Support and Positive Values Among Urban Youths: The Mediational Roles of Positive Identity and Commitment to Learning

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ABSTRACT

Although existing literature demonstrates that youth positive developmental benefits are associated with support for urban youths, little is understood about the multiple roles of positive identity and commitment to learning influence on positive values. This study examines the multiple mediation effects of positive identity and commitment to learning on the relationship between support and positive values embraced by urban youths living in the inner city of Kuala Lumpur. The participants of the study were 243 urban youths, ages ranging between 15 and 24 years. The average age is 17.2 (SD=2.45). These youths are predominantly Malay (91%) while the others are Chinese and Indian. Using the Hayes and Preacher procedure, the bootstrap analysis shows that commitment to learning, jointly and partially mediates the effects of support on positive values, whilst positive identity does not contribute to the relation between support and positive values. The analyses provide support for the meditational assumptions that support influence positive values through school engagement. Suggestions for further research and implications for positive youth development are considered.

INTRODUCTION

A substantial body of literature shows that support of urban youth is related to positive values. In general, studies show that urban youths who perceive their parents,

teachers and community members as social supportive do far better in school, work or community than those who do not perceive as such (e.g. de Graaf, Vanwesenbeeck, Woertman, Keijsers, Meijer, & Meeus, 2010; Keijsers, Frijns, Branje, & Meeus, 2009). Despite the growing body of evidence concerning the association between the perception of support and positive values, the mechanisms through which support exerts its influence on positive values have seldom been examined. Previous research suggests that support may influence positive values indirectly through self-esteem (e.g. Felson & Zielinski, 1989) and motivational belief mechanisms (e.g. Ahmed, Minnaert, der Werf & Kuyper, 2010). Taken together, the emerging literature suggests that the presence of support (or lack thereof) may precipitate positive or negative experiences as well as adaptive or maladaptive behaviour among youths, which, in turn, influence positive values. Although understanding such mechanisms of influence is important, as it will inform further research and policy initiatives, and may lead to the development of effective intervention programmes to reduce urban youth delinquent behaviour and enhance resilience, empirical evidence on the subject is lacking.

The purpose of our study is to examine the positive identity (self-esteem, sense of purpose, curiosity) and commitment to learning (achievement motivation, school engagement) pathways through which social support may influence positive values. Most of the studies have used procedures for estimating the indirect effects in simple mediation models. Thus, it is not yet known whether support may influence positive values indirectly through the multiple mediation effects of positive identity and commitment to learning. This is a question to be addressed. Positive identity and commitment to learning as mediators is chosen because there is a strong relation between a predictor and an outcome. In addition, the mechanisms behind the relation are explored. The values of Cronbach's alpha are also used to determine mediators in our study. An initial analysis shows that the relation between the predictor and outcome, and between the predictor and the mediator are comparable (Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998). Thus we use these comparability criteria to determine the mediators of our study. We choose urban youths because reports showed that they are involved in antisocial behaviour (Salleh, 1997), unprotected sex (Hamzah, 2007), drug abuse (Lim *et. al.*, 2010) and receive less support from parents (Ong, Chandran, Lim, Chen, & Poh, 2010). Thus, urban youths are an ideal population to study the positive values to examine the mediational effects of positive identity and commitment to learning, which happen to be in flux.

Definitions of developmental assets

Developmental assets focus on a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviours that increase young people's positive development outcomes (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998; Scales & Leffert, 1999). The developmental assets can be categorised as either internal assets

(attributes and qualities within the young person) or external assets (various ecologies that interact with the young people). The Malaysian version of developmental assets is presented using 25 dimensions (for details see Abdul Kadir, Rahim, Abdul Mutalib, Wan Mahmud, Chong & Suhbi., 2012a). The internal assets consist of achievement motivation, school engagement, caring, integrity, planning and decision making, interpersonal competence, resistance skills, self-esteem, sense of purpose, curiosity, morality, and positive emotions. The external assets consist of family support, other adults support, family communication, caring neighbourhood, caring school/place, caring neighbourhood climate, family boundaries, hope and expectation, positive

peers influence, religious community, and safety. We focus on only 12 dimensions of developmental assets and operational definitions, which are presented in Table 1.

