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## Comparison of Work Values of Malaysian Youth in Different Contexts at School and University

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**Abstract:** The social contexts of youth in different levels of the education system contain some differences. Youths in school are very much influenced by family orientations and peers towards work and work choices, whereas youths in colleges and universities gain wider exposure through socialization with fellow students and lecturers, administrators, external agents and through their involvement in a variety of campus activities. The exposure to different role sets and role models may engender differential influence on work values of students in schools and at universities. Although there are some researches of work values of adolescents, there are not many researches that compares youth work values across different age groups in school and university contextual settings. Yet this gap in knowledge is important if we are to examine the patterns of work values formation across different age levels and social-educational settings. This study aims to fill the gap in the knowledge of the formation of patterns of work values emerging amongst youths who are in the school setting, in comparison to those who have entered college and universities in Malaysia.

**Key words:** Work values, school, university, youth

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### INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are aged between 15-24 (Twenge *et al.*, 2010; Schunk and Meece, 2005). During adolescence, value development takes place (Flanagan, 2003a). Adolescence is an important time for identity formation (Porfeli, 2007) and it is through values that self-identities are formed. Values provide adolescents with guideposts and a schema to make sense of their experiences and interaction with other people (Flanagan, 2003b). During adolescence, youths begin to think more seriously about work (Shanahan, 2000; Schulenberg *et al.*, 1993). As they become more aware of their internal values, they begin to realize potential careers which match their values and they begin to see work as a source of their future identity formation (Twenge *et al.*, 2010; Porfeli, 2007). Youth in late adolescence spend considerable part of their time planning on their future work (Arnett, 2004; Shanahan, 2000). Their emerging sense of work values, that is, values that they anticipate in their future careers and values that they bring to their future, figure importantly into adolescents' identity development (Hamilton and Hamilton, 2006).

Current trends show that the developmental period between adolescence and young adulthood has become increasingly blended and therefore more protracted

(Arnett, 2000; Settersten *et al.*, 2005). Arnett (2004) classified the years from age 18-24 as the emerging adulthood". As a result there exists a very thin line that blurs any sharp distinction that could be made between the two developmental phases. Why Recent trends suggest that young people remain in school longer as more youth gain open access to tertiary level education? More and more youth combine education and work (Frone, 1999; Loughlin and Barling, 2001; Wray-Lake *et al.*, 2009) to support their expenses but many still have to be relatively dependent on family resources when their income from part time or temporary jobs is not sufficient to support both living and educational expenses. Home and family continue to be an important if not a major socialization routine during the stage late adolescence into young adulthood (Marcia, 1980; Fussell and Furstenberg Jr., 2005).

The socialization to work values of adolescents from the age of 15-24 may offer more similarities than differences. Research suggests that teenage or late adolescence work is largely routine, mostly occurring in the lower level service industries (e.g., cashiers, sales clerks, food and beverage services and janitorial jobs) and are part time (Busacca *et al.*, 2010; Van Ness *et al.*, 2010). Teenagers also tend to work alone, or on irregular shifts that interferes with the development and maintenance of

close personal relationships in the workplace. These young workers are affected by the quality of their work experiences and this would relate to the development of their work values, work-related attitudes and life values (Frone, 1999; Hamilton and Hamilton, 2006; Loughlin and Barling, 2001). Since teenagers seem to be more influenced by their work environments than adults (Frone, 1999) their work values and attitudes and aspirations are stable once established during the teenage years (Krosnick and Alwin, 1989; Alwin *et al.*, 1991). In Malaysia, many teenagers have some temporary or part time work experience, especially during school vacation or in the interim while waiting to start their college or university education. The amount of teenagers in late adolescence who work in family owned businesses as unpaid or paid labor is also increasing.

Younger generations are coming of age in an economic context where work has been restructured to feature more episodic engagement, such as work offered in time-limited contracts, or work assigned in a specific function. Workers' mobility across companies have grown (Barry and Stephen, 1997) not least because of the fact that workers have been relied upon as a source of knowledge and human capital spillover (Battu *et al.*, 2003). In recent years, job insecurity has grown (Wray-Lake *et al.*, 2009; Barry and Stephen, 1997; Flanagan, 2005, 2008) and these insecure jobs offer fewer benefits or guarantees (Reynolds *et al.*, 2006). Adolescents observe the results of these economic vicissitudes on their parents and other adults. There are evidence that children's perceptions of parental work attitudes and experiences shape the development of their own work beliefs and attitudes (Barling *et al.*, 1998). They too are drawn into their family experience of the bitter clashes of work values with life aspirations and the assimilation of these observations begin to shape these adolescents' own work orientation and work.

