

ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY IN IMPROVING THE LIVES OF YOUTH IN PUBLIC HOUSING

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Abstract

Purpose of Study: Having a sense of hope and aspirations for the future are often conceptualized as components of resilience for youth in urban environments. However, less is known about the factors that may influence how young people develop their future aspirations, and how those aspirations may impact their actions in achieving their goals. This study is a conceptual paper to identify the factors that influence the youth future aspirations and how self-efficacy acts as a moderator. Self-efficacy being defined by Albert Bandura as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. Through preliminary studies conducted by informal interviews with youth in four (4) PPR in Kuala Lumpur it was found that the youths in the PPR are divided into 3 segments firstly the illiterate youth, secondly literate youth with a few years of formal schooling and third group of youth who completed their formal schooling. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a theoretical framework we hope to identify factors that contribute towards the youth future aspirations.

Methodology: In this paper, literature relating to the development and characteristics of youth in public housing, self-efficacy, and factors that influence the youth future aspirations are reviewed to ascertain if any relationship exists between them.

Results: A conceptual framework is developed to propose the relationship between success factors as the independent variables and youth future aspirations as the dependent variable, with self-efficacy as the moderator. This study identified success factors that could influence the future aspirations of youth in public housing in Malaysia. We propose a model for developing youths' future aspirations.

Keywords: Youth, Self-efficacy, Public housing, Project Perumahan Rakyat.

INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy refers to one's beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to achieve given results. In the 1994 Encyclopaedia of Human Behaviour, Bandura emphasized that "self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (p.71). Nonetheless, in Malaysia youths has been defined as those who are between 15 and 30 years of age in a new policy replacing the former policy that categorised the youth as those between 15 and 40. The changes made from the former policy are to ensure that the definition of the Malaysian youth was in accordance with international standards (Malaysiakini.com). Self-efficacy in youths helps empower an individual's belief in their innate ability to achieve goals. It functions as a multilevel and multifaceted set of beliefs that influence emotions, thinking, motivate themselves, and act during various tasks. Self-efficacy beliefs are learnt by enactive attainment, vicarious experience, imaginal experiences, and social persuasion as well as physical and emotional states. These beliefs are arbitrated by cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes to produce actual performance. Self-efficacy development is closely intertwined with a person's experiences, competencies, and developmental tasks in different domains at different stages in life. Moreover, there are certain factors that might influence how youths develop their future aspirations which may lead to their actions in achieving their goals. In this urban environments, young people especially those who comes from lower-income population are somehow affected academically and socially with the rapid urbanization of the cities. In Kuala Lumpur, public housing is an alternative given to people from lower-income group to own a house.

People's Housing Project (Program Perumahan Rakyat or PPR) are low cost high rise flats developed by the National Housing Department (Jabatan Perumahan Negara or JPN) in Kuala Lumpur since 1998. Public low cost housing units are subsidized between 30 to 70% of the total construction cost by government. According to the ninth Malaysia plan, Public Low Cost housing represented approximately 192,000 units (31%) of Malaysian's annual housing target between 2001 and 2005. PAKR is one of government programs to alleviate poverty in the country as an effort to improve the quality of life among the low income families in order to provide its citizens with adequate, affordable and quality housing has committed billions of dollars for the sole purpose. It is funded by the government which government state identifies the appropriate sites to implement to implement the project. By using bottom top approach, allocation for number of low cost houses needed in a state is determined by the state government themselves. The 'Zero Squatter by 2005' policy was implemented in the whole Malaysia in 1996. Due to economic recession in the late 1997, a four-tier pricing system on PPR schemes in cities and major town for resettlement of squatters has been implemented. This is to ensure its citizens which comes from lower income groups are able to continue enjoying the benefits of adequate, affordable and quality housing.

Table 1: The features of housing offered under the public housing programs (KPKT, 2002)

HOUSING PROGRAM	MONTHLY INCOME LEVEL PER HOUSEHOLD (Gorman)	DWELLING TYPE	SIZE OF DWELLING (MIN AREA)	SPACES PROVIDED	OTHER CRITERIA
PAKR Program	Below 1,500	5 storey Apartment in towns terrace or detached house insuburd	60 meter square (650 Square feet)	3 Bedroom 1 living space 1 kitchen 1 bathroom 1 toilet	
PPR [Integrated] Program 1998	Squatters with Income Below 1,500	11-16 o16 –18 storey apartment in urban centres 5 storey apartment in small cities	60 meter square (650 Square feet)	3 Bedroom 1 living space 1 kitchen 1 bathroom 1 toilet	Rent at RM 124 a month
PPR (New Policy) 2002 :					
1. OWNED	Refer to National Housing Standard CIS 1 : 1998 and CIS 2 : 1998				
2. RENTED					

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Characteristics of Youths

According to studies done by [Chantal and Gallagher \(2013\)](#) youths growing up in low-income housing tend to face difficulties at school as well as in the community that they live in. Violence is part of their daily life and this is a reason why many are involved in delinquent behaviors and tend to drop out from school.

