

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AMONG B40 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH**

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**Abstract:** Adolescents have historically been viewed as issues to be fixed and troublesome because to the idea of "storm and stress". These social perception towards this group has led the youth to be considered at youth to many moral issues, thus, the concept of Positive Youth Development was introduced to further investigate youth development in terms of Competence, Character, Caring, Confidence and Connection. This study aims to investigate the factors in Social Support (Family, Peer and Significant other) towards the Positive Youth Development. To measure this, this research is conducted using quantitative approach by survey method and collected 151 respondents from B40 undergraduates' students in Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Respondents are collected by Convenience Sampling. The Instruments used are Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and Positive Youth Development Inventory. The data was analysed using IBM SPSS version 28.0. Independent Sample T-test was conducted to analysed gender difference in subscale of PYD, One-way ANOVA was analysed to investigate between year of study and PYD, and lastly Pearson's Correlation to investigate relationship between Social Support and PYD. Results shows there is no significant effect of gender and year of study towards PYD but, there is significant effect of social support towards PYD. This finding contributes awareness to the community to enhance family and friend to support as they are the most significant system in the Bronfenbrenner Ecological System Theory (1994) which states that these groups are the closest to the individual. This study provide insight on PYD and possible environmental factors. Further research may conduct this study using qualitative approach to gain in-depth information to understand student's development better.

**Keywords:** Social support, Positive Youth Development, B40, Adolescent, University Students

## **INTRODUCTION**

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a newer movement in the field of working with youth. Positive Youth Development reflects the positive psychology approach. It emphasizes the strengths of youth and the positive qualities and developmental trajectories that are desired for youth. Lerner and her colleagues (2009, 2013) comprises PYD into five (5) main components known as 5Cs which are Competence, Connection, Caring, Character and Confidence. Lerner (2009) also conclude that for youth to develop the 5Cs, they must have access to positive social contexts such as social support from various sources such as family, peers and significant others.

PYD is combined research philosophical and a programmatic approach to supporting healthy, productive, and engaged youth as they mature into adults (Bowers et al., 2010). The PYD approach is based on the belief that adolescents who have more developmental assets are more likely to succeed academically, have better economic opportunities, be more civically engaged, and be healthier in the long run.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia. The incidence of absolute poverty by state shows that Sabah recorded the highest percentage of 25.3 per cent (2019: 19.5%). Overall, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the household income and subsequently affected the structure of household groups.

Social support is a multidimensional concept (Hwang et al., 2009). One of a method to measure social support is by measuring perceived support which evaluate how a person perceives the presence of support from social ties. These perceived social supports consist of different components, it can be emotional, instrumental, financial, or informational that people who are involved in supportive social relationships experience benefits in terms of their health, morale, and coping (Reevyl & Maslach, 2001). Besides the type of support, social support can be significantly received from those who are the closest to us such as our family, friends and significant others.

There are very few publications of research on PYD in Malaysia. Some have done however it remains unclear whether PYD is applicable in Malaysian context (Abdul Kadir & Mohd, 2021). Furthermore, most

research in Malaysian does not have empirical research that studies the relationship between Social Support and PYD. Some local research studies PYD and purpose of life, hope and well-being (Abdul Kadir & Mohd, 2021; Mohamad et al., 2014). Similarly, other international publication also study mostly on other variables besides social support towards PYD such as life satisfaction (Shek & Chai, 2020; Sun & Shek, 2011) and depression (Gomez-Baya et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2020).

PYD research has primarily been undertaken in Western nations (Wiiium and Dimitrova, 2019). According to Benson et al. (2006), the role of developmental assets may vary depending on cultural context. As a result, gathering evidence from non-Western contexts is critical. Since Malaysia itself is diverse in its culture, studying the PYD attributes also need to be seen as crucial.

### **Research Objective**

- a) To investigate the significant effect of different gender and subscale of positive youth development among UMS students.
- b) To investigate the significant effect of year of study and positive youth development among UMS students
- c) To investigate the relationship between social support (family, peers and significant others) and positive youth development among B40 undergraduate students in UMS

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a quantitative research approach, the survey method is used in this study The questionnaire will be self-administered by the respondents as the main method of data collection

The sampling method used was Convenience Sampling. The sample was collected based on the respondent's availability to partake in this research (Elfil & Negida, 2017). Researcher distributed the questionnaires through Social Media platforms in the form of Google Form Link, number of sample (151).