Support and positive values

Although research has documented remarkable relations between the perceptions of urban youths concerning the support from parents, peers, neighbours and positive attitudes, research on positive values is scant. Perceived support has been related to academic achievement (Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009; Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma Jr, & van Dulmen, 2006), conspicuous consumption attitudes (Gudmunson & Beutler, 2012), self-esteem (Gaylord-Harden, Ragsdale,

TABLE 1
Definitions of developmental assets

Developmental assets	Operational definitions
Support	
Family support	Family provides high levels of love and support
Positive family communication	Young person and his or her parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s)
Other adult relationships	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults
Caring neighbourhood	Young person experiences caring neighbour
Caring school climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment
Positive values	
Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people
Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs
Positive identity	
Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem
Sense of purpose	Young person reports that "my life has a purpose"
Curiosity	Young person explores new things, gains new knowledge and experiences
Commitment to learning	
Achievement motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school
School engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning

Mandara, Richards, & Petersen, 2007), self-concept (Covington & Dray, 2002) and motivational beliefs (Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf, & Kuyper, 2010). In general, most studies report that support from parents, peers, and neighbours influence the positive attitudes of urban youths. Only one recent study reports that positive values are significantly related to life satisfaction, grade, and attendance in school (Heinze, 2010). Using the developmental assets approach, Heinze (2013) found that youths residing in emergency shelters score lower on positive values than the control groups. Experiencing residential instability, family conflict, and problems at school may relate to the absence of family members and teachers when they are needed by youths residing in emergency shelters. Although the study reveals that most of the youths score low on positive values, the association of positive values and life satisfaction indicates that the perception of sources of support has the potential to influence positive values.

Support and positive identity

Positive identity consists of self-esteem, sense of purpose, and curiosity. Few studies have been found to examine the relationship between support and positive identity. Thus, our study aims to address this research gap. Supportive relationships play a vital role as resources for social adjustment among urban youths. A strong positive interpersonal relationship for instance is beneficial because support would function as a source of comfort throughout the multiple life changes (Kenny, Gallagher,

Alavarez-Salvat, & Silsby, 2002). Some studies show that urban youths are more likely to have difficulty in adjusting when sources of support are not available in times of crisis (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Harris, 2002), which may affect their positive identity.

Support is an important factor in developing self-esteem. Previous studies suggest that the relationship of parents and peers with the youths would lead to the development of self-esteem (Kulaksizoglu, 2001). Attention, acceptance and respect from others have a vital role in self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967). Those urban youths with high self-esteem were reported to be more successful, confident when interacting with the social environment and effective in communication skills (Arslan, 2009). Taken together, previous studies show that factors, such as support and self-esteem, need to be understood during the important development period of adolescence.

A sense of purpose in life refers to an individual's intention, goals and a sense of direction for their life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). This indicates that if the individual feels that there is meaning to his/her life both currently and in the past, they hold beliefs that give life purpose, and they have aims and objectives for living. Having a purpose in life contributes to optimal human functioning in many ways (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009). It is also associated with major indicators of thriving during youth stages and beyond (Bundick, Yeager, King, & Damon, 2010). Therefore, urban youths with a sense of purpose are

expected to be psychologically healthier than those without a sense of purpose (Debats, 1998), are able to overcome life challenges (Frankl, 1959), and also help urban youth to resolve their identity crisis (Erikson, 1968). There is evidence that youths with a sense of purpose are also more highly involved in social activities than those without (McAdam, 2001) thus encouraging pro-social behaviour and civic engagement (Bronk *et. al*., 2009). In contrast, among youths with high ability, a sense of purpose does not motivate them to engage in pro-social behaviour more than those considered as typical youths (Bronk, Finch, & Talib, 2010). This can be explained in terms of intrapersonal giftedness where inspiration is more appropriate of relating motivation achievement. A sense of purpose has the potential to enhance motivational beliefs and self-confidence that may help youths to develop positive values.

