CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

6.1 Premier Youth Award Programme and Adolescent Identity Development

The ARP programme has many characteristics that could possibly enhance the development of an individual's identity. It is suggested that the ARP programme may be one form of an identity development programme. This chapter aims to explain the results of the study in the context of theory, past research and the characteristics of the ARP programme.

Three comparisons from the study, that is the results of the ARP versus the non-ARP group, the participants that had been involved for only 1-4 months in the ARP programme with the non-ARP group and finally, the participants that had been involved for 1-4 months in the programme with those who had been involved for 6-30 months, are summarised in Table 6.1:

Table 6.1: Comparison of Results of 3 analysis: ARP versus Non-ARP ; Involved for 1- 4 months versus Non-ARP; Involved for 1-4 months versus 6- 30 months.

Variables	ARP versus Non-ARP	1-4 months versus Non-ARP	1-4 months versus 6-30 months
Identity Score	Sig.	Sig.	Nil
Career	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.
Political	Nil	Sig.	Sig.
Religious	Nil	Nil	Nil
Interpersonal	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.

Sig. - Significant: Nil - Not-significant

The empirical results from the study, indicate that when the ARP group was compared to the non-ARP group, those in the ARP group were significantly closer to identity achievement than the non-ARP group.

Thus it may be said that the ARP programme, had helped in some manner to enhance the identity development process towards identity achievement. According to Marcia (1989), based upon the results of almost all the research up to date, identity achievement is the most adaptive of the identity statuses because of the individual's demonstrated capacity for choice as well as the ability to make commitments to action as well as to act flexibly depending on the situation.

It is suggested that the mechanisms that helped participants towards identity achievement, were the dimensions of exploration and commitment. According to Marcia, exploration means the relatively guilt and anxiety free, serious consideration of alternative occupational, ideological and interpersonal domains. Archer (1989) adds that exploration refers to the assessment of alternatives that should culminate in a personally expressive choice. It is exemplified by engaging in activity that would provide the knowledge to make a decision within an appropriate period of time. Commitment refers to the investment in a given choice expressed through such criteria as activity, knowledge and consideration of how one's choice will be integrated with one's future goals (Archer, 1989).

The ARP by its objectives, structure, activities and programmes, provides participants many opportunities for the process of exploration and commitment. Further it provides a relatively guilt and anxiety free environment to do so. Firstly, the participant makes a free and active choice to participate in the programme. Then in the four areas of the programme, that is, service, recreation and expeditions, skills and innovation and sports and culture, he explores the alternatives available. Possibly, introspectively looking at his own interest and preferences as well as the options available, he makes a decision on which activity or skill he intends to choose in each of the four areas That is already a commitment. Then, he sets specific measurable targets to achieve in the time period specified. Also, he determines specific action plans to achieve those targets. All of these processes involve exploring alternatives and finally making decisions and commitment to follow through. This commitment is specified, written down and communicated to the programme facilitator.

It is suggested that these processes of continuous exploration and commitment are mechanisms that facilitate the identity development process towards identity achievement. ARP concretely and specifically, provides the opportunities for the participants to be involved in these two processes (exploration and commitment), and the result is a positive growth in the identity development process, that is development towards identity achievement.

Schlenker (1985) views identity as a structure or framework out of which individuals interact with the world. This identity structure is continually updated as new experiences and information are encountered. ARP provides a wide variety of contexts in which the individual interacts with the world. Thus it helps provide many experiences and information that can be used to continually update the identity structure.

Grotevant (1987) has defined exploration in the process of identity formation as "problem-solving behaviour aimed at eliciting information about oneself or one's environment in order to make a decision about an important life choice". According to him, for adolescents, the "work" of identity is seen as the exploration process. In the pursuit of the awards within the ARP programme, the participants would have to use much problem-solving and decision-making skills to solve as best as possible the problems they may face and complete the programme in the shortest possible time. Problems that arise include problems with the family and teacher who often feel that their children or students should not be "wasting" time on non-academic work, and spending more time on their studies instead. Additionally, participants need to manage their time and other resources between academic and ARP work as well as involvement in the four different areas of ARP simultaneously if they want to achieve the award in the shortest possible time, which is often the aspiration of most participants. All of these problem-solving processes provide information about oneself and one's environment as well develops the confidence and skills to solve problems

and make decisions towards achieving one's goals. It is suggested that these processes facilitate identity development.

