

How Social Support Relates to Purpose Commitment and Purpose Exploration Among Chinese Adolescents: The Mediating Roles of Hope and Self-efficacy

Huei-Wen TSAI & Ching-Ling CHENG*

*Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling
National Taiwan Normal University*

While having a purpose in life fosters optimal youth development, the attainment of this purpose would be implausible without appropriate resources. Employing structural equation modeling, this study aimed to understand the relations that purpose development (i.e., purpose commitment and exploration) had with external resources of support from significant others (i.e., family and peers) and internal resources of goal-oriented dispositions (i.e., hope and self-efficacy) among a sample of Chinese adolescents in Taiwan (N = 438). Specifically, this study investigated the double-mediation effect of hope and self-efficacy on the relationships between social support for youth's interest and purpose development. Results revealed that all variables were positively correlated. In addition, direct and indirect paths were found between social support for interest and purpose development. The associations between social support for interest were partially mediated by hope. The roles of social support as well as hope in adolescent purpose development, possible explanations for the insignificant mediating effect of self-efficacy, and practical implications were discussed.

Keywords: adolescent; hope; life purpose; self-efficacy; social support

Introduction

Adolescence is a distinctive period of life in the quest for one's identity (Erikson, 1968).

* Corresponding author: Ching-Ling CHENG (clcheng@ntnu.edu.tw)

Adequately serving this end, purpose works as a self-regulating beacon that navigates adolescents through their inquisitive journey toward identity establishment (Moran, 2009). Besides, purpose is also a vital developmental asset that helps youth thrive for the public good (Benson & Scales, 2009; Seligman, 2002). Youths with a sense of purpose have been found to be associated with presenting more prosocial behaviors (Bronk, Hill, et al., 2009), stronger moral commitments (Damon, 2008), a positive sense of self (Blattner et al., 2013), higher life satisfaction (Bronk & Finch, 2010), longevity (Hill & Turiano, 2014), higher self-efficacy (DeWitz et al., 2009), as well as positive affect and hope (Burrow et al., 2010; Li & Cheng, 2022). On the other hand, the absence of purpose or meaning in life was reported to be linked with depressive symptoms (Mascaro & Rosen, 2005). In short, purpose gives people a sense of meaning in life, which is crucial to human function across cultures (Steger et al., 2008).

Having a purpose of life is by no means an easy task; various resources and support consistent with the need are critical factors that make success possible. Regarding external support, family and peers are usually most available and influential to adolescents (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). As for internal resources, goal- and future-oriented constructs such as hope and self-efficacy have been found to have an impact (Cassidy, 2015; Yarcheski & Mahon, 2016). Therefore, this study aimed to understand how purpose development is intertwined with the support youth perceive from family and peers as well as with self-evaluated hope and self-efficacy. Particular attention was given to whether hope and self-efficacy could serve as potentially mediating paths from social support to purpose development.

Purpose Commitment and Purpose Exploration

Living a life of purpose is a process that involves exploration and commitment. Built on the Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al., 2006), *Identified Purpose* and *Search for Purpose* were two distinguishable but related dimensions that were used to probe into the concept of purpose by Bronk, Hill, et al. (2009). Identified purpose (i.e., *purpose commitment*) refers to the volume of long-term commitment one has toward a specific life goal; search for purpose (i.e., *purpose exploration*) speaks to the volume of spontaneous considerations of different life goals. These two facets of purpose have been validated in many of the studies on purpose, including those with non-Western samples. For instance, Li and Cheng (2022) were successful in clustering purposes into four profiles using the two dimensions. Accordingly, the present study included both dimensions and investigated

respectively their associations with other main variables (i.e., social support, hope, and self-efficacy).

Purpose is a developmental asset that puts one in a favored position of personal positive functioning (e.g., life satisfaction, psychological well-being) and moral commitments (Bronk, 2014). A widely accepted definition of purpose is “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence beyond the self” (Damon, 2008, p. 33). By this, purpose is not only a goal with personal significance but a goal with the inclusion of others into one’s own life (Bronk, Hill, et al., 2009). Empirical studies also evidenced that positive social interactions, such as social support, play a fundamental role in one’s sense of meaning and purpose (Bronk, 2012; Liang et al., 2017).

