



Pragmatism in Islamic Higher Education: Navigating Social Trends and Academic Orientations

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Abstract:

This study describes the phenomenon of pragmatic lifestyle orientation among students at the Faculty of Ushuluddin Adab and Humanities (FUADAH) UIN Salatiga. A pragmatic lifestyle is the tendency of students to pursue instant results, such as high grades and quick completion of tasks, driven by the pressures of a results-oriented system. Research questions: how did this pragmatic orientation come about, what are the driving factors, and how does it impact students' learning strategies and academic achievements? The research aims to uncover the manifestations of this pragmatic lifestyle, distinguishing it from the general philosophical study of pragmatism. Using a qualitative method with an Islamic anthropological perspective, the researcher analyzed students' behavioral adaptation. The study subjects were 19 students from the AFI Study Program. We analyzed data through interviews, participatory observations, and a literature review. The results show that students tend to adopt lifestyles that prioritize efficiency, practicality, and tangible results. The main driving factors are the competitive environment and technological advancements. As many as 100% of students admit to using technology (such as AI and Google) to speed up tasks. The chosen learning strategies focused on effectiveness and efficiency (74%), and this reportedly affected their GPA (79%). This research is essential because it provides practical insights for institutions and lecturers to design teaching strategies that strike a balance between practical orientation and in-depth intellectual exploration. This study aims to support student success without sacrificing essential academic values such as critical thinking and integrity.

INTRODUCTION

A pragmatic lifestyle enters the academic world, including among students. Pragmatism in this context refers to students' tendency to seek instant results, such as pursuing high grades and getting a job quickly, rather than engaging in critical inquiry. A variety of factors influence this shift, including pressures from the education system, job-market demands, and social and technological changes that drive fast-paced cultures. As a result, students are more likely to employ efficient, outcome-oriented learning strategies. (Samata, 2016), such as

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memorizing for exams, seeking summary material rather than reading sources, and selecting courses considered easier or more beneficial for their future careers.

This research focuses on FUADAH UIN Salatiga students who tend to adopt a pragmatic approach to academics. In initial observations and interviews, we found that students aimed for quick successes, such as graduating with high grades or securing a job, rather than engaging in critical inquiry into science. This shift impacts how they approach their studies, select courses, and participate in an academic environment. This phenomenon not only affects individuals but also the education system, which is increasingly adapting to these pragmatic demands.

Some factors that encourage students to adopt a pragmatic approach to academics include, first, a results-oriented education system that enables students to focus more on measurable academic grades and achievements. Second, the increasingly competitive job market requires students to think strategically about how to enhance their competitiveness. Third, technological advances and the increasing ease of information availability also contribute to academic pragmatism. Fourth, social and academic cultural pressures that emphasize quick success also affect students' mindsets. Many students feel burdened with the expectation of graduating soon, getting a job, and achieving economic stability (Aminah, 2025; Murtadho et al., 2023).

A pragmatic lifestyle in academia has a diverse impact, both positive and negative. On the positive side, pragmatism can help students focus more on their goals, improve learning efficiency, and prepare them to compete professionally. Pragmatic students tend to be more strategic in choosing their educational paths, looking for opportunities relevant to their careers, and are better prepared to face challenges in the professional world.

Pragmatism can also hinder students' intellectual and critical development. If students focus solely on results and ignore the deep learning process, they can miss opportunities to develop critical, reflective, and analytical thinking skills. In addition, excessive pragmatism can also lead to a disregard for academic values such as honesty, integrity, and intellectual exploration. Students may be more likely to seek shortcuts, such as copying assignments or relying on instant learning resources, without truly understanding the content.

Researchers have conducted various studies on the pragmatic lifestyle. And its impact on student academic behavior. To support this research, the author uses several studies conducted by other researchers as references. Joko Wahyu Setyono's (Setyono, 2023) Research examines pragmatism, which they measure by the extent to which an idea or action provides practical benefits to humans. Ease of use is an essential factor in determining the value of the truth. The implication of pragmatism in modern life is the development of various technologies that accelerate and facilitate human activities.