Curiosity enhances the individual's engagement with the world, which includes exploratory behaviour, a sense of purpose of life, and motivational achievement (Kasdan & Steger, 2007). Curiosity possesses a number of adaptive attributes as well as sensitive to adaptability (Kashdan, Sherman, Yarbro, & Funder, 2013). This may relate to the activation of a behavioural system of curiosity. The roles of bottom-up and top-down curiosity shape the individual's characteristics in exploring the world. In the social world, curiosity involves the management of anxious thoughts and feelings by activating bottom-up curiosity (e.g. take advantage of exploring

interest stimuli) or top-down curiosity (e.g. intentionally creating interesting situations), which may create tension between the individuals and their social world. Curious people will react if there is something new or interesting information to be explored, something that can be challenged, novel, and complex. However, curiosity may relate to the characteristics of youth and the outcomes in terms of positive social interactions. The top-down curiosity may be activated when youths explore various situations, which would bring about positive values.

Support and commitment to learning

Commitment to learning consists of achievement motivation and school engagement. Social supportive social relationships have been linked to commitment to learning but not limited to early adolescents' academic achievement (Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf, & Kuyper, 2010; Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma Jr., & van Dulmen, 2006), and general cognitive ability (Karbach, Gottschling, Spengler, Hegewald, & Spinath, 2013), goal orientations (Gonida, Voulala, & Kiosseoglou, 2009), character strengths (Gilham *et. al.*, 2011), interest (Rowan-Kenyon, Swan, & Creager, 2012), school engagement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011) and learning motivation (Whitaker, Graham, Severtson, Furr-Holden, & Latimer, 2012). Previous studies have found relatively consistent evidence of the relationships between social support and achievement motivation. For instance, Whitaker, Graham, Severtson, Fuur-Holden and Latimer (2012)

found that urban African American middle school youth with good family functions and neighbourhood conditions had higher learning motivation than those without them. Using the Family Assessment Measure III (FAM-III) to measure family function and the Neighbourhood Environment Scale (Crum, Lillie-Blanton, & Anthony, 1996) to measure neighbourhood condition, and Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) to measure learning motivation, the researchers also suggest that family function has a greater effect on youths learning motivation. Family function mediates the relationship between neighbourhood conditions and learning motivation, which indicates that learning motivation is at-risk of decline through both unhealthy environment and neighbourhood conditions. The researchers conclude that the extent of social support is very important to youth learning motivation and effective learning. Social support from teachers and achievement was also found among youths living in poverty (Kenny, Walsh-Blair, Blustein, Bempechat, & Seltzer, 2010). Using a self-report of the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) to measure social support from teachers and the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) to measure achievement-related beliefs, the study found that support from teachers was significantly associated with academic efficacy and mastery goal orientation. Teacher support was also found to be the most powerful predictor on academic achievement. This indicates that motivation relates to academic achievement, therefore support from teachers as a unique predictor of motivation makes sense.

The social literature shows that the presence of support (or lack thereof) is associated with school engagement among urban youths (Green, Rhodes, Hirsch, Suárez-Orozco, & Camic, 2008; Hughes, Zhang, & Hill, 2006). Youths who have support from parents, teachers and peers engage more in social activities and have better achievement motivation. Teacher-student support predicts social acceptance and high engagement (Hughes *et al*., 2006) whilst low engagement in school relates to sexual behaviour (Voisin & Neilands, 2010). School engagement is also related to students' achievement goal orientations (Gonida, Voulala, & Kiosseoglau, 2009), which varies according to gender and race (Wang, Willett, & Eccles, 2011). Evidence suggests that predictors of school engagement and academic performance are motivation and study skills (Moreire, Dias, Vaz, & Vaz, 2013). Reports also suggest that other factors relating to school engagement are peer influence, gang involvement, gender. Support from teachers is able to reduce sexual behaviour and gang involvement (Voisin & Neilands, 2010). This indicates that teachers influence is also a notable finding on interrelationships among peer influence, sexual behaviour, and gang involvement.