Purpose and Social Support

Purpose and social support consistent with its effort are the two contributors to one’s personal thriving (Damon, 2008). This statement may be especially true when applied to adolescents. Adolescence is a life period when one starts to explore the question of “Who I am.” Purpose as a form of identity capital is accordingly a critical component to the success of youth development (Burrow & Hill, 2011; Moran, 2009). Additionally, as the path to purpose is never free of challenges, social support from important others would be an indispensable resource for youth development (Arslan, 2021; Malin et al., 2014). Chen et al. (2022) investigated the relationships between purpose and social support and suggested that perceiving social support for youth’s interests encourages them to pursue their purpose in life. Family is without doubt one vital source of support for youth as they pursue their life aims (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004; Wang et al., 2021), but peers also play a crucial part as adolescents spend increasing time with their peers (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). In all, the importance of purpose for adolescents cannot be overstated in adolescents’ flourishing, and fostering this development will require support from both family and peers.

Purpose, Hope, and Self-efficacy

A sense of purpose is a source of self-oriented motive as youths work toward their goals (Yeager et al., 2014); naturally, it is not a surprise to see researchers put the concept of purpose together with goal-related constructs (e.g., Lane & Schutts, 2014; M. X. Zhang, Mou, et al., 2018). Of the constructs pertaining to goal attainment, hope and self-efficacy

have been often put together for scrutiny and have been found to positively relate to each other (e.g., Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Goodman, 2019; Phan, 2013). Furthermore, many of these studies further showed that students with high levels of hope and self-efficacy had the merit to achieve their goals compared to their counterparts.

Hope and its relations to purpose

According to Snyder (1995), hope is defined as “the process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the *motivation* to move toward (agency) and the *ways* to achieve (pathways) those goals” (p. 355, emphasis added). In this dynamic cognitive motivational system, two components (i.e., agency and pathways) contribute to one’s goal attainment in a reciprocal and interrelated manner (Snyder, 2002). That said, hopeful individuals do not just have determination but also strategic ways to reach the desired goal, and lack of either component would not suffice to describe the genuine nature of hope. Moreover, individuals who scored high on hope were reported to fare better than their peers in areas such as well-being (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999; Siu et al., 2021), life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2006; R. Zhang, Ewalds-Kvist, et al., 2019), academics (Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991; Siu et al., 2021), and resilience (Cicek, 2021; Yildirim et al., 2022).

Hope and purpose are companions that work hand in hand (Snyder, 2002). When one has a life goal to hope for, determination and a means to the end are often integral parts of success. Bronk, Hill, et al. (2009) studied the relationships among hope, purpose, and life satisfaction among adolescents and emerging adults. The results suggested that both components of hope (i.e., agency and pathways) were significantly and positively associated with purpose development. Furthermore, having the agentic component of hope is one effective way for a person with a purpose in life to reach higher levels of life satisfaction. That is, young people with a purpose in mind were not only the ones with greater hope, but they also felt more content about their lives when they were hopefully determined to work toward their purpose.

Notably, hope is a product of social commerce and arises especially when one feels securely attached to and supported by important others (Xiang et al., 2020). Yarcheski and Mahon (2016) conducted a meta-analysis on predictors of hope. The study identified 11 predictors and found that social support was one of the five predictors (i.e., positive affect, life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, and social support) that had a large effect size. Otis (2017) was also interested in the role that social support from close relationships played in adolescents’ hope. The results showed that support from parents, peers and teachers all

contributed uniquely to hope in adolescence, of which parents accounted for the largest variation, followed by peers. In sum, past research acknowledges the role hope plays in optimal youth development and how social support makes a difference in one's hope development (Gilman & Huebner, 2006).

Self-efficacy and its relations to purpose

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1994) as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 71). This goal-oriented self-judgment helps increase decisiveness, mobilize effort, and tackle difficulties (Usher & Pajares, 2006). Self-efficacy played a pivotal role in one’s motivation in regard to goal pursuit. McGeown et al. (2014) studied 455 secondary school pupils and examined how their sense of self-efficacy and personality predicted academic motivation. Their findings demonstrated that self-efficacy, compared to personality, was a better predictor of one’s intrinsic academic motivation and accordingly goal attainment. That is, adolescents stand in a favored position with success when they have a stronger I-can-do-it belief, which at the same time indicates stronger motivation to achieve a specified goal.

Self-efficacy not only prepares a ground for a goal to germinate, but also sustains its development toward attainment. Considering self-efficacy as an individual resource for stress coping, the study conducted by Cicognani (2011) evidenced that adolescents with high self-efficacy and social support from family as well as peers were more capable of dealing with minor stressors in life than their counterparts. Besides, they tended to use more active coping strategies such as communicating with others rather than withdrawing from problems, which in turn led to better psychological well-being. The positive association between self-efficacy and mastery goals (Phan, 2013) as well as resilience (Cassidy, 2015) lend support to Cicognani’s results. Taken together, high self-efficacy not only kindles one’s incentive to work toward a goal, it may also be a fundamental source of confidence and positive strength that allows one to overcome obstacles encountered during purpose pursuit.

