

## RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARENT'S HOPE, PRIMARY PUPIL'S HOPE WITH THEIR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to (1) examine relationships between primary pupil's hope and their academic achievement, (2) examine relationships between parent's hope and primary pupil's hope, (3) determine the level of hope among primary pupils, and (4) examine gender differences in primary pupil's hope. Quantitative correlation research was used in this study. Data was collected by using Adult Hope Scale (AHS), Children Hope Scale (CHS) and Average Exam Result. A sample of 375 year five primary pupils and one of their biological parents were participated. The findings indicated that there was positive correlation but weak between pupil's hope and their academic achievement, as well as the correlation between parent's hope and pupil's hope. Most year five pupils in this study had moderate level of hope and there was no significant difference of the year five pupil's hope between genders. The findings of the research have implications on several aspects included theory, curriculum and also psychology literature. The findings inform that hope intervention can be imposed on curriculum to enhance the level of hope of primary pupil. From the psychology field, hope was an important variable that linked with pupil's life satisfaction and psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** *Parent's Hope; Primary Pupil's Hope; Academic Achievement; Hope Between Genders*

### INTRODUCTION

One pillar of the positive psychology paradigm was the study of positive emotions such as hope, gratitude, forgiveness, satisfaction (Seligman 2002). Hope was defined as a cognitive set involving the beliefs in one's capabilities to produce workable routes to goals (pathways thinking), as well as the self-related beliefs about initiating and maintaining movement toward those goals (agency thinking)(Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, Rapoff, Ware, Danovsky et al. 1997). Literature review had recommended the importance of hope in human development (Snyder, Harris, Anderson, Holleran, Irving, Sigmon, et al. 1991; Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995). Findings had consistently showed that possessing low hope was significantly associated with a number of negative outcomes including psychological distress (Snyder, LaPointe, Crowson, & Early, 1998). Hope in adolescents also had been strongly related to greater interpersonal skills, self-esteem and life satisfaction (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006). However, the study of hope had been left majorly to theologians and psychologists, and it was somewhat neglected in academic arena (Haplin, 2001).

### Hope and learning

Hopeful thought not only allows students to maintain and plan the positive direction related to their learning goals, they also allow students to adjust and improve the fruitless learning strategies toward goal attainment. In this context, hope thought is positively and closely related with students' goal-related processes such as aiming the higher and more challenging goals and more positively appraising their goal attainment (Feldman et al. 2009; Snyder et al. 1991). According to Snyder et al. (2003), hope can help students to strengthen their future goal-directed behaviours, especially when students experience continuous obstacles and failures in their school learning (Snyder et al. 2002).

### Hope and academic achievement

High hope individuals had reported significantly greater academic and interpersonal satisfactions (Chang, 1998). This was because high hope pupils able to set clear goals (Snyder, 1994). They could establish their goals based on previous performance and extend slightly more difficult learning or performance goals (Snyder, Feldman, Taylor, Schroeder, & Adams III, 2000a). Due to they are able to adjust their own goals and in control how they would pursue, they are intrinsically motivated and performed well academically (Conti, 2000). Moreover, they are better at breaking the assignments to smaller parts that are sequenced towards long term goals (Snyder et al., 2002)

### Malaysian students' academic achievement

Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) is the public exam in Malaysia that assessed primary six pupils. The result of UPSR from 2011 to 2015 showed the trend of up and down (MOE, 2015). This finding was worrying especially Malaysia had consistently allocated a very large proportion (22%) of its national budget to education (MOF, 2015). According to Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in year 2012, Malaysia was ranked at the bottom third (Choong, 2016). In year 2015, Malaysia students' score in mathematics, science and reading were still below global average score (Menon, 2016). Besides that, according to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in year 2011, Malaysia was ranked below international average (Choong, 2016). In year 2015, Malaysia students' score in science and mathematics were still below international average score (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), 2015). In short, it indicated that Malaysian pupils' academic achievement is getting worst during recent years. It was likely to be very severe if schools participating in PISA and TIMSS are the country's best.

### Hope as significant predictor

Recent studies had indicated that there are many factors that could be important predictors of academic achievement besides intelligence (McDermott & Snyder, 2000; Busato, Prins, Elshout, & Hamaker, 2000). Pupils face with a variety of difficulties in pursuing their academic goals and thus, the development of goal-setting abilities (hope) play an important role in their academic achievement (Amey & Long, 1998).