Based on the Housing Opportunity & Services Together (HOST) framework developed by [Popkin and McDaniel \(2013\)](#) it concludes that by assisting the needs of vulnerable families will actually reduce the cost of housing maintenance and significantly improve the lives of residents in the housing area. The environment will be cleaner, more orderly, and will cost less to maintain [Bin-Zainudin et al. \(2018\)](#). Crime rate and disorder will be reduced when families have a clearer vision and are looking for a better future. This is an important step to take, as the survey shows that older HOST youth are already showing signs of dropping out of school and the younger ones will probably face the same situation in the future. When vulnerable families are empowered, positive changes will definitely be the result.

Another way to improve the lives for the next generation of HOST youth is ensuring that they stay in school by providing them with the services that they need. According to [Fredericks et al. \(2004\)](#) it is of vital importance to maintain the youths' interest in school by ensuring that their homework is done and that they are involved in school activities. These are ways to ensure that they are motivated to achieve academic excellence. When these youths are motivated and see their path out of the rut that they are in things will change for the better drastically [Ozkurt and Alpay \(2018\)](#). Schools need to find the core of the problem and find ways to overcome it. Assistance may be in the form of free lunches, counselling or financial assistance.

[Gee and Payne-Sturges \(2004\)](#) and [Williams and Collins \(2001\)](#) works suggest that a large number of youths in America are growing in communities which are deprived of many basic needs, such as the right resources and opportunities, and in this way the gap between race and economy is even wider now. Housing areas are segregated between the haves and the have nots. These youths from poorer areas also do not have access to health programs or quality after school programs. These conditions result in poor physical, mental and academic achievements. ([Burchinal et al., 2011](#)) These are recipes for disaster. These factors have led many marginalized communities to be more self-reliant and to focus on internal resources.

Research done by [Gee and Payne-Sturges \(2004\)](#) and [Delgado and Staples \(2008\)](#) indicate the importance of relationships within the community (residents), social links, and empowerment of the community which can actually help to lessen problems within the community. [Makuwira \(2007\)](#) states that community organizations, such as resident associations or committees, are considered the most appropriate to champion this effort as they can ensure community participation which will enable to improve the relationship within the community as well as improving skills and knowledge of the youths/residents. More and more youths are now helming these organization which originally was led by adults. The important role of youths in these organizations are becoming apparent. Youth are now perceived are leaders and motivators and no longer as social delinquents but assets that can be a catalyst for change.

Thus, these forms of organization helmed by youths are rapidly increasing in America (Ginwright, 2010; Onyinye *et al.*, 2018) and these programs organized by them offers various kinds of training for the youth, such as community or organizing leadership, which aims to propel positive change in the community. These programs will enable youths to identify critical issues and will then be able to engage in problem solving activities such as campaigns or workshops to address the issues.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow suggested over seven decades ago that humans are driven and motivated by their own inner needs to survive, to feel secure, to feel loved and belonged and to achieve self-esteem. He submitted "A Theory of Human Motivation" in 1943. The theory became widely accepted across many disciplines and is still recognized and used to this day. Social scientists over the years have realized that social actions cannot be explained without understanding human motivations (Abulof, 2017).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has been applied effectively in various populations specifically people struggling with homelessness, children in crisis and refugees (Lonn and Dantzler, 2017). According to Brady-Amoon (2012) Maslow's Theory of hierarchy of needs is effective in a humanistic counseling approach. The humanistic principles of the theory maximize an individual's own potential within one's own experience. Thus, a humanistic counselling approach using the theory could be appropriate in dealing with youths in public housing.

Maslow's Theory of Needs is universal and flexible that it has not only been applied in business and social science but also adapted in hospice and palliative care. Zalenski and Raspa (2006) used Maslow's Theory of Needs in a framework designed for achieving human potential. It is used to support the goals of patients and families during the last phase of life through identifying the five levels of patients' needs i.e. (1) pain, fears for physical safety, (3) affection, love and acceptance (4) esteem, respect and appreciation (5) self -actualization and transcendence.

