PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND GLOBAL SELF-WORTH IN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine whether adolescents' global self-worth can be predicted through perceived social support from the parents, peers, and teachers. A self-report survey was administrated to a group of adolescents (N=100) with age ranging from 13 to 18 years; selected using the purposive sampling technique. Two scales were used for data collection: the Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescent (SSSCA) and Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA), developed by Harter (2012). Multiple Regressions predicting adolescents' global self-worth from perceived social support (parents, peers and teachers) were conducted. The results indicated that the combination of perceived social support significantly predicted the adolescents' global self-worth, F (3, 96) = 5.97, p < 0.01. Surprisingly, the finding revealed that increased social support from peers predicted improved global self-worth, (β = .322, p < 0.01), whilst there was no significant contribution from the parents and teachers support towards global self-worth among adolescents. Results are discussed with respect to potential mechanisms through which social support and global self-worth may operate. The implications of the study and recommendation for future research are presented.

Keywords: *global self-worth; parent support; peers support; teacher support*

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the term global self-worth, specifically pertaining to the adolescents' overall evaluation of general happiness and satisfaction becomes extremely important for the adolescents. Global self-worth or self-esteem is the evaluation of how much a person likes oneself, is happy with the way one is leading one's life and is generally happy with the way he or she is (Harter, 1999). Thus, it constitutes the general perception of one's self which is similar to the Rosenberg's (1979) notion of self-esteem. These two categories of self-evaluations can be coexisting. However, the term global self-worth is more appropriate and specific for the adolescent between the ages of 13 to 18 years (Harter, 2012).

During the period of adolescence, teenagers are extremely preoccupied with the need to be viewed positively by their significant others; personal and moral values appear to be the key themes in their self-concept (Berk, 1993). Cooley (1902) emphasized the importance of social support as one of the determinants of self-esteem, establishing a congenial relationship with significant others such as parents, peers, and teachers (Hoffman, Ushpiz, & Levy-Shifp, 1988). Several researchers suggested that the adolescents' ability to go above and beyond their self-esteem or self-worth is related to their teachers' expectation (Kuklinski & Weinstein, 2001), parent attachment (Moula, 2010), or peer relationship (Adeyemo & Torubeli, 2008). However, one of the most persistent confrontations among the previous findings is the inconsistencies of the interaction between social support (such as parents, peers, and teachers support) and global self-worth among adolescents (Dong, Liu, & Ding, 2012; Wo, Lin, Ma, & Li, 2001; Asma, Shahin, & Taghi, 2013).

Additionally, prior research works have shown that social support is strongly correlated with academic and social competence and an important predictor of social function in adolescence (Mahon, Yarcheski, Yarcheski, Cannella, & Hanks, 2006). More specifically, social support from parents, peers, and teachers

is positively correlated with the risk of socialization (Lasgaard, Nielsen, Eriksen, & Goosens, 2010), and reduced the level of emotional disturbance (Masi, Chen, Hawkley, & Cacioppo, 2011). Based on these arguments, the impact of social support towards adolescents' global self-worth is an important research area, in which the researcher indicated that all three sources of support (parent, peer, and teacher support) are vital in adolescents' global self-worth (Shiu, 2001). Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the impact of social support and global self-worth among adolescents.

Objective and Hypothesis of the Study

The objective of the present study aims to identify if the adolescent's global self-worth can be predicted better through perceived social support from parents, peers, and teachers. We also hypothesized that positive perceived social support from parents, peers, and teachers will increase adolescents' global self-worth, and assume that the more positive social support that perceived by adolescents, the higher the level of global self-worth among adolescents.

METHOD

Research Design

A quantitative self-report survey was conducted among adolescents using the purposive sampling. Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescent (SSSCA) and Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) were employed during data collection.

Participants

A total of 100 adolescents consisting of 60 female and 40 male, age 13 to 18 years old ($M = 15.70$, $SD=1.22$) from a public high school at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah were involved in this study. Students were randomly chosen from different grade with a different family background. The majority of participants described their ethnic as Chinese (80.7%), Bumiputera Sabah (18.2%), and Malay (1.1%).