Hope had been found as a significant predictor of the academic performance for all the educational degrees (McDermott & Snyder, 2000) and academic achievements of pre high school and high school students (Lopez, Bouwkamp, Edwards, & Teramoto Pedrotti, 2000). More recently, findings of the study by Frehe (2008) suggested that students with hope when facing academic impediments appeared to better handle impediments by not diminishing their overall G.P.A. Even though studies had investigated hope in adolescents, college students and undergraduates (Hinton-Nelson, Roberts, & Snyder, 1996; Lewis & Kliewer, 1996), research that focuses on this group of the population, primary pupil was in its infancy (Hoy et al., 2013; Westburg & Martin, 2003; Roberts, Brown, Johnson, & Reinke, 2002). Thus, further research was to focus on the relationships of primary pupil's hope and their academic achievement in Malaysia context.

Child development theorists had purported that parents were vital to children's hope development (Farran et al., 1995) and served as "role models for hope in their children" (Snyder, 1994, p. 105). Children's hope may be influenced by how parents perceived their own hope. Previous studies identified that high-hope children reported that their parents guided and facilitated them with goal-achieving strategies. Besides, also taught them how to think of barriers to achieve goals as challenges (Snyder, 1994). The study of Marques, Pais-Riberio and Lopez (2007) showed weak but significant correlation emerged between children's and their guardians' levels of hope which suggested familial links in hope. However, the findings of Hoy, Suldo and Mendez (2013) indicated no significant relationships emerged between parent's hope and child's hope. Discrepant results on relationships between parent's hope and children's hope created the needs for researcher to further study the parent's hope and children's hope linkage. Further, most of the research showed no significance difference between gender (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997; Snyder, 1995, 2000; Snyder, Lopez et al., 2003; Hasnain, Wazid, & Hasan, 2014; Ahlawat, & Budhiraja, 2016) but the researches mostly focused to western world. The result might be different if the research is conducted in Malaysia. Therefore, this research aimed to fill this gap.

### Purpose of the study

This study aimed to examine the relationships between primary pupil's hope and their academic achievement, the relationships between parent's hope and primary pupil's hope. Besides, the levels of hope among primary pupils and gender differences in primary pupil's hope were also investigated.

### Significance of the study

This research might bring benefits to pupil, parents, school, families and society. It would provide some insights into the ways all stakeholders should assume their responsibilities in the effects of hope. Educators could design individual plans to teach all pupils the skills used by high-hope individuals, who normally performed better academically than low-hope individuals (Snyder, 1994). High hope individuals set clear goals and developed multiple strategies to achieve their target goals (Snyder, 1994). High hope individuals were also more likely to stay focused on their goals.

They were able to keep assessing their progress and continuing even though facing anticipated and unanticipated obstacles (Snyder, Feldman, Shorey, & Rand, 2002). Counsellors in school may play a role of a "coach" who helped in the formation of goals, coached pupil who was low in pathways thinking or lacked of ways to solve problems and guided those who was low in agency thinking or mind set easily gave up when faced difficulties.

This study would contribute to parents' awareness about the importance of hope in their children. The result of this study would provide some insights and information on how their children's hope correlated to their academic achievement. This study also would encourage school to open door widely to welcome parents' partnership. Parents and schools were seen as having similar functions when it came to children. Policy makers especially Minister of Education may find the findings useful to develop parent-school programs including educating parents the importance of parental role towards their children's hope, teaching parents hope related skill, such as how to set age-appropriate goals, how to develop strategies for solving problems and how to enhance inner determination. By having this knowledge, parents would be able to help their children's hope development.

