Bullied, Blamed, Broken: The Impact of Victim Blame on Bullied Adolescents' Ego Establishment

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ABSTRACT

School bullying is widely recognized as a significant social issue. Past studies have discovered a potential connection between school bullying and identity crisis, drawing from Erik Erikson's theory about psychological developmental stages. However, there is a dearth of research examining the possible influence of victim blame on bullied students' identity formation during adolescence, especially with sufficient quantitative evidence. Addressing this research gap, the current study aims to investigate the correlation between victim blame and bullied students' identity crisis with quantitative measures. To comprehensively analyze the relationship between these three factors, this research focuses on the following question: How does victim blame impact the establishment of ego in bullied adolescents? To answer this question, data was collected from participants with high school experience and classifying them into control and treatment groups. research tools were employed simultaneously: James E. Cote's identity crisis modality model, Erik Erikson's theory about psychological growth phases, and a quantitative survey consisting of close-ended questions. The findings reveal that most participants in the treatment group exhibited a sharp increase in identity crisis levels during adolescence, accompanied by frequent acute fluctuations in identity crisis level. This period also coincides with their experience of both victim blame and school bullying. Furthermore, the results demonstrate a positive correlation between victim blame and bullied students' identity crisis. This research offers fresh insight to the psychology of bullied adolescent students, and future studies should aim to expand the scope of inquiry into the process of identity formation.

Introduction

One out of 5 American students had been bullied, which means about 20% of the total schooling age population experienced school bullying (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2019). Despite efforts to prevent school bullying, it remains highly prevalent in America and across the globe. School bullying, defined as any offensive behavior by a youth or a group of youths that results from an unequal power distribution and occurs with high frequency or likelihood of repetition, has serious long-term effects on its victims (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014). For instance, victims are more likely to experience dissatisfactory academic outcome, higher droup-out rate, and depressive symptoms (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019). Among these, the psychological impact is the most significant, with bullied students showing a 27% decrease in self-confidence (ED, 2019).

Subsequently, numerous scholars have focused on the psychological influence of school bullying, as well as other subsequent incidents, such as victim blame.

Victim blame refers to the belief held by a person or a group of people that the victim(s) of a crime should take responsibility for the incident they experienced (The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime(Centre Canadien De Ressources Pour Les Victimes De Crimes) [CRCVC], 2016). This topic has garnered increased attention due to its serious consequence. By marginalizing the victims, victim blame can result in additional trauma with the victim normalizing the crime, thereby preventing victims from reporting (Koppenhafer, 2021).

Furthermore, victim blame exacerbates the harm caused by the incident through moral censure and other means. Based on the research of Dr. Anju Hurria (Schroeder, 2016), who is a psychiatrist and clinical assistant professor for juveniles' psychiatry at the University of California-Irvine, victim blame is a type of secondary trauma that can lead to increased depressive and anxious symptoms, suicide tendency, and worsened post-traumatic stress disorder. Overall, victim blame amplifies the impact of school bullying.

The objective of this research is to study victim blame and school bulling by collecting quantitative evidence about the long-run identity formation of victims. This study will focus specifically on the adolescent stage, which Erik Erikson's study (1997) identified as the crucial period for identity formation.

The prevalence of cases involving victim blame and school bullying is a primary stake for this research. For instance, a resilience coach in a top private school once stated that bullied children should bear some responsibility themselves, and this belief is not an uncommon cultural phenomenon, as biased criticisms toward vulnerable groups persist to various degree (Hunt, 2016). With the prevalence of social media, victims are more exposed to such statements, while the opportunity cost of online bullying becomes lower. This can significantly influence bullied students' identity formation, thereby making this issue worse.

Literature Review

Copious studies have explored the potential influence of school bullying on its victims; however, few have specifically focused on Erik Erikson's theory (1997). Erikson's theory proposed eight psychological phrases in an indual's life—trust vs. distrust; independent will vs. abashment and suspicion; proactivity vs. guilt; diligent vs. self-abasement; identity vs. identity confusion; familiarity vs. marginalization; breeding vs. self-absorption; and self-cognition vs. regret—that are the product of the surrounding environment (Kivnick & Wells, 2014; Knight, 2017; Orenstein & Lewis, 2020). Erikson (1997) offers a concise definition of identity in *A Life Cycle Completed*, defining identity as a structural principal which expands consistently in one's lifetime. Erikson's theory, unlike other studies that discuss the ego establishment, provides corresponding age ranges for specific stages, such as adolescent hood for identity formation.