The technological revolution has literally obscured knowledge and work boundaries. Today, technology has made self-improvement a matter of personal choice and individual differences emerge through differential efforts to develop personal knowledge. Website technology and on-line sharing enable quick access and sharing of information. Youth learn to quickly acquire knowledge in various areas, thus becoming instantly aware of related knowledge in their work and other fields of interest. These on-line transactions and exchanges develop new sets of work values that place high premium on good social networks. Social networks are valuable resources. Being informed, being connected and being creative in the use of information are the assets of individuals, regardless of

age and experience. New sets work values emerge amongst the younger generation that demand individual autonomy at work and space to seek, share and create knowledge; immediate connectivity and control over work process, rather than being wholly subject to external authority.

Given that these contexts in their all-embracing and all-pervading presence define the objective realities of all adolescents (Wray-Lake *et al.*, 2009), we might therefore anticipate that the formulation and shaping of work values amongst adolescents between the age of 15-24 to bear greater similarities rather than differences. This age cohort would not strictly engender a generation gap between them but since their experience of social contexts may be described as similar, any differences in their work values could hypothetically be attributed to individual personality or socialization.

Generally, studies in the US show that adolescents still reported high values for many, if not all, aspects of work from 1990 till 2000 (Wray-Lake *et al.*, 2009; Johnson, 2002). For the period from 1976-1992, Wray-Lake *et al.* (2009) reported that several studies found a decrease in high school seniors' values for work as a central part of life. There was steadily declining trends in high school seniors' willingness to work regardless of their need for money and to put in overtime.

From 1990-2000, Wray-Lake *et al.* (2009) also reported an increase in high school seniors' values of materialism and extrinsic work characteristics, such as work that provides status and money as opposed to opportunities to help others. The value high school seniors placed on status and prestige, respect, advancement and earnings increased from the late 1970s until the late 1980s, when they reached their highest levels. These values have remained high and stable through the 1990s and early 2000s although there was some moderate decline from 1990-1992. The rise in extrinsic values in the 1970s and 1980s and stability thereafter may reflect those cohorts' increasing materialism and drive for attainment of status and wealth (Putnam, 2000).

Since the early 1990s, high school seniors have placed decreasing value on intrinsic rewards of work while maintaining or increasing desires for extrinsic and materialistic rewards (Putnam, 2000). High school seniors' intrinsic work values which included the importance of acquiring and maintaining a useful set of skills, seeing the results of one's work and having a job that is interesting, declined slightly between 1976 and 2005.

Trends also showed adolescents preferred work that allowed them a better percentage of personal time. There is a gradual increase over time in the value for jobs that

offer more than two weeks of vacation as well as jobs that leave time for other things in life (Wray-Lake *et al.*, 2009).

In recent years adolescents have placed less value for a predictable and secure job. Job security is described as jobs that promise a predictable and secure future while job stability is synonymous to keeping same job (Wray-Lake *et al.*, 2009). This trend could reflect a positive adaptation to labor market trends or a resignation to the reality of diminishing opportunities for job security. Work is not seen as an investment with a company (Barling *et al.*, 2002). Youths are said to want immediate payoffs from the workplace (e.g., independence, flexible hours, having fun at work) since they do not have long term plans in the work place. Barling *et al.* (1998) showed that parental experiences of layoffs, job insecurity significantly predicted late adolescents' perceptions of parental job insecurity which in turn, predicted their own work beliefs and work attitudes such as alienation and cynicism. Because of the experiences of their parents, adolescents are said to be skeptical, unimpressed by authority and self-reliant in their orientation towards work (Jurkiewicz, 2000; Westerman and Yamamura, 2007).