Self-efficacy is a result of both a personal as well as a collective belief (Pajares, 2006). Usher and Pajares (2006) examined the sources of academic self-efficacy among middle school students and reported that supportive messages from parents and peers best predicted a girl’s academic self-efficacy. Thus, the way one is treated and responded to by significant others seems to make a difference in one’s development of self-efficacy.

Again, similar to hope, such a goal- and future-oriented concept as self-efficacy is related to purpose development. DeWitz et al. (2009) studied the association between self-efficacy and purpose in life among 344 college students. The findings indicated that general self-efficacy positively affected purpose in life and hence the undergraduates' retention. Likewise, Lane and Schutts (2014) conducted path analyses and suggested that an increased self-efficacy in one's talent predicted not only hope and life satisfaction but also life purpose among college students.

The Present Study

In this study, we proposed two models in which social support from family and peers, hope, and self-efficacy were adopted as three predictors of purpose development. Notably, unlike most studies (e.g., Lambert et al., 2010), the construct of social support framed in the present study referred to the support for youth's interests rather than support for emotion. In accordance with the social support required for purpose pursuit suggested by Damon (2008), we argued that the social support specifically for adolescents' interests would be worthy of inspection. As giving attention to and receiving positive feedback on one's interest sets a stage for purpose development (Chen et al., 2022), we probed into the extent to which one perceives support regarding their interests rather than the perception of general support. Additionally, while the mediating roles of hope and self-efficacy have been surveyed in many studies, what is known about the concurrent effect of hope and self-efficacy specifically on purpose development is largely unexplored. Therefore, we proposed models that aimed to examine two fundamental aspects: (a) an investigation into relations among purpose development, social support, hope, and self-efficacy; and (b) an investigation into the mediating roles of hope and self-efficacy in the association between social support and purpose development. Based on the literature reviewed, we hypothesized that: (a) purpose development (i.e., purpose commitment and exploration), social support, hope and self-efficacy are positively correlated; (b) both hope and self-efficacy mediate the relationships between social support and purpose development.

Method

Participants

The data were collected as part of a two-year longitudinal project of Adolescent

Purpose Development in Taiwan from 2015–2017. Altogether four waves, with six-month intervals, of data were collected. The analyses in the present study were based on those who participated in the wave 4 survey. Participants were 438 second-year students (161 males, 277 females) from one single public senior high school located in northern Taiwan. The mean age of the participants was 17.3 years ($SD = 0.3$).

Procedures

Prior to the commencement of the study, this study was approved by the university research ethics committee. Parental consent forms were distributed to all students, and the response rate was 92%. All students voluntarily took part in the research, and their personal information was kept strictly confidential. Aside from ensuring participants' anonymity and confidentiality, we also employed various scale anchors for the main variables and examined the construct validity to overcome common method bias (Conway & Lance, 2010; Fuller et al., 2016).

Measures

The questionnaires included Chinese versions of the Revised Youth Purpose Survey (RYPS), Social Support for Interest Scale, Hope Scale, and General Self-efficacy Scale, along with demographic data such as age and gender. All scales were translated from English to Mandarin Chinese, with back translations conducted by bilingual professionals to ensure the translation quality. Then, a group of high school teachers scrutinized the wording and the contextual applicability. Finally, a pre-test was carried out among a group of senior high school pupils before the current study proceeded to data collection.

Purpose

Purpose was measured using modified RYPS (Bundick et al., 2006). Recent research conducted by Li and Cheng (2022) suggested that RYPS demonstrated acceptable psychometrics in the cultural context of Taiwan. The scale included two subscales of Identified Purpose, which is congruent with the present study's variable of purpose commitment (7 items, e.g., "I have a purpose in my life that reflects who I am"), and Searching for Purpose, which is consistent with this study's variable of purpose exploration (5 items, e.g., "I am always searching for a purpose in my life"). Responses are rated on

a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”), with higher scores indicating higher purpose identification as well as quest for purpose. RYPS’s two subscales had good internal consistency reliability in the current study (for purpose commitment: $\alpha = .94$, $\omega_t = .96$, $\omega_h = .88$; for purpose exploration: $\alpha = .88$, $\omega_t = .89$, $\omega_h = .86$).