According to A Life Cycle Completed, identity is established through intimacy, which allows adolescents, aged ten to nineteen years old (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019), to shape and share their identities with friends. In contrast, identity conflict arises when teenagers face isolation, leading to doubts about their identity and potentially damaging their future ego establishments. While Erikson purposes a compelling argument, it remains challenging to select quantitative measure for studying identity formation.

One study conducted by James E. Cote (1986) sheds light on the measurement of identity crisis, providing valuable insights into the trends of identity formation due to their inverse characteristics. According to Cole's model, identity crisis is assessed based on four criteria:

1.   Disobeying requests from parents;
2.   Feeling confused about life and don't have any plan for the future;
3.   Feeling unsure about one's own belief;
4.   Feeling hateful that one has to be part of the society.

Meanwhile, Cote addresses a concern raised by Roazen (1976), which suggests that in Erikson's theory, there are many ambiguous terminologies that make it difficult to identify suitable descriptions. Therefore, it becomes necessary to select specific aspects of the identity formation for analysis. Cote chose to examine the participants' degree of identity crisis within different periods. Figure 1 illustrates the corresponding digital values for each degree of crisis. This model was selected for the current research due to its ability to capture the prolonged process of ego establishment, allowing for the collection of long-term data. An abbreviated version of the model is presented below.

The model enables participants to select a degree that represents their identity formation during different periods, resulting in a curve that symbolizes the participants' journey of identity formation. This curve provides valuable insights for further studies on the long-run effect of the victim blame. According to Cote, he had validated his model by comparing with the other charts (Rasmussen, 1964; Byrd, 1971; Marcia, 1964), and the overall results were aligned with those of previous studies.

Cote's model offers a quantitative measure of identity formation by capturing the tendency of identity crisis, while Bogaerts et al. (2021) suggest that there may be differences among individuals. Figure 2 depicts a sexual difference in identity formation. Most females reported a visibly higher level of identity confusion compare to males, except during the age range of 19 to 21 years old. Although boys exhibit a lesser degree of identity confusion, their trend aligns with that of girls.

Identity Crisis Modality													
I. Acting against parent's wishes													
	Age												
	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
[6] Extreme													
[4] Considerable													
[2] A little													
[0] Not at all													

II. Feeling at a loss what to do with life													
	Age												
	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
Extreme													
Considerable													
A little													
Not at all													

III. Feeling uncertain about what to believe in													
	Age												
	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
Extreme													
Considerable													
A little													
Not at all													

IV. Feeling Resentment that about Having to Fit in as a Member of the Society													
	Age												
	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36
Extreme													
Considerable													
A little													
Not at all													

Figure 1. The identity crisis modality model by Cote (1986)
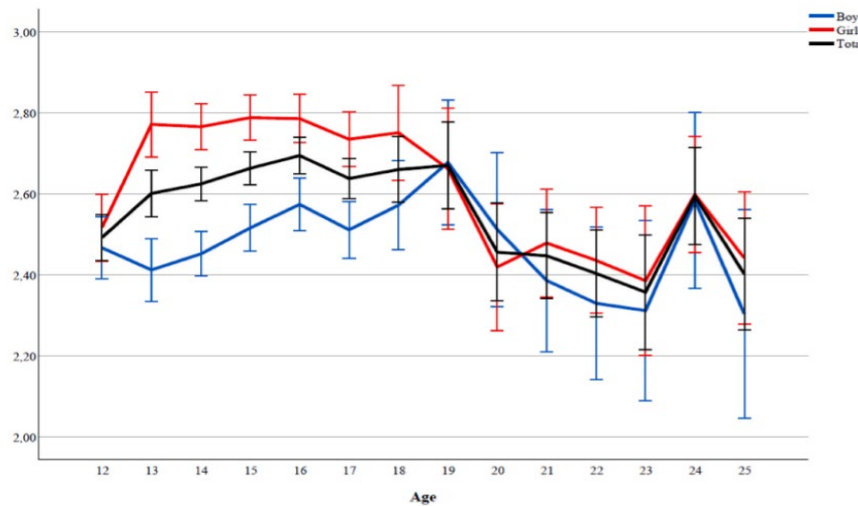
Figure 2.Degrees of identity confusion among males and females (Bogaerts, et al., 2021)

