

## Causes and Effects of Hedonism Culture Among Malaysians

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### Abstract

Hedonism started subtly in Malaysia and its influence is growing rapidly until now it is becoming more critical day by day and does not seem to be diminishing. The objective of this study which is to examine the classification of hedonism culture, identify factors of hedonism culture transmission and analyze the effect of hedonism culture. Hedonism is an unhealthy culture and will have negative effects that can destroy social institutions. Increasing the number of science discourse programs in discussing the impact of hedonism culture can also be a vehicle to be highlighted to today's youth so that they can realize the truth and take lessons from the importance of guarding one's honor against being contaminated by immoral things. This study hopes that the youth in this country can use their youth with the advantage of good energy and physical strength to do things that benefit themselves, the nation and the country and not get caught up in lust for pleasure and hedonistic entertainment.

**Keywords:** Hedonism Culture, Factors, Effect, Malaysia

### Introduction

Hedonism is derived from the Greek word, which means the pursuit of pleasure or indulgence. Hedonism is an ethical theory that describes that the enjoyable and the best thing in life is by maximising the pursuit of pleasure (Hamzah, 2010). In addition to that hedonism also means the perspective or the way of life that prioritises the pleasure and enjoyment of life (*Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat*). Hedonism is one of the social problems that can be explained when a person makes entertainment and pleasure one of the ways to solve problems or get spiritual peace without thinking about the consequences in the future.

Hedonism also is the philosophy that acknowledges pleasure as the most important human pursuit and the only good for an individual. Therefore, hedonists seek to maximise pleasure to minimise any pain or suffering, believe that pleasure is good in life, pain is evil, and that goal in life should be to maximise pleasure and minimise pain.

Hedonism started subtly in Malaysia and its influence is growing rapidly until now it is becoming more critical day by day and does not seem to be diminishing. Examples that can be taken here such as the organization of parties or concerts and excessive entertainment, drinking parties, taking drugs, the free association between different sexes, practicing free sex without regard to sin, getting used to the culture of hanging out and so on. The culture of hedonism has become part of the lifestyle of modern and urban society. It becomes the main goal or purpose of life for individuals who care about pleasure alone without caring about other aspects that are more important in their lives. They are also encouraged to do harmful and negligent things, always think about fun and entertain themselves so much that they forget themselves and the main purpose of life as Muslims and caliphs on this earth. Which causes Malaysia to have a fragile hold on their own civilization even though Malaysia experienced technological evolution nowadays as they are easily influenced and tempted by the world.

Examples of cases related to hedonism happening in Malaysia such as concerts and wild parties. An example of a case of hedonism that can be described is the Future Music Festival Award (FMFA) Concert at the Bukit Jalil Stadium on March 13 and 14, 2014. The most shocking news is that 6 people between the ages of 19 and 28 died due to drug overdose during the concert (Astro Awani, 2014). The concert was said to be dirty and wild because it was contaminated by giving out condom packs which caused unrestrained promiscuity.

This clearly proves and shows the culture of hedonism as wild concerts in Malaysia are becoming more and more common. This will also give space to negative elements such as unlimited relationship boundaries, free sex or promiscuity, excessive drug usage and alcohol consumption to be normalised. Hedonism is becoming more and more prevalent in our country with the organisation of various extravagant entertainment concerts. In fact, nightclubs are being established, causing the culture of hedonism slowly to be normalised in the eyes of the public.

Therefore, what are the factors that cause this culture of hedonism to happen? Hedonism is an unhealthy culture and will have negative effects that can destroy social institutions but what are the actual effects that will affect individuals, society and the country? This paper will unravel all the questions by answering the objective of this study which is to examine the classification of hedonism culture, identify factors of hedonism culture transmission and analyze the effect of hedonism culture.

### **The Classification of Hedonism Culture**

Society nowadays, despite age and social status, is easily influenced by hedonistic culture. There are various types or forms of hedonism culture which we could see in our community's daily life without us knowing.