Instruments

A set of self-administration questionnaire consisted of Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescent (SSSCA: Harter, 2012) and Revised Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA-R: Harter, 2012) was used in this study.

The content validation for both instruments was verified by two experts from the field of psychology using the Back-Translation (Brislin, 1970).

First, the SSSCA scale is used to assess the perceived parents support, peers support, and teachers support that manifest toward the self. This scale is also used to identify forms of social support which would best predict one's sense of global self-worth as a person. A total of 18 items was used in SSSCA scale, and each subscale has 6 items which were rated 1 (least support) to 4 (most support). The internal consistency analyzed by Cronbach Alpha value .748.

Second, the SPPA-R scale consists of 6 subscales; only the subscale of global self-worth with 5 items was included in the present study. All items are scored on a 4-point scale, with subscales scores ranging from 1 to 4, where a score of 1 represents the lowest level of global self-worth and a score of 4 represents the highest level of global self-worth. This subscale is used to evaluate how much one like oneself as a person and how happy one is with the way one is leading one's life. This subscale is similar to Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, but the wording is more appropriate for the adolescents (Harter, 2012). The internal consistency analyzed by Cronbach Alpha value was .722.

Procedure

The hard copies of the questionnaires were distributed and the informed consent forms were collected. This survey was administered in a classroom, and it takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the measures. All the participants were inducted voluntarily and they were properly briefed about the scope of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were addressed accordingly.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by simultaneous multiple regression and statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 22.0. An alpha level of .05 and .01 was used for all statistical analysis.

RESULTS

A Standard Multiple Regression was con-

ducted to determine the best linear combination of the perceived social support for predicting the global self-worth. The result in Table 1 revealed that the model which includes parent support, peer support, and teacher support explained 15.7% of the total variances in the global self-worth, F (3, 96) = 5.97, p < 0.01. Of these three variables, only the social support from peers makes the largest significant contribution (β = .322, p < 0.01). Whereas, there are no significant influences of parent support (β = .057, p < 0.05) and teacher support (β = .156, p > 0.05) toward global self-worth among adolescents.

Table 1. Regression analysis of social support towards global self-worth

Social Support	Self-Worth				
	R^2	F	β	t	Sig.
Model	.157	5.97			.001**
Parent			.051	.464	.644
Peer			.322	3.369	.001**
Teacher			.156	1.463	.152

*p<.05, **p<.01

DISCUSSION

Peer Support
The present study aims to examine the best linear combination of perceived social support towards global self-worth among adolescents. Several interesting findings were discovered. First, the participants reported their global self-worth is significantly influenced by peer support. The finding is consistent with previous studies (Ebru & Cakar, 2010; Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, & Pohlert, 2004) that adolescents who perceived a higher social support from peers tend to pose a higher global self-worth. This result also indicates that peer support plays a crucial role in the adolescents' development in which teenagers tend to build good relationships with peers and often seek help from them (Parada, Craven & Marsh, 2008). Thus, positive peer supports serve as an important role in adolescents' school adjustment and positive self-esteem (Ellis, Marsh & Craven, 2009).

According to Cochran (2009), the frequency of peer social support is most positively correlated with adolescents' self-concept which is consistent with prior research that peer support is the most important predictor of self-worth, scholastic competence, athletic competence, and physical appearance self-concept (Demaray & Malecki, 2003). The findings of Cochran (2009) also showed that the relationship between peer support and social self-concept were stronger than the relationship between close friend social support and the social self-concept. Additionally, students often encounter difficulties in the classroom and need help. They often turn to peers for help when they encounter academic or social problems as their peers are able to provide valuable academic and social support as compared to parent and teacher support (Altermatt, 2007). Although seeking help from a teacher is associated with desirable learning and adjustment outcomes (Karabenick & Newman, 2006), but seeking help from peers has received more attention (Kiefer & Shim, 2016).