There are two (2) instruments used in this study Positive Youth Development Inventory (PYDI) and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). PYDI by (Arnold, M.E., Nott, B. D., & Meinhold, J. L.) in 2012 from Oregon State University in the United States. The PYDI consists of 48 items that are measured on a 4-point Likert Scale

with a score from 1-Strongly Disagree to 4-Strongly Agree. The item is divided into 5 subscales of the 5Cs in PYD; Connectedness, Caring, Confidence, Character and Competence.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley (1988) to measure perceived social support. The MSPSS contains 12 items in which each item is measured on 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1-Very Strongly Disagree to 7-Very Strongly Agree. this instrument has already covered three dimensions, Family, Friends, and Significant Others. (Wongpakaran et al., 2011) In the majority of studies, the three-factor MSPSS construct has been found to have good to outstanding internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.81 to 0.98 in non-clinical samples and 0.92 to 0.94 in clinical samples).

The data gathered was analysed using statistical analysis such as descriptive analysis, independent t-test, One-Way ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation. The mean value, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage in the descriptive analysis were used to analyse the demographic factor. An Independent t-test is used to examine two unrelated sets of measurements (Samuels & Gilchrist, 2014). Thus, in this study, an Independent t-test is used to investigate the effect of gender and PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS. One-way ANOVA is used to determine whether a continuous dependent variable's means for two or more groups are different (Jackson, 2020), One-way ANOVA is analysed to investigate the effect of year of study and PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS. lastly, Person's correlation is used to study the relationship between two continuous variables and to quantify the strength and direction of the relationship (McCormick & Salcedo, 2015), thus, this analysis is in this study to identify the relationship between social support and PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS. the significant values of these analyses will be used to test the hypotheses, respectively.

## **RESULTS**

Results comprise descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics can be shown in the table below.

Table 1.1: descriptive statistics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Gender</b>			1.63	0.48
Male	56	37.1		
Female	95	62.9		
<b>Age</b>			3.23	1.03
20	9	6		
21	26	17.2		
22	50	33.1		
23	56	37.1		
24	8	5.3		
25	2	1.3		
<b>Year of Study</b>			2.44	0.87
1	29	19.2		
2	35	23.2		
3	78	51.7		
4	9	6.0		
<b>Ethnicity</b>			2.97	1.64
Malay	55	36.4		
Chinese	6	4.0		
Indian	4	2.6		
Bumiputera Sabah	68	45.0		
Bumiputera Sarawak	10	6.6		
Others	8	5.3		
<b>Faculty</b>			2.34	1.78
Psychology and Education	77	51.0		
Social Science and Humanities	23	15.2		
Business, Economics and Accounting	16	10.6		
Science and Natural Resources	17	11.3		
Engineering	14	9.3		
Computing and Informatics	2	1.3		
Food Science and Nutrition	2	1.3		

Based on Table 1.1 above, describes that the percentage of male respondents is 25.8% less than the percentage of females with an amount of 56 male students and 95 female students. Furthermore, the year of study part shows that most of the students are third-year or final-year students with a staggering amount of 78 responses (51.7%), followed by the second year (23.2%), first-year 19.2 and lastly fourth year with only 9 responses (6%). Moreover, the majority of the participant’s ethnicity is the Bumiputera Sabah with a total of 68 (45%), which is almost half the sample size. Then it is followed by Malay with 55 (36.4%), then dropped significantly with less than 20% that consists of Bumiputera Sarawak (6.6%), Others (5.3%), Chinese (4%), and lastly Indian with only 2.6% of the total participant. Out of 8 faculties ( $M= 2.34, SD=1.78$ ) in UMS, the Faculty of Psychology and Education seems to be most of the responses,

with half of the respondents from this faculty (51%). This is then followed by the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, which is 4.6% more than the Faculty of Business, Economics, and Accounting, making it the third on the list. Furthermore, the report from table 3.1 also shows the response from the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources (11.3%) and the Faculty of Engineering (9.3%). Lastly, the least similar number of respondents are from the Faculty of Computing and Informatics (1.3%) and Faculty of Nutrition and Food Science (1.3%) with only 2 responses from each faculty.