The law of entertainment is required in Islam, but excessive enjoyment of entertainment is also prohibited in Islam. Islam forbids its people from engaging in excessive behaviour in any situation, including matters of religion, as well as in entertainment and socialising with it, despite the fact that the original law is necessary. The problem is, today, many people have been ignorant and complacent to the point of going beyond the concept of entertainment, which originally should be just to fulfill human nature. It seems that without an entertaining event, the celebration of a ceremonial or festive activity would be incomplete. The element of entertainment has become a normalization or a common thing in society when the organisers get the freedom to organise parties, festivals, concerts, and other entertainment programs. Modern society is also exposed to a diverse range of extraordinary

and fascinating entertainment and cultural situations, which attracts people to the latest styles of reality entertainment to the point where they are unaware of the limits of entertainment. The fact that excessive entertainment will have a harmful impact on personal and mental development, especially for young people and children who will be heirs in the future. According to Sham et al (2000), this type of entertainment, which is overly centred on pleasure, will make people irresponsible and forget about their responsibilities and obligations.

In today's society, loitering or hanging out in public areas like parks and other locations without a purpose is considered negative behaviour. Shopping malls, entertainment centers, bus stations, restaurants, coffee shops, recreational parks, and other places where people congregate. The reason why people choose these locations is that they are comfortable and have a variety of facilities. The people who like to hang out today are innumerable, regardless of whether they are old or young. As opposed to other activities, including talking about topics that have advantages, these folks who hang out typically just seek entertainment. The physical attractiveness or convenience of public places that are interesting to visit, the factors of living quarters that are less comfortable or too crowded, a selfish attitude without thinking of others, and a lack of desire to act productively in daily life have also been among the causes.

Drug abuse refers to the act of misusing drugs over medical advice. Substance abuse refers to the abuse of substances and other drugs, such as alcohol, marijuana, hypnotic tablets and many more. Every year there is an increase in the number of drug users and substance abuse cases, which has led to drug and substance misuse becoming a major problem in the country. As a result, there are several symptoms and social crimes committed by these groups, such as theft, grazing, and murder, in addition to the spread of numerous deadly diseases. The amount of ecstasy tablets abused is also on the rise, and it is typically consumed at large-scale celebrations in entertainment centers, wild parties, and nightclubs. While Islam urges its people to always protect their religion, life, soul, intellect, property, dignity, and lineage, the primary cause of the rise in pill addiction among Muslims is a lack of faith, devotion, and acts of worship (Daud, 2002). including abstinence from substance addiction and illegal drugs. The growth in pill addiction among non-Muslims may be due to mental tension, the need for pleasure, the influence of friends, and the inability to find a solution to a problem; as a result, they resort to substances such as drugs and alcohol.

The relationship between men and women is originally required in Islam and even demanded if the purpose of the meeting is to cooperate in good matters. Even so, the Islamic religion has outlined and emphasized that the cooperation that is established must always be within the limits of the Sharia between different sexes. Among them are such as both parties guarding their views, women wearing clothes outlined by *syar'a*, maintaining etiquette, avoiding using anything that can tempt an individual, refraining from sitting alone especially without the presence of a stranger and the meeting is done for the purpose of discussing matters or affairs that require both to be present together (Al-Qaradhawi, 1993). In a simple sense, the meeting is held to bring about things that bring benefits only. In this era of globalization, people's lifestyles are changing more and more according to current developments. Society is now beginning to tend to the too free association between men and women who are not *muhrim* whether between engaged couples, lovers or common friends. This uncontrolled free association can be a driving factor in the occurrence of adultery cases. As a result of worry, fear and shame for the excesses that have been made known to the public, they are also involved in a more serious crimes, which the case of murder and abandonment of babies.

Relationships without boundaries between unmarried men and women could lead to promiscuity in society. Most of the time, the parties that are involved in this relationship or promiscuity assume that it is an enjoyment, pride and in accordance with the recent time flow. Not only does this undignified act or practice involve the promiscuity of unmarried men and women or fornication, but even worse, this act could lead to homosexuality and lesbians. Homosexual acts such as gay, lesbian and such are considered vile and sinful in accordance with the al-Quran and bible. Apart from promiscuity and the personal opinion of sex relationships, the influence of mutual friends, the mass media entertainment that instills pornography or pornographic entertainment, the establishment of numerous entertainment centers, family problems, the mass production or availability of getting contraceptives like condoms, pessary, birth control pills, surgery, budget hotel that become the facility of having sex and lack of religious education from the early age are also considered as the factors that act as a catalyst to encourage the society to be involved in this compulsive sexual behaviour (Awang, 1996).