The study explored the ego establishment process among teenagers, and its association with gender, aging, and possible depressive symptoms. Data was collected from 5860 Belgian adolescents that age 12 to 25 with 56.1% of girls and 43.9% of boys. A smaller sample of 2,782 participants from the major group was used to study the connection between depressive symptoms and role formation. The participants completed Erikson's identity subscale and a self-checklist measuring depressive symptoms. The results indicated a negative correlation between identity synthesis and depressive symptoms, suggesting that role confusion is more likely to lead to an increase in depressive symptoms. The research finding, particularly the sexual difference in identity synthesis, highlights the importance of considering gender when interpreting different trends in identity confusion or evaluating the consequences of identity conflict.

The study of identity crisis, as suggested by the research question, may have a correlation with school bullying and victim blaming. A study conducted by Samantha Salmon et al. (2018) offers background information on the current school bullying situation, focusing on nine types of school bullying and their associated factors:

1. physical harm;
2. the physical bullying with a weapon;
3. verbal bullying;
4. verbal bullying with cultural or racial discrimination;
5. verbal bullying with a taunt on gender identity;
6. verbal bullying with body shame;
7. cyberbullying;
8. personal information leakage on the internet;
9. feeling insecure when communicating with people on the internet.

Using a cross-sectional survey, data was collected from 64174 middle and high school students, with 51.3% boys and 48.7% girls, in grades 7 to 12. The result was categorized based on the participants' gender, grades, religion, region, etc. It was found that 33.8% of male students reported being verbally insulted at least once in the previous year, 21.5% for verbal bullying with cultural or racial discrimination. Among female students, the most prevalent bullying victimization is body shame, reported by 46.8% of the participants. After correcting for school, grade, and region, female students generally demonstrate a higher trend of experiencing all nine types of school victimization, except physical harm. These findings highlight the widespread occurrence of school bullying and the contribution of different factors to various types of bullying, acting as initial motivators.

Among the studies focusing on school bullying, victim blaming, and identity formation separately, Sanchez's capstone paper (2019) stands out as the one that truly combines the problem of school bullying with identity formation and examines their intercorrelation. Through the analysis of the impact of school bullying upon adolescents, the author reaches an abstract but innovative conclusion. Due to school bullying, bullied students are more likely to feel insecure and lack of a sense of belonging. As a result, there may be a negative correlation between school bullying and identity formation, since the author postulates that ethnic identity and social environment could largely impact identity formation. Furthermore, the victims also experienced a higher dropout rate, leading to a lower chance of receiving positive guidance on the ego establishment and participating in group work that can aid identity synthesis. The situation worsens when bullied adolescents ascribed the cause of school bullying to themselves This may lead them to avoid the process of identity synthesis consciously or unconsciously. Overall, these findings suggest a negative correlation between school bullying and identity formation.

One limitation to Sanchez's research is lack of empirical data. The evidence is solely based on Erikson's theory and common sense. . However, Sanchez's research has a limitation in terms of the lack of empirical data. The evidence is solely based on Erikson's theory and common sense, which leaves room for doubt regarding the link between school bullying, lack of a sense of belonging, and feelings of insecurity. It's therefore challenging to determine the extent to which Erikson's theory aligns with school bullying and the role victim blaming plays in bullied students' identity confusion.

Overall, there is a consensus that school bullying, as a pervasive issue, does impact identity formation, and there are reported differences in the level of identity conflict between genders. This impact may be further amplified when victim blaming is taken into consideration.