Positive identity, commitment to learning and positive values

The correlational studies between positive values and commitment to learning as well

as positive identity are well-established. A great deal of research has documented substantial relationships between positive identity (e.g. self-esteem, sense of purpose, curiosity), on the one hand, and positive values, on the other (Scales *et. al*., 2006). In general, the studies suggest that those youths have a choice to make and help them to become caring, responsible, and successful adults by developing developmental assets and increasing resiliency. The link between commitment to learning (e.g. motivational achievement, school engagement) and positive values is evident in a number of studies among youths and appear to be well-established. In general, achievement motivation is positively correlated with positive values (Heinz, Jozefowicz, & Toro, 2010; Muller, Phelps, Bowers, Agans, Urban, & Lerner, 2011; Scales *et. al*., 2006). Research on positive youth development also shows a similar pattern. For instance, studies in the United States found a significant association between school engagement and healthy development (Muller *et. al*., 2011) as well as increases in decision making skills, which helps to prevent delinquent behaviour (Crean, 2012). In such studies, support has been related to positive outcome. In general, it has been previously suggested that both achievement motivation and school engagement promote positive development (Heinze, Jozefowcz, & Toro, 2010).

THE PRESENT STUDY

As mentioned above, the mechanisms through which support of youth influences positive values have engendered little empirical work. Because of the dearth of empirical mediation research in the developmental literature, the mediation constructs for the model were derived from the existing body of theoretical literature on positive youth development. Fig.1 visually presents the conceptual model of the study. The effect of support on positive values is transferred through positive identity and commitment to learning is proposed. A specific domain in measuring support, positive values, positive identity, and commitment to learning is examined. All the variables in our study with regards to poor neighbourhood conditions and support, which reduces the positive values of youths are defined and assessed. Whether positive identity and commitment to learning jointly mediate the effects of support on positive values is tested. Multiple mediators are justified by the understanding that a single mechanism is not able to explain the complex associations between support and positive values. Based on the existing literature, it is hypothesized that 1) self-esteem, sense of purpose and curiosity jointly mediate the relationship between support and positive values, and 2) motivational achievement and school engagement jointly mediate the relationship between support and positive values.

METHOD

Participants

We used UNESCO's universal definition of youths. UNESCO uses the United Nations' universal definition of 'youth'

as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Therefore, no particular criteria other than being Malaysian, over 15 years of age but not more than 24 years old and volunteering to participate in this after school programme are employed in this study. Only 243 participants met the criteria to be selected in our study (mean age 17.2, SD=2.45). Overall, the sample consisted primarily of Malays (91%) and the remaining participants identified themselves as Indian (7%) and Chinese (1%). More than half were male participants (65, n=157) and the rest were female (35%, n=86).

Procedure

The study was conducted from 6 to 22 February 2010 in the public housing programmes of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley. A total of 11 public housing areas under the City Hall of Kuala Lumpur were

identified. Invitation letters were sent to 11 heads of the communities, of which three responded. Before the actual research was conducted, the Principal Investigator (PI) and research team organised several meetings with the residents' committees. The aim of the meetings was to explain about the study. We used the door-to-door technique to approach the participants by employing a systematic random sample. For each family, only one adolescent was chosen to complete the questionnaire. The participants took 45-60 minutes to complete the questions. Oral consent was sought from the parents or guardians. Written consent was inappropriate for participants as their parents were apprehensive about signing any papers (Cardozo *et. al*., 2004; Scholte *et. al*., 2004). Further details of the study can be found elsewhere (Abdul Kadir, Rahim, Mustapha, Abdul Mutalib, & Mohamed, 2012b).