Kholil Lur Rochman (Rochman, 2015) demonstrates that, through genealogy, the pragmatic-hedonistic life choice of Jepara women during the time of Ratu Kalinyamat was influenced by the daughter of Sultan Trenggono, the third ruler of the Demak kingdom, after Prince Sabrang Lor and Raden Patah.

Kurniawan (Kurniawan, 2022) Elaborated on the concept of the truth of pragmatism, as defined by William James, by discussing the book *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. The results of the research show that,

according to William James, the truth of pragmatism is the compatibility between ideas and reality. We can assimilate an accurate idea that is validated, justified, and proven. As mentioned earlier, people cannot enforce this.

Research by Farah et al (Farah & Nasution, 2020). It suggests that students may experience changes in their lifestyles and interactions due to online learning, due to the absence of in-person interactions, which is feared, and this threatens the formation of a generation of qualified intellectuals. Considering that students' interaction and learning patterns are currently different, and they are also in the adjustment stage.

Nidawati discusses pragmatism (Nidawati, 2022). It argues that education is a process of reorganizing and reconstructing individual experiences. The educational implications of pragmatism are to respect the principles of education as the basis of expertise and subject-centered education.

Based on the growing literature, this research has a strong rationale for examining students' orientation and strategic choices in adopting a pragmatic approach to their academic process. This research aims to differentiate the subject, as people have so far viewed research on pragmatism as a school of philosophy, a life choice that leads to hedonism, and a process of reconstructing individual experiences. Therefore, this study is necessary to explain the orientation and the factors that influence students' adoption of a pragmatic lifestyle, as well as their learning strategies and academic achievements. This research draws on Malinowski's theory, which posits that culture serves to meet human needs, comprising three categories: basic, instrumental, and integrative needs. William James heavily influenced Malinowski's thought, who argued that cultural theory must begin with basic human needs.

This research aims to provide recommendations for educational institutions to design more effective teaching strategies that accommodate students' needs without sacrificing essential academic values. In addition, this research has the potential to help students realize the importance of balancing a practical orientation with intellectual exploration, enabling them to develop a more comprehensive mindset in the face of academic and professional challenges.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative methods (Brannen, 2005) Were employed in this study, a type of field research. We chose this method to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' pragmatic orientations in the academic process. In this study, a qualitative method was employed to explore in greater depth the orientation and factors that encourage pragmatic lifestyles and learning strategies in the context of student academic achievement.

The research subjects are active students at Fuadah UIN Salatiga who tend to adopt a pragmatic approach to their academic work. The selection of subjects is carried out through purposive sampling, specifically targeting students who meet specific criteria, such as an efficient learning pattern, a focus on results, and the use of practical and adaptive academic strategies. The student is in the 6th semester (class of 2022) from the Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy Study Program (AFI). From the 6th semester onwards, students take a modern Western philosophy course, including one on pragmatism. This activity involved 19 students from the AFI B class. All of them have material experience in philosophy. Their age

range is 18 to 20 years, with an average age of 19.

The objective of this research is to explore a pragmatic lifestyle within the academic process, encompassing orientation, factors influencing students' adoption of a sensible lifestyle, learning strategies, and educational decision-making to achieve academic goals.

To obtain complete and accurate data, this study employs several methods of data collection, including interviews to delve deeper into the reasons, motivations, and impacts of implementing a pragmatic lifestyle in academics. Participatory Observation aims to reinforce the findings from the interview. Literature studies are conducted to provide a theoretical basis for research. The data analysis process is carried out through thematic analysis, which is used to identify patterns and themes in interview and observation data, specifically by identifying the main themes within the data. The stages of thematic analysis include selecting information relevant to the research focus, grouping data into appropriate categories based on identified themes, and analyzing the relationships between themes to gain a deeper understanding.

