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Is Minimalist Argument too harsh?

As the average household items in America reach the figure of 300,000, one out of four Americans faces the clutter problem (Ohatzky). This means that most of the space in the house is occupied by an item that the owner might never use, and can be seen as a waste of money and space. Minimalism promotes the idea of limiting spending and possession to the items that are useful in everyday life. By reducing the number of items in the house, the minimalist view offers a tidy and simpler life which has the potential of improving lifestyle and happiness. But some people see minimalism to be extreme and argue that getting rid of the extra items in the house is not the only option to declutter the household. A person can always rent a storage unit where they can keep all the items that might not serve the purpose in daily life but hold some emotional or historical value. Although minimalism offers some financial barriers, however, as Americans we should strive for minimalism because it promotes happiness, sustainable housing, and reduced environmental pollution.

Minimalism can improve happiness among people by improving life satisfaction and well-being. The well-being of a person plays a significant role in improving life satisfaction, which ultimately leads to improved happiness. According to a study by Argan and others, a survey of 1230 people in Turkey showed that the well-being of a person was related positively and directly to life satisfaction, and it indirectly improved the happiness among people. Therefore, by improving the well-being of a person, happiness can be improved as well. The

minimalist lifestyle has proved to be influential in improving the well-being of people. A study by Lloyd and Pennington studied the well-being of a person through autonomy, mental space, competence, increased emotions, and awareness. The results of the study found that the participants of this study felt trapped and congested before adopting a minimalist lifestyle, and after adopting a minimalist lifestyle their autonomy improved because of fewer possessions and reduced social expectations. The other aspects of well-being also improved as participants reported increased control over their environment, mental clearness, and improved awareness because of reflection and the development of new insights. Moreover, a materialistic lifestyle does not have a positive effect on the lifestyle of a person. This is because, “studies document that strong materialistic values are associated with a pervasive undermining of people's well-being, from low life satisfaction and happiness to depression and anxiety to physical problems such as headaches, and personality disorders, narcissism, and antisocial behavior” (Kasser). Thus, where materialism tends to reduce the well-being of people, minimalism improves the well-being and ultimate happiness of people.

A minimalist lifestyle can also positively impact the environment by providing energy-saving opportunities. According to U.S. Energy Information Administration, an average household in America consumed 10,715-kilowatt/hours in one year. This energy consumption harms the environment as it produces a higher need for electricity generation which leads to increased fossil fuels use. A minimalist housing can provide an opportunity to save energy and thus reduce the carbon footprint which can contribute to saving the environment. According to Palafox, an adaptation of minimalist housing can reduce the average household energy consumption by 45%. Thus, owning fewer items requires less space which can allow a person to

move into a tiny sustainable home and reduce their energy consumption. This can help in improving the environment by reducing the carbon footprint of a person.

Extending the theme of sustainability, a materialistic lifestyle has increased the consumerist behavior among people which can be linked with depletion of resources and environmental pollution. Consumerism promotes the acquisition of items and goods in a marketplace. As the prices of the goods are increasing every day, fast fashion has become the leading choice for clothing and fashion accessories among people, especially women. Fast fashion provides desired fashion accessories at an affordable rate which compels the consumers to buy a lot of clothing. With increased buying trends among people, fast fashion companies such as Zara and H&M benefit. According to Hayes, the size of the fast fashion industry in 2019 was \$35.8 billion which was fueled by the pandemic and is predicted to be 38.21 by the end of 2023. This shows that people are focusing more and more on fast fashion without even knowing the environmental impact of the fast fashion industry. As it is apparent from the name, the fast-fashion items are not manufactured to last for a long time, but only to be used a few times. Approximately 60% of the fibers used in the fast fashion are manufactured from fossil fuel, and when discarded they will not decompose for a long time (Schlossberg). Moreover, the clothing items and fibers that end up in the sea or freshwater can cause harm to sea life and intoxicate the drinking water reservoirs. By adopting a minimalist lifestyle, a person can reduce the need for fast fashion and buy clothes that can be used for a longer period. This can reduce the use and abuse of fossil fuels and their harmful effects on the environment.

The argument made against the minimalist lifestyle is that it does not relate to happiness and is not achievable by every person in society. The opposing side claims that the relationship between a minimalist lifestyle is not robust and happiness can be achieved in other ways as well.

A study by Matte and colleagues conducted a survey that included 395 Brazilian amateur runners and found out that participants did not relate minimalism to happiness and suggested that happiness could not be achieved by getting rid of the items alone but the reduction in consumption can serve other incentives as well such as financial condition. The opposing side also argues that minimalism is not possible for everyone because not everyone has the financial means to afford something on the spot. Financially unstable people might need to buy stuff from sales that can serve them for a longer period. Thus, the opposing argument looks at the financial status which can serve as an incentive to reduce consumption and as a barrier to practicing minimalism.

Minimalism promotes the idea of reduced possession of the items and discarding or selling the items that spark the least joy or are useless. The minimalist lifestyle can improve well-being which leads to an increased chance of happiness and autonomy. The positive impacts of the minimalist lifestyle are not limited to human health and happiness, but they expand to electricity consumption and environmental pollution as well. By adopting a minimalist lifestyle and tiny sustainable housing a family can reduce the energy consumption by a significant amount. Consumerism has fueled the trend of fast fashion due to which fast fashion industries have boomed and fossil fuel depletion has been increased. These fossil fuels, in form of clothes, are dumped in the environment where they can stay for a long time polluting water and endangering aquatic life. The opposing side argues that the financial status serves as a major contributor to a reduction in consumption, and a financially unstable person might not have the choice to buy something on the spot and might have to buy items from sale ahead of the time. The financial status does serve as the restrictor to the minimalistic approach but the well-being,

sustainability and environmental benefits of the minimalist lifestyle are enough to support the argument that minimalism should be the target of the American society.

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