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THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THEIR ATTIRE AND LEARNING MOTIVATION

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Abstract

Proper attire and learning motivation are two components that are interesting to be investigated. This is because the first impressions can be long-lasting, and they are usually based on a thin slice of behaviour and outlook, as Morris (1996, p. 135) explains that it is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting social signals. This study tried to explore more about the students' perception on their attire and learning motivation. The research was conducted at IAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala Langsa, particularly in the Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business. Six participants from different stages and semesters, three males and three females who are studying at Syari'ah Banking Department, were the samples of this research. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the students' perception on their attire and learning motivation. Data were collected by using individual semi-structured interviews. Interview data were open coded and thematically analysed. The findings indicated that wearing proper attire does not reflect the motivation of learning. The participants classified that the attire is worn to increase the sense of confidence in order to attract people. Learning motivation, however, is acquired from the willingness of each student.

Keywords: *Proper attire, learning, motivation, university students.*

INTRODUCTION

Wearing proper attire is demanding for some people as it may represent the status of the people themselves (Lightstone, *et al.*, 2011, p. 15). In case of students' attire, some rules have been applied according to how to dress well in a college. As one of Islamic higher education institutions, IAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala especially the Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business pays more attention on this issue. The dress code for the students in this college surely should be based on the standard of Muslimah dress, for instance the female students have to wear proper outfit from top to toe. Boulanouar (2006) illustrates that wearing clothes, for religious reason, is to conform to the guidelines provided in the Islamic teachings. Even though the interpretation of the standard may be different among students, they should take the way to dress into priority anyway. In '*Buku Panduan Akademik Tahun Akademik 2015/2016*', it is clearly explained that the students must wear proper dress neatly and in Islamic way. Wearing jeans and sandals is non permissible within campus border. Those rules imply that good attire is very important for the students while being in the college and that they have to be aware of this issue.

Moreover, attire also has impact on someone's non-verbal communication since it can 'speak' in a silent way. This kind of communication has a good influence on how to enhance the quality of

communication itself (Li, 2011). It is common to hear people's judgement that inner beauty is the only thing, but physical attractiveness plays an important role in interpersonal encounters. Therefore, wearing proper attire, especially in the campus area, is required as it reflects the characteristic and the story of the person himself (Morris, *et al.*, 1996, p. 135).

In terms of motivation in learning, appropriate attire worn by the students might stimulate positive enthusiasm in study, which in turn helps enhance their spirit. Harder and Sullivan (2007) point out that student's motivation influences critical school-related outcomes including attention, effort, goals, work quality, behaviour, well-being, test score, grades and school completion. What is more, someone's characteristic can be seen through his outfit implying motivation, skill, hardworking and responsibility (Eises, 2014, p. 1). Even though successful people do not have to dress up, it is good to make a favourable first impression even before the first words are exchanged. To this respect, Lightstone, *et al.* (2011) have stated that first impression of the person's character is often formed by what he is wearing. Appearance is also the way to achieve other's respect. It is undeniable that when the students wear proper attire in the classroom, the lecturers gain more power in teaching. As a result, the teaching learning process runs smoothly and efficiently. The present study is an attempt to get insights into the students' perceptions on their attire and learning motivation.

METHODS

The research was conducted at IAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala Langsa, particularly in the Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business. In the analysis of this qualitative research, the writers used interview as the only data resource. Creswell (2007), as cited in Sampson (2016), explains that qualitative research assists researchers in comprehending live experiences, and the procedure for such research involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive engagement to assess patterns and relationships of meaning. The writers, thus, selected six students randomly as the sample of the research from different stages and semesters consisting of 3 males and 3 females, who are studying at Syari'ah Banking Department. Those participants were then interviewed through individual face-to-face interviews. Each participant of the research was interviewed within different session to avoid the bias of the answers. The use of *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) in the interview session is the choice in order to facilitate the participants in answering and sharing the information regarding the issue.

Five open questions were inquired to the participants of the research and then the writers analysed all the answers deeply. This was to achieve the goal of the research which is to investigate the students' perception on their attire and learning motivation.

Table 1. The detailed profile of the participants.

<i>Male</i>	<i>Semester</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Semester</i>
Participant 1 (P1)	2	Participant 3 (P3)	2
Participant 2 (P2)	6	Participant 5 (P5)	6
Participant 4 (P4)	4	Participant 6 (P6)	4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the interview and obtaining some information from the samples related to the students' attire and their learning motivation, the writers then analysed the answers carefully as follows:

Bagaimanakah menurut anda seharusnya penampilan seorang mahasiswa? (In your opinion, how should a student's attire be?)