Social support for interest

Social support was assessed by two subscales of Social Support for Interest Scale from family and peers. The subscales have five items each that assess the extent to which family members and peers provide their attention, encouragement, and help in regard to the respondent’s interests (e.g., “My family/friend talks with me about my interests”). Participants answered the items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“always”), with higher scores indicating higher levels of social support. Two subscales displayed good internal reliability (for support from family: $\alpha = .89$, $\omega_t = .95$, $\omega_h = .80$; for support from peers: $\alpha = .84$, $\omega_t = .89$, $\omega_h = .81$)

Hope

Hope was assessed with the 6-item Children’s Hope Scale (Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991). The scale comprises two subscales, assessing two major components of agency (3 items, e.g., “I think I am doing pretty well”) and pathways (3 items, e.g., “I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me”) in the hope construct. Participants rated items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”), with higher mean scores indicating higher levels of hope ($\alpha = .85$, $\omega_t = .91$, $\omega_h = .78$).

General self-efficacy

The General Self-efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1992) is a 10-item measure which assesses one’s general belief that one has the ability to perform challenging tasks and deal with adversity (e.g., “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough”). Participants answer each item on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 4 (“strongly agree”). In this study, the internal reliability is good ($\alpha = .93$, $\omega_t = .94$, $\omega_h = .84$).

Analytic Strategy

All descriptive statistical analyses were completed using the SPSS 22.0 software. Furthermore, structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation using R, version 3.5.1., was employed to test the hypothesized models in which hope mediates the association between social support and purpose commitment (model 1) as well as purpose exploration (model 2) respectively. Raw data served as the input, and the two latent variables of hope (agency and pathways) and social support (family support and peer support) were scaled by fixing one of their indicator paths to 1.0. Purpose commitment and purpose exploration were, respectively, represented by a single indicator. According to Holahan and Moos (1991), latent constructs could be represented by one or two indicators. Regarding measurement error, a single-indicator latent variable essentially equals a manifest variable. For this reason, the error measurement in the current analysis was fixed at zero.

Before conducting the SEM, confirmatory factor analysis was employed along with item parceling to examine the validity and reliability of the overall measurement model. Item parceling was applied to reduce the number of observed variables, thereby reducing the model complexity and the measurement error (Nasser & Takahashi, 2003). Specifically, random assignment was used and parcels were created by the notion that equal common factor variance should be achieved (Little et al., 2002). In the present study, the variable of purpose commitment contains 7 items, with the first three items being assigned to parcel 1 (i.e., PC1), and the following four items being assigned to parcel 2 (i.e., PC2). The variable of purpose exploration comprises 5 items, with the first two items as parcel 1 (i.e., PE1) and the following three as parcel 2 (i.e., PE2). Finally, the concept of self-efficacy consists of 10 items and 2 parcels were created with 5 items each (i.e., SE1 and SE2 respectively).

Due to the large sample size in the present study, a non-significant χ^2 is very unlikely (Kenny, 2015). Therefore, four adjustment indices were used to assess the model fit, including Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). CFI, TLI, and IFI values that are close to or greater than .95 as well as RMSEA values less than .08 are deemed a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, significant levels for indirect and total effects were tested utilizing the recommended 1,000 bootstrap samples and the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Descriptive data on all study variables and the bivariate relations among each of the variables in the study are shown in Table 1. Bivariate relations indicated significant and modest correlation between purpose commitment and purpose exploration ($r = .30$). Adolescents' purpose commitment was significantly positively related to their reports of hope ($r = .62$), self-efficacy ($r = .53$), and social support ($r = .53$). In addition, purpose exploration had significant and moderately positive associations with hope ($r = .28$), self-efficacy ($r = .20$), and social support ($r = .22$). The two mediators of hope and self-efficacy had a strong correlation ($r = .68$) and they were both significantly correlated with the reports of social support ($r = .46$, for two respective associations with social support). That is, adolescents who reported high levels of hope also reported high levels of self-efficacy; moreover, they also reported receiving substantial support for their interests from their family and peers.

Table 1: Correlations of the Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Purpose commitment	—								
2. Purpose exploration	.30	—							
3. Hope	.62	.28	—						
4. Agency	.57	.23	.93	—					
5. Pathways	.57	.28	.93	.72	—				
6. Self-efficacy	.53	.20	.68	.61	.65	—			
7. Social support	.53	.22	.46	.45	.40	.46	—		
8. Family support	.46	.18	.36	.34	.32	.36	.79	—	
9. Peer support	.34	.26	.43	.41	.38	.35	.72	.36	—
Mean	4.44	5.30	3.52	3.46	3.58	2.41	3.38	3.37	3.16
Standard deviation	1.06	0.91	0.62	0.68	0.66	0.59	0.59	0.93	0.64