Berzonsky (1992) proposes that the four statuses in Marcia's paradigm reflect different styles of personal problem solving and decision making. Those on the higher status levels, that is moratoriums and achievers, are, or at least have been, engaged in information-oriented processes of self-exploration; they deliberately seek out self-relevant information before making identity-relevant decisions and committing themselves. In ARP, in all the four areas of the programme, participants have to actively seek out information, firstly about themselves and secondly about their environment. In seeking out more about themselves, they need to better identify and understand their interests, goals, values, priorities, strengths and weaknesses. In seeking out information about their environment, they would probably want to know what activities and programmes are available or what activities their friends have chosen, or when a particular programme is being organised. They may further seek information on how to participate in programmes that they are very keen in but are not available in their immediate environment. It is suggested that the process of seeking self-relevant information and making relevant decisions facilitates the process of identity development.

Comparing across time of participation in the ARP programme, that is comparing those from 1-4 months to those 6-30 months group, it appears that there is

no significant change in identity development. However, two sub-scores that have changed significantly are the career and interpersonal domains. In both cases, those who were involved longer in the programme were significantly closer to achievement than those who had just joined. Thus, the career and interpersonal identity appear to have increased significantly towards achievement through continued participation in the programme. Also, ARP participants were significantly closer to achievement in these two domains compared to the non-ARP group. There were no significant differences between ARP and non-ARP participants in the religious and political domains.

The career and interpersonal domains are important areas of interest for adolescents. Thus, it is possible that participants were more sensitive as well as more involved with activities or programmes that were related to these two domains. Further, the programme itself is rich with activities that are related to career possibilities as well as opportunities for interaction and social relationships. With the adolescent sensitive to career and interpersonal issues, and the programme itself more focused on these two domains, the ARP programme was able to influence positively, that is enhancing participants towards identity achievement, in these two domains.

Most of the adolescents in the study were either preparing for their *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* or their *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia*, and thus were probably very concerned of their career plans after their examinations. In relation to

this, within the context of the ARP programme, there are many opportunities to learn skills that may be useful in finding jobs later, for example in radio repairing or tailoring. Thus, the ARP programme probably helped significantly influence abilities to build a clearer career identity for the ARP participants.

The ARP pogramme also has strong interpersonal content in that there are many opportunities for the participants not only to interact with peers, but also with instructors, teachers, community leaders, government officials and other adults. Thus the ARP programme probably helped to build a clearer interpersonal identity in the ARP participants.

The political and religious sub-scores were not affected by the programme. This is not surprising, as the programme has no religious or political content. Also, religion has often been considered to be the domain of influence of the family and religious teachers, and thus probably, the programme was unable to influence religious identity. Further, the programme is strictly non-political, and thus was unable to significantly influence the political identity of the participants. While those who were longer in the programme were significantly closer to achievement than those that had just joined, this may be due to interactions with government officials and politicians which might have indirectly made them more aware of political and policy issues especially those more related to their projects or their career, for example youth policy, health policies or environment policies.

When those who had just joined the programme (that is 1-4 months), were compared to the non-ARP group, the difference in means of the overall identity score was significant, with the ARP group being closer to achieved status. There are two possible explanations. One possible explanation was the early effects of the programme. Another possible explanation was the very characteristics of the participants who had chosen to participate in the programme.

Before a participant even registers in the programme, he is briefed thoroughly on the objectives, structure and activities of the ARP programme. Often short courses are held to explain, to groups who are interested to participate, all the various aspects of the programme. By the time the participant actually registers, he has probably already chosen the skills or activity in the four areas of the programme, the specific goals for each of the skills or activity and the action plan to achieve those goals in the required period. This early process of exploring alternatives and making choices, may have helped facilitate the identity development process, thus the early participants were already significantly at a higher identity level than the non-ARP group.

The second possibility is the nature and characteristics of the adolescents who had chosen to participate in the ARP programme. Adolescence is often viewed by psychodynamic theorists, as a period of adjustment, leading the individual to adulthood (Muuss, 1968). According to them, the quality of coping during the adolescent years determines to a significant extent how well the person will adapt to

adulthood roles and responsibilities. In this context, it is suggested that only adolescents already having more effective coping skills and who are confident to take risks, take the initiative to participate in a programme like the ARP programme. It is possible that those who have poor coping skills or lack the confidence may simply keep away from any developmental programme.

It should also be noted that the sample in the ARP group were in fact not a random sample of the overall ARP participants. They were in fact considered by the secretariat as the more active groups in the country. Thus the non-randomness of the ARP sample may have given added optimistic results.