### Theoretical framework

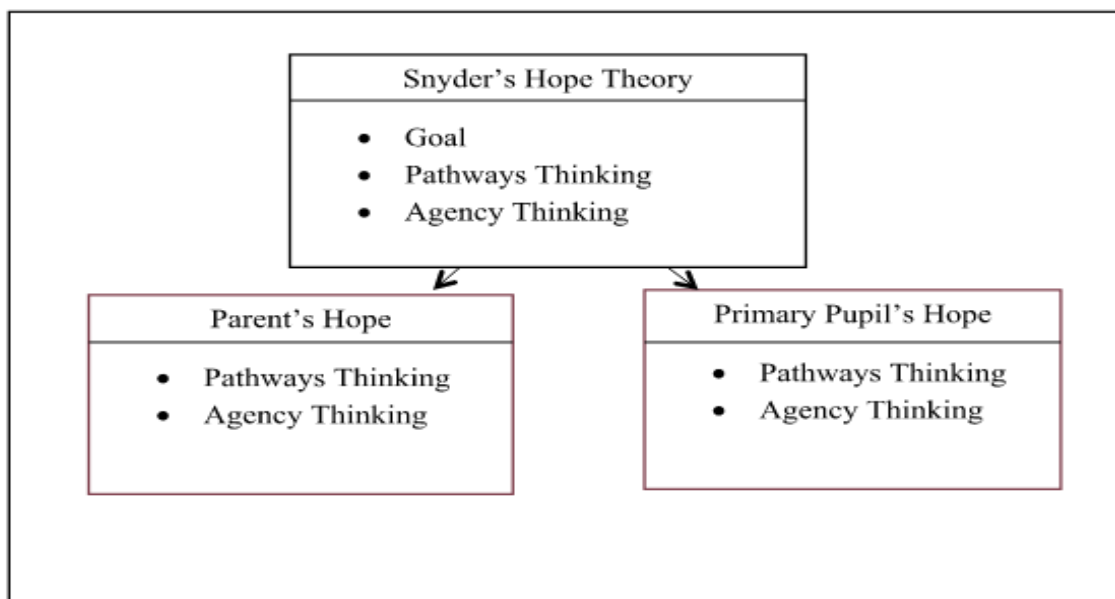


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

According to Figure 1, there were three inter-related components in Snyder's Hope Theory (Snyder et al. 1997), which included goal, pathways thinking and agency thinking. Goal could be anything an individual desired to do, experience, have or become. It may be long-term or short-term, learning oriented or performance oriented, complex or simple to achieve. It surely needed to have significant value in order to occupy conscious thought. Also, goals must be achievable, yet have some uncertainty. Goals with 100% probability of achievement definitely did not need hope. High hope individuals preferred to extend their goals to slightly more challenge than previously achieved goals.

Pathways thinking reflected the beliefs in one's capabilities to produce workable routes to goals. Based on Snyder's Hope Theory, individuals needed to imagine ways to the desired end points so they could achieve their goals. Some individuals perceived they could generate one principal way to their goals but some actually thought of multiple ways. This multiple pathways thinking were true for high-hope individuals especially when they faced with obstacles (Snyder, 1994a, 1994b).

Agency thinking was self-related beliefs about initiating and sustaining movement toward those goals. Snyder's Hope Theory highlighted that agency thinking was needed as a motivational component to make individuals progress along their imagined ways to their target goals. Agency thinking was highest when the goal was meaningful to the individual. Also, the task must be complex enough to keep interest but not too complex until it undermined motivation. When the principal ways were blocked, agency thinking was important because the necessary motivation must be channelled to the alternate ways (Irving, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998; Snyder, 1994b). Individual who was high

in agency thinking always encourage himself or herself through statements such as, “I can do this” “I really want this and I’m not going to let anything stop me”.

This theory was the pillar for understanding parent’s hope and primary pupil’s hope. Both components, pathways thinking and agency thinking must be assessed together so as to obtain an overall sense of the parent’s hope and primary pupil’s hope.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used the quantitative correlation research design to achieve its research objectives. Hundred seventy-five standard five pupils (179 male and 196 female) and one of their biological parents were sampled from three Chinese primary school in North-East of Penang island.

The self-reported “The Adult Hope Scale” (AHS) by Snyder, Harris et al (1991) was used to measure parent’s hope. The scale included 12 short statements in which four were measuring pathways thinking, four were measuring agency thinking and balance four were fillers or distractors. Either one of the parents had to respond to four point Likert Scale which were Definitely False = 1, Mostly False = 2, Mostly True = 3 and Definitely True = 4. The total AHS score was derived by summing the four pathways thinking and the four agency thinking items responses. The highest score would be 32 and the lowest score would be 8. The researcher conducted a pilot study to check its reliability. The AHS gave a result of 0.79 of Cronbach Alpha value which implied the reliability was respectable (DeVellis, 1991).