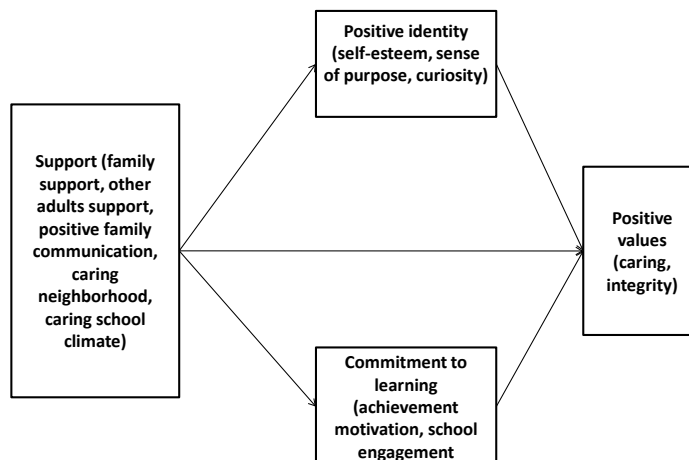
Fig.1: Conceptual model of the study

Measure: The 25 Developmental Assets Questionnaire – Malaysian version

The 25 Developmental Assets Questionnaire (Malaysian version) was utilised to measure a person's positive experiences and relationships with others as the most essential components in building the well-being of youths (for further details see Abdul Kadir, Rahim, Abdul Mutalib, Wan Mahmud, Chong, & Suhbi, 2012a). This instrument was developed by adapting and adding new components to the 40 Developmental Assets of the Search Institute. The Malaysian version of developmental assets comprises 93-items that assess both internal and external assets with some additional 20 items to measure demographic characteristics of the respondents. Each item is answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .87 to .88 (Abdul Kadir *et. al.*, 2012a). The overall Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .87, indicating that the measure was satisfactory and consistent. For the purpose of the study, positive values, social support, self-esteem, curiosity, motivational achievement, and school engagement were analysed to see if there was a meditational effect of positive identity and commitment to learning on the relationship between social support and positive values among urban youths.

Examples of items on self-esteem items included: "I think I'm no good at all", "I feel I will not succeed when I try to do something important", "If I'm capable of doing things, I want to change many things."

Examples of items on sense of purpose included: "I'm going to help improve the lives of families", "I am uncomfortable mixing or mingling with other races", "I keep the good name of me and my family".

Examples of items on curiosity included: "I was fully involved when participating in social activities", "I like to explore new information."

Examples of items on achievement motivation included: "I've no motivation to go to school", "I'm confident I'm able to be a successful person at school", "I'm confident that I can compete at school."

Examples of items on school engagement included: "I like going to school", "I feel safe at school", "I feel I belong to the school."

Examples of items on social support included: "My parents are not concerned if I'm sick", "My parents always give an opinion for solving problems", "I don't have an opportunity to discuss my personal problems with my parents", "My parents advise me when I make a mistake", "My parents do not make me feel left out in the family", "I feel like running away from home."

Examples of items on positive values included: "I was involved in preparing for the festival day", "I was visiting a sick relative", "I will return the borrowed items", "I will help my family when they are in times of crisis."

RESULTS

The inter-correlations among the study variables are displayed in Table 2. Support is

significantly correlated to three components of positive identity, two components of commitment to learning, and positive values. Positive identity is significantly correlated to positive values. Commitment to learning is also significantly correlated to positive values.