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

Mediation Analyses

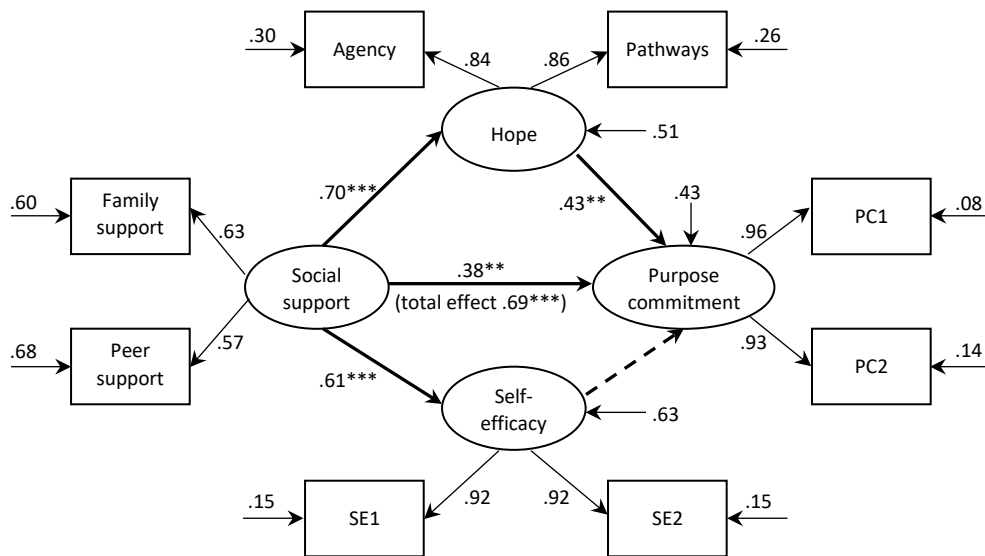
In the current study, two mediational models were tested. The first structural model contained direct and indirect paths from social support to purpose commitment via the mediators of hope and self-efficacy. The second structural model tested a mediational model

in which hope and self-efficacy mediated the association between social support and purpose exploration.

Model 1: Mediated model of social support, hope, self-efficacy and purpose commitment

For model 1 (see Figure 1), all factor loadings of the measurement model were large and statistically significant. The standardized values of the factor loadings were over .93 ($p < .001$) for purpose commitment; .63 and .57 ($p < .001$) for social support from family and peers respectively; over .84 ($p < .001$) for hope, and .92 for self-efficacy. The overall model fit to the data was satisfactory according to the descriptive fit indices: $\chi^2(14, N = 438) = 32.157$, CFI = .992, TLI = .984, IFI = .992, and RMSEA = .054. The effect of social support on purpose commitment was partially mediated via hope but not via self-efficacy. The regression coefficient between social support and hope, and the regression coefficient between hope and purpose commitment was significant. The unstandardized indirect effect was .55 ($p < .001$), and the standardized indirect effect was .30 ($p < .001$). We tested the significance of this indirect effect using bootstrapping procedures. Unstandardized indirect

Figure 1: Final Model 1 of Mediating Roles of Hope and Self-efficacy Between Social Support and Purpose Commitment



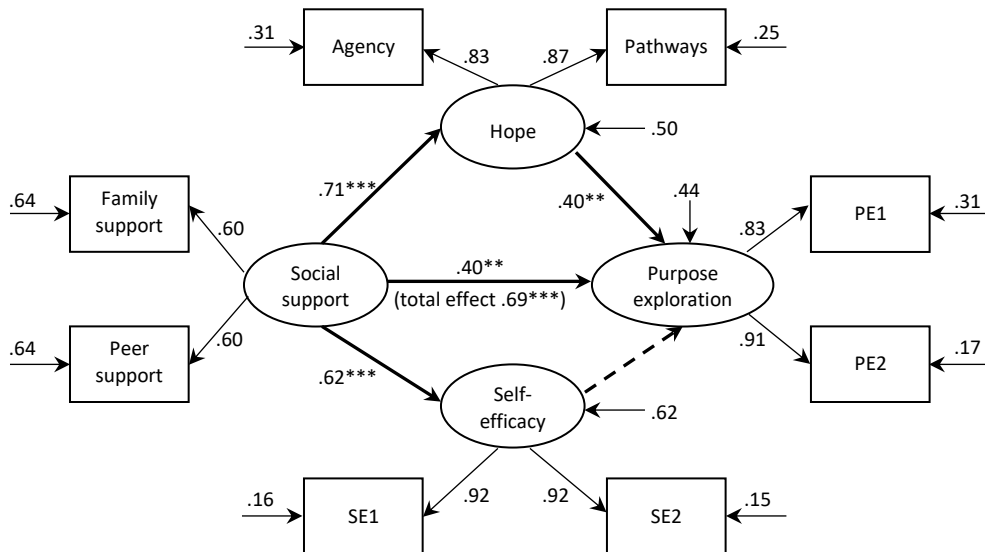
** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

