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Promoting Inclusiveness

**Career Exploration, Talent Development,  
Work Habits, Meaning in Life and Connectedness  
of Adolescents in Hong Kong**

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## Background

- ▶ A curriculum reform in Hong Kong **senior secondary education** (Grade 10–12) in 2009
- ▶ At the end of Grade 9, all students will **choose** their elective subjects according to their interests, needs, abilities and aspirations

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- ▶ Talent development programs – embracing **enrichment** activities, moral and citizenship education, aesthetic activities, physical activities, community service, and career-related experiences – have been organized in many schools (Curriculum Development Council, 2001; Education Department, 2000).

## Career Exploration

- ▶ career exploration encompasses all activities inside and outside school that are directed toward enhancing **knowledge of the self** and awareness of the **work environment** (Blustein, 1989).

## Talent Development

- ▶ the process of talent development is complex, and undergoes many changes during adolescence. In particular, students develop increasingly positive beliefs concerning their ability to build upon their particular **strengths** (Simonton, 2001).
- ▶ a dynamic process in which natural abilities are transformed into aptitudes that are appropriate and necessary for particular occupations (Gagné, 2003).

## Work Habits

- ▶ The development of positive work habits and values such as working consistently without supervision, taking full **responsibility for completing tasks**, managing time effectively, and assisting co-workers when necessary (Lapan, 2004).

## Meaning in Life

- ▶ Steger, Frazia, Oishi and Kaler (2006)
- ▶ **'meaning in life'** as the sense and significance one attaches to the nature of one's being and existence, and the satisfaction associated with this sense of meaning.
- ▶ associated with career adaptability (Lips-Wiersura, 2002; Santilli, Nota, Gineva & Soresi, 2014)

## Parental Support

- ▶ Parental support involves listening, **companioning**, informing, encouraging and approving with children, which enhance parents/children relationship. Instructing, supervising and protecting are also important components (Pickhardt, 2011)

## School Connectedness

- ▶ **'connectedness'** refers to the positive feelings an individual has of 'belonging' within a particular social group or situation (family, school, and friends) (Townsend & McWhirter, 2005).
- ▶ School connectedness was defined as the belief by students that adults in the **school care** about their learning as well as about them as individuals (Resnick, 1997).

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess career exploration, talent development and work habits of adolescents in Hong Kong and to explore interrelationships among career exploration, talent development, work habits, meaning in life, parental support and school connectedness.

## Method

A survey was conducted.

The participants:

- ▶ 1986 Grade 9 students, 1811 Grade 7 students
- ▶ 1847 males, 1917 females;
- ▶ age range 11 to 19 years
- ▶ mean age 13.93,  $SD = 1.320$
- ▶ from 79 secondary schools

## Measures



*Career and Talent Development Self-Efficacy Scale*  
(Yuen, et.al., 2010)

6 item Subscales

**Career Exploration** e.g. Explore my career path and goal.

**Work Habits** e.g. Work autonomously.

**Talent Development** e.g. Explore my capabilities in academic subjects.

1-*extremely lacking in confidence*

6- *extremely confident*

Subscales scores Cronbach's alpha .87-.89

## Meaning in life



Meaning in Life Questionnaire

“the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the **nature of one's being and existence**” (Steger, Frazier, Oishi & Kaler, 2006, p. 81).

5 item Subscales

**Presence** e.g. 'I understand my life's meaning.'

**Search** e.g. 'I am searching for meaning in my life.'

1- Absolutely untrue; 7- Absolutely true

Subscales scores Cronbach's alpha .82, .86



## Parental Support

- ▶ *The Parent Support Scale (PSS ; Coker & Borders, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996)*
- ▶ measuring parents' support from the adolescents' perspective
- ▶ four-item
- ▶ e.g. At home, I actively talk with my parents about school activities
- ▶ 1-strongly disagree
- ▶ 6-strongly agree
- ▶ Scale scores Cronbach's alpha .77

## School Connectedness



- ▶ *The Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (HMAC Short Form; Karcher & Sass, 2010; HMAC Chinese version; Yuen et al., 2010)*
- ▶ School Connectedness Subscale
- ▶ 6 items
- ▶ e.g. I enjoy being at school.
- ▶ 1-not at all ; 5-very true
- ▶ Scale scores Cronbach's alpha .74