To test the multiple meditation hypotheses, we used the bootstrapping approach (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Shrout & Bolger 2002). The bootstrapping strategy is suitable for testing multiple mediators simultaneously. The procedure uses the original sample data as a population and takes random samples of size "n" with replacement techniques and estimates the total and specific indirect effects. Testing the total indirect effect is similar to testing the overall effect of multiple independent predictors in a regression analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The significant total indirect effect suggests that as a set, the multiple mediators (M's) transmit the effect of an independent variable (X) on a dependent variable (Y). A specific indirect effect refers to the extent to which a mediator transmits the effect of X on Y, above and beyond the other mediators. Preacher and Hayes (2008) suggest that bootstrapping is better than Baron and Kenny (1986) in terms of reducing type 1 error and has a greater power in detecting indirect effects.

The analytic diagram (Fig.2) shows the coefficients estimated. The "a" coefficients represent the effects of support on mediators; the "b" coefficients represent the effects of the mediators on positive values partialling out the effect of support. The "c" is the total effect of support on positive values (Panel A). The "c'" (Panel B) is the direct effect of support on positive values. The specific indirect effects are represented by a_1b_1 (self-esteem), a_2b_2 (sense of purpose), a_3b_3 (curiosity), a_4b_4 (achievement motivation), and a_5b_5 (school engagement). The total indirect effect is the sum of all specific indirect effect. To test these hypotheses, we use the SPSS macros for multiple

TABLE 2
Inter-correlations and descriptive statistics for all variables studied

Developmental assets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Positive values	-						
2. Support	.79**	-					
Positive identity							
3. Self-esteem	.72**	.72**	-				
4. Sense of purpose	.27**	.34**	.21**	-			
5. Curiosity	.23**	.33**	.23**	.13*	-		
Commitment to learning							
6. Achievement motivation	.77**	.79**	.76**	.28**	.23**	-	
7. School engagement	.84**	.78**	.78**	.31**	.19**	.85**	-
Mean	34.1	41.1	7.15	7.88	13.54	14.39	18.19
SD	6.08	9.49	1.75	2.15	2.43	3.64	4.54

Note: All correlations are significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

mediations (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The current analyses utilize 1000 bootstrap samples to create a pseudo population of indirect effects. Ninety-five per cent confidence intervals (95% CIs) are used to evaluate the significant and the magnitude of indirect effects estimated through the bootstrapping technique. An effect is significant if the confidence interval does not include zero (Table 3). We describe the extent of mediation by calculating the proportion mediated (i.e. ratio of indirect effect to total effect (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

The results show that support had a direct effect on self-esteem, sense of purpose, curiosity, achievement motivation, and school engagement. In the test of direct effects of the mediators on positive values, only school engagement significantly predicted positive values. Nevertheless,

self-esteem, sense of purpose, curiosity and achievement motivation did not have a statistically significant contribution in the presence of the other mediators. The total effect of support on positive values was significant and so was its direct effect. Overall, the support model explained 75% of the variance in positive values (Fig.3).

Examination of the total and specific indirect effects of support on positive values reveals interesting findings. The total indirect effect is significant with the 95% bootstrap confidence interval (table 3). The analysis of the ratio of the total indirect effects of the proposed mediators shows that only school engagement significantly mediates the association between support and positive values. Examination of the proportion of effects mediated shows that 30% of the total effect of support on positive values is mediated by school engagement.
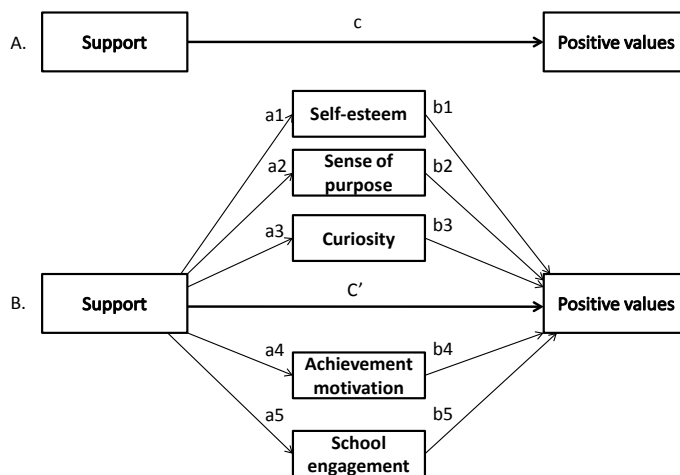