Snyder et al., (1997) self-reported “Children’s Hope Scale” (CHS) was administered to measure primary pupil’s hope. The CHS included six short statements in which three were measuring pathways thinking and three were measuring agency thinking. Primary school pupil had to respond to a six point Likert Scale which were 1= none of the time, 2= a little of the time, 3= some of the time, 4= a lot of the time, 5= most of the time and 6= all of the time. To calculate the total CHS score, added up all the six items responses. The highest score would be 36 and the lowest score would be 6. After pilot test, the result showed that the scale was very good in reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.895$  (DeVellis, 1991).

Primary pupil’s academic achievement was measured through self-reported average exam result. It was the mean of whole year school exam result. The research questionnaires were conducted in English and Chinese language whereby Chinese language was translated through standard and systematic procedure. The translated questionnaires were judged by expert in English and Mandarin who had translation experience for ten years and expert in psychology from School of Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

The quantitative data collected through questionnaire survey were analyzed with Pearson product moment correlation to examine the relationships between parent’s hope and year five pupil’s hope, as well as the year five pupil’s hope and their academic achievement. T-Test was used to analyze the gender difference on year five pupil’s hope.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The relationships between primary pupil’s hope and their academic achievement were examined through the Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The interpretation on the strength of correlation was based on the guidelines proposed by Hinkle, Wiersma and Jurs (2003). Based on these guidelines, the strength of any coefficient between .01 to .30 were considered very weak, while coefficients, which ranged from .31 to .50, were considered as weak, those ranged from .51 to .70 were considered moderate, coefficients which were between .71 to .90 were considered as strong and those greater than .90 were considered as very strong. Table 1 showed the results of the correlation analysis between primary pupil’s hope and their academic achievement.

Table 1

*Correlation Test among Primary Pupil’s Hope, Academic Achievement and Parent’s Hope*

	Academic Achievement		Parent’s Hope	
	Correlation value (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation value (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Primary Pupil’s Hope	.237**	.000	.112*	.030

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Based on the result in Table 1, there was very weak but positive correlation between primary pupil's hope and their academic achievement,  $r = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r^2 = 0.06$  (Hinkle et al., 2003). The coefficient of determination showed that 6 % of the variances in the score of primary pupil's hope related with the variances in the score of primary pupil's academic achievement. There was low level of primary pupil's hope associated with their academic achievement.

The finding was similar with the result of Gilman et al. (2006) that supported pupil's hope correlated with academic achievement but with different strength of correlation. Gilman et al. (2006) showed the correlation strength of hope agency and academic,  $r = 0.42$  whereas hope pathways and academic,  $r = 0.24$ . Also the result showed the same trend as Gilman et al. (2006) that the strength of the correlation was higher between hope agency and academic achievement,  $r = 0.24$  compared to the strength of correlation between hope pathway and academic achievement  $r = 0.18$ . The finding supported Snyder's Hope Theory that high hope pupils able to set clear goals. At the same time, high hope pupils benefited by staying very focused on their goals. Their thinking was "on task". They attended to suitable cues in specific learning and testing environment (Snyder, 1994) High hope pupils also more willing to try new approaches and managed to find multiple strategies to achieve their goals (Tierney, 1995). Another asset of high hope pupils was their high level of motivation. Due to their previous successful goal attainment, they were to be filled with a sense of agency thinking to predict future school successes.

However, by looking at the strength of the correlation, Gilman et al. (2006) showed weak but positive correlation between hope and academic achievement whereas the researcher's finding showed very weak correlation. In researcher's opinion, this may be due to researcher's population group was younger compared to Gilman et al (2006) which had mixed elementary and high school pupils. Other research studies investigating younger children have concluded that as children aged, their agency and pathway beliefs became stronger (Nicholls, 1979; Parsons & Ruble, 1977).

Due to these samples were from Chinese primary school, there may be cultural factors that contributed to the difference in the findings. According to Chao and Sue (1996), Chinese parents in most Asian countries were pushing their children to achieve better grades, get higher test scores and achieve greater academic outcomes. They were willing to invest time, money or attention in their child's education to ensure their child able to study diligently and fight for academic success in future. The relationships between parent's hope and primary pupil's hope were also examined through the Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The interpretation on the strength of correlation was based on the guidelines proposed by Hinkle et al. (2003). Table 1 showed the result of the correlation test between parent's hope and primary pupil's hope.