Table 1.2: Independent t-test on the Analysis of Gender and PYD subscale

Variable	Male		Female		t-value	Sig.
N						
PYD	M	SD	M	SD		
Competence	44.77	6.64	44.76	6.10	.009	.224
Character	30.04	4.22	30.88	3.70	-1.28	.212
Connection	25.04	4.44	24.97	4.05	.095	.816
Caring	25.77	4.28	27.46	3.68	-2.57	.329
Confidence	27.91	5.02	28.22	4.25	-.40	.387
Total	153.52	22.24	156.28	18.14	-.831	.090

Based on table 1.2 above, each subscale is not significant with the effect of gender in which  $p > .05$ . To enumerate, for Competence components of PYD, with almost no difference in Male ( $M=44.77$ ,  $SD=6.64$ ) and Female ( $M=44.76$ ,  $SD=6.10$ ) conditions  $t(149) = .009$ ,  $p > .05$ . Competence component of PYD is not significant from gender difference. Similarly, Connection shows an likeness between Male ( $M=25.04$ ,  $SD=4.22$ ) and Female ( $M=24.97$ ,  $SD=4.05$ ) conditions  $t(149) = .095$ ,  $p > .05$ . Hence, this also reports that Connections is not affected by gender. Moreover, the report also shows for Character where Male ( $M=30.04$ ,  $SD=4.22$ ) and Female ( $M=30.88$ ,  $SD=3.70$ ) conditions  $t(149) = -1.28$ ,  $p > .05$ , thus, this determines that Character is also not influenced by gender. Moving on, the Caring subscale is also similarity the previous subscale in which Male ( $M=25.77$ ,  $SD=4.28$ ) Female ( $M=27.46$ ,  $SD=3.68$ ) conditions  $t(149) = -2.57$ ,  $p > .05$ ; accordingly, there is no significant effect of gender towards the Caring subscale of PYD. Lastly, it is also reported that the Confidence subscale of PYD, Male ( $M=27.91$ ,  $SD=5.02$ ) Female ( $M=28.22$ ,  $SD=4.25$ )

conditions  $t(149) = -.04, p > .05$ . Therefore, this result shows no significant effect of gender towards this subscale.

From the report, this can be concluded that the first null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) of this study is accepted indicating that there is no significant effect of gender on subscales of PYD among B40 undergraduate UMS students.

**Table 1.3: One-Way Analysis of Variance of PYD by Year of Study**

	<b>Df</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean Squares</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Group	916.389	3	305.463	.781	.506
Within Group	57494.538	147	391.119		
Total	58410.927	150			

According to Table 1.3, a One-Way analysis of variance was conducted to analyse the relationship of PYD in the context of the year of study among B40 undergraduate UMS students. It is shown in Table 3.3, that  $[(F3,147) = .781, p = .506]$  thus, this null hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is no significant effect towards PYD from years of study among B40 undergraduate students in UMS.

**Table 1.4: Pearson’s Correlation of Social Support and Positive Youth Development among B40 undergraduate Students in UMS**

		<b>Total Score PYDI</b>
Total Score MSPSS	Pearson Correlation	.552**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	151

*Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Pearson’s Correlation was conducted to investigate the third and final hypothesis to investigate the relationship between Social Support and PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS. Table 1.4 shows that the relationship between Social Support and PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS is positively correlated and statistically significant ( $r = .552, p < .01$ ). Thus, this determines that the third hypothesis that states there is no relationship between Social Support and PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS is rejected. Hence, determines that Social support does affect PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS.