Parent support
On the other hand, the result showed that there is no significant effect of parent support on global self-worth. Although the previous study indicated that parents and peers are both important providers of social support (Ebru & Cakar, 2010). But, in this study, peer support has been found to buffer the influence of parent support on adolescent global self-worth. Therefore, it can be said that adolescents obtain different aspects of social support from different types of relationships, and when one relationship is lacking in social support, other relationships become increasingly important resources (Gaertner, Fite & Colder, 2010).

Although the previous study suggested that a high quality of parent support are positively related to increased self-esteem in adolescence regardless of gender differences (Ebru & Cakar, 2010); however, the result of the present study showed no significant influence of parent support towards global self-worth. Findings indicate that this might be due to the impact of different family backgrounds such as family income and parent-child relationship as the financial resources and parental support may help buffer some of the negative experiences encountered by adolescents (Jones, 2012). Moreover, previous studies also showed inconsistencies of the relationship between social support and self-esteem among adolescents (Dong et al., 2012; Wo et al., 2001; Asma et al., 2013).

Teacher Support
The results of this study also found that there is no statistically significant influence of teacher support in the prediction of adolescents' global self-worth. The previous study by Galanaki and Vassilopoulou (2007) revealed that teachers were often transferred to different schools, and thus it is common for the students to perceived low teachers support. Because teacher-students relationship tends to be unstable than peer relationship, thus peer support is more prominent and more likely than teachers to contribute towards global self-worth (Zhang, Gao, Fokkema, Alterman, & Liu, 2015). Furthermore, some researchers found that school belongingness also has positive effects on the well-being and general development of adolescents (Bonny, 2000; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Cohen, 2010). For example, the presences of positive school belongingness help to increase a higher level of self-esteem. Cohen (2009) also suggested that teachers support is associated with students' perceived of school belongingness which in turn resulting in their own self-esteem.

Therefore, it can be said that students who feel less sense of school belonging tend to have less perceptions of teacher support and they are more likely to perform poorly in academic and have a lower perception of self-worth (Stracuzzi & Mills, 2010). It is important for schools to reach out to the minority of students who feel disconnected from their school. Stracuzzi and Mills (2010) also suggested that teachers are one of the most important factors in promoting a positive sense of school belongingness through encouragement and communication with students and parents. Additionally, Demaray and Malecki (2002b) also found that teachers support is not positively associated with adolescents' self-concept, especially in terms of academic competence. Whereas, both family support and peers support are positively associated with adolescents' social development (Demaray & Malecki, 2002b).

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The present study provides some important theoretical implications. Similar to prior studies, this study found that only peers' support is the best predictor of adolescent's global self-worth (Zhang et al., 2015). However, previous studies only examined the roles of social support in the prediction of adolescents' global self-worth in the school setting, which is important to adolescent's development and overall well-being.

This study extends the current knowledge and theories by dividing the social support from significant others into three main sources (parents, peers, and teachers). The result of this study suggests that each of these three main sources of social support linked to global self-worth differently. The diverse associations between the main social supports with global self-worth indicate that peer relationships are more reciprocal in the school context, and thus, social support from peers is expected to be a strong predictor to global self-worth compared with the parents and teachers' supports.

The findings of this study also show important practical intervention implications in improving the adolescents' global self-worth in the school context. From a practical standpoint, it is important to understand the potential links between perceived social support and global self-worth among adolescents. Therefore, the findings suggest different measures should be taken to assess global self-worth, especially those items or wording that is more appropriate for adolescents. From an intervention standpoint, this study suggests the importance of improving the social support of significant others to adolescents, especially in terms of global

self-worth. The results may suggest peers support is positively associated with the teenagers in providing academic and social support in the school setting.

However, parents and teachers support should be encouraged further as they may be equally effective in improving the adolescents' global self-worth by becoming more understanding, caring, and providing guidance to their children. Additionally, educators may benefit from the results of the study when considering planning additional programs for adolescents to interact with classmates and improve their overall self-concept (Cochran, 2009). Future research should explore different aspects of social support and examine their contribution to the psychological well-being of the adolescents. More research on the topic of social interaction during adolescence and the importance of social support in promoting developmental adjustment and global self-worth in adolescence are necessary.

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