

Materialism among Indonesian Adolescents

Nurintan Sri Utami
University of Muhammadiyah Malang
nurintan.22@gmail.com

Abstract. This research was held to describe materialism among Indonesian adolescent through a qualitative approach. Preliminary studies conducted by researcher was to collect data and categorize it. Data was taken from 30 adolescents aged 13-14 years old. The results of the preliminary study showed that most adolescents were at a moderate level of materialism. The main study used a qualitative method – interviews. The interviews were conducted on two 14-year-old adolescents who described the three dimensions of materialism consisted of happiness based on material ownership (happiness), success was measured materially (success), and the center of activity was obtaining material/goods (centrality). The results also showed that materialism arose from the observations on media information such as advertisements on television. Therefore, the dominance of materialism could be lowered due to a sense of gratitude and self-acceptance.

Keywords: Adolescents, materialism, Indonesia

Introduction

Materialism in adolescents is an important discussion for educators, parents, and manufacturers, especially in Indonesia because adolescents relate to the consumptive behavior (Chan, 2013; Lubis, 2016). Adolescent appear to be more materialistic than the parent generation (Gu & Hung, 2009). Materialism is known as an orientation related to the fulfillment of elements of ownership (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Richins & Dawson, 1992). There are three dimensions in the materialism which is happiness caused by property ownership (happiness), a measure of success based on material ownership (success), and the center of individual activity is obtaining material/goods (centrality) (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Adolescents may possess materialism due to parenting style, divorced parents, economic deprivation (people at low economic levels tend to be more materialistic) (Polak & McCullough, 2006), advertisement impressions, materialistic parents and friends (Chan & Prendergast, 2007), and also gender (women are more materialistic than men) (Djudiyah & Sumantri, 2015). Moreover, materialism may be influenced by a friendship (Pinto et al., 2017). Adolescents compare themselves with peers who may have luxury items which encourage adolescents to be materialistic (Chan & Prendergast, 2007, 2008). Materialism in adolescents also be formed from imitation behavior on celebrities or popular figures who are well known through advertisements on television or other social media (Chan & Prendergast, 2008). Cultural dimension in Indonesian as a high power distance, low uncertainty avoidance and collectivism related to dimension of materialism that is focused on acquiring goods whose activities adapted to become impulsive shopping activities (Dameyasani & Abraham, 2013; Awanis, Schlegelmilch, & Cui, 2017; Güliz & Belk, 1996)

Nevertheless, if adolescents possess a high materialism, they tend to do risky things when facing negative events in their lives (Auerbach et al., 2010). Furthermore, a materialism may lead to a conflict with self-transcendence which includes interpersonal relationships consist of empathy, a desire to be better and become a person who continues to grow (Can, 2013; Kasser, 2016). Materialism has a lot of negative impacts on the lives of adolescents even though they are entering crucial stages of development and establishing their identity in the future (Santrock, 2011).

When materialism dominates life, it would be dangerous. Therefore, this research is important to provide an overview of the materialism in adolescents. It is ranging from the meaning of materialism to the adolescents, driving factors, and find the factors which may reduce the materialism level. So, parents, educators, and the government may help adolescents become individuals with better character in the future.

Method

Participants in preliminary study are adolescents. The ages of adolescents ranged from 13 to 14 years, 10 males and 20 females totalling 30 adolescents from SMPN 14 Malang. The main point is when researcher had interviews about materialism and it's conducted on two adolescents with moderate level in materialism, a female (first subject) and a male (second subject).

The instrument used in the preliminary study was the Material Value Scale consisted of 15 items which utilized Likert scale with 5 alternative answers from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This scale has a high reliability which is equal to .79 to .91 (Richins, 2004). After the testing, the valid and reliable items amounted to 12 items ($\alpha = .86$). Furthermore, in the main study, researcher has the interview guideline based on the three dimensions of materialism (happiness, success, and centrality). Subjects responded to the questions: What happiness means to you? What makes you happy? In

your opinion, what is the basis for someone called successful people? What do you think is important in your life? What do you think about shopping? What do you often buy things? How do you feel when you can't buy something?, and researcher record it.

The preliminary study measured the level of materialism categorically (high, medium, and low). The main study analysis utilized a Huberman's reduction analysis because it was included in the phenomenological qualitative research (Neuman, 2014).

Results

Preliminary studies showed that statistical data about materialism level in adolescents. Based on the results of data categorization, materialism level of adolescent was 16.7% at low level, 80% at moderate level and 3.3% at high level. This showed that the tendency of adolescents regarding the level of materialism was at a moderate level (see fig. 1). The happiness based on material ownership in materialism dimension is the highest among other dimensions (M = 92.25). Success measured by material becomes the lowest dimension (M = 66). Center of activity was obtaining material (centrality) is in the middle (M = 77.25).