Twenge *et al.* (2012a) using a large nationally representative sample of young people surveyed since 1976, compared the work values of GenY (born in the late 1980s) to those of GenX (born in the 1970s) and Boomers (born in the 1950s) at the same age. Twenge *et al.* (2012a) found that GenY was much more likely than previous generations to say they wanted a job with an easy pace and lots of vacation time and less likely to want to work overtime. They also saw work as less central to their lives and were more likely to agree that "work is just making a living". At the same time, they placed more importance on salary and status.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found that faculty enhances students' learning of values while Johnson and Elder (2002) found that level of education influences work values of adolescents.

Viewed alongside declining trends for intrinsic work values, stable extrinsic work values and increasing values of work that allows time for leisure, it appears that more recent cohorts of high school seniors have lower expectations that employment will be a source of meaning or purpose in their adult lives.

Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1992) defined values as desirable, abstract goals that apply across situations which includes also work situations. Values serve as guiding or a set of criteria they use to select and justify actions and to evaluate people and events.

Wray-Lake *et al.* (2009) defined work values as a more specific type of values which determine the importance

one places on various characteristics and rewards of employment. Work values are defined as what a person wants out of work in general. Work values also comprise what components of a job are important to the work satisfaction of the individual (Duffy, 2010; Hatrup *et al.*, 2007a). Work values shape employees' perceptions of preferences in the workplace, exerting a direct influence on employee attitudes and behaviors (Dose, 1997).

Wollack *et al.* (1971) worked on protestant work ethics divided work values into intrinsic work values as opposed to extrinsic work values. Intrinsic work values are in themselves a source of internal motivation that galvanize people to commit themselves to their work while extrinsic work values refer to external factors such as wages, promotions and other privileges that come with the job. Hirschi (2010) developed five intrinsic work value items (variety at work, helping other people, independence at work, leadership and responsibility and interesting work) and another five extrinsic work value items (high income, job security, fast and easy entry to job, leisure time besides work and prestigious work). Ryan and Deci (2000) also use the intrinsic-extrinsic polarities. Extrinsic work values focus on the consequences or outcomes of work, or the tangible rewards such as income, advancement and status. Intrinsic work values focus on the process of work or the intangible rewards that reflect the inherent interest in the work, the learning potential, the opportunity to be creative (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Other work values include influence of autonomy in decision making; job stability or security; altruistic rewards in helping others; social rewards related to interpersonal relationships at work and leisure which includes free time, vacation, freedom from supervision (Johnson, 2002); challenge, personal worth, equitable opportunity, social status and personal development (Zhang *et al.*, 2007); social relations, self-realization, work condition, altruism, benefits in career and influence (Hagstrom and Kjellberg, 2007); job security, high income, advancement opportunity, interesting work, autonomy in work, helpfulness to other people and usefulness to society (Hatrup *et al.*, 2007b) and self-reliance, morality/ethics, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time and delay of gratification (Van Ness *et al.*, 2010).

Twenge *et al.* (2012b) uses the following work value constructs to trace the changing work values across generations: Leisure rewards, extrinsic reward, intrinsic rewards, altruistic rewards and social rewards. Leisure refers to work/life balance which translates into jobs with flexibility and the ability to go part-time or leave the work force temporarily for personal life goals. Extrinsic rewards

are expressed in the form of pay, material possessions and prestige. Intrinsic rewards entail being motivated to work for work's own sake rather than to obtain material or extrinsic rewards. Altruistic rewards includes the motivation to help others and society through work. Social rewards refers to the need to belong or to be connected. It is also a component if intrinsic motivation.

This study aims to examine the work values of youths in the 16-24 year old age bracket in Malaysia in two different settings: The school and the university. If the hypothesis that adolescence and young adulthood is a blended protracted developmental phase, then it should be expected that the work values of these two groups be similar.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Population and Sampling:** The population of this study were undergraduates from public universities and senior secondary school students in government schools in Malaysia. Random cluster sampling was carried out to select four public universities and four secondary schools from the north, south, east and west zones of Peninsular Malaysia. At these universities, survey questionnaires were distributed to students from the clusters of Sciences programs (i.e., Engineering, Medicine, Biotechnology, Marine Science, Geological Science, Pure Science and Mathematics) and from Humanities and Social Science programs (i.e., Education, Languages, Human Resource, Management and Administration, Marketing, IT and Graphics). Lecturers from the clusters in each university were randomly contacted and requests for distribution of questionnaires for 20 min during class time were negotiated. Experience has shown that face to face data collection yields higher response rate. All students in the classes assigned by the lecturers to the researchers, were given the questionnaires. In total, 800 questionnaires were distributed to the undergraduates throughout the various clusters of the total 764 were returned but only 711 (88.87%) was fit to be used for analysis.