The existence of the infamous street thugs in our society was very common in our country, unfortunately, the notorious activity had become increasingly worse in the 1990s. Most street thugs reside in the big, busy and developing cities commonly around Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang, Ipoh and Johor Bahru (Daud, 2002). Most of these thugs consist of teenagers and those that were used to venture into illegal racing either by cars or motorcycles with the intention of enjoyment and self-pleasure without considering their safety and others. The place of attraction for their actions or racing is mostly around the big city and highways (Sham et al., 2000). Not only have they involved themselves in dangerous and felonious activity, but there are quite a number of them that have engaged in social criminal felonies such as stealing, robbery, heist and so on.

Pornography entertainment also could convey negative effects on the growth of society similar to drugs in these modern ages. It could stimulate the sexual desire of the viewer and encourage them to copy and practice the images or videos (Sham et al., 2000). Islam teachings had emphasizes that all senses, including the eye, are entrusted to us by Allah, so it is compulsory to be used for beneficial and watching things that are allowed in Islam. In the same way, the bible and Christian teachings also emphasizes the same things as pornography, or the action of seeing other people as sexual object sinful and obscenity, and preserving the sexual desire for our life companion. In addition to that, Islam and Christian teach the devotee to perpetuate the dignity of others.

Alcoholic beverages such as beer are alcohol in the form of ethyl alcohol, which in chemistry is considered a drug that affects the human brain and continuous consumption could lead to addiction for the drinkers. There are 3 types of alcoholic beverages that are well-known nowadays which are beer, wine and liquor. Alcoholic beverages are deemed as the mother or main factor that causes wrongdoings and disputes among people as it can influence the actions of individuals. Alcohol drinking or any kind of alcoholic beverages that can cause drunkenness - *tuak, samsu, air daun ketum*, *tapai* water and so on are forbidden in Islam. Unfortunately, nowadays, there are several Islam people that use these alcoholic beverages as their daily beverages to the extent of ignoring Islam prohibition. In developing cities, these beverages had become the fundamental causes of health problems (Abidin, 2008). The prohibition of Islam is based on the element of harmful issues. Something that could cause negative effects on the individuals or society is presumed forbidden and illegal even though they are not stated specifically in the al-Quran or hadis. Alcoholic beverages could harm the individuals either their religion, mind, body, soul and properties. It also can affect the family

institution when the drinker is unable to fulfil or neglect their responsibilities to their family or spouse. Moreover, it can also affect society in terms of moral establishment, property loss, the spread of deadly diseases, which can lead to the destruction of society (al-Qaradhawi, 1993).

### **The Factor of Hedonism Culture Transmission**

The spread of the culture of hedonism in society in Malaysia today is becoming more and more worrisome. The Western civilization that monopolises a large part of the world today is also a civilization that is not based on religion but only focuses on technological and scientific progress that they are proud of, where this kind of understanding has actually blocked and eliminated the role of religion in everyday life.

The changes that Islam brought once upon a time also had many positive effects in the context of humanity. The same is the case with Christianity which asserts that the culture of hedonism is capable of damaging the human mind (Iksan, 2010). As Iksan (2010) said, the free way of life for people who want pleasure must be based on the will of God and not their own choice or the will of the devil.

There are many factors that cause this culture of hedonism to grow in society, especially for Muslims in this country, which is through the West's attempts to manipulate individual thoughts. Al-Quran has warned that there are two groups of people who are very hostile to believers, especially Muslims, namely the Jews and polytheists. This matter is revealed by God through His word which means:

*You will surely find the people who are most hostile to the believers, the Jews and the polytheists....* (Surah al-Maidah 5:82)