Once the qualitative data analysis is complete, the next step is to determine how the data can support or reinforce the research findings. Thus, this research can enrich our understanding of how a pragmatic lifestyle is applied in the academic process of students in the Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy Study Program at Fuadah UIN Salatiga. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the research strategies used include (Sugiyono, 2009): a. Data is collected through questions and answers, observations, and literature studies that allow for comparison and validation of information from various sources. b. Informants were permitted to review the interview results so that the researcher's interpretation aligned with their experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The presentation of the researcher's data begins by conveying that the orientation of this study is on the views that underlie students' attention, thoughts, or tendencies to choose a lifestyle during their academic process.

The researcher made observations by entering the class and interacting with AFI B students from the 2022 class, who were in their sixth semester at the time of the research. Their age range spans 18 to 20 years, with an average age of 19, placing them in Generation Z. Another term for Generation Z is iGeneration, referring to the generation born during a period of rapid technological development. Generation Z is adaptive to change and can perform multiple tasks simultaneously effectively. They also show concern for social and environmental issues relevant to the community. Next, the researcher conducted interviews and disseminated a list of written questions. Among these informants, the gender distribution was 68% women and 32% men. The total number of informants is 19, consisting of 13 female students and 9.

In the search for data related to Pragmatic lifestyle in the context of learning strategies (diagram 1), from the results of the question based on the data, as many as 74% stated that pragmatic lifestyle was important, 15% said that adjusting the lecture assignment model, and 11% considered it not suitable to be applied.

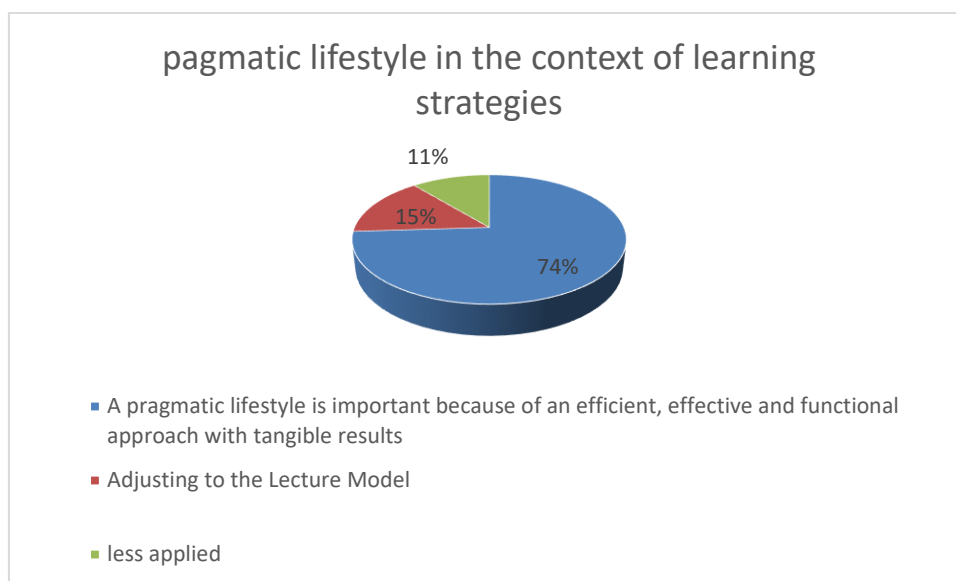


Figure 1. Diagram Pragmatic lifestyle in the context of learning strategies

Related to the pragmatic learning strategies used by students of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy, FUADAH UIN Salatiga, based on interviews, we found that 21% used project-based learning strategies, 32% used internet assistance such as AI, YouTube, online courses, ChatGPT, etc., 26% made notes and practice questions, and 21% combined note-making and practice questions.

The majority of students prioritize efficiency, focusing on short-term results: 58% often prioritize it, 21% find it adequate, and 21% do not. Students tend to use the technology depicted in Diagram 5. 100% of students report using it, with 63% using it constantly and 37% combining it with lecture notes.

The role of external pressure in adopting a pragmatic lifestyle was perceived as follows: 68% stated that external pressure played a vital role, 21% found it had little effect, and 11% considered it moderate.

The majority of students (68%) stated that a pragmatic lifestyle had a significant impact on their GPA, while 21% reported a moderate effect. When facing the exam, the majority of students (78%) adopt pragmatic strategies, 10% do not, and 12% moderate their approach.