Of the 711 responses from the university, 564 were female (79%) and 147 male (21%) respondents. The mean age of the sample was 23, 24 years ( $SD = 0.51$ ). In terms of academic year, 32.6% were freshman in the first year, 5.9% were sophomores in the second year, 37.7% were juniors in the third year and 23.8% were seniors in their final year of study. By programs of study, the sciences cluster had 379 respondents (53.3%) while 332 make up the respondents from social science and humanities programs of study (46.7%). The 396 undergraduates (56%) had work experience and some were still working. Of the total 315 undergraduates (44%) never had any work experience.

Meanwhile, the secondary school sample size was however more limited. Due to the targeted sample at upper secondary level, all students in Form 4 were included in the survey. In total, only about 610 questionnaires were distributed. Twenty nine was discarded, leaving 581 fit for analysis (95.25%). The data collection was conducted during school class time with the teachers' consent, in a face to face session with the researcher for a period ranging from twenty to thirty minute session.

The respondents from secondary schools comprised 308 males (53%) and 273 females (47%). 161 of these students (28%) had and some still were on part time jobs, thus having some work experience. Majority of 420 students (72%) never had any work experience. Since all the schools in the study had already streamed the Form 4 students in either Arts and Science classes based on the students' previous results in the public examination, we used these existing clusters and found 381 students from the Arts stream (66%) and 200 from the science stream (44%).

**Instrument:** The instrument that was developed comprised of two sections: Section 1: Work values and Section 2: Personal profile of the respondents such as program of study, gender and work experience. Literature was used to construct the present work values. The constructs we used were: Work commitment (5 items), Pride in work (4 items), Authentic liking for Job (2 items), Authority in job (3 items), Autonomy in job (3 items), High pay (3 items), Success recognition (7 items) and Social status of job (3 items). The constructs of work commitment, Pride in work, Authentic liking for job and Autonomy in job represented intrinsic work values. Autonomy in job was considered an intrinsic value since it described the internal need for independence to self regulate one's work and its outcomes. On the other hand, Success recognition, High pay, Social status of job and having authority in Job were treated as extrinsic work scales.

All items for Work Values were measured on a Likert Type 5-point scale that ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. These items were at first reviewed by colleagues for content validity and subsequently piloted with 30 undergraduates and 30 upper secondary school students. The alpha of the pilot tests were all in acceptable range.

**Statistical analysis:** Data from the real study was entered in the SPSS and factor analysis was carried out to explore the components drawn from the items. All analysis used

Promax which converged in 7 iterations. For the university sample, principal component analysis confirmed all the eight components of work values. For the school sample however, factor analysis drew only six principal components, whereby Autonomy in Job was incorporated into success recognition and pride in work was incorporated into Work Commitment. However, the comparisons of means across the two groups in this report will be based on all eight constructs.

**RESULTS**

In both the undergraduate and school samples, the correlations between components were significant but ranged from low to moderate while the communalities were mostly moderate (0.40) to high (0.82). Both Kaiser Meyer Olkin of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s test of Sphericity were significant in the undergraduate and school samples, thus confirming that the sample size was adequate and that factor analysis was an adequate test to test the constructs. The reliability of the sub-constructs of work value are shown in Table 1.

In Table 2, the mean differences of all work values between the university undergraduates and the upper secondary school students were significantly different, except for Authority in Job ( $t = 0.10, df = 1203.73, p > 0.05$ ). Not only was the mean difference for Authority in Job insignificant between school students and university

undergraduates but it was also very small at 0.01. On the other hand, the undergraduates placed significantly higher value in comparison to secondary school students for work commitment, pride in work, authentic liking for job, autonomy in job, high pay, success achievement and social status of job. The largest mean difference was in authentic liking for job where the mean difference was 0.38, followed by work commitment and pride in work whereby each had mean difference of 0.31 and followed by autonomy in job (mean difference 0.28), achievement recognition (mean difference 0.22), high pay (mean difference 0.16) and social status of job (mean difference 0.12).