Markstrom Adams et.al. (1993) contend that the identity crises is viewed by Erikson as resolved in either an active or passive form. The passive form is generally viewed as acceptance of an unexplored form of role confusion (diffusion) or a foreclosed acceptance of others' choices and expectations. The active form is volitional in nature with exploration and commitment processes underlying identity formation. For Erikson, a healthy personality is based on an active form of identity formation. Identity development that is based on the active mastery of the environment, autonomous and independent functioning, and congruence between what one wants to be and the acceptance by significant others, is viewed as a positive identity resolution (Markstrom Adams et. al., 1993). Thus the ARP programme can be viewed as an active form of identity formation. Firstly, it involves an active attempt

to control one's own environment. Further, the participant often acts independently to set and achieve targets. Also, he often has to seek a balance between his own interests, needs and preferences and that of significant others, which could be his parents or the course facilitator. Again these processes can be viewed as an active process towards positive identity formation.

The early researchers such as Freud, Asubel and McCandless had suggested that the primary determinant of adolescent behaviour was genetic factors. While not denying the role of the genetic component in influencing behaviour, Erikson added that the individual's culture would influence the ways in which one thinks and behaves. Thus Erikson gave rise to the possibility that the external environment could influence adolescent development.

Further, according to Erikson, to establish identity requires individual effort in evaluating one's self and learning to use that knowledge to achieve a clearer concept of who one is and what one wants to be and become. He adds that during adolescence, there must be an integration of all converging elements and resolution of several conflicts. The resolution of these conflicts would lead to the development of time realisation and management, clear goals, self-confidence, role experimentation, seeking career alternatives, understanding one's sex roles, building relationships, leadership and commitment to values. If these conflicts can be resolved positively, he claims that a firm identity emerges.

It appears that the ARP programme creates the environment for the positive resolution of these conflicts. Through the programme, participants need to set goals, manage their time between school work, family life and programme demands and experiment with differing choices. It also helps one to interact better with others. From the results, ARP participants have significantly higher self-esteem, social responsibility, goal-setting skills and with increasing participation a more liberal attitude towards authority compared to non-ARP participants. It is thus suggested that ARP helps enhance one's identity level by contributing to resolve conflicts faced by adolescents.

The need for experimentation in a risk-free environment is supported by other researchers. Rapoport (1989) suggests that adolescents should be allowed to experiment freely with different aspects of social reality while being relieved of full adult obligations and responsibilities. Coleman (1974) emphasises the importance of encouraging a wide variety of environment for youth as possible to facilitate their development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that human development is facilitated through interactions with persons who occupy a variety of roles and through participation in an ever-broadening variety of roles.

Having the time to experiment with roles is an important prelude to establishing a coherent sense of identity. But role experimentation can take place only in an environment that allows and encourages it. Without a period of moratorium, a full and

thorough exploration of the options and alternatives cannot take place, and identity development will be impeded. In other words, according to Erikson, adolescents must grow into adulthood, not be forced into it prematurely.

According to Erikson, without a chance to explore, to experiment and to choose among options for the future, young people may not realise all that they are capable of becoming, that is they may not reach their fullest potential (Steinberg, 1993).

It is suggested that the ARP programme provides such a context for identity development. It provides a risk-free environment for experimentation, opportunity for a wide variety of roles such as learners, helpers, leaders and sportsmen, and interaction with people with a wide variety of roles such as teachers, parents, government officials and community leaders. Thus it is suggested that when a context of this nature is provided, identity development is facilitated towards achievement.

However as Erikson had noted, a comprehensive understanding of identity development must take into consideration the domains of one's career; one's ideologies; one's philosophy of life' one's ethical capacities; one's sexuality: the personal meaning of one's gender, ethnicity and nationality; and one's relationship to "an all-inclusive human identity" (Waterman, 1992). In this concept, it is clear that a programme such as ARP has limitations. While the ARP may influence certain domains, it hardly influences or has no effect on other domains. The results from this

study for example indicate influence in career and interpersonal domains but limited influence on the religious and political domains. Thus ARP can make a contribution towards identity development but other conditions such as family style, cognitive capacity, ethnic membership and religiosity (Markstrom-Adams, 1992) are all factors that could impact in a dynamic manner on the development of identity in adolescents.

6.2 Correlation of Adolescent Identity Development and other Psychological Variables

Based on the content and structure of the ARP programme, it was suggested that the psychological variables most probably affected by the programme were self-esteem, social responsibility, attitude towards authority, social skills and goal-setting behaviour.

The Pearson correlation analysis in the study has indicated that for the ARP participants there were indeed positive correlations between identity score and self-esteem, social responsibility, social skills and goal-setting behaviour. That is to say, those who were closer to identity achievement scored significantly higher on self-esteem, social responsibility, social skills and goal-setting behaviour. There was no significant correlation between the identity score and attitude towards authority. In the non-ARP group, however, there were no significant correlations between identity score and any of the psychological variables.