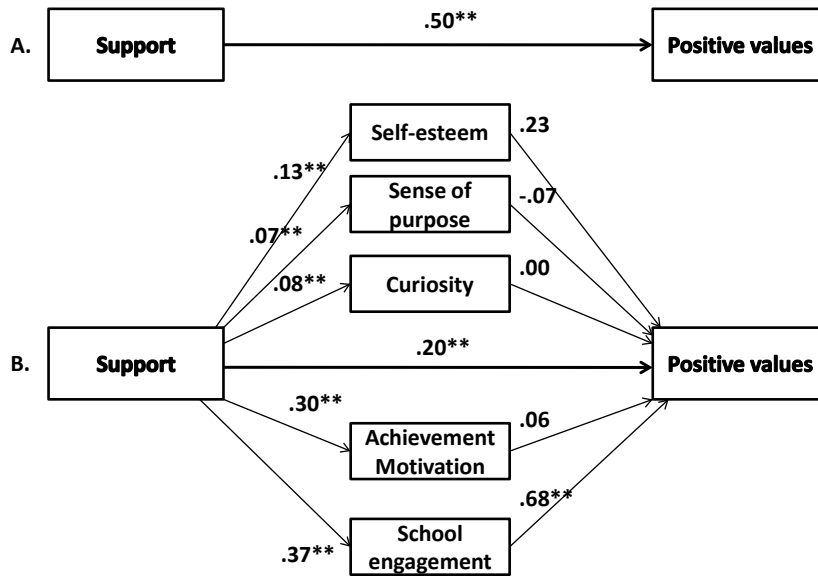Fig.2: Analytic diagram for multiple mediations model proposed

Fig.3: Support, mediators and positive values (** p<.01)

TABLE 3
Total and specific mediated effects and their corresponding bootstrap confidence intervals for positive values

Indirect effect	Support		
	Estimate	SE	95% CIs
Self-esteem	.03	.02	(-.01, .08)
Achievement motivation	.02	.03	(-.04, .09)
School engagement	.25	.03	(.18, .32)
Sense of purpose	-.00	.01	(-.02, .01)
Curiosity	.00	.01	(-.01, .02)
Total effect	.03	.02	(.24, .36)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was designed to examine the multiple mediation effects of positive identity (self-esteem, sense of purpose, curiosity) and commitment to learning (achievement motivation, school engagement) on the relationship between support (parental support, positive communication, positive relationships with adult) and positive values (caring, integrity) among urban youths in Malaysia. Generally, the results reveal that only school engagement mediates the effect of support and positive values. In other words, in part, urban youths with high support reported more positive values because they are engaged in more

school engagement. However, not all the proposed intervening variables mediated the association between support and positive values. In general, the analyses provide support for the meditational assumptions in previous studies (Li, Lerner, & Lerner, 2010).

The results reveal that support from parents, positive family communication, and social supportive other relationships facilitate school engagement, in turn, increase youths positive values. The findings show that youths who describe their parents as supportive and as having good communication skills appear to be involved in school engagement and develop positive values. Such youths, in general, feel less anxious about academic performance, participate in classroom activities, are interested in joining school-clubs, feel safe at school and feel that they belong to the school; all these, in turn, influence their positive values. The results affirm the significance of the support of school engagement on youths' positive values (Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005; Moreira *et. al*., 2013; Whitaker *et. al*., 2012). The meditational effects of school engagement support the theoretical discussions on the effect of family support in school activities and values of educational attainment. Support from parents, other adults and neighbours can motivate urban youths to attend school and become engaged in the school activities. Family involvement in urban youths' education, for instance, has shown to be a good predictor of school engagement among urban youths (Murray,

2009) while a caring neighbourhood has shown a strong influence on school engagement (Daly, Shin, Thakral, Selders, & Vera, 2009). A caring school climate (e.g. teachers, peers) may also be a key source of support for helping urban youths prepare for their schoolwork, and, thus, would help them to be more engaged in school. All these factors lead to the formation of positive values. Our findings are consistent with those of Li, Lerner and Lerner (2010) who found that support indirectly influenced a youth's positive development through its effect on school engagement. Overall, our findings attest to the importance of support on urban youths' positive values.