The tests in Table 3 show the differences in work values between undergraduates of different age cohorts: 18-19 years against those in the 20-24 years old and above 25 years old and those 20-24 years old against the >25 years old. In Table 3, the mean scores of undergraduates across the three age cohorts for work values Authority in Job and High Pay were moderate and not significantly different. The value of social status of job was found only to be significantly different and higher between the 18, 19 year old age cohort and the 20-24 year old.

Interestingly, there were no significant differences in the mean scores of all work values between the 20-24 and above 25 age groups, except for work commitment. This suggests that the orientation to work values appear to become stable at about the age of twenty and above.

Table 1: Reliability of the sub-constructs of work values

Parameters	University (N = 711)				School (N = 581)			
	Alpha	Mean	SD	Range	Alpha	Mean	SD	Range
Work commitment	0.80 (5 items)	4.54	0.56	3.80	0.80 (5 items)	4.22	0.79	3.40
Pride in work	0.68 (4 items)	4.47	0.54	3.25	0.67 (4 items)	4.16	0.69	3.50
Authentic liking for work	0.79 (2 items)	4.37	0.74	4.00	0.69 (2 items)	3.99	0.96	4.00
Authority in work	0.77 (3 items)	3.73	0.76	4.00	0.71 (3 items)	3.73	0.82	4.00
Autonomy in work	0.80 (3 items)	4.30	0.61	3.00	0.76 (3 items)	4.02	0.82	4.00
High pay	0.69 (3 items)	3.74	0.80	4.00	0.70 (3 items)	3.58	0.91	4.00
Success recognition	0.84 (7 items)	4.36	0.51	2.57	0.86 (7 items)	4.14	0.73	3.43
Social status of work	0.72 (3 items)	4.09	0.75	4.00	0.74 (3 items)	3.97	0.87	4.00
Total alpha	0.89 (30 items)	4.24	0.39	2.34	0.92 (30 items)	4.01	0.57	2.88

Table 2: Mean differences in work values and education level of student

Parameters	Education level		t	df
	University	Upper secondary		
Work commitment	4.54 (0.56)	4.23 (0.79)	7.99***	1012.73
Pride in work	4.47 (0.54)	4.16 (0.69)	8.74***	1079.85
Authentic liking	4.37 (0.74)	3.99 (0.96)	7.84***	1074.40
Authority	3.74 (0.76)	3.73 (0.82)	Ns	Ns
Autonomy	4.30 (0.61)	4.02 (0.82)	6.85***	1046.42
High pay	3.74 (0.80)	3.58 (0.91)	3.34***	1158.70
Success recognition	4.36 (0.51)	4.14 (0.73)	6.22***	1007.38
Social status of job	4.09 (0.75)	3.97 (0.87)	2.69*	1150.44

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , standard deviations appear in parentheses alongwith means, Ns: Not significant

Table 3: Comparison between 18-19, 20-24 and >25 year old university undergraduate groups

Parameters	Age level groups among undergraduates (year)			Comparison of 18-24 years old		Comparison of 18, 19 and >25 years		Comparison of 20-24 and >25 old	
	18, 19 (N = 162)	20-24 (N = 520)	>25 (N = 29)	t	df	t	df	t	df
Work commitment	4.72 (0.46)	4.50 (0.57)	4.25 (0.59)	5.09***	325.60	4.10***	34.45	2.28*	547
Pride in work	4.58 (0.49)	4.44 (0.55)	4.30 (0.54)	3.01***	294.60	2.79***	189	Ns	
Authentic liking	4.58 (0.66)	4.32 (0.75)	4.10 (0.67)	4.34***	302.60	3.60***	189	Ns	
Authority	3.84 (0.86)	3.69 (0.74)	3.93 (0.59)	Ns		Ns		Ns	
Autonomy	4.42 (0.61)	4.26 (0.61)	4.18 (0.52)	2.89***	680	2.20*	42.69	Ns	
High pay	3.63 (0.91)	3.77 (0.77)	3.92 (0.57)	Ns	Ns	Ns		Ns	
Success recognition	4.53 (0.48)	4.32 (0.50)	4.26 (0.56)	3.43***	680	2.65***	189	Ns	
Social status	4.27 (0.68)	4.03 (0.77)	4.12 (0.55)	1.95*	238.17	Ns	Ns	Ns	