The combination of school bullying and victim blame is relatively rare in current research, as most studies primarily focus on school bullying alone. However, in reality, the cases can be more complex and multifaceted. It is crucial to consider victim blame as an integral part of the process that bullied teenagers may experience due to social or cultural stereotypes. Furthermore, identity formation holds significant importance in one's life, as teenagers may struggle to be open-minded if they lack a clear understanding of their own identity (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Unfortunately, there is currently a lack of studies addressing the impact of victim blame on bullied students' identity development. This limited knowledge can influence people's understanding and decision-making. Without acknowledging its effect, it becomes challenging to provide bullied victims with appropriate psychological guidance. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to explore more effective approaches to address school bullying and victim blame, while providing further insights into the mental processes of the individuals involved. In summary, the research question proposed is: **How does victim blame affect the establishment of ego among bullied adolescents?**

Methods

Research Tool

To start with, a survey is in need for the data collection process. The research instruments other than James E. Cote's identity crisis modality model are also used in this study, such as the "Youth Health Survey Report (YHSR)" (Winnipeg Regional Health Authority [WRHA], 2012) and "Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021).

Table 1. YHSR questions that relate to students' campus psychological wellbeing (WRHA, 2012)

Statement	% Agree	% Disagree
I feel close to the people at this school.	81%	19%
I feel I am a part of this school.	87%	13%
I am happy to be at this school.	87%	13%
I feel safe at my school.	91%	9%
I feel safe in my community.	88%	12%
I feel safe in my home.	98%	2%
I have at least one close friend that I can share things with.	93%	7%
I feel family supports me.	93%	7%
I feel involved in my community.	63%	37%

The YHSR concerns about participants' sense of belonging and connection within society and the campus, asking them to answer whether they agree with given statements. Table 1 shows the original copy of part of the YHSR questions; given statements are on the left side, while the data collected from the YHSR are presented on the right column. Through YHSR, the psychological wellbeing of the targeted audience could be rated. Related part of the survey had been selected as a reference. Now, they are used as the introductory question to prepare the subjects for following questions. Wording modifications have been made to better avoid social desirability biases.

Table 2. Supplemental Materials (CDC, 2021)

The next 2 questions ask about bullying. Bullying is when 1 or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when 2 students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way.

23. During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied **on school property**?
 A. Yes
 B. No

24. During the past 12 months, have you ever been **electronically** bullied? (Count being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media.)
 A. Yes
 B. No

Table 2 demonstrates the additional questions, which came from YRBS. The original YRBS served as a biannual measure of American juveniles' risky behavior and their current or potential health problems; therefore, it appears useful when measuring school bullying. Selections of questions about school bullying from the YRBS are shown in Table 2. The participants would be asked to respond to each statement using "yes" or "no". Similarly, the questions have been modified.

Research Design

This research method will be practiced following a systematic approach with scientific objectivity and preciseness, consisting of the following simplified steps:

1. Based on the concept of Erik Erikson's theory and identity crisis modality model, design a survey with close-ended questions;
2. select participants that have high school experience;
3. collecting data from the participants;
4. analyzing the data statistically.

For preparation, I read Erik Erikson's A Life Cycle Completed (1997) which provides a detailed account of his theory. I started the preparation process from September 2021 to October 2021, reading all credible materials I can find that is related to my topic. By reading this book, I extracted important information about identity formation. To ensure consistency during the interpretating process, I will present his personal writing first and then provide logical deduction. Based on the content of the book, my hypothesis is that there is a negative correlation between school bullying and the identity establishment, since he suggests that identity accumulation would be based on one or more intimate relationships. In most of the occasions, it's unlikely that bullied students could still establish a good relationship with their classmates. On the other hand, they are more likely to face social isolation or stereotyped relationships. Social isolation status, as an outcome of school bullying, would provide a worsened environment for identity formation.