**Table 1**  
*Means and Standard Deviations by Gender*

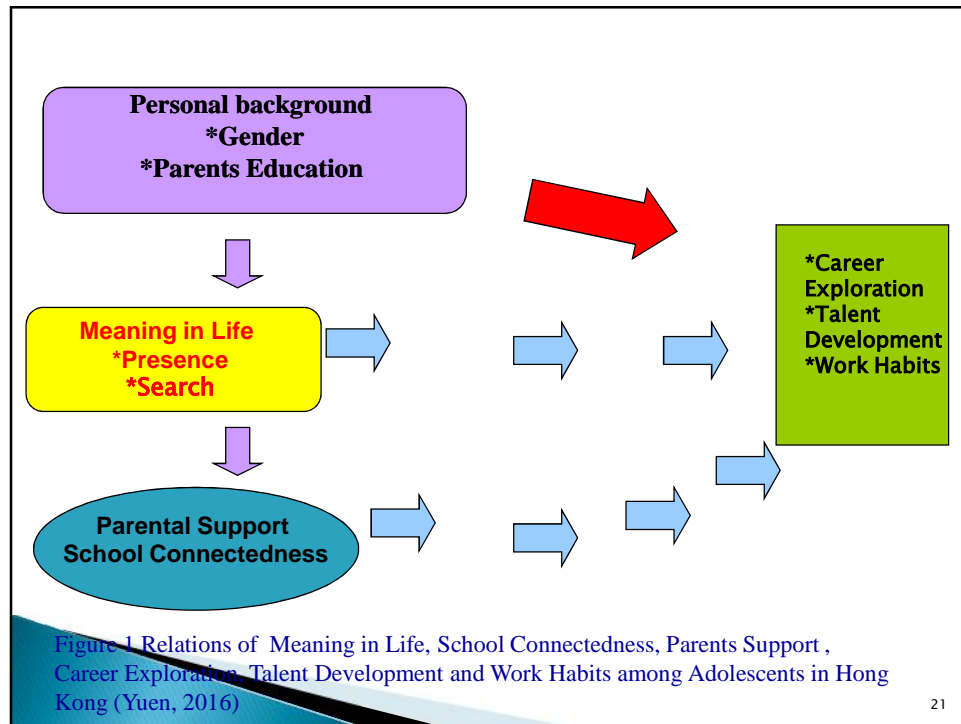
Subscale	Males <i>n</i> = 1847		Females <i>n</i> = 1917		F	$\eta^2$
	M	SD	M	SD		
Career Exploration	25.33	5.526	25.42	4.760	.298	.000
Work Habits	25.10	5.310	25.60	4.595	9.232	.002
Talent Development	25.53	5.413	25.32	4.664	1.645	.000
Meaning Presence	23.14	5.971	23.21	5.643	.133	.000
Meaning Search	25.45	5.695	25.67	5.142	.215	.000
Parental Support	13.87	4.247	14.38	3.940	14.83***	.004
School Connectedness	20.32	3.747	20.88	3.350	23.38***	.006

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , *F* tests were based on *df* = 1 and 3762.

**Table 2**  
*Intercorrelations between Career and Talent Development Self-Efficacy, Meaning in Life, Parental Support and School Connectedness (separated by gender)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Career exploration	1	.692***	.817***	.552***	.330***	.319***	.454***
2. Work habits	.811***	1	.735***	.461***	.298***	.362***	.581***
3. Talent development	.858***	.817***	1	.525***	.324***	.368***	.517***
4. Meaning Presence	.544***	.472***	.519***	1	.323***	.285***	.400***
5. Meaning Search	.446***	.419***	.448***	.422***	1	.179***	.289***
6. Parental Support	.372***	.384***	.401***	.314***	.277***	1	.390***
7. School Connectedness	.536***	.567***	.561***	.435***	.398***	.421***	1

Note. Correlations for males (*N* = 1847) are displayed on the lower diagonal, while correlations for females (*N* = 1917) are displayed on the upper diagonal. All correlations are statistically significant at  $p < .001$  level.