\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.001, Means in top row while standard deviations appear in parentheses alongwith the means, Ns: Not significant

### DISCUSSION

Generally the scores of most work values were high and this was consistent with the findings of Twenge *et al.* (2012a) work on American youths aged 15-24. In spite of that, the first point to note is that the university graduates and secondary school students appear to place moderate importance on the work values of having Authority in Job and having High Pay. Again, this seems consistent with Twenge *et al.* (2012a) and Wray-Lake *et al.* (2009) findings that youths seemed to want less responsibility and valued work that allowed them to take personal time off as opposed to work that emphasized performance based remuneration where higher work commitment/output promised higher salary returns. The second point is that in spite of the general achievement of high mean scores in all work values (except in Authority and High pay), the mean scores of secondary school students who were aged 16-17 were consistently lesser than those of the university undergraduates. Secondary school students work values appear to be not as defined and stable as those work values professed by undergraduates, particularly by undergraduates above the age of 20.

The highest work value selected by both the university and school respondents was work commitment. University students seemed to place work commitment, having pride in one's work, having authentic liking for one's job, being recognized for success in one's job and having autonomy in one's job as the five top work values. The top five work values for upper secondary school students was similar except for their order: Work

commitment, pride in work, being recognized for success in one's job, having autonomy in one's job and having authentic liking for one's job. Four of these five were intrinsic work values (work commitment, having pride in one's work, having authentic liking for one's job and having autonomy in job) which therefore suggested the stronger emphasis on intrinsic work values. This seems contradictory to findings by Twenge *et al.* (2012b), Putnam (2000) and Schulenberg *et al.* (1993) who reported that materialism and personal expectations were the more outstanding values in their study in the US. The present findings also indicated that the trend of these five choices of work values were consistent across respondents aged from 16-24, although their order of sequence might differ in one or two instances.

It might be supposed that since these respondents were all full time students, their perception of intrinsic work values could have been perceived as an extension of values associated with good learners. Good learners are often described having good self-discipline, self-motivation, commitment to study and genuine interest in learning. Work commitment, pride in one's work, authentic liking for job and enjoying autonomy for independent learning mirror those values demonstrated by successful learners and after all, being successful in learning is the closest experience of their student lives at the present time of the study albeit many also held part time or temporary jobs.

The stability of intrinsic work values may be explained by the recursive reinforcement effect of learner self efficacy. As a point of discussion, we refer to Bandura (1989) triadic socio-cognitive reciprocation model

of self learning (experience/environment, behavior and personal self-efficacy). In Bandura (1989) theory, one's self-efficacy influences one's behavior and this ultimately influences how one responds to elements in the environment. Behavior is the manifest form of our internal values. The environment also influences one's behavior and hence, self-efficacy. Work values form part of one's cognitive and behavioral make-up. In practice, work values translates to behavior at work (or within the classroom) and as a result, these values undergo modification, clarification and reinforcement through their interaction with multiple situations in the environment. Positive response will result in those intrinsic work values becoming more stable in their characteristics. Moreover, classroom teaching and learning experiences tend to reinforce behaviors that are sourced from intrinsic values. The stability and uniformity of emphasis on intrinsic work values across the two groups of respondents in our study may be attributed to the extension of reciprocal reinforcing effect of the learning values encouraged in school and in university setting in Malaysia. In other words, educational institutions in Malaysia may have a more dominant effect on the socialization of intrinsic work values than what is now known. More research however is needed to investigate this claim.

On the other hand, the response to the four extrinsic work values was mixed. On one hand, the mean scores for Authority in Job and High pay were average amongst the school students and the undergraduates. While these two groups were not significantly different in their mean scores on Authority, the undergraduates' mean score for High pay was significantly higher. On the other hand, the mean scores for the other two extrinsic work values Success recognition and Social status of job were all high (above 3.95) for both the school students and the undergraduates but the undergraduates' score tended to be the significantly higher score.