Read, Adams and Dobson (1984) have indicated that advanced ego-identity statuses were associated with more complex personality attributes reflected in such characteristics as self-esteem, locus of control, moral reasoning and ego development. They categorised identity achievement and moratorium as advanced statuses. For Read, Adams and Dobson, conclusions from numerous studies suggest that identity achievement and moratorium males maintain more psychological maturity than found for diffusion or foreclosure males. They admit however, that considerable debate exists on status comparison for females. Meeus (1992) had even gone so far as to say that identity achievers were prototypes of healthy development.

Waterman (1992) suggests that a sense of personal identity constitutes an aspect of optimal psychological functioning. He further suggests four criteria as to what constitutes optimal psychological functioning. To be deemed optimal, psychological qualities should contribute to personal well-being, realisation of goals held by individuals, social acceptance and the realisation of goals deemed valuable within the societal context. The variables related to personal well-being were self-esteem, happiness, and anxiety. The variables related to goal-directed activity were goal-setting, sophistication of cognitive functioning, and beliefs about personal responsibility. The variable related to social acceptance was social attractiveness. Finally, the variables related to goals deemed valuable by society were attitude towards authority, social responsibility and capacity for intimacy.

He reports that past research indicates positive correlations between the strength of personal identity and self-esteem, lower levels of emotional stress, goal-setting behaviour, locus of control, social attractiveness, attitude towards authority, social responsibility and social skills. Other researchers have also supported these relationships (Prager, 1992; Neuber and Genthner, 1977; Adams and Shea, 1979; Dellas and Jernigan, 1987; Orlofsky et. al, 1973; Donovan, 1975; Slugoski et. al. 1984; Walter and Stivers, 1977; Marcia, 1966; Rothman, 1984; Akhtar, 1984; Makstrom-Adams, 1992).

This empirical study generally supports Waterman's model. In the context of personal well-being, there was a relationship between higher identity levels and higher self-esteem. In the context of goal-directed activity, there was a relationship between higher identity levels and higher goal-setting behaviour. In the context of social acceptance, while no study was done with the variable of social attractiveness, the relationship between identity and social skills was studied. The relationship, however, appeared to be insignificant. In the context of goals deemed valuable by society, there was a relationship between higher identity levels and higher levels of social responsibility. Thus generally, Waterman's model of personal identity and psychological functioning was supported by the data.

Further the t-test for difference of means for three analyses, that is, the non-ARP versus the entire ARP group, those who had just joined the programme (less

than 4 months) versus the non-ARP group, and the non-ARP group versus those who had been longer in the programme (that is 6-30 months), are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Comparison of Results from 3 analysis: Total ARP group versus non-ARP group; Involved for 1-4 months versus non-ARP group; Involved 6-30 months versus non-ARP group

Variables	ARP vs. Non-ARP	1-4 mths vs. Non-ARP	6-30 mths vs Non-ARP
Self-esteem	Sig.	Nil	Sig
Social Responsibility	Sig.	Nil	Sig
Attitude towards Authority	Nil	Nil	Sig
Social Skills	Nil	Nil	Nil
Goal Setting	Sig.	Nil	Sig

Sig. - Significant: Nil - Not-significant

Firstly, when the ARP group that had just joined the programme (that is less than 4 months) was compared to the non-ARP group, none of the psychological variables were significantly different. This means that the level of the psychological variables of the non-ARP group was similar to those who had just joined the programme. Secondly, when the non-ARP group was compared to the entire ARP group, all the psychological variable scores except social skills and attitude towards authority of the ARP group were significantly higher. Further, when the non-ARP group was compared to only those who had been in the programme for a longer period, that is at least 6 months, and thus more affected by the programme, there was a similar pattern, that is to say the ARP group continued to have significantly higher scores on self-esteem, social responsibility and goal-setting behaviour compared to the non-ARP group. However this time, attitude towards authority which had not been

significant earlier was now also significantly higher, that is those who had been longer in the programme were now more liberal towards authoritarianism. Only, the social skills score continued to be not significantly different.

This indicates that the ARP programme may have at least in some ways benefited the participants by helping to enhance their self-esteem, social responsibility, goal-setting behaviour and with increasing participation also their attitude towards authority.

It is suggested that ARP could have helped to enhance the psychological variables through creating an environment, through interactions with peers and adults as well as through the activities and programmes.