Firstly, I drafted the survey and checked its compliance with the research requirements in October 2021. The survey aims to collect information about the participants' gender, age, experiences of school bullying and victim blaming, and self-rated degree of identity formation. To achieve this, I continually read various research papers' methodologies and discussed the necessary components with my tutor. Over a month and a half, I engaged in the process of editing and modifying the survey until late November 2021. I found that direct questions about school bullying or victim blaming are inevitable, so I employed introductory questions and word modifications in the survey to reduce participants' resistance. Based on the collected information, the survey is divided into the following parts:

1. Proclamation
2. Demographic Information about gender and age
3. Introductory questions concerning participants' general social well-being
4. Single choice questions about whether participants have school bullying or victim blaming experiences
5. Identity Crisis Modality Model

The proclamation, included at the start of the survey, provides participants with a detailed description of the research process, purpose, and guidelines. Additionally, a universal definition of victim blame (CRCVC, 2016) and school bullying (CDC, 2014) is used to ensure consistency and guide participants. Anonymity and confidentiality of participants throughout the survey will be guaranteed to protect their privacy and encourage truthful responses.

After final modifications to the survey draft, I began preparing the first draft of my research paper. Simultaneously, before fully implementing the survey, I conducted a pilot study (Appendix A) in January to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the questions. Only six out of twenty participants' surveys were deemed valid. Due to the complexity of the identity crisis modality model, originally designed for offline situations, I made format changes to the final version (Appendix B) to enhance understanding in an online setting. The survey was ultimately implemented in late January.

Secondly, the survey primarily targets participants with high school experience. As the most directly-involved stakeholders, they can offer comprehensive and informative perspectives on the impact of school bullying and victim blaming. While participation in the survey is voluntary, participants have the right to decline answering. To ensure diversity among the subjects, the survey will be shared on various social media platforms, allowing more people to participate. The demographic diversity will ensure objectivity and inclusiveness in this research. Participants with experiences of school bullying and victim blaming will act as the independent variable, while those without such traumatic experiences will serve as the controlled variables. By separating them into two groups, we can better observe the difference in their degree of identity formation.

Once completed on the survey, the data collection process started immediately and lasted for a month. . Although most surveys were well-written, some participants did not take the survey seriously or misunderstood the instructions. To avoid discrepancies, their responses were excluded from the statistical analysis.

Finally, to find the connection between victim blaming and identity formation, statistic analysis is used to demonstrate whether the connection exists. Primarily, the raw data was categorized into five age periods like Erikson's theory (1997) suggested in order to measure the degree of identity crisis corresponding to particular age periods. The calculation process of the average value is:

1. Multiplying the assigned value with their corresponding percent of the degree of behaviour that the participants reported
2. Dividing the product with the added-up number of participants involved

This method provides a mathematical way to quantify the degree of behavior into a numerical value. By connecting each coordinate based on the calculation, the coordinate and trend of the curve can be obtained. The result illustrates the overall degree of identity crisis at each age group, and the connected curve shows the long-term development of identity crisis.

Results

A total of 33 participants from different age groups completed the survey. The majority of them came from a credible website that allows people to share surveys and collect data for research purposes. They are located all over the country, as shown in Appendix C. Their basic demographic information is presented in Figure 3.