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## Research Hypothesis and Data Analysis

H1. Meaning in life, parental support, school connectedness, and career exploration, talent development and work habits are significantly **related** to each other. (Correlation Analysis)

H2. Clearer meaning in life, stronger parental support, **stronger school** connectedness predict more confidence in career exploration, talent development, and work habits. (Regression Analysis)

## Findings

### The results

1. Presence of **meaning in life and search for meaning in life** positively associated with parental support and school connectedness;
2. Irrespective of gender, career exploration, work habits, and talent development are predicted by presence and search for meaning in life, school connectedness, and parental support.

Table 3  
Hierarchical regression analysis for prediction of students' career exploration (separate by Gender)

Variable	Male <i>n</i> = 1709		Female <i>n</i> = 1796	
	$\beta$	adj $\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	adj $\Delta R^2$
Step 1		0.006**		0.004*
Father's education	-0.023		-0.001	
Mother's education	0.033		0.013	
Step 2		0.130***		0.099***
Parental support	0.110		0.102	
Step 3		0.168***		0.128***
School connectedness	0.281		0.225	
Step 4		0.125***		0.158***
Meaning presence	0.313		0.394	
Meaning search	0.169		0.118	
F value	F (6, 1702) = 214.914***		F (6, 1789) = 191.731***	
Total adj $\Delta R^2$	42.9%		38.9%	

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed.

3. In the females, **career exploration** was strongly predicted by **meaning in life**, along with *school connectedness*, and *parental support*.

4. In the males, **career exploration** was strongly predicted by school connectedness, along with *meaning in life*, and *parental support*.

Table 4  
Hierarchical regression analysis for prediction of students' talent development (separate by Gender)

Variable	Male n = 1709		Female n = 1796	
	$\beta$	adj $\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	adj $\Delta R^2$
Step 1		0.006**		0.011***
Father's education	0.007		0.013	
Mother's education	0.007		0.031	
Step 2		0.155***		0.129***
Parental support	0.145		0.138	
Step 3		0.178***		0.165***
School connectedness	0.312		0.302	
Step 4		0.099***		0.113***
Meaning presence	0.265		0.324	
Meaning search	0.168		0.116	
F value	F (6, 1702) = 223.191***		F (6, 1789) = 215.686***	
Total adj $\Delta R^2$	43.8%		41.8%	

Note \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed.



4. For both males and females, **talent development** was strongly predicted by **school connectedness**, along with parental support and meaning in life.
5. For both males and females, work habits was strongly predicted by **school connectedness**, along with parental support and meaning in life.

**Table 5**  
*Hierarchical regression analysis for prediction of students' work habits (separate by Gender)*

Variable	Male <i>n</i> = 1709		Female <i>n</i> = 1796	
	$\beta$	adj $\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	adj $\Delta R^2$
Step 1		0.004*		0.001
Father's education	-0.010		0.019	
Mother's education	0.004		-0.054	
Step 2		0.136***		0.131***
Parental support	0.124		0.130	
Step 3		0.193***		0.222***
School connectedness	0.359		0.411	
Step 4		0.067***		0.057***
Meaning presence	0.213		0.235	
Meaning search	0.143		0.078	
F value	F (6, 1702) = 190.514***		F (6, 1789) = 209.939***	
Total adj $\Delta R^2$	40.0%		41.1%	

## Implications

Limitations and of this study :  
cross section survey caution in interpretation of causes and impacts

Future research:

**Longitudinal qualitative interview studies** on meaning in life, parental support, school connectedness, career exploration, talent development, work habits, and school guidance of the Grade 9 and Grade 10 students.

Guidance programme with Chinese adolescents:

Enhancement of meaning in life, parental support and connectedness to school, teachers and peers

## Qs and As

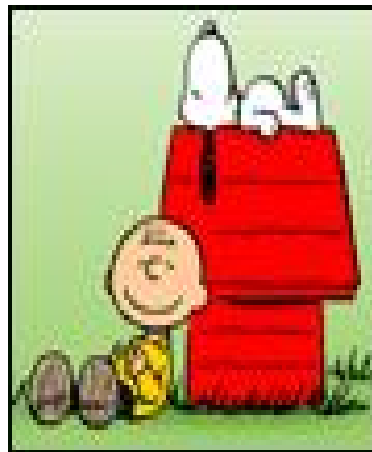
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## Thank You and Keep in Touch

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