Based on the evidence from the Quran, it is clear that the enemies of Islam today are always trying to find a way to attack Muslims and influence them. Weapon attacks are considered irrelevant today because they are an ancient tactic that will ultimately cause huge losses, but now the West has come up with a more dangerous idea which is through thought attacks because through this method it is possible to silently change a person's way of thinking individually. The main goal of this thought attack is none other than to tarnish the image of Islam in the eyes of the world as well as cause a distortion of understanding among the followers of the Islamic religion in addition to aiming to twist the facts about the history of Islam in this way they create a history of Islam that is not authentic in every source and reference as well as glorifying the history of Europe which in the end will raise doubts about the real life of Muslims in the present and the future in addition to defaming the personality of Muslims and introducing new cultural elements (Hassan, 1994). This Western faction has also chanted secular slogans that specialise in religion only in worship institutions and separate the role of religion that originally led to the progress of civilization in all matters of daily life (Ulwan, 1993). Zakaria Stapa (1999) also gives an impression that this form of attack is the colonisation of thought and the colonisation of the new style of this modernisation era. If this matter is taken for granted, in the end, this culture of hedonism will be considered a common thing in society nowadays.

Globalisation or a world without borders is proof that occurs as a result of the clash of cultures between Islam and the West. The borderless world introduced by the West is actually nothing other than aiming to dominate the whole world including Islamic countries in various aspects (Jamsari et al., 2005). Globalisation is also an alternative to the merging of various races, economies, politics and socio-cultures dominated by large-scale multinational

companies to create a world without borders, and free and open economic markets. It is a movement of materialism and universality. The progress of globalisation today has highlighted secular and liberal ideologies easily and effectively in people's thinking and way of life. The flow of secular and liberal beliefs causes the emergence of various cultures of thought in society such as materialism, individualism, hedonism, nationalism and the like (Othman & Abd. Hamid, 2003). The emergence of this globalisation will ultimately result in all negative elements that are against Islamic values that are easily spread to Muslims, especially the youth today. Furthermore, young people today are very easily influenced and believe in something without knowing the validity of the information. This channel of globalisation can occur in various mediums, especially information technology. The advancement of information technology which is used as a channel to spread the propaganda of a bad image of Islam also has a negative effect, especially on young people who have a narrow mind. This group of teenagers will be easily influenced by Western attacks and thoughts that are contrary to the Islamic way of life and are intended to mislead (Jamsari et al., 2005). Indirectly, this will cause the culture of hedonism and yellow culture to be easily absorbed into the thinking of young people which affects the construction of Malaysian civilization.

Mass media is an information medium that is quite famous for elements such as entertainment and knowledge. In our unconscious, it also influences social behavior, culture, personality development and pushes an individual toward a positive or negative direction. The negative influence of today's mass media on behavior stems from yellow culture, violence and Western culture that contradicts Eastern customs and Islam (Mustari, 2005). This mass media includes print media, broadcast media and electronic media. The general public knows this medium provides a lot of entertainment programs for us. Entertainment magazines and entertainment sections in the mass media are also often the focus of reading and viewing in today's society, especially to avoid boredom in addition to increase knowledge. Electronic media such as radio, television and movies also play a role in damaging the moral thinking of mankind. This is because Hollywood is a Jewish town. Popular movie stars like Kirk Douglas and Elizabeth Taylor also come among them (Abdullah, 1992).

The values of Western culture today without realising little by little seem to have seeped into Asian and Islamic culture. Its influence is absorbed through various methods, especially through the medium of entertainment which is neglectful and outrageous because things like this are easily accessible and always get a place from most parties. Music, songs, movies, cartoons and comics from the West have successfully penetrated the world market today and indirectly managed to influence to some extent the way individuals live today. Aspects of Western culture are widely spread through entertainment channels like this. The lively rhythm of music such as rock n roll and heavy metal, the negative ways and lifestyles of Western entertainers such as involvement with drugs, vandalism, promiscuous sex and the like are also followed by the younger generation because they consider such things to be common human nature (Aros et al., 2001). Eliminating or reducing the feeling of stress, tiredness and getting peace of mind and soul are among the main reasons why an individual seeks entertainment. Entertainment centers such as discos, nightclubs, karaoke centers, cinemas, cyber cafes, and snooker centers are also widely established in city centers such as around the Kuala Lumpur area, in particular often the focus of the community for entertainment. The mass media also provides a lot of programs in the form of entertainment that are neglectful and indirectly involve children to adults such as Jom Heboh Carnival concerts, Akademi Fantasia Program, Mentor and others. This kind of program if not controlled is likely to damage future generations because it is feared that this will become a

common event every year to be held. Access to entertainment without borders or at the fingertips provides a golden opportunity for Western culture which can be described as destructive to poisoning the thoughts and values that religion tries to inculcate.