(a)   Gender Distribution
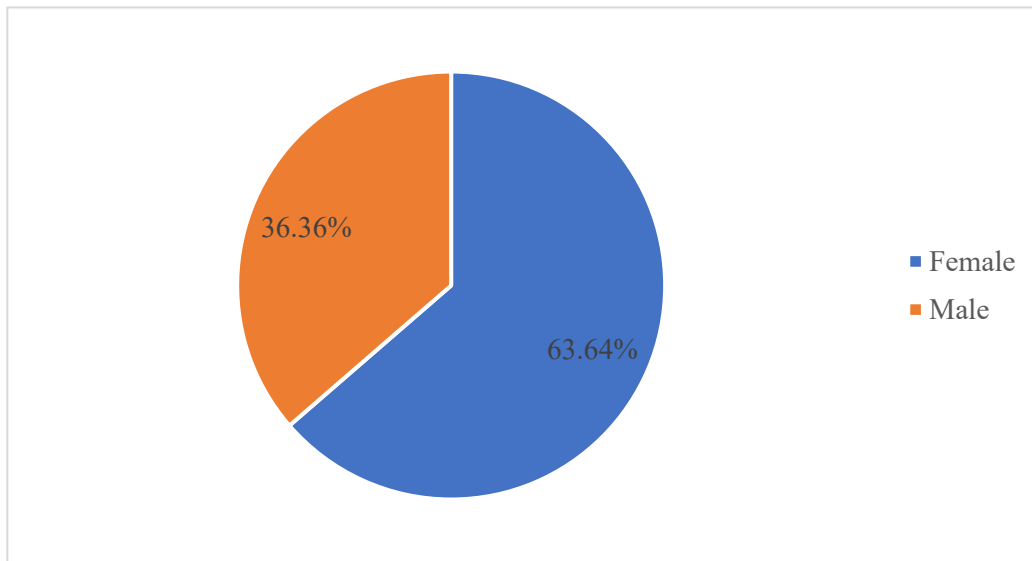
(b)   Age Distribution
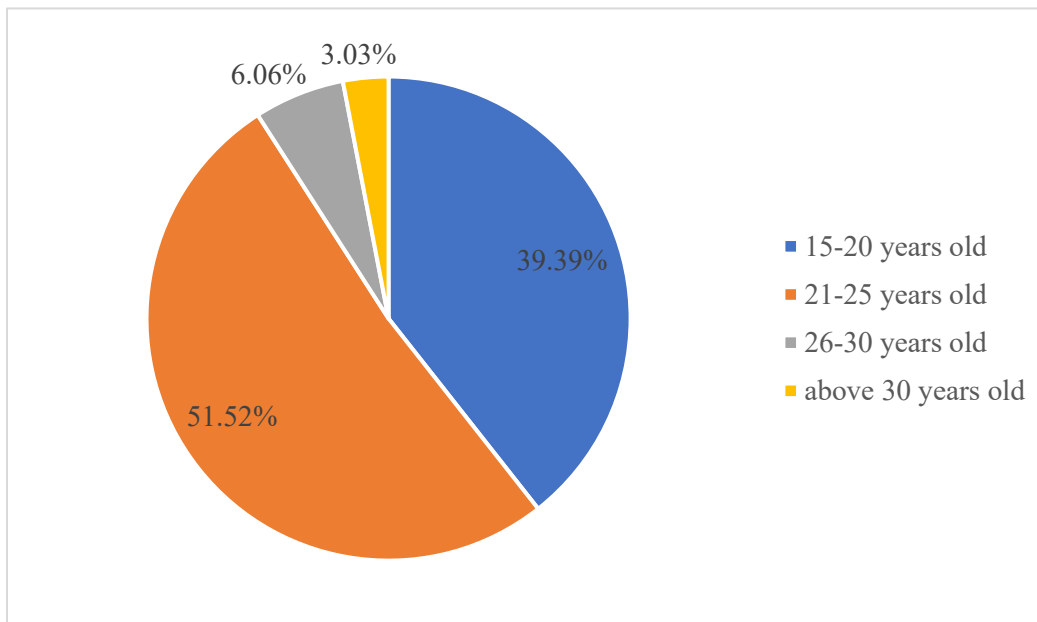
**Figure 3** Demographic Information about the Subjects