Based on the result in Table 1, there was very weak but positive correlation between parent's hope and primary pupil's hope,  $r = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r^2 = 0.01$  (Hinkle et al., 2003). The coefficient of determination showed that 1 % of the variances in the score of parent's hope related with the variances in the score of primary pupil's hope. There was very low level of parent's hope associated with pupil's hope. The finding was similar with Marques et al. (2007) which supported that there was correlation between parent and child levels of hope although with different strength of the association. Besides that, the finding showed quite similar strength of association with Steger, Hicks, Kashdan, Krueger and Bouchard (2007) findings regarding dizygotic twins (DZ) or fraternal twins' hope ( $r = 0.20$ ).

This finding supported the Hope Theory hypothesis that hope may be passed from parent to child (Farran et al., 1995; Snyder, 1994; Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 1999). Children's hope may be developed through inherit or imitation of parents' expressed hope. According to Kliewer and Lewis (1995), probably through the encouragement of critical role models such as high hope parents, high hope children learnt how to find pathways to their target goals and maintain mentally energized for those goals.

According to Hope Theory, if there was a heritability factor, it would appear in agency rather than pathways sub variable. In this research, this finding also aligned with Hope Theory hypothesis. The correlation between parent's agency and pupil's agency were higher ( $r = 0.14$ ) compared with correlation between parent's hope and pupil's hope ( $r = 0.11$ ) whereas there was no correlation between parent's pathway and pupil's pathway.

Looking at the strength of the association, Marques et al. (2007) showed weak correlation ( $r = 0.37$ ) whereas researcher's finding showed very weak correlation ( $r = 0.11$ ). However, in researcher's opinion, that study was conducted in Spain which suggested cultural factors may contribute to the difference in the finding. At the same time, that study also included older youth and this suggested the difference may be caused by possible developmental differences.



Besides that, the correlation was very weak may be due to only one parent of each pupil, either mother or father, rather than both parents, participated in this research.

Meanwhile, the level of primary pupil's hope was based on three score range: low hope (6-21), moderate hope (22-28) and high hope (29-36) (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997; Gilman et al., 2006; Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Ribeiro, 2016). Based on Table 2, among 375 participants, 15.5% (total number = 58) had reported high level of hope. Nearly half of the participants, 44.8% (total number = 168) had reported moderate level of hope while 39.7% (total number = 149) had low level of hope. Based on the result, most primary pupil in this study had moderate level of hope.

Table 2  
*Level of Hope among Primary Pupil*

Level	Score Range	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
High	29-36	58	15.5
Moderate	22-28	168	44.8
Low	6-21	149	39.7

Note: Six Point Likert Scale: 1= none of the time; 2= a little of the time; 3= some of the time; 4= a lot of the time; 5= most of the time; 6= all of the time

In this research, the findings told a totally different story when compared with western pupil's level of hope (Gilman et al., 2006; Gallop, 2009). This finding indicated Chinese primary pupils in this study were less hopeful, less having future ideas and goals, as well as strategies and energy to accomplish their goals, easier to give up when facing obstacles because they could not find alternative pathways or could not get the support they needed to overcome obstacles. This finding supported Callahan (2000) who reported that hope levels were significantly different among children from different cultural groups.

Table 3 shows the results about the investigation on the difference in year five pupil's hope between genders. The result obtained from SPSS for independent samples t-Test was shown in the table. The Levene's test was conducted to test the assumption that the variances of the two groups were equal. From the Levene's test, it showed  $p > 0.05$ , therefore the two groups were assumed equal variances.  $t = -1.09$ ,  $df = 373$ ,  $p = 0.28$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , therefore failed to reject null hypothesis. Thus, there was no significant difference in primary pupil's hope between genders.

Table 3  
*t-Test Analysis on Gender Differences in Primary Pupil's Hope*

Primary Pupil's Hope	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	179	22.98	5.04	-1.09	373	.28
Female	196	23.54	4.87			

Equal variances assumed

$p > 0.05$

This study showed the same result as Snyder, Hoza et al. (1997), Snyder (1995, 2000a), Snyder, Lopez et al. (2003), Hasnain, Wazid and Hasan (2014) and Ahlawat and Budhiraja (2016).

One explanation was that there were truly no gender differences in hopeful thinking about goals. This also could be due to influence of modernization and equality in the present world (Ahlawat, & Budhiraja, 2016). Modernization meant influence of literacy rate, medical facilities, parenting, family environment, information technology and media. Due to which males and females get equal opportunity to decide the appropriate goal for their life.