It is suggested that ARP has influenced the improvement of self-esteem, social responsibility, attitude towards authority and goal-setting behaviour. Self-esteem probably improved as the result of the process of setting goals and achieving continuous improvements towards those goals. Also, continuous interactions with peers and elders in a supportive atmosphere may have helped to improve one's self-esteem. Social responsibility probably improved as a result of being made more aware and sensitive to the plight of the poor and disabled through the programme. Learning of service skills such as first aid, life-saving, counselling or helping the old or disabled as well as actually being involved in service programmes such as community

development for the poor or providing service for the old or disabled or those in hospitals may have served to build a greater sense of social responsibility in the participants. Greater liberalisation towards authoritarianism was probably influenced by the flexible nature of management of the project. There was a high degree of spirit of volunteerism from the participants themselves as well as the programme facilitators and the instructors. Flexible management indicated that force or coercion is not always necessary to get the best out of the participants. Thus the liberal use of authority has its strengths in getting the best out of the participants. Goal-directed behaviour improved probably by the very nature of the programme, where goal-setting is such a critical component. The participants are expected almost immediately when they register for the programme, to identify their areas of interests, be aware of their capabilities as well as their potentials, then based on their interests and potentials to honestly set goals to reach their highest potentials within the time frame, taking into consideration the alternatives available. Further, within the context of the programme, they have to plan action schedules to reach those targets. This probably helps to enhance goal-setting behaviours in participants.

Social skills scores were not affected by the ARP programme. It is suggested here that the test design may have been weak and only measured conservative socially appropriate behaviour such as "Being well mannered and behaving properly in social situations" and "Dressing and acting in a way that is appropriate to the occasion". In the context of this programme, the more relevant social skills are probably items

related to starting and developing relationships, maintaining relationships, seeking advice, handling conflicts and listening skills.

Additionally, a regression analysis was done on the ARP group to ascertain which of the psychological variables contributed most to the variance of the identity scores. Interestingly, the variable that contributed most to the variance of identity scores was goal-setting. While the other variables, that is self-esteem, social responsibility, social skills and attitude towards authority, may be more difficult to teach or instill in adolescents, goal-setting is a skill that can be imparted with greater ease through formal or informal training. What is important is that its impact on developing the individual's personal identity, relative to other variables, was the greatest.

One way to overcome self-imposed limitations is to set challenging goals (Sacczzo & Ingram, 1993). ARP provides many opportunities in each of the four areas (that is community services, recreation and expeditions, skills and innovations and sports and culture) to set challenging goals to overcome self-imposed limitations. Through goal-setting, adolescents can be encouraged to stretch beyond their presently imposed limitations, and reach their fullest potentials (Saccuzzo & Ingram, 1993).

6.3 Demographic variables and Identity Formation

6.3.1 Gender and Identity Development

In this study, there were no significant differences between gender, not only in the overall identity score but also in all the domains, indicating that for this sample at least, the identity development processes may be similar for both male and female participants.

While many theorists have suggested that males and females address the identity tasks differently, research findings have not been entirely consistent. Archer (1989) in her study found males more foreclosed and females diffused in the political domain while females were more in the moratorium and identity achieved status in the domain of family values. In a study on males and female air force cadets, Dellas and Jerningan (1987) found males and females to be in different identity statuses. For example, they found more females in the moratorium status. They attributed the greater percentage of women in the moratorium status in their study to uncertainties regarding their entrance to a career not previously available to women. Ginsburg and Orlofsky (1981) have suggested that for females, foreclosure rather than moratorium was closer to identity achievement. According to them, past research has shown that women achievers and foreclosures have scored more internal in locus of control , more field independent and have conformed less to peer pressure than their moratorium and diffusion counterparts. Thus, for women they suggest that foreclosure rather that moratorium is closer to identity achievement .

Thus, while there appears to be suggestions that identity formation may be different for males and females, past findings have not given clear and consistent results as to the nature of these differences. In this study the lack of significant difference in identity scores between the male and female participants may be due to the sample itself. At this age it is possible that gender is not yet a significant factor in identity formation. Archer (1989) reports that from her three studies, she found male and female adolescents used the identity processes similarly. She had defined process as "particular identity status representing an individual's approach to one's self-definition". In her studies both gender, established commitments without the benefit of exploration of alternatives or demonstrated a lack of investment in identity formation. She added that for both males and females there were few instances of sophisticated decision making in arriving at their self-definitions.