## **DISCUSSION**

As a parallel to the hypothesis proposed, the present study concluded that the initial hypothesis shows no significant effect between gender difference and every subscale of PYD among proposed parameters within this research which is the lower end in the societal community in Malaysia that translates directly to the B40 Undergraduate UMS students. This could be further explained that both genders (Male and Female) do not influence any components of PYD which makes it both have similar levels of PYD. In comparison to the previous study concluded that is unlikely to be like the present, it also discovers that different genders are likely to have a different pattern and inconsistency in their findings (Årdal et al., 2017; Gomez-Baya et al., 2022; Rueger et al., 2008). Furthermore, the most prominent result that shows a consistent pattern within the female category seems in the score of Caring, Character, and Connection. On the other hand, the male's category scores predominantly for Competence and Confidence for the components of PYD (Conway et al., 2015; Gomez-Baya et al., 2022; Gomez-Baya et al., 2021; Gomez-Baya et al., 2019).

However, to put it from a different point of view, some studies did find a solid reason for how gender differences have an influence on PYD components. For example, in a study conducted within the Spanish community, young women reported greater connection, which was related to their greater empowerment, boundaries, and expectations, including social competencies; (Gomez-Baya et al., 2021). According to Shakya et al. (2019), while some sex-specific disparities in developmental outcomes are socially influenced by gender norms, others are caused by biological causes.

Realistically, that research was influenced by outside factors such as the difference in terms of societal culture and norms. This also includes but is not limited to differences in gender role plays within the scope of the researched community which significantly influenced the outcomes of the study conducted. Meanwhile, current research covered a different aspect of the community which is primarily focused on the UMS student that is in Sabah. Different scopes of parameters of this research have produced different outcomes for this research.

The findings of the current study showed that there is no significant effect of years of study on PYD among B40 undergraduate students. This can simply mean that any year of study from Year 1 to Year 4 of the students



in UMS will not have any significant difference in their PYD attributes. With the result of this hypothesis, this finding could not predict through the theoretical approach by Bronfenbrenner Ecological system theory at the Chronosystem level. Because presumably, it could immediately assume that the final year could have a more prominent level of PYD attributes. This notion aligns that having more Connection components of PYD such that they could have a wide circle of friends, a much more caring circle, and feeling connected to their friends and lecturers. With the fifth level of the Ecological System theory in mind, it could explain how over time, they should have a higher level of PYD attributes.

From the current study, the third hypothesis is shown that there is a significant effect on the relationship between social support and PYD among B40 undergraduate students in UMS. With a positive correlation between the two variables. This result shows that it supports the Literature review that was discussed in the earlier chapter stating how social support is connected to PYD.

In addition to that, it can be discussed in much more detail how some other factors that are affected by social support, are also affecting the components of PYD. This is due to numerous adaptive psychosocial health outcomes have been linked to social support (Yıldırım & Çelik Tanrıverdi, 2020). Empirical Evidence suggests that social support improves resilience (Ozbay et al., 2007), hope (Yadav, 2010), life satisfaction (Ergh, Hanks, Rapport, & Coleman, 2003), well-being and quality of life (Castellá Sarriera, Bedin, Tiago Calza, & Casas, 2015; Bennett et al., 2001), and a variety of mental health symptoms like anxiety and depression (Henry et al., 2019). Besides that, strong social support has been demonstrated to play a significant role in reducing functional impairment in depressed patients (Travis et al., 2004).

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the researcher is very pleased to know that social support may affect the positive development among these low-income groups of students. Being at bottom of the economic society would be very tough for anyone to endure. Hence, knowing that social support factors them with a constructive future also opens a door for other parties to do the least they could do to communicate and understand them.

Contributing to many parties, just from this research is the least the researcher could do to help and further develop a more positive environment. That depends on how the youth in today's generation will change it for the future. Besides that, other academic contributions can be presented in this study such as theoretical explanation.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

I am aware that my participation is entirely optional and that I can stop at any moment, for any reason, and without incurring any fees. I am aware that a copy of this consent form will be provided to me. I freely consent to participate in this study.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The researcher declares no conflict of interest

### **Ethics Statement**

All procedures utilized during this study that involved using human participants were carried out in compliance with the institutional research committee's ethical guidelines. All participants gave their informed consent.

### **Author Contributions**

Muhamad Adam Mahamarowi contributes for the most part of the research which includes the based concept of the variables, research methodology, data acquisition, data analysis and interpretation. Norsimah Dasan is the supervisor for this study which provides guidance for the authors to proceed with this research.

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