For the first question about how the students' attire should be, almost all participants had similar answers in which they explained about how the students' attire should look like. Based on their opinion, the students' attire should be based on the criteria of neat, clean and the law of Syari'ah. The female participants even added some categories that the dress should not be tight and sheer. P2, in addition, pointed out that the students should wear black shoes as the representation of office workplace. P1 emphasized on having impressive characteristics resulted from being good and smart students.

Overall, participant's opinions regarding the question reflect their understanding of reading 'Buku Panduan Akademik Tahun Akademik 2015/2016'. One of the points in the book is neat, that the students should wear the clothes well and tidy, especially in the area of campus. Showing how the students' outlook should be is also another essential point to gain more motivation in learning.

Seberapa pentingkah penampilan bagi anda? (How important is attire for you?)

For this question, which is related to how important the students' attire appearance is, most participants explored different ideas which differentiate gender briefly. The female participants agreed that proper attire and outer look are essential elements that should be prioritized. They declared that comfortable outfit creates more confidence and also affects the people surrounding. The appearance can have a profound effect on the surrounding atmosphere due to its ability to demonstrate respect, create perception of professionalism, responsibility, competence, and influence teaching effectiveness. Many experts have discussed the issue in different literature, such as Raiscot (1986) and Morris, *et al.* (1996), who mentioned that clothing affects several kinds of judgments people make, including but not limited to, credibility, likability, dominance, kindness, and empathy. Stenberg's (2009) also asserted that some students and teachers believed that clothing has an effect on individuals.

Most male participants, additionally, believe that the appearance or outer performance is not particularly important since good characteristic is not always represented by proper attire. P4 even claimed that the students who prioritize the appearance must have lower score academically.

Nevertheless, appropriate attire in the appropriate place creates profound impression for other people. The most important point to be highlighted is that the students must follow the rules stated in the guidance book. The issue of wearing proper attire, hence, should be considered well.

Bagaimanakah motivasi belajar bagi anda? (In your opinion, what do you think about learning motivation?)

In terms of learning motivation, participants provided different perspectives. P4 and P6 believed that learning motivation is obtained from willingness, which translates that getting motivated to learn and work hard is important for academic success. School and campus environment are the pivotal elements to influence the learning motivation, said P2. If both findings are joined, they might match the conceptual framework of social learning theory suggested by Bandura (1977) emphasizing on personal factors and environmental determinants which influences each other directionally. The other participants, moreover, even assured that lecturers play crucial role in improving the students' motivation in learning. Getting insight into the lecturers' side, the participants informed that professional lecturers must provide a quality teaching environment including the technique of teaching, the material used and surely their proper attire. In this regard, Hammer (2000, p. 456) clarifies that if a teacher is concerned with how (s)he is perceived by the students, (s)he must choose his/her clothing carefully. McKay (2009) also adds that the key ingredient of making a good impression is knowledge, preparation and appearance.

Apakah setiap penampilan mahasiswa menunjukkan motivasi belajarnya? (Does a student's attire show his/her learning motivation?)

To the question about whether the students' appearance shows their learning motivation, all participants assumed that proper attire does not reflect their learning motivation. All of them agreed that attire and learning motivation are two different concepts that have different characterization as well. For them, wearing proper attire is important in order to increase the sense of confidence as well as to adjust to the surrounding environment.

Apakah penampilan dan motivasi belajar saling berkaitan satu sama lain? (Do the students' appearance and their learning motivation correlate each other?)

The last question is about the correlation between the students' appearance and learning motivation. The participants, somehow, provided variety of answers. P1 confirmed that both components, attire and learning motivation, have a low correlation. P2 said that those components do not have any correlation at all due as attire is used for showing off only, but learning motivation is acquired from the college circumstances. The other participants, however, believed that attire has a

good influence on their learning motivation. This is because the process of observing and making evaluation is based on how individual look, and the perception of one's appearance is based on the first impression (Sampson, 2016).

Consequently, although the students provided various opinions for this question, they should recognize that the issue of proper attire cannot be separated from the learning improvement. This is relevant to Eises's (2014, p. 1) argument that motivation is entailed from the outfit. Therefore wearing proper attire may increase motivation in learning for some people.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research question of this study which is the students' perception on their attire and learning motivation, our findings reveal varied perceptions among participants. Regarding the proper attire, it evolves a neat, clean, Syari'ah law-based, not tight and sheer. Moreover, in terms of the importance of attire, female participants considered it essential while male participants believed it as less useful, even it results in low academic performance. Furthermore, learning motivation is defined differently as it is derives from willingness, depending on campus environment, and even lecturers play crucial role. That is why all participants further believed that learning motivation cannot be assessed by their attire. However, some participants still believed that attire influences their learning motivation. In short, all responses showed that wearing proper attire does not reflect the motivation of learning. Attire is only related to the improvement of confidence; the motivation of learning alternately can be increased through self-willingness as well as the college stakeholders such as lecturers.

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