effects were computed for each of 1,000 bootstrapped samples, and the 95% CI was computed by determining the indirect effects at the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect was .55, and the 95% CI ranged from .23 to .93, which did not contain 0. Thus, the indirect effect was statistically significant ($p = .002$). Regarding self-efficacy, the regression coefficient between social support and self-efficacy was significant, whereas the regression coefficient between self-efficacy and purpose commitment was insignificant. The unstandardized indirect effect was .006, and the standardized indirect effect was also .006.

Model 2: Mediated model of social support, hope, self-efficacy, and purpose exploration

For model 2 (see Figure 2), the overall model fit to the data was good based on the descriptive fit indices: $\chi^2(14, N = 438) = 20.789$, CFI = .996, TLI = .993, IFI = .997, and RMSEA = .033. The factor loadings for this measurement model were .83 and .91 ($p < .001$) for purpose exploration, both .60 for social support, .83 and .87 ($p < .001$) for hope, and both .92 for self-efficacy. Aligned with the results of model 1, the indirect effect of social support to purpose exploration was observed by way of hope but not self-efficacy ($b = 0.013$, $\beta = 0.009$, $SE = 0.079$, $p = .873$). The unstandardized indirect effect via hope

Figure 2: Final Model 2 of Mediating Roles of Hope and Self-efficacy Between Social Support and Purpose Exploration



** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

was .38 ($p < .001$), and the standardized indirect effect was .28 ($p < .001$). We tested the significance of this indirect effect using bootstrapping procedures. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 1,000 bootstrapped samples, and the 95% CI was computed by determining the indirect effects at the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect was .38, and the 95% CI ranged from .09 to .63, which did not contain 0. Thus, the indirect effect was statistically significant ($p = .006$).

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the relations of social support with purpose development and to examine the potential mediating roles of hope and self-efficacy. With no doubt, we need to be cautious in unabashedly interpreting the direction of causality given the cross-sectional data used for our analyses. Still, in keeping with previous studies, our findings suggested that such goal-oriented constructs as hope, self-efficacy, and purpose in life flourish among strong social support (e.g., Bronk, 2012; Cicognani, 2011; Yarcheski & Mahon, 2016). In addition, social support could contribute to purpose development not just directly, but also indirectly by raising a sense of hopefulness, which has been shown to independently bolster purpose development (Bronk, Baumsteiger, et al., 2019).

Correlational analyses showed that social support was positively related to adolescent purpose development. Additionally, both hope and self-efficacy were positively associated with social support and purpose development. Overall, the correlation findings supported past research that the main study variables are positively interrelated (Damon, 2008; Pajares, 2006; Snyder, 2002), and support from family and friends is crucial at all phases of a youth's engagement in purpose pursuit (Bronk, 2012; Balthip et al., 2017; Liang et al., 2017).

SEM suggested that high levels of social support for interest directly and indirectly predicted purpose development. Concerning social support, the current study focused on students' perceptions on how much support specific to their personal interests they received from family and peers. Our results corroborate the finding of the literature review conducted by Koshy and Mariano (2011) that support for interest is an essential contribution to purpose development in adolescence. Besides, considering that interests shape purpose and purpose sparks interests (Liang et al., 2017), our findings also support the theoretical argument proposed by Damon (2008, p. 38), who maintained that for young people to thrive, it takes (a) "forward movement toward a fulfilling purpose"; and (b) a "structure of social support

consistent with that effort” (emphasis added). For adolescents who are either searching for a purpose in life or committed to one, having important others who care about their interests appears to be a *consistent* resource that helps them flourish.

In our double-mediator models, only hope partially mediated the link between social support and purpose development. That is, when feeling hopeful about attaining their goals, adolescents with social support showed higher levels of commitment to and exploration of their purpose. Stoyles et al. (2015) found that family support and hopefulness were significant antecedents of a strong purpose in life. Our study further evidenced that hope was not only a concurrent predictor to purpose development along with social support, but could also be applied as an effective conduit for the social support to pass on its power to purpose development. In other words, hope could function as a way through which social support exerts its influence on purpose development. The current results point to the possibility that by raising youth’s hope as family and peers provide support for their interests, we may help nurture purpose in adolescence.