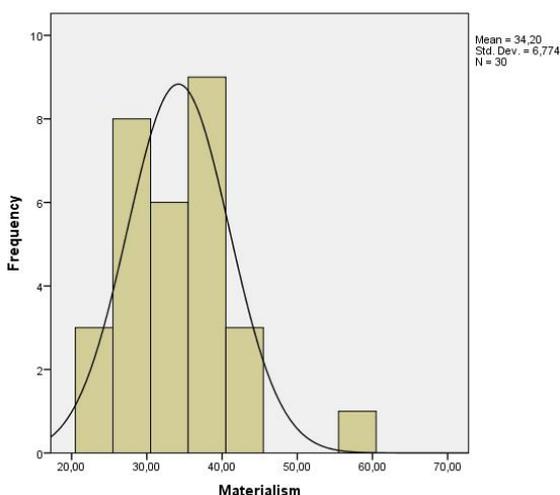


Figure 1. Materialism among Indonesian adolescents

Furthermore, the main study described about materialism in adolescents (moderate level). Happiness tends to be measured by the amount of material possessed, it motivates to have something as private property. However, happiness also may be obtained by feeling contentment in life for sure there was good luck or being grateful. The first subject considered that wealth is very important. She felt that life was affluent. She said, "I'm happy when i was shopping with my mom". Yet, when she was unable to buy the item she desired, usually the subject would be annoyed at first, but became normal (in emotions) after the incident passed. The second subject had a normal feeling when having a luxury item. He said that he was grateful for having a luxurious item. He also did not respond excessively when looking at

other people having luxury items. He said, "I am grateful for what I have now but wealth is important too".

Success tends to be measured by the amount of property possessed, school achievements, and the job status based on the information from the media, such as television. According to the first subject, she is proud of those who are successful. According to her, a sign of personal success was measured by the success in achieving goals, objectives, having a lot of money, owning home and a good job. Those characteristics of succeed perceived as the result of watching TV's information. If she saw other people succeed, she respond with "I'll be the same success like that people". Then, according to the second subject, he was amazed by smart, religious, and successful person, not arrogant person. According to him, successful people were able to go to desired school and got a job as he wishes. He argued that school achievement was important.

The activity of obtaining goods looks very significant. The items desired such as food and the need for internet access (internet data package) based on the age of the adolescents. If there is an inability to obtain the desired things, there will be a temporal frustration because the condition is understandable. First subject often spent money to buy popular food. She said, "I'm going to restaurant in a month of time". For second subject that is most important was enough pocket money and he could save it. The second subject did not like shopping except buying an internet data package because internet was very important for complete a task or just play games. He said, "I need more internet package rather than the other things". However, when he was unable to buy the internet data package, he felt a little upset, but then he could accept the situation.

Adolescents represented by the two subjects in the main study interview results have a tendency to assess success in terms of material (possessing money, house, and good in job) and success person is the one who achiev their goals. The adolescents have different views about luxury goods ownership. The first subject preferred to own a luxurious item and when someone else had it, she felt the need to own the luxury item like everyone else. While the second subject stated that he felt nothing special by possessing a luxurious item and he felt more grateful by owning it. According to both subjects, their lives were already well-off. Both subjects were seen spending their money on their personal desires. The first subject spent her money on her favorite food and the second subject spent his money to buy internet data packages. When they were unable to buy the desired items, both subjects felt a little upset, but eventually they would get used to it, and accept the situation.

Discussion

Based on the results of the preliminary and main study, adolescents are in fact have a moderate level of materialism. It shows that adolescents could potentially have a higher materialism level or declines when they

become adults. Adolescents describe their happiness is measured by wealth and motivated to have the same thing with other people. This indicates that materialism associated with the meaning of happiness is still dominated by the image of property ownership, whereas happiness is artificial and usher in prosperity in life (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002). On the other side, adolescents consider that their lives had been fulfilled and feel grateful for favors. Materialism may be lowered from its dominance with a gratitude, and trust in the fortune from God (Lambert et al., 2009).

A sign of personal success was measured by information about success in television and another media (Gu & Hung, 2009; Oprea, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2012) which presents role models that successful people must possess good wealth and job. Indeed, adolescents have the characteristics of wanting to be popular like his idol and stand out among other adolescents (Santrock, 2011). In addition, the media is influential on adolescent behavior, research shows that an advertisement and other medias can lead to high materialism (Masood, Musarrat, & Mahazir, 2016; Vandana & Lenka, 2014). Activities acquiring goods also appear to be a dimension of materialism. Adolescents want the goods according to their age. If they are unable to obtain those goods, so they will be able to understand the condition. This indicates that adolescents have better self-acceptance (Kasser, 2016).

Conclusion

Adolescents have a moderate level of materialism. There are adolescents who think that happiness and success based on material and work status. While others believe that success can be achieved with school performance. Researcher conclude that external and internal factors influence to materialism. Materialism arises from observations on media information such as advertisements on television. Materialism also lowered its dominance because there is exists a feeling of gratitude and self-acceptance. Suggestions for future research is to examine relationship materialism and gratitude or self-acceptance, also explore other factors that can decrease level of materialism.

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