Maslow's work addressed human motivation with regards to meeting goals and fulfilling needs. (Lonn and Dantzler, 2017). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is commonly seen as a pyramid of five layers where each layer is represented by a level of needs that need to be satisfied before ascending to the next level. However In his later works, Maslow has included a sixth level to the pyramid. The six levels of needs, starting from the bottom, are physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, self-actualization and self-transcendence (Maslow, 1943;1971). The different levels of needs are arranged in ascending order from lower basic human needs to highest where a person seeks fulfilment of personal potential. According to Maslow, human needs are hierarchical which means that an unsatisfied lower level needs dominate one's thinking and actions until it is satisfied. Once a lower level needs are satisfied, then the next level of needs will be pursued. Several authors have proposed updates to Maslow's framework such as overlapping tiers instead of distinct levels of needs (Gorman, 2010; Kenrick *et al.*, 2010) and linking higher order needs to culture (Gorman, 2010).

Table 2: A Rectified Version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs by Koltko -Rivera, 2006) as cited by Venter and Venter (2010)

Motivational Level	Description of person at this level
Self-transcendence	Seeks to further a cause beyond the self and to experience a communion beyond the boundaries of the self
Self-actualization	Seeks fulfillment of personal potential
Esteem needs	Seeks esteem through recognition of achievement
Belongingness and love needs	Seeks affiliation with a group
Safety needs	Seeks security through order and law
Physiological (survival) needs	Seeks to obtain the basic necessities of life

Self-efficacy

How people perceive their own effectiveness, skill and ability to affect change is referred as self-efficacy. Generally, it is considered as how the individual perceives how easy or hard it is to achieve a certain behaviour which involves experience and obstacles encountered in the process or assessment of a situation (Wijaya, 2008). It can influence a person's action, choice, effort, perseverance, resilience and thoughts – whether they are self-hindering or self-aiding (Bandura, 1988; Bandura and Wood, 1989; Chen *et al.*, 2004). Those who possess high self-efficacy will not see challenges as obstacles but as something to be learned as mastered, will not give up when faced with failures or setbacks and will likely set more challenging goals for themselves (Bandura, 1995). They will not be hampered by negative feedback, but instead take it in a positive way to improve their performance (Alam *et al.*, 2015). Self-efficacy is similar to self-confidence (Wilson *et al.*, 2007) it examines the concept of self-evaluation that goes beyond self-esteem (Brown, 2011). A person with low self-efficacy on the other hand, believes that he or she lacks the capabilities to effectively perform certain tasks (Aviram, 2006).

A number of researchers have identified dimensions of self-efficacy. These include the ability to solve problems, make decisions, manage finance, be creative, be persuasive, and to lead (Wilson *et al.*, 2007; Ayodele, 2013) be confident, have souls leadership, and have a mental maturity (Sarwoko, 2011). Similar self-efficacy concepts used in various other studies

include personal agency beliefs, personal efficacy, capacity beliefs and perceived competence (Mitchell and Daniels, 2003). Various studies have identified two different ways of applying the self-efficacy concept, which are task self-efficacy and coping self-efficacy. Task self-efficacy refers to the perceived ability to perform a particular behaviour, while coping self-efficacy refers to the perceived ability to prevent, control, or cope with potential difficulties (Cunnien *et al.*, 2009).

Albert Bandura further explained that self-efficacy can influence a person's life as it can affect not only his or her behaviour, but also goals and aspirations, outcome expectation, affective proclivities and opportunities in the social environment. Indeed, self-efficacy is also reportedly linked to academic achievement, healthy lifestyle and the ability to negotiate risk (Gecas, 1989; Bacchini and Magliulo, 2003; Kerpelman *et al.*, 2007; Nebbitt, 2009).