Suggestions from students to keep them productive include balancing efficiency with understanding the material and being wise in using technology (32%); reading books, engaging in discussions, and attending lectures and learning (53%); and focusing on time management (15%).

By considering this, achieving a good GPA is often a reason to adopt a pragmatic approach to the academic process. Students who choose this orientation have a unique perspective and approach to dealing with various life situations, as seen in the data above.

Students who choose a pragmatic lifestyle adopt a mindset and behavior that prioritize practicality, efficiency, and tangible results in dealing with various situations. As such, they tend to focus on solutions we can implement directly and that provide tangible benefits. Students who adopt a pragmatic lifestyle orientation when facing challenges tend to be more flexible.

Factors That Motivate Students of Fuadah UIN Salatiga in Pragmatic Lifestyle Orientation

Based on the data, the driving factors for students adopting a pragmatic lifestyle are both internal and external. The pragmatic lifestyle, which emphasizes results and efficiency, is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include aspects of the individual's basic personality that tend to be results-oriented and goal-oriented. At the same time, external factors include the social environment and technological developments that foster a fast-paced, instant lifestyle.

The study's results reveal the internal factors that drive results-oriented students who seek to achieve their goals quickly. A significant number of students, namely 74%, stated that a pragmatic lifestyle is essential because it provides an efficient, effective, and functional approach with real results. However, 11% indicated that it is not suitable for those who conduct academic work in a results-oriented manner and want to achieve goals quickly. In comparison, 15% are oriented towards the results, which will adjust to the lecture assignment model.

Research on External factors indicates an environment that demands rapid and competitive results (Nurlaela Sari, 2013). The fast-paced world of work can encourage students to adopt a pragmatic approach to life to survive and succeed. The demands of an increasingly competitive job market prompt students to think strategically about how they can enhance their competitiveness (Trinarso, 2015; Zahroh et al., 2025). Social pressures and academic cultures that emphasize quick success also shape students' mindsets. Many students feel burdened with the expectation of graduating soon, getting a job, and achieving economic stability. (Aminah, 2025). This encourages the majority of students, namely 58%, to often prioritize efficiency with short-term results over in-depth understanding. 21% take a moderate stance, balancing their position depending on the situation and conditions. 21% fall into the category of not prioritizing efficiency enough, in the sense that they usually strive for deep understanding.

The influence of social media and other digital platforms often presents a picture of instant success and quick achievement, which can trigger the desire to achieve similar things without a lengthy process. Technological advancements, such as the internet and smart devices, have accelerated access to information and communication, leading people to expect quick, efficient results across various aspects of life. Technological advances and the fast and easy availability of information also contribute to academic pragmatism. (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). With the internet and digital learning platforms, students tend to seek the fastest way to understand the material, such as through short videos, summaries, or other instant resources. Most students (100%) reported using technology (applications, Google, ChatGPT, etc.) to speed up academic tasks, with 63% using it consistently, 37% using it occasionally, and the results were balanced.

An education system that places too much emphasis on test results and academic achievement can also encourage students to focus more on outcomes than on the learning process. An outcome-oriented education system enables

students to focus more on measurable academic grades and achievements. Grade-based exams and evaluations are often the key benchmarks of academic success, so students are more interested in quick and efficient ways to achieve desired results. Many students, namely 74%, consider it essential to have a pragmatic lifestyle in the context of learning strategies because of an efficient, effective, and functional approach with tangible results, 15% adjust to the lecture assignment model, and 11% consider it less appropriate to apply a pragmatic lifestyle in the context of learning strategies.

The study's results showed that 68% of students stated that external pressure played a role in their adoption of pragmatic strategies. This happens because students feel pressured to get good grades. As many as 21% stated that external pressures had little effect on their decision to adopt a pragmatic lifestyle. Meanwhile, 11% of students noted that external pressure in the medium order was balanced in their decision to adopt a pragmatic lifestyle.