Authority could have been perceived as a distribution of responsibility and accountability (not necessarily associated to a hierarchical position or seniority) and accordingly was the least likely to appeal as a work value. This aversion to authority would be in line with Twenge *et al.* (2012a) and Wray-Lake *et al.* (2009) report. Besides, powerful influence today is not unilaterally associated with authority alone (Johnson and Elder, 2002). Today's youth is likely to develop circles of social and professional influence through their social networks. Our findings seems to run parallel with other research which pointed that the present generation preferred autonomy to be self-directed in their work rather than being subjected to authority in their work, or having to exert authority on others (Jurkiewicz, 2000).

However, contrary to research findings such as Twenge *et al.* (2012a) and Putnam (2000) who reported youths' increased emphasis on materialism and high pay, the value of having high pay attracted only average response from Malaysian school students and University undergraduates. This finding reflects the current job market in Malaysia where high pay is usually linked with professional qualification or niche competence, senior position holders, very successful business people, or politicians. High pay is not usually a negotiable job market feature. Regardless of whether these Malaysian students aspired to have high pay, their average response to this item mirrored their realistic view of work as a source of income for living, rather than as a means to luxury. Nonetheless, undergraduates were closer to their goals if they wanted to become professionals and be eligible for High pay. Hence, this would explain the undergraduates' significantly higher inclination for high pay in comparison to the school students, albeit both their mean scores being average.

While High pay is perceived as a privileged incentive, Success Recognition appears to be regarded as a more accessible work value whereby work commitment and individual effort may result in being given rewards in various forms. The motivation for achieving success and be rewarded are central themes to the intrinsic values of self-autonomy in job and commitment to the job. In other words, success recognition acts as the external motivation for those intrinsic values. Hypothetically, when the desire for autonomy in job and commitment in job are high, the desire for reward for these kinds of work values increases, much as depicted in Bandura's triadic socio-cognitive reciprocation model.

Previous research such as Twenge *et al.* (2012b) and Putnam (2000) reported the increase of emphasis on social status of job amongst youths. The present findings indicate that the value of social status of job was more pronounced amongst the university undergraduates than the school students. It would appear that as youths progress through their university education, they become more socialized in their fields of specialization and become more aware of society's assessment of related jobs in those fields. Social status of jobs is more pronounced in the Asian culture and having jobs of good social status enhances the individual's personal stature in the society. In contrast, school students do not yet have the benefit of specialization socialization but their awareness and (perhaps) inclusion in society's assessment of job social status makes them appreciate the value of having job with social status.

There does not seem to be any study to the researchers' knowledge on when work values begin to stabilize but our study indicates no significant change in



work values of undergraduate cohorts aged 20-24 and those above 25 years old, thus suggesting that the stabilization of values might occur between the age of 20-24. Krosnick and Alwin (1989) suggested that stabilization of work values may occur at teenage but our findings indicate a later stage of development, that is, extending into young adulthood.

The findings of this research suggest that age maturity and level of education positively affect young adult's emphasis on different intrinsic and extrinsic work values. There appeared to be very little change in the emphasis on intrinsic work values as a whole. Johnson and Elder (2002) who did a study on the change of work values in the eight years after high school to postsecondary education found that with continued schooling, work values did continue to undergo change. Johnson and Elder (2002) study indicated that while high school graduates attached less importance to rewards, those who went to college showed the amount of importance they attached to rewards grew. They concluded that higher levels of education were coupled with greater maintenance of extrinsic values. While our study gives some evidence to their work, the findings confirm that Malaysian students consistently uphold more intrinsic values but had mixed response to extrinsic work values.

### CONCLUSION

Very few studies have attempted to compare work values of youths in secondary (or high schools) and youths who are at college or university to determine whether they differed in their work values. Although this study has not dwelt upon particular features of the educational institution and how these might affect the work values of the youths in them, the findings of this study suggest that more in depth study of the effect of program characteristics, institutional socialization and organizational culture might throw some light on how work values are transformed through different levels of education. A time based study is suggested as a plausible research design to capture the transformation and the probable variables that exist in the same time element that affect the transformation of work values.

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