While the goal-oriented construct of hope played an influential role in the association between social support and purpose development, the other goal-oriented construct of self-efficacy in the present study showed no sign of mediated effect, which may be attributed to at least three possible reasons. First, the similarity between hope and self-efficacy probably caused diminished power on self-efficacy when the two variables were examined together. Rand (2018) distinguished the two constructs by listing seven aspects: goal-oriented, future-oriented, generalized, cognitive, self-focused, perceived ability, and perceived intention. The two constructs were reported to overlap in many ways except that self-efficacy has no perceived intention and can be either generalized or specific. In the current study, a strong positive correlation ($r = .68$) was also found, supporting the postulation that the shared features between self-efficacy and hope might result in the shared mediating effect from self-efficacy to hope.

Second, the insignificant mediating power of self-efficacy may be affected by the adoption of general self-efficacy rather than domain-specific self-efficacy. There is a long-lasting debate about whether to use general self-efficacy or domain-specific self-efficacy (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1992; Pajares, 1997; Rand, 2018). Researchers who favor domain-specific self-efficacy argue that it is only at appropriate levels of specificity that self-efficacy functions best. These arguments, however, are mostly drawn from research situated in school contexts where students’ academic performances were of focus. For example, the empirical study conducted by Feldman and Kubota (2015) showed that

students' academic performances (i.e., GPA) were predicted by general hope but not at all general self-efficacy. By this, considering purpose in life is not academic performance in essence but a goal-oriented belief as self-efficacy and hope, the present study decided on general self-efficacy (and general hope) instead of domain-specific self-efficacy. Despite this, our findings, together with past research, illuminate a possibility that purpose development might need to be deemed as an independent subject domain rather than merely a general expectancy domain. Therefore, future research might consider applying measures of purpose-specific self-efficacy when looking into the relationships that involve purpose development and self-efficacy.

Third, why self-efficacy may not have mediated the association between social support and purpose development pertains to the typology of social support. Social support in terms of its content may consist of various types such as emotional, instrumental, instructional, and appraisal support (Otis, 2017; Tardy, 1985). Studies have suggested that different types of support may play different roles and meet different needs. For example, Syed Sahil and Awang Hashim (2011) contended that parental emotional support, not academic support (i.e., informational support), was a salient factor in enhanced academic self-efficacy, which further predicted adolescents' cognitive engagement in class. Likewise, Otis (2017) also found that with emotional support from significant others as the overarching type of support needed for adolescents, it was teachers' informational support and peers' instrumental support that contributed uniquely to hopefulness. All in all, owing to the fact that support may come in a variety of forms, it is plausible that a specific type of support might better correspond to self-efficacy and further on to purpose development. That is, self-efficacy might still be reserved as a path for social support in fostering one's purpose development if a rightly needed support from family and peers is provided. Of course, research in this regard is required to provide further evidence.

Finally, the present findings echoed prior research that showed hope and self-efficacy to be similar but distinct constructs (Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Rand, 2018; Snyder, 2002). As stated, hope and self-efficacy were both positively related to social support and purpose development in a consistent way. Additionally, in the two structural models, hope and self-efficacy were both predicted by social support but only hope was a significant mediator. Assuredly, the results indicated a need to simultaneously investigate these two constructs and further clarify their unique roles in adolescent purpose development.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any study, there are several limitations of this study that have implications for future work in this area. Firstly, one noteworthy issue is from the measurement perspective. The current study conducted only quantitative questionnaires. Since qualitative interviews allow researchers to generate in-depth information about belief and attitudes, future researchers are advised to also involve qualitative investigations to gain a better understanding about the role of social support played in adolescent purpose development. In addition, the current study collected self-report data from adolescent students only. Although social support matters to an individual when it is subjectively perceived as support, data from multiple sources may bring about a more comprehensive picture of how support is given and perceived and accordingly how it affects a youth's purpose in life.

Secondly, this study was cross-sectional in nature, limiting our ability to determine causality or the temporality of the relationships found. We tested two parallel models with hope and self-efficacy as mediators in keeping with past research suggesting that these two future-oriented constructs are imperative in goal attainment. Hope was evidenced to be a plausible path to foster purpose development of adolescents with social support, as the results of the present study showed. However, longitudinal data is necessary to better understand the interactions among the variables, such as whether a causal relationship between hope and self-efficacy exists (Phan, 2013), or whether there are reciprocal relations between social support and purpose.