Pragmatic Lifestyle on Student Learning Strategies

A pragmatic lifestyle can influence students' learning strategies. Based on the data obtained, it can be analyzed that several ways of a practical lifestyle can influence learning strategies:

First, students with a pragmatic lifestyle tend to focus on results that can be achieved quickly, so they prefer effective, efficient learning strategies. This is evident among the majority of students: 74% of the informants stated that a pragmatic lifestyle is essential due to its efficient, effective, and functional approach, yielding real results. Only 11% said it was not suitable to implement an effective, efficient learning strategy because they feared they would not gain a deep understanding of the lecture material. Meanwhile, 15% of the informants stated that they prefer to apply the learning style they already have, with a sense of the types of tasks given during the academic process.

This encourages many students, namely 58%, to often prioritize efficiency with short-term results over in-depth understanding. 21% take a moderate stance, balancing their position depending on the situation and conditions. 21% fall into the category of not prioritizing efficiency enough, meaning they usually strive for deep understanding.

Second, students with a pragmatic lifestyle orientation prefer learning practical skills that can be applied in daily life. They tend to be more flexible in their learning strategies, so they may prefer to try different learning methods to achieve their goals. This is evident among most students: 80% of the study strategies change before the exam, 10% do not change, and 10% change sometimes, depending on the situation and conditions.

Third, students adopt a Learning Efficiency orientation by choosing the most relevant and practical learning resources to understand the material and answer exam questions, such as summaries, lecture notes, or practice questions, rather than reading all the textbooks in depth. Among AFI students, 26% use this method. They will prioritize the materials most likely to appear on the exam, often by identifying the lecturer's or senior's grid or question patterns. Taking notes and practicing questions, they will seek the best strategies for completing an assignment or exam, including understanding the assessment format, identifying key points to include in their answers, and even seeking advice from friends who

have worked on similar assignments. Utilize a network of friends or seniors to obtain efficient information, notes, or study aids. While 32% prefer to use internet assistance (such as AI, YouTube, online courses, and ChatGPT), which are considered the most relevant for understanding the material. 21% combine using the internet and taking notes. They can adjust their learning style according to the demands of the course or lecturer. If a course requires memorization, they will memorize. If they need to understand the concept, they will try to understand it, 21% like project-based learning.

Fourth, the majority of students reported using technology (including the internet and applications) to facilitate and accelerate learning. Specifically, 63% of students combined notes during the academic process, and 37% always used technology to complete assignments.

Pragmatic Lifestyle on Student Academic Achievement

We can interpret a pragmatic lifestyle as one in which students choose the most practical and effective strategies and actions to achieve their educational goals. The following analysis, based on the data obtained, is crucial for achieving academic goals.

One of the satisfactions of the academic process comes from the result (grades or graduation). The study found that 79% of students stated that adopting a pragmatic lifestyle is highly impactful, as it significantly affects grades and GPA. As many as 21% of students believe that adopting a pragmatic lifestyle has a moderate impact on their grades and GPA.

The informants in this study are Generation Z, so the researcher also wants to know what students can do to stay productive without compromising the quality of their learning. The majority of students, approximately 53%, continue to prefer reading books, engaging in discussions, attending lectures, and other forms of knowledge acquisition. 32% of students attempt to strike a balance between efficiency and safety, using technology wisely. Meanwhile, 15% of students said that they should not ignore time management.

In its application, academic culture depends on the individual or student and relates to choices that must function in their lives. According to Malinowski, the function of culture is to meet human needs, which can be categorized into three types: biological, instrumental, and integrative. Malinowski's thinking was heavily influenced by William James, who believed that cultural theory must begin with human organic needs. In this study, to analyze students' pragmatic lifestyle in academic behavior, the researcher employs the theory of William James (1842–1910), specifically pragmatism, which emphasizes truth as something that must function in a person's life. A person's confidence can be tested based on its practical benefits in daily activities.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of this study indicates that the orientation toward a pragmatic lifestyle among students of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy at FUADAH UIN Salatiga is closely related to the characteristics of Generation Z, who are highly adaptive to technological advancements and rapid social change. The findings reveal that the majority of students (74%) perceive a pragmatic lifestyle as important because it offers efficiency, effectiveness, and tangible outcomes in

the academic process. This aligns with the tendency of students to prioritize short-term results over deep conceptual understanding (58%). The fact that 100% of students utilize technology in their learning further reinforces the argument that digitalization has significantly shaped a practical and instant-oriented mindset. Recent studies confirm that Generation Z learners tend to adopt technology-driven, outcome-oriented learning approaches due to the accessibility of digital resources and the demand for rapid information processing (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Holmes & Tuomi, 2024). Therefore, a pragmatic lifestyle is not merely an individual preference but also a contextual response to the demands of a fast-paced digital era.