6.3.2 Race and Identity Development

Streitmatter (1988) admits that very little research has been done that examined the relationship of identity status and race or ethnicity. In his study he compared the identity formation of whites and others, which included Hispanics, Blacks, native Americans and Asians in the domains of occupation, politics, religion, dating, sex-roles and recreation. He found significant measures in the foreclosure status only. Specifically, on both ideological and interpersonal domains, he found the minorities to be significantly more foreclosed than their non-minority counterparts. However, it should be noted that his study was done in a mandatory desegregation zone, where

bussing was being undertaken. Thus, there may have been many other influences on the results. This study may have limited significance in the local context. However, it is important as one of the few studies investigating the influence of race on identity formation.

In the present study undertaken, the identity formation of Malay (total of 149) participants was compared to that of Chinese (total of 24) participants. There was no significant difference in the overall identity score. However, there were significant differences in the religious and interpersonal sub-scores. More specifically, the Malays were closer to identity achievement than the Chinese in the religious domain, while the Chinese were closer to identity achievement than the Malays in the interpersonal domain.

It should be noted, however, that the Chinese constituted just 13% of the sample, and that a very small proportion of the overall ARP participants were in fact non-Malays. While the data generally does not support the theory that ethnicity influences identity development differently for the different groups, a more equal sample is needed to make more definitive conclusions.

6.3.3 Age and Identity Development

Streitmater (1988), in comparing 13 year olds and 14 year olds in the ideological and interpersonal domains, found that 14 year olds were more mature than 13 year olds. For measures of advanced identity status, that is achievement and moratorium, the 14 year olds were significantly higher in identity status than the 13 year olds, and for measures of unsophisticated identity statuses, that is diffusion and foreclosure, the 13 years olds were closer to diffusion and foreclosure (lower statuses) than that of the 14 year olds. Streitmatter suggests that these findings support Erikson's theoretical notion that advancing age is conducive to a stable identity.

A summary of the results of the study is tabulated as follows:

Table 6.3: Comparison of results of 3 analysis: Age 14-15 versus 19-21 years old; Age 14-15 versus 16-18 years old; Age 16-18 versus 19-21 years old

Variables	Age 14-15 vs. 19-21	Age 14-15 vs 16-18	Age 16-18 vs. 19-21
Career	Sig.	Nil	Sig.
Political	Sig.	Nil	Sig.
Religious	Sig.	Nil	Sig.
Interpersonal	Sig.	Nil	Sig.
Identity Development Score	Sig.	Nil	Sig.

Sig. means Significant; Nil means Not Significant

The research undertaken supports Erikson's view. In the research undertaken, the 19-21 year olds were closer to identity achievement in the overall identity score as well as in the career, political, religious and interpersonal domains as compared to the 14-15 year olds. Further, when those in the 14-15 year group were compared to the

16-18 year group, there was no significant difference in both the overall identity score as well as all the sub-scores. However, when the 16-18 year olds were compared to the 19-21 year olds, all the scores became significantly different, that is the 19-21 year olds were significantly closer to identity achievement than the 16-18 year olds in both the overall identity score as well as in all the domains. It is possible that there is an active maturational process in the ages of 19 to 21 for the sample studied.

Thus the results strongly suggest that identity development does advance with age. This trend was probably supported by increasing experiences, enhanced cognitive abilities and increasing confidence to make decisions and commitments. In discussing the relationship of age and identity development, Archer and Waterman(1983) suggest that we are initially diffuse. We have not had the experience, motivation or cognitive abilities to become committed to particular life goals until early or mid-adolescence. At that age perhaps we make our first tentative commitments as foreclosures, usually based upon the preferences of parents or significant others. With exposure to increasing experiences, we begin to examine alternatives as moratariums, and if it feels comfortable, choose from among those alternativs and implement a commitment as an identity achiever.

The results of the study have generally indicated that ARP possibly influences identity development, enhancing the identity development of participants towards identity achievement. This may have been made possible through the risk-free

environment which provides wide opportunities for exploration and commitment as well as opportunities for interactions with a wide variety of people in various roles made available to participants within the context of the ARP programme. Such a context probably influences positively the identity development of the individual.

However, overall identity development of an individual is a far more complex construct. Other factors that possibly influence its formation and development include one's family relationships, ethnic membership and one's religiousity. That is the ARP may not provide a comprehensive influence on the identity development of the individual. In the context of the study, two possible areas that show ARP has having some influence are the career and interpersonal domains, where the empirical results have been relatively consistent.

Additionally, one needs to review the research design in generalising the results of the study. Two important elements of the design are sample selection for the study as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the identity development measure that was developed and used for the first time in this study.

6.4 Limitations

6.4.1 Post-test Design

The study was based on the post-test only control group design. There were two groups in the study, the ARP and non-ARP group. As it was not possible to assign

the respondents to the two groups randomly, this was only a Quasi-experimental design.

