 11. 1%	129 17.1 %	120 15.9 %	25 0 33. 1%	38 5.0%	7.75
Helping Others	5 0.7 %	6 0.8 %	7 0.9 %	12 1.6 %	78 10. 3%	66 8.7 %	87 11. 5%	150 19.9 %	141 18.7 %	16 8 22. 3%	35 4.6%	7.46
Think well of others	11 1.5 %	7 0.9 %	10 1.3 %	17 2.3 %	10 2 13. 5%	69 9.1 %	12 2 16. 2%	125 16.6 %	114 15.1 %	14 3 18. 9%	35 4.6%	7.10
Honest	9	10	13	19	96	80	13 3	128	98	13 3	36 4.8%	6.98

	1.2	1.3	1.7	2.5	12.	10.	17.	17.0	13.0	17.		
	%	%	%	%	7%	6%	6%	%	%	6%		
Read	20	9	12	23	11	59	97	124	104	15	38	6.92
Holy	2.6	1.2	1.6	3.0	8	7.8	12.	16.4	13.8	1	5.0%	
Book	%	%	%	%	15.	%	8%	%	%	20.		
					6%					0%		
Visit	19	8	16	15	12	77	10	111	111	12	40	6.79
house of	2.5	1.1	2.1	2.0	8	10.	3	14.7	14.7	7	5.3%	
worship	%	%	%	%	17.	2%	13.	%	%	16.		
					0%		6%			8%		
Speak in	12	14	26	22	11	79	11	103	91	14	40	6.75
polite	1.6	1.9	3.4	2.9	5	10.	1	13.6	12.1	2	5.3%	
language	%	%	%	%	15.	5%	14.	%	%	18.		
					2%		7%			8%		
Ashamed	50	21	25	26	10	56	84	81	90	17	43	6.55
to litter	6.6	2.8	3.3	3.4	0	7.4	11.	10.7	11.9	9	5.7%	
	%	%	%	%	13.	%	1%	%	%	23.		
					2%					7%		
Give	14	14	16	20	14	10	10	106	87	10	40	6.50
charity	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.6	5	7	6	14.0	11.5	0	5.3%	
	%	%	%	%	19.	14.	14.	%	%	13.		
					2%	2%	0%			2%		
Look at	54	22	24	34	47	13	66	60	105	16	47	6.43
others	7.2	2.9	3.2	4.5	6.2	3	8.7	7.9%	13.9	3	6.2%	
as lower	%	%	%	%	%	17.	%		%	21.		
than						6%				6%		
oneself												
Take	44	17	34	43	51	13	81	90	94	12	40	6.38
pride in	5.8	2.3	4.5	5.7	6.8	3	10.	11.9	12.5	8	5.3%	
oneself	%	%	%	%	%	17.	7%	%	%	17.		
						6%				0%		
Sacrifice	36	21	26	25	13	60	10	96	67	13	41	6.37
for the	4.8	2.8	3.4	3.3	6	7.9	9	12.7	8.9%	8	5.4%	
sake of	%	%	%	%	18.	%	14.	%		18.		
religion					0%		4%			3%		
Envy	34	36	59	71	69	16	59	62	61	10	39	5.79
	4.5	4.8	7.8	9.4	9.1	3	7.8	8.2%	8.1%	2	5.2%	
	%	%	%	%	%	21.	%			13.		
						6%				5%		
Amazed	10	61	64	44	16	61	56	50	34	68	44	4.73
with own	9	8.1	8.5	5.8	3	8.1	7.4	6.6%	4.5%	9.0	5.8%	
abilities	14.	%	%	%	21.	%	%			%		
	4%				6%							

Table 2 showed that among the spiritual practices most frequently done by respondents are prayer (mean=8.22) followed by fasting (mean=8.07), supplicatory prayer (mean=7.97) and being grateful (mean=7.75). This finding is in line with a study by Musa (2015) which shows that the more spiritual practices done, the higher the spiritual and religious well-being attained by university students in Jordan. This finding is almost the same with a study by Carr & Kroth (2017) which found that research respondents carried out spiritual practices such as *solah* (prayer), fasting and *ibadah* (acts of devotion) for the purpose of getting closer to God and going through the process of self-transformation.

Generally, research respondents apply moral values in their spiritual practices such as helping others (mean=7.46), thinking well of others (mean= 7.10), honesty (mean=6.98), reading holy book (mean=6.92), visiting house of worship (mean=6.79), speaking in polite language (mean=6.75), ashamed to litter (mean=6.55), give charity (mean=6.50), and sacrifice for the sake of religion (mean=6.37). These are among the moral values which the Gen Z should apply in order to have a good personality and exemplary character. This study finding that shows respondents love to help others (mean=7.46) is in line with a study by Mohd. Khairi & Mohamad Khairi (2016) which found that the item ‘I will immediately help others in need’ achieved a high mean value (mean=4.51).

Even so, this research also finds that there are bad spiritual practices by the respondents such as looking down on or seeing others as lower than themselves (mean=6.43), self-pride (mean=6.38), envy (mean=5.79) and amazed at his own abilities (mean=4.73) which may infer that respondents possess arrogance, self-pride, *ujub* (self-admiration) and envy for others. This attitude needs to be shunned because it has a bad effect on human life such as leading to selfishness, feeling he is the greatest, avoiding responsibility, blaming others, always objecting and difficulty in accepting others opinions (Pasha 2002). Envy also needs to be avoided as envy does not bring any good except sins because envy will lead one to gossip, abuse, insult and speak ill of the person envied (al-Ghazali 2000). This negative attitude should be avoided by the Gen Z in order to create and maintain social harmony. In addition, research results find a positive and significant relationship between lifestyle activities and spiritual practices among adolescents of Gen Z ($r = 0.469$; $p < 0.01$). High spiritual practices have a relationship with a positive lifestyle (Table 3).

Table 3: Relationship between spiritual practices and adolescent lifestyle

Variable	Value r
Spiritual practice Lifestyle	.469**

** $p < 0.01$

This finding shows that spiritual practices to some extent reflect a person’s lifestyle. The reason is that in religion, a person has certain responsibilities which need to be fulfilled in daily life. A person who adheres to religious teachings would certainly spend some of his time in fulfilling his religious obligations. This clearly shows that religious practice and lifestyle cannot be separated in life except for the individual who has no religion. This finding is in line with a study which found that religion and spirituality play a very important role in human life. Religion plays various roles such as it gives peace of mind, gives strength to face the trial of ill-health, assists in self-transformation, builds positive emotions and reduces feelings of

depression (Emlet et al. 2018; Van de Velde et al. 2017; Carr & Kroth 2017; Wendt et al. 2017; Van Cappellen et al. 2016; Abdullah et al., 2016; Gopal, 2014; Mokhtar & Albaraka, 2016; Hamjah et al.2017; Hamjah & Mohd. Arib, 2015).

Conclusion

This research showed that the Gen Z are very much concerned with personal hygiene, emphasize on balanced diet and maintain sufficient sleep hours at night to complete their lifestyle activities. The Gen Z in this research are also very much concerned with spiritual practices in their lives and among the most frequent spiritual practices observed are prayers (*solah*), fasting (*sawm*), supplicatory prayer (*doa*) and being grateful (*shukr*). This research also finds a significant relationship between lifestyle and spiritual practices of respondents. This study implied that spiritual practices is very critical for comendable Gen Z lifestyle.

Author Contributions

All the authors have participated sufficiently in this work. The authors are fully responsible for the contents of the paper and the authors are fully responsible for any plagiarism or other issues arising from this paper.

Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest have been declared.

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