Self-efficacy, unlike personality traits, can be developed (Oyugi, 2015) and the process is not static (Bandura, 1997). The authors asserted that the process is either enhanced or depleted through five primary sources which are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, physiological and affective states, and imaginal experiences. As such, a person's action are based on his or her beliefs rather than the objective truth, and those thoughts are the key to one's level of motivation, affective states and actions (Markman *et al.*, 2002). These beliefs can be developed into a habit that will benefit the person throughout his or her life (Pajares, 2005). Self-efficacy is often developed based on the person's interaction with his or her environment, therefore the social structure's effect on the individual should not be taken lightly (Gecas, 1989). Factors like age, gender, race, and socio-economic can either enable or constrain the development of positive self-efficacy (Brown, 2011). Past studies however have shown mixed results on the relationship between social structures dimensions and self-efficacy. Gecas (1989) found that in terms of gender, males have a higher self-efficacy than females. Looking at both gender and race, Rollins and Valdez (2006) and Tashakkori and Thompson (1991) found that overall white males exhibit the highest self-efficacy. While findings from Buchanan and Selmon (2008) confirmed this, they also found that black females exhibit a higher self-efficacy compared to white females and almost as high as white males. From the results, the authors concluded that gender moderates the relationship between race and self-efficacy. This is echoed by the findings of a study conducted on poor African-American youths which reported that females possess a higher level of self-efficacy than males (Nebbitt, 2009). The study further showed that social factors like social cohesion, maternal support and monitoring, and attitudes towards deviance can also influence self-efficacy. Brown (2011) expanded the study by adding Hispanics to the race category. Her findings showed that Hispanic middle and high school students exhibit the lowest self-efficacy compared to their black and white peers. This result was echoed in a study by Minter and Pritzker (2015), which reported that female youths have a higher Academic Self-efficacy (ASE) than male, and Latino youths have the lowest ASE amongst other races.

Self-efficacy in youths

The development of identity and aspirations for the future are formed during adolescence (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999). It is during this period that youths begin to anticipate the future with regards to work, family, community, and health (Cunnien *et al.*, 2009).

Self-efficacy beliefs are important during the adolescence years because it is during this period youths must believe that their actions can lead to their desired outcome. This belief will provide them the motivation or perseverance in facing difficulties that may arise (Pajares, 2005). This is confirmed in the study conducted by (Minter and Pritzker, 2015) which found that early adolescents displayed a higher rank of academic self-efficacy (ASE) than their older counterparts. In his study into self-efficacy during childhood and adolescence, Pajares (2005) suggested that youths who are confident in their social and academic skills anticipate positive social life and expect to achieve academic success. Those with low confidence will anticipate the opposite – they expect to be socially rejected or academically fail. He went on to say that youths often avoid particular academic, career and life paths not because they lack the capabilities but rather because they lack the confidence in their capabilities. Thus, with early identification, low self-efficacy can be improved so that these youths can be guided to understand their true potentials. According to Pajares, self-efficacy is not just a belief held by the individual but also by a collective such as neighbourhoods, communities, schools and the likes. The schools' sense of collective efficacy for example can exert positive or negative impact on the teachers' and students' own sense of efficacy. He concluded by recommending that parents and teachers nurture the necessary self-beliefs to their children and students so they will continue to succeed in their adult lives.

PROFILE OF YOUTHS IN PROJEK PERUMAHAN RAKYAT (PPR) IN MALAYSIA

The authors have actively participated in social activities with the communities in three PPRs in Kuala Lumpur. Through engagement with the youths, we have identified several issues that commonly occur. Figure 1 illustrates the identified issues. Through the authors' interaction with 2 youths in one of the PPRs - Youth A and Youth B, Youth A was involved in some illegal activities and without intervention from an NGO, he would have spiralled into more dangerous terrain. Youth B on the other hand although coming from the same background wanted to improve his future and entered a skills training college in Kuala Lumpur. However he had to quit due to financial constraints. With encouragement from Youth B and the PPR residents' organization, Youth A finally decided to continue his studies at a skills-based government-funded college in Jitra, Kedah. They were assisted by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to enrol in this college. The fees and accommodation are also provided free by the college. Both youths are doing well. This would suggest that with the

right support and encouragement the youths can develop self-efficacy which in turn help them to view themselves in a positive way. They still have a long way to go but they are now on the right path.

Youths from PPR just need encouragement and support from the right quarters so that they too can create a better future for themselves. The authors believe that due to their disadvantaged background youths in the PPR needs to have self-efficacy developed in them, so that they will realise that your background do not define them but their actions do. The youth from PPR mostly do have support from their parents however their parents do not have the knowledge and capability to assist them. Without help from the key players listed in figure 2, their chance of success will be limited. It is more difficult to work with these youths as for such a long time they have been left to fend for themselves. Frequent engagements and commitment by the key players are a necessary ingredient for success for these youths.