Another possibility was female and male who had taken hope scales may had been imagining different goals and, as such, their equal agency and pathways actually served differing targets (Snyder, Hoza et al., 1997). Related to this test of differential goals, there was another explanation that compared with those conjured by males, female may be targeting goals that were easier or lesser status in terms of achievement. Thus, seeming equal pathways and agency would be in the service of vastly disparate goal targets (Snyder, 2000b).

On one hand, such finding may suggest that the stereotypical notions about male being more agentic, and female being less agentic were outdated (Snyder, 2000b).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that there was positive correlation but weak between pupil's hope and pupil's academic achievement, as well as the correlation between parent's hope and pupil's hope. Besides, most pupils in this study had moderate level of hope and there was no significant differences in primary pupil's hope between genders. The results have implications on several aspects. The aspects include theory, curriculum and also psychology field. The parties involved were pupils, educators, counsellors, school authorities, parents and policy maker.

From the theory field, the findings are similar and support the hypotheses of the Hope Theory developed by Snyder. There is relationship between hope and academic achievement. Besides, correlations between parent's hope and children's hope indicate parents play important role to assist and influence their children's hope through modelling. At the same time, the level of hope among different population and culture differ from each other. Finally, there is no significant difference in hope among gender.

There are few implications of the findings towards curriculum field. Firstly, the level of hope among pupil is able to determine through Children Hope Scale and this will help educators to identify whether the pupil is in high-hope or low-hope category. Further appropriate hope program can be imposed to pupil who is low hope in order to increase their hope level. In addition, once the level of hope has been established for a pupil or group of pupil, school counsellors can monitor pupil's hope level and do comparison after teaching pupil about the strategies described in the hope model itself. Another implication is educators can identify high hope pupils and see what they naturally do to achieve their advantages in living. According to Snyder's Hope Theory, high hope pupils tend to have more cognitive energy and pathways for their goals. In other words, educators can learn from high hope pupils how they do it in order to help the low hope pupils.

Since pupils spend a major part of their time in school environment, educational facilities are ideal settings for providing interventions programs that promote hope (Miller, Gilman, & Martens, 2008, p. 6). At the same time, the enhancement of agency and pathway hope through specific hope program or intervention may produce a more positive interaction between parents and children, educators and pupils, counsellors and pupils. Policy makers especially Minister of Education should develop parent-school programs including educating parents the importance of parental role towards their children's hope. Seminars and trainings regarding how to foster children's hope such as teaching parents hope related skill should be carried out.

From the psychology field, hope is an important variable that influence pupil's life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Snyder, Lopez et al., 2003; Valle et al., 2006). Children Hope Scale (CHS) is a well-researched assessment tool that has been used in numerous studies and settings to understand hope in youth (Edwards, Rand, Lopez, & Snyder, 2006). School counsellors may consider using the CHS in order to conduct research about hope and other psychological outcomes in schools, and provide evidence-based support for related interventions that target hope. Focusing on positive psychology construct, hope is more productive compare with focusing on negative psychology construct, hopeless. This means school counsellor can help pupils and school personnel to think more hopefully. Also, at school level, different discussions or workshops with school personnel about the school climate can lead to the development of specific strategies for facilitating a hopeful environment.

Overall, as the findings of this study imply that hope level of most primary pupils are moderate and low, relevant party such as parents, educators, counsellors and school authorities must seek suitable hope program for pupils. On the other hand, parents and educators must be the high hope role model and hand in hand provide the hopeful environment to increase primary pupils' hope level to a satisfactory level, which ultimately will improve pupil's psychological well-being. The sample of this study is limited to high performing schools in Penang district as the convenient sampling technique is used. Future study should include a larger and more diverse group of participants, which would provide a better insight on how pupil's hope correlate to their academic achievement and would be able to generalize to other states of the country.

Future studies should also include obtaining more in-depth data from each pupil. Future researcher could interview each pupil about the aspects of hope. Questions adapted from a 12-question interview such as "Tell me about your hope?", "Is hope important to you?" and "Why hope is important to you?" could provide more information to researcher. A qualitative approach in the study might bring out new ideas and new understanding of the aspects of

hope. In Snyder's Hope Theory, hope was suggested as a concept that can be taught to pupils. For future study, researcher may use a control group to compare the effectiveness of several types of intervention programs to assist pupil to increase their hope levels in terms of agency thinking and pathway thinking.

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