In line with the developmental approach, we suggest that support from parents and other adults are external factors of positive values at the individual level, which relates to personal worthiness. One interpretation of our findings is that Malaysia, as a 'collectivist' society, might desire a large and integrative social network; parents in the social environment might be very conducive to providing such support whilst other adults with a particular kind of positive value are someone high on helping each other.

The strong, positive relationship between support and positive value is consistent with other findings working with such variables (Goodwin, Cost, & Adonu, 2004). Although our findings are based on cross-sectional data, and therefore causality cannot easily be ascertained, our findings support other research work within the positive youth development and developmental assets approach, which view

support as a key part of the wider close relationship.

Also contrary to our predictions, self-esteem, sense of purpose, curiosity, and achievement motivation did not contribute significantly to the prediction of positive values. Even the simple correlations of positive values failed to account for much variance. This may indicate that positive values are affected by school engagement than those factors included in our studies. Additional research is needed to explain this finding. This collection of findings is new in the literature and suggests that parents, other adults and peers need to provide different types of support if they are going to effectively encourage urban youths to participate in school activities.

However, interpretation of these findings should be made with cognisance of several limitations. First, the sample comprises youths living in one city of the Klang Valley, hence generalization to urban youths is not possible. Second, the sample size is small; therefore we cannot generalize such findings to youth populations. The use of a more heterogeneous sample would make it possible to assess gender differences and other socio-demographic factors. A large sample size is required for generalization so findings can inform more contributing factors to positive values. Finally, although this study shows good psychometric properties, it relies on self-reports. Therefore, we suggest incorporating different assessment methods, such as self-report, diaries, interviews, and information processing.

Despite these limitations, the findings of our study have important implications. Our findings provide further support for our understanding that school engagement includes urban youths' affective, behavioural and cognitive responses relates to sense of belonging and involvement in school. A high level of school engagement may be important for building positive values of urban youths. Thus, it would be worthwhile to establish support groups among families where other adults can help urban youths not to engage in unhealthy social activities. Such unhealthy social activities are usually associated with delinquent behaviour. It would also be useful to strengthen close contact with teachers in order to encourage urban youths to actively engage in learning. We suggest that schools, as well as communities, should pay particular attention to the social context of urban youth learning. We suggest that the teachers and the communities create supportive social relationships between parents-urban youths and should encourage parents to provide support at home.

The importance of family involvement in school activities should be led by a national agenda aimed at promoting school-family partnerships, parent education, and parenting programme. The Ministry of Education, Malaysia for instance should encourage family involvement in school activities by implementing more intervention programmes to increase urban youth school engagement. Studies in the United States, for instance, have shown that parents play a significant role in promoting

school engagement through parent-school involvement, such as monitoring the completion of homework (Stormshak, Fosco, & Dishion, 2010).

The present study contributes to our growing understanding of the contribution school engagement mediate the relationship between support and positive values. Our findings are consistent with the idea that support from parents, other adults, positive family communication, caring neighbours, and school caring climate help youths to attain their potential, which, in turn, enhances their positive values. Our study was conducted among urban youths at public housing which is identified as a low-income urban environment. The challenges facing urban youths are real and pervasive. In developing further understanding about supportive relationships, the relationship of adults-urban youths, as a potential source of support, is an important factor for researchers, educators and policy makers. This can be done by treating urban youths as equal partners where roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated. Thus, future research should explore whether different sources of support and positive identity are related to positive values.

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