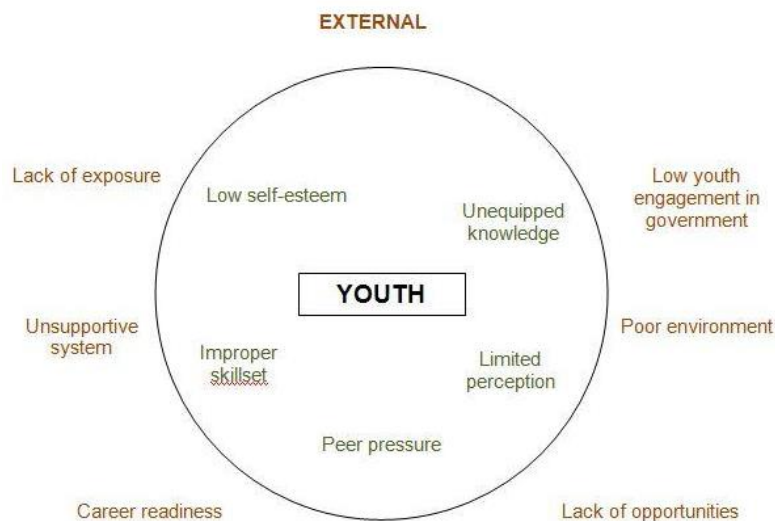


Figure 1: Common issues identified amongst youths in PPR

PROPOSED MODEL FOR YOUTH FUTURE ASPIRATIONS DEVELOPMENT

We therefore propose a model for developing future aspirations in youths. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below. The model begins with the identification of needs as suggested by Koltko –Rivera’s rectified version of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Then, the model identifies key individuals or collectives that take up roles in achieving those needs. We propose that self-efficacy be instilled in the youths via various activities. The final stage of the model is the desired outcome which is a positive future aspiration in youths.

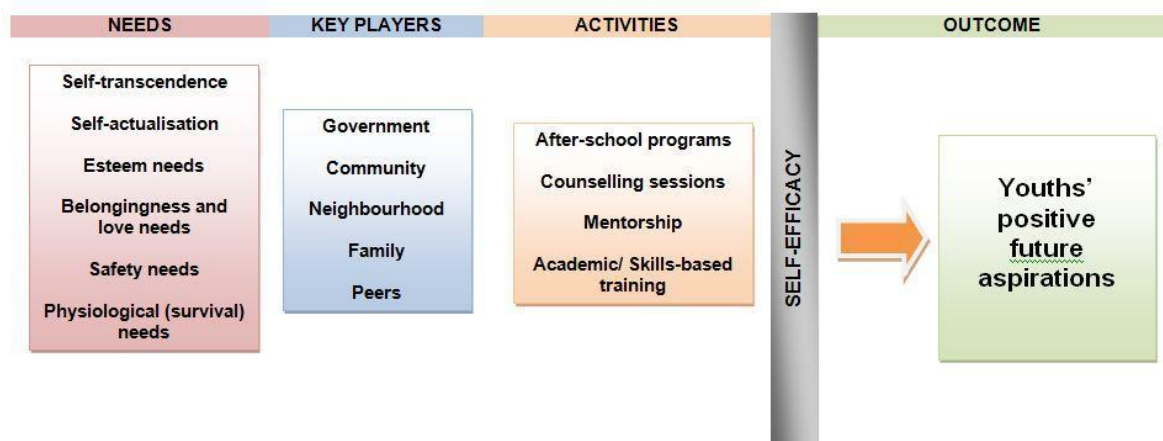


Figure 2: Model of Youth Future Aspirations Development

After school programs will help to guide these school going kids will encourage these students to explore their potential. The counselling sessions will be focused on social and psychological issues. For example an NGO, Puteri Arafiah will assist these youths to deal with social and emotional issues. Mentoring sessions will connect these youth with people who are established in their particular field. These youths need mentors to continuously encourage them to strive for the best. They need to know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and to get there they will never be alone. Through the academic and skills based trainings these youth will be given the right advice and assistance which will allow them to realize their true potential.

The authors' experience with the two youths has confirmed that with the right intervention from key players, self-efficacy can be developed which in turn steered the youths towards a more positive outlook. The feeling of hopelessness has transformed to optimism which encourages the youths to aspire for the future. The authors believe that all these positive reinforcements will be beneficial for these youths to help them exit the vicious poverty cycle.

These efforts should not be a one-off event for it to create a solid impact. For continuity the authors suggest youth centres that act as the place youths can go to get assistance. The centres need to be near and easily accessible, therefore the authors' recommend youth centres to be placed in every PPRs. This is due to the youths' financial constraints and also for their security so that they do not have to travel far. Each youth centre must have one person as a point of reference, assisted by full time staff (admin and management), social workers and volunteers. This will help to create a healthy ecosystem with key players playing their roles in developing youths' future aspirations.

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