To ascertain the generalizability of the study, the selection of the samples as well as the questionnaire developed to measure identity development need to be further explained.

6.4.2 Sample Selection

One of the constraints of the study was that it was undertaken when the momentum and the impact of the programme was decreasing, and as it was being replaced by another programme, that is the *Rakan Muda* programme. Thus, there were only pockets of groups in the country where the ARP programme was still being pursued with some vigour. Thus, there were too few groups to choose the sample from.

The samples chosen may have been the more active groups, compared to the others. Conversely, they too may have been influenced by the slow-down of the overall programme, and were thus not as dynamic or active as they would have been had the study been conducted when the programme had been promoted and implemented more aggressively. Based on observation, it was felt that even these groups in the sample had been affected negatively by the slow-down of the programme. Enthusiasm and interest were clearly waning, and often ARP participants themselves were more keen to inquire about the *Rakan Muda* programme, rather than

the continuation and growth of the ARP programme itself. It appears that the media blitz on the *Rakan Muda* programme had generated tremendous enthusiasm and expectations.

Further, the selection of groups of participants identified by the programme secretariat as the more active, may have resulted in a sample that was not truly representative of the ARP population. Thus, the generalizability of the results to the population is limited.

6.4.3 Questionnaire Development

One of the most challenging tasks in the study was the development of the instrument to measure identity status. While Marcia and earlier researchers had used semi-structured interviews, it was felt that it was inappropriate as the respondents' answers had to be fairly narrow and specific to ascertain their status level. Moreover, the results would be too much subject to the interviewers' interpretation. More importantly, such a technique would be difficult to use on a large sample.

Dellas and Jernigan (1987) used the Dellas Identity Status Inventory-Occupation (DISI-O), while Streitmatter (1988) used the Extended Objective Measure of Identity Status (EOM-EIS) instrument to assess the identity statuses of adolescents. The significant element of these later measures were that they were objective and self-administered.

As it was not possible to obtain a copy of the EOM-EIS instrument, the researcher developed his own instrument, based on similar principles. Identity development is indeed a complex construct, thus developing an instrument to measure it was indeed an extremely challenging task. Different researchers (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966; Schlenker, 1985; Grotevant, 1987; Berzonsky., 1992; Waterman, 1984) have approached identity development differently. However, for the purpose of this study, the identity status model developed by Marcia and used by most researchers in various formats was used in the questionnaire design as it allowed the identity construct to be operationalised for the purposes of research and measurement.

Though the overall score was reliable, the identity measure had its strengths and weaknesses. Its primary strength was its ability to differentiate the identity levels between the ARP and non-ARP groups. On certain sub-scales, that is career and interpersonal, it was able to show significant improvement over time. It also showed consistently that religion was unaffected by the programme. On the other hand, the weakness of the scale was its inability to distinguish between the four different status levels, diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement, of the participants. It showed too strong a bias towards the higher status levels, that is moratorium and achievement. Even so, it is suggested that the scale expressed an acceptable representation of the differences between the identity levels of ARP and non-ARP groups.

However, it is felt that many more retests need to be done to refine the instrument. The purpose of more tests is to develop and refine new appropriate and valid items to more specifically measure the identity statuses of the individual.

6.5 Conclusion

Chiam and Nik Aziz Pa (1982) in their study on the profile of local adolescents found them to be timid, shy, easily embarrassed and lacking in self-confidence. In another study on drug-abusers, Chiam (1993) found them to be low in self reliance, easily influenced by peers, not having any direction and aim in life and lacking in self-control. She adds that adolescence is a period for the young to search for self-identity and the philosophy of life. These are among the main developmental tasks of adolescents because at this stage of their lives, they should have the mental, biological and emotional maturity to prepare for adulthood by setting goals for themselves. Further, without self-discipline and self-reliance, adolescents will be unable to resolve the identity crises and become productive citizens (Chiam, 1993).

Further, Malaysian adolescents are also facing crime and drug problems. In 1991, there were 1,892 arrests of juvenile delinquents (New Straits Times, 12 May 1993). In 1992, according to the Drug Report of the Anti-Drug Task Force, there were more than 17,000 drug addicts in Malaysia, in the age range of 20 to 39 years.

It was thus felt that there was a need for concrete adolescent development programmes to fulfill two developmental needs; firstly, as preventive programmes against delinquency and other social problems and secondly, to equip adolescents with the right attitude, knowledge and skills to play a more effective role in society.

One such developmental programme for young people is the Premier Youth Award Programme (ARP). Introduced in 1992, the programme aims to introduce young people to worthwhile voluntary activities, provide young people with opportunities to learn about responsibility, self-reliance, perseverance, challenge and personal achievement, to widen their horizons as well as help them become mature responsible members of society.