In a life with various layers of society, peers are the most friendly group in a person's life apart from their own family. This intimate association becomes a medium for sharing all problems, advice, and opinions so that we consider that our friends are everything to us. Unbeknownst to us, this contributes to their attitude which is easily influenced by symptoms that are necessarily unhealthy and damage their common sense so that they are willing to act against the advice of others, especially their own family (Zainal & Mohd, 2004). It must be normal in the lives of young people to want fun, exchange ideas while sharing problems and discuss whether they are positive or negative. This happens because they believe that their peers will be more understanding, not prejudiced, and always ready to express their feelings. However, this association that is considered normal can also be a factor in spreading the symptoms of hedonism among young people who are more concerned with pleasure and lust alone. So the culture of hanging out, smoking, stealing, free association and hateful attitudes emerged in the minds of young people. This is exacerbated when today's young people are more concerned with living a life free from traditional customs and heritage that are said to be obsolete and no longer fit with the trends of the times (Baharudin et al., 1991). Pressure after pressure from peers who are in line with their own wishes can also highlight negative patterns of activities because they want to race to show each other's greatness and forget to look at it from a religious point of view.

### **The Effect of Hedonism Culture**

Nowadays, sinful acts committed by Muslims are seen as light and even become a habit for someone who is used to doing it, while Islam sees that sinful acts, even if they are as small as particles, will have a negative impact on the perpetrators both in this world and in the hereafter (Ali, 2010). Maybe the lust that encourages disobedience will get pleasure, but the pleasure that is felt is only a deceptive and false pleasure because it is obtained through haram means and prevented by Islam and Syarak. As a result, those who commit this disobedience will not find peace in their lives because they have made a decision against Allah S.W.T and His messenger as well as earning the wrath of Allah S.W.T. The words of Allah S.W.T:

*And whoever disobeys Allah S.W.T. and His messenger, and transgresses the limits of His legislation, Allah will put him in the fire of hell, and he will remain therein, and he will be subjected to a most despicable punishment.*

(Surah An-Nisa':14)

The cause of committing disobedience described in the Qur'an stems from three things, namely, being bound by the heart to things other than Allah S.W.T to bring shirk to Him, obeying the nature of anger resulting in murder between one another, and obeying the desires of lust resulting in the commission of adultery. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) explained to his people the consequences of committing an act of disobedience which is entirely stemming from the will of lust, it can harm the human heart. This effect is getting worse if the perpetrators continue to commit disobedience and are reluctant to repent to Allah S.W.T. Their hearts will be difficult to accept the truth because the eyes of their hearts have been covered by the dirt of sin (Ali, 2010)

Other than that, the hedonism culture can also spread disease to humans who love to have fun. The Prophet SAW explained that one of the diseases of Muslims at the end of this age is too fond of things that have an element of pleasure or hedonism. The disease of pleasure described is the main disease that occurs when Muslims are more concerned with world affairs. The culture of going to concerts, gigs and nightclubs is stemming from wanting pleasure in life. The attitude of wanting to try without being based on the right religious grip will sweep one's life into the valley of wrath. This illustrates that Muslims today are being hit by a very sharp and pointed spiritual crisis. With that emptiness, they will try and do anything to satisfy their lust. From there the loss of moral values that exist and there is only cheating, betrayal and spite (Ali, 2010).