Thirdly, the target population might not be as well represented as we intended it to be. Adolescence refers to a period of development roughly between ages of 10 to 25 (Curtis, 2015). However, our study sample consisted of only 11th graders; therefore, inclusion of a wider age range in future studies would be preferred. Despite this, the study sample is not without potential benefits. In Taiwan, secondary education refers to three years of junior high school (i.e., 7th to 9th grades) and another three years of senior high school (i.e., 10th to 12th grades). When students come to the 11th grade, they will need to choose between the liberal arts and natural science tracks. This decision makes such a major impact on the students' following career path that 11th grade turns out to be a critical time for youth to ponder the future as well as their purpose in life. In short, it is adolescents' purpose development that the present study is interested in; therefore, researchers who share the same interest are suggested to encompass youth across a wider age range. Still, as our study sample was situated in a life period when the idea of purpose in life becomes especially salient, the results cannot be overlooked.

Conclusions and Suggestions

A key objective of the current research was to extend our understanding of how social support influences youths' purpose development via personal attributions of hope and self-efficacy. Our findings confirmed that the environmental factor of social support specifically regarding interests was associated with purpose development as well as the personal aspects of hope and self-efficacy. In addition, hope partially mediated the link that social support had with purpose development in adolescence. We believe the present study offers insights to educators interested in fostering adolescent purpose development.

First, for one's purpose in life to flourish, significant others such as parents and peers are advised to pay attention to youths' interests by giving encouragement and having discussions on relevant topics. Appropriate support is what helps one develop purpose (Bronk, 2012; Damon, 2008) and it can be particularly true for adolescents because identity exploration is the main task of that time period (Erikson, 1968). Hence, supportive guidance is critically needed. Such support can be provided as easily as asking simple questions that focus on the relevant topic (Bundick, 2011). For example, by asking teens "What activities have you been engaged in?" and "Whether and why do you think these activities are important to you?", a sense of purpose may be initiated. Besides, the interest-related conversations may be taken even further to where teens ponder ways to make positive connections between their passion-driven goals and others. As such connection is helpful in identity development (Rath, 2020), walking with adolescents an extra mile on the path to purpose by caring for their interests and their possible connection with the world is in and by itself fostering optimal development.

Second, we suggest that schools develop programs or interventions that enhance hope in students. As demonstrated in our results, it is via elevated hope that the benefits of social support were carried forward in better purpose development during adolescence. In other words, when feeling motivated and resourceful toward their goals, adolescents tend to show more satisfying exploration of and commitment to their purpose in life. When this is the case, educators are advised to help students explore their *why* by starting with *what* and *how*. In other words, to find their purpose in life, the youth could start with questions regarding *what* goals they want to achieve and *how* they may achieve them. On hope enhancement, Snyder, Lopez, et al. (2003) provided a list of useful suggestions for school psychologists. Mainly, they emphasized the development of agency and pathways, the two components of hope. With respect to agency, it matters not only that school psychologists guide students to set goals but also that they check with students whether the goals in mind are the ones of

personal meaning rather than wishful expectations imposed by others. As for enhancement of pathway thinking, students need to learn to break larger goals into doable subgoals along with concrete markers.

In sum, the present study's findings indicated the importance of social support for youth's interests and the role of hope in purpose development. As purpose contributes greatly to optimal youth development, the aforementioned effort suggested to be made regarding fostering purpose deserves attention.

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華人青少年之社會支持、確認目標與尋找目標的相關研究：
以希望感與自我效能為中介變項

蔡惠文、程景琳

摘要

生活目標能促進青少年的整體發展，但生活目標所帶給青少年的正向影響力尚需搭配適當的社會資源來輔助。本研究旨在探討生活目標發展中的「確認目標」和「尋找目標」與「社會支持」的關聯，並進一步分析此關聯是否會受目標定向之相關構念「希望感」和「自我效能」的中介影響。本研究採問卷調查法，以台灣地區 438 名青少年為研究對象，並運用結構方程模式進行資料分析。研究結果顯示：（1）所有研究變項皆呈現顯著正相關；（2）希望感對於生活目標的兩面向與社會支持的關聯具有部分中介效果，而自我效能對於其關聯不具任何中介效果。由本研究結果可知，社會支持與希望感對於青少年生活目標的發展具有影響力。最後，本研究針對研究結果進行討論，並闡述研究限制、實務意涵與未來研究發展。

關鍵詞：青少年；希望感；生活目標；自我效能；社會支持

TSAI, Huei-Wen (蔡惠文) is a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, National Taiwan Normal University.

CHENG, Ching-Ling (程景琳) is Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, National Taiwan Normal University.