Erikson (1968) views adolescence as a major junction in life when young people focus intensive energy on issues of self-definition. If identity formation occurs optimally, subjectively, there should be a sense of well-being. "Its most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of knowing where one is going and an inner assuredeness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson, 1968).

Building upon Erikson's work, Marcia (1966) developed the identity status approach to the process of identity formation. Marcia's four identity statuses occupy unique positions along the dimensions of exploration and commitment. The four

statuses are identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and identity achievement. Identity achievement represents an autonomous resolution of identity, incorporating a set of commitments adopted during a period of exploration (moratorium). Meeus (1992) adds that identity achievers posses a positive image, are cognitively flexible and independent, adhere to noble moral principles and reject authoritarianism. They perform well at school. Their engagement in relationships runs smoothly. Meuss says that identity achievers are prototypes of healthy development.

Further, Waterman (1992) suggests that a sense of personal identity constitutes an aspect of optimal psychological functioning. To be deemed optimal, psychological qualities should contribute to personal well-being, realisation of goals held by individuals, social acceptance and realisation of goals deemed valuable with the societal context.

The ARP programme which is concerned with individual challenge, personal discovery, growth, self-reliance, perseverance, personal responsibility, new experiences, building competence, autonomy and working with others fosters the right environment for exploration and commitment which could possibly enhance the process of identity development in adolescents.

Waterman (1992) suggests that intervention strategies that promote the consideration of identity alternatives (exploration) and the formation of identity

commitments could facilitate the development of optimal psychological functioning along a variety of dimensions. Archer (1992) adds that it is healthy for adolescents to examine alternatives and make changes as needed. The purpose of identity intervention strategies is to provide youths with the tools to enhance their ability to adjust to changing conditions, and to define and develop various components of one's self as needed (Archer, 1989).

While the ARP was never developed specifically as an identity development programme, nevertheless, it has many characteristics that indicate that through the two dimensions of exploration and commitment, it could possible influence identity development. Thus, the aim of this study was to determine the influence of the ARP programme on adolescent identity development. Additionally, the relationship of self-esteem, social responsibility, attitude towards authority, social skills and goal-setting behaviour and identity development was also considered.

The results indicated that indeed the ARP participants were at a higher identity level, that is to say closer to identity achievement than the non-ARP group. Thus, the ARP programme has enhanced the identity development of participants closer towards identity achievement. Thus, ARP can be considered one form of intervention strategy to enhance identity formation.

When the non-ARP group was compared with those who had just joined the programme, there were already significant differences, that is to say, those who had just joined the programme, were already significantly closer to identity achievement than the non-ARP group. This could mean that those who joined the programme were already in the higher identity levels compared to the non-ARP group. It also implies that those in the lower levels of identity formation were not participating in the programme. This group, that is those in the lower levels of identity development, would probably benefit more from a programme, such as the ARP programme. Thus it may be interesting to implement this programme amongst a greater number of youths, who may not be so keen to participate. This could possibly be done with better promotion of the programme such as ARP or programmes similar to ARP such as the *Rakan Muda* programme.

Thus ARP, though a programme not specifically designed for the process of identity development, it nonetheless appears to positively facilitate identity development of adolescents towards identity achievement. Thus, any adolescent development programme, with similar objectives and structure, may also be able to facilitate the positive development of adolescent identity. In this context, it would be interesting to study the influence of the new *Rakan Muda* programme, or for that matter any other adolescent development programme.

The results also indicated that the strength of identity was related to higher self-esteem levels, higher social responsibility, a more liberal attitude towards authoritarianism and improved goal setting behaviour. No relationship was found between identity and social skills. Further, through regression analysis, it was found that of all the variables, goal-setting contributed the most towards identity development.

This has important implications for adolescent development programmes. It appears that goal-setting had the greatest impact on identity development. Fortunately, goal setting is a skill that can possibly be more easily imparted compared to the other psychological variables. Saccuzzo and Ingram (1993) suggest that goals allow a person to act in a relatively consistent and coherent way over a long period of time without an immediate reward or inducement. Goals provide guidelines for behaviour and help prevent one from acting aimlessly. When one sets a goal, one is hoping to achieve one's objectives some time in the future. Also, one is forcing oneself to stretch beyond one's imposed limitations.

Thus, the ARP or any programme that could enhance identity development, increases the possibility of developing and nurturing young people who have a personal sense of well-being, can interact more effectively with others and have greater sense of social responsibility to contribute better towards nation-building.