Furthermore, the emergence of a pragmatic lifestyle is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internally, students demonstrate strong goal-oriented behavior and a desire to achieve results efficiently, which drives them to adopt practical learning strategies. Externally, academic pressure, social expectations, and increasing competition in the job market significantly shape this orientation. The study found that 68% of students acknowledged the substantial role of external pressure in encouraging pragmatic strategies. This finding is consistent with recent research highlighting that academic environments emphasizing performance and employability tend to foster efficiency-oriented learning behaviors (Zhang et al., 2023; Jackson, 2024). In addition, the influence of social media and digital platforms promotes a culture of instant success, where achievements are often portrayed as quickly attainable. The education system itself, which frequently prioritizes measurable outcomes such as grades, further reinforces this tendency. Consequently, students are more inclined to focus on academic performance rather than the learning process, reflecting a broader shift toward outcome-based education (OECD, 2023).

The implications of a pragmatic lifestyle are clearly reflected in students' learning strategies and academic achievement. Students tend to adopt efficient strategies, such as utilizing digital technologies (32%), combining note-taking with practice exercises (26%–21%), and implementing project-based learning approaches (21%). These strategies have a significant impact on academic performance, with 68%–79% of students acknowledging a positive effect on their GPA. However, this tendency may also reduce the depth of conceptual understanding if not balanced with more comprehensive learning approaches. Recent studies emphasize the importance of balancing efficiency with deep learning to ensure sustainable academic development (Redecker & Punie, 2024; Limone et al., 2025). Therefore, students need to integrate pragmatic strategies with reflective and critical learning practices, such as reading, discussion, and effective time management. From the perspective of William James' pragmatism, truth is validated through its practical consequences, suggesting that students' pragmatic lifestyle represents a rational adaptation to academic demands. Nevertheless, maintaining equilibrium between practicality and depth of understanding remains essential to preserve the integrity of the educational process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's results, it can be concluded that: first, the pragmatic lifestyle orientation referred to in this study is based on the view that underlies

students' attention, thoughts, or tendency to choose a lifestyle during their academic process. Second, the factors that encourage Fuadah UIN Salatiga students to adopt a pragmatic lifestyle orientation in the educational process are both internal and external. These include the fundamental nature of individuals who tend to be results-oriented and want to achieve their goals quickly, as well as external factors that influence their behavior. One of them is the social environment, as well as technological developments, that encourage a fast-paced and instant lifestyle. Third, the way a pragmatic lifestyle can affect learning strategies, namely students with a sensible lifestyle tend to focus on results that can be achieved in a short time, so they prefer effective and efficient learning strategies, like to learn things that are practical and can be applied in daily life, choose the most relevant and practical learning resources to understand the material and answer exam questions, Utilizing technology (internet, applications, etc.). A pragmatic lifestyle among college students, in terms of academic achievement, is an outcome-oriented approach in which students tend to choose effective strategies to achieve their educational goals. Satisfaction is obtained from the result (grades or graduation).

This research encourages students to balance pragmatic learning strategies with a more holistic approach. Institutions and lecturers can incorporate learning methods that focus on the student's learning process, including understanding of the process and concepts, rather than just the final result. These methods can also help students develop a more balanced learning strategy.

In addition, this study's results contribute to further research examining the long-term impact of this pragmatic lifestyle on graduates' career achievement and job satisfaction. It is also possible to compare the pragmatic lifestyle orientation of students in other faculties (excluding FUADAH) to determine whether the field of study has a significant influence on these differences.

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