In addition, the disease can only be spread by people who love worldly life only. The word '*Wahn*' which means love of the world and fear of death shows luxury and pleasure in the world is the main goal of life in the world. For some humans, the pleasures of the hereafter are just empty talk because death has cut off life in the world and the picture of life in the hereafter cannot be accepted by the human mind. If this is believed, then someone has perverted his faith because he denies life in heaven and hell. They have been influenced by the thought of hedonism embodied by Western liberalists. In Islam, the Prophet taught Muslims to believe in eternal life, namely life in the hereafter. However, life in the world should not be abandoned as long as it is not contrary to syarak. In fact, Islam does not prohibit its people from rejoicing instead the Prophet told his people to look for something that pleases them rather than the problems that arise. Apart from reading the Qur'an, entertaining by listening to music is permissible in Islam. But if the song that is heard is distracting then it should not be heard (Ali, 2010)

Lastly, the hedonistic culture can lead humans to be religiously ignorant. From what we can see, Hedonism has made Muslims ignorant of the laws and regulations of Islam. The thinking and morals of Muslims have been obscured by various tribulations coming from the West. In terms of freedom of life, it makes humans indecent and sensitive to the will that is done (Ali, 2010). Excessive freedom in the lifestyle of hedonism is a demonstration of the concept of liberalism. It over-indulges the individual and liberates the passions to the exclusion of pure morals and values when it comes to society. Islam sees the failure of the liberalism system because its approach does not have a spiritual element and keeps human life away from Islam and submission to Allah SWT while the need for religion and tawheed Allah SWT is fitrah for every human being (al-Qardawi, 1985)

### **Conclusion and Suggestions To Deal With This Issue From Being Rampant**

In conclusion, this study can unravel questions related to the factors, forms and effects of hedonism on many parties. Therefore, this study will also give some suggestions to avoid the culture of hedonism among Malaysians. In facing this quite challenging era of globalisation, all parties regardless of race, age and religion should join hands to ensure that this useless culture can be dealt with and further develop our beloved country together.

Among the suggestions that can be given, is that through the community preaching movement, especially by focusing on the youth group, they need to be empowered more. Preachers need to change the way they deliver information and their approach to the community. They should emphasize that their da'wah is based on religious belief and it will cause one's faith to fade easily if not properly maintained. Preachers should be wise to organize strategies to strengthen the faith of the youth and explain that Islam is not a burdensome or troublesome religion but that Islam is a holy religion. When a person has a



less clear religious goal, they prefer to imitate foreign culture, especially Western culture that is considered modern and up-to-date.

Furthermore, parents play an important role in dealing with the influence of hedonism. Many parents nowadays do not pay attention to their children because they are too busy with their respective careers. Parents should be the best role models for children because they will feel loved and at the same time can prevent their children from being easily influenced by negative elements. Therefore, a deeper understanding perspective of each religion is needed to realize this matter. From a social point of view, parents need to monitor their children's associations. Parents should ask their children when their attitudes and behavior begin to change and should give a positive image to children so that they do not get caught in the symptoms of hedonism.

Next, the government needs to take proactive measures by controlling forms of entertainment that can neglect our youth today because they are the nation's assets in the future. We don't want future generations to be damaged because they are too careless with the pleasures of the world alone. The meaning of control in this context does not mean tightening or directly restricting the movement of teenagers to get entertainment but rather identifying and imposing harsh measures on the organizers of profit-oriented entertainment programs that allow the practice of using prohibited substances such as pills that can make customers trance so that in the end it leads to immoral things like free sex.

Besides, the government can also take a positive approach by building and introducing One Stop Center Units in each state or district where this center aims to carry out the function of receiving complaints, providing guidance and as a shelter for those who are teenagers today. It is possible that these groups face problems in their daily lives but they do not know how to complain through the right channel, so the existence of this One Stop Centre can be a place that can be used to bring about the common good. With this, professionals such as counseling experts can listen to the problems they face and provide the best solutions so that this culture of hedonism can be prevented at an early stage before it becomes a dangerous poison to community institutions.

Public and private educational institutions can also help in controlling this culture of hedonism from becoming serious by encouraging university students to follow religious programs that can soften their hearts and protect themselves from neglecting things that do not bring any benefit. Finally, national educational institutions can also take a proactive approach by increasing the monitoring of students so that they do not easily get caught up in the hedonistic practices and thoughts that are currently prevalent in the country. Increasing the number of science discourse programs in discussing the impact of hedonism culture can also be a vehicle to be highlighted to today's youth so that they can realize the truth and take lessons from the importance of guarding one's honor against being contaminated by immoral things.

This study hopes that the youth in this country can use their youth with the advantage of good energy and physical strength to do things that benefit themselves, the nation and the country and not get caught up in lust for pleasure and hedonistic entertainment.

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