The general demographic characteristic of the participants is shown. The number of responses from female (63.64%) is greater than those from male (36.36%). Although past studies have suggested a difference in the identity formation trend between two sexes (Bogaerts, et al., 2021), the data discrepancy is negligible since this research focuses on the added-up trend of identity formation. Meanwhile, most participants' age is between 15 to 20 years old with mean age of 21.88 years old. This suggests that they have either completed high school or are currently attending high school, which satisfies the age requirement of research.
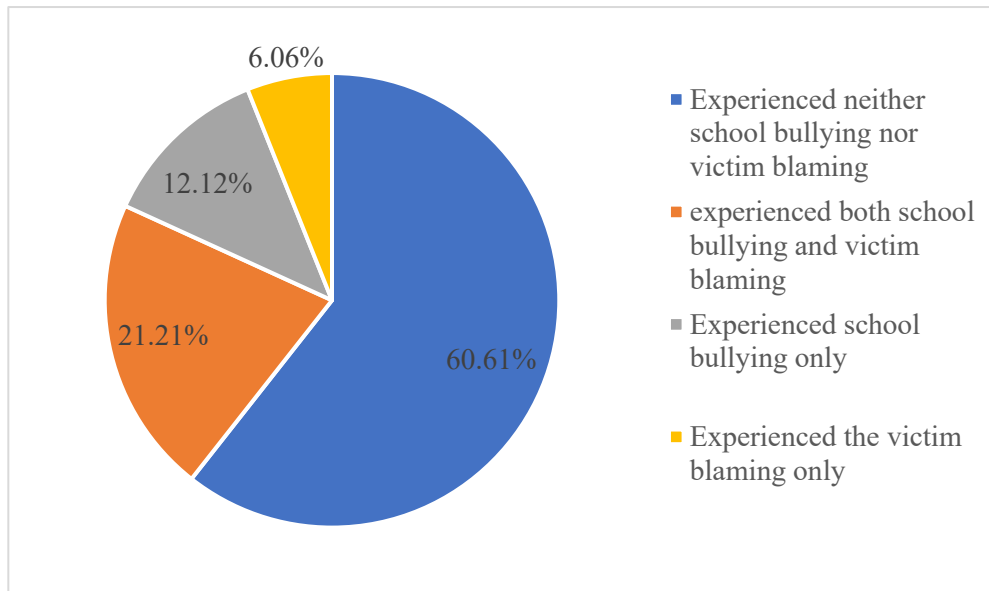

Figure 4 The Reported Distribution of Participants' High School Experiences

Figure 4 illustrates whether participants have school bullying or victim blame experience in the past. Self-administered multiple choices are provided with each question. About 33.33% of subjects report that they have been bullied, and 27.27% suggest they have experienced victim blame. Outside of 60.61% participants that reported none of those experiences, the second largest group (21.21%) is consists of participants who have both school bullying and victim blame experiences. This data further reinforces the stressed situation of school bullying and victim blame problems. Based on information collected, participants could be divided into the treatment group and control group. By looking over two groups' level of identity crisis, Figure 5 could be obtained.
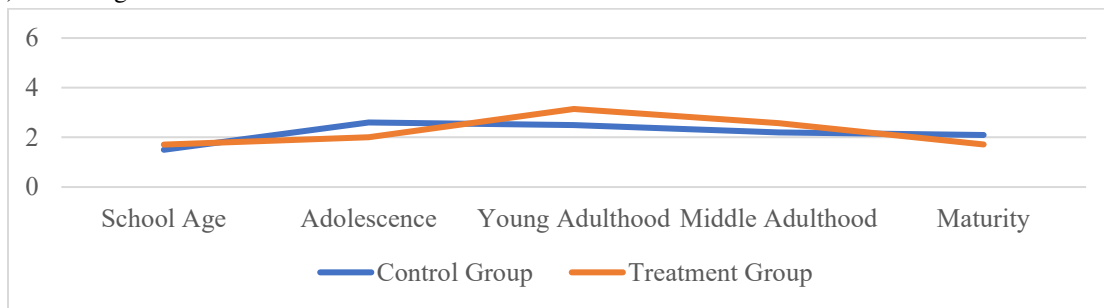
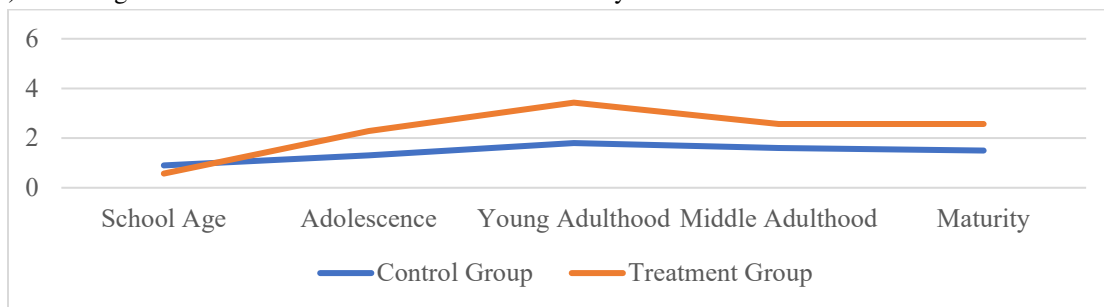(a)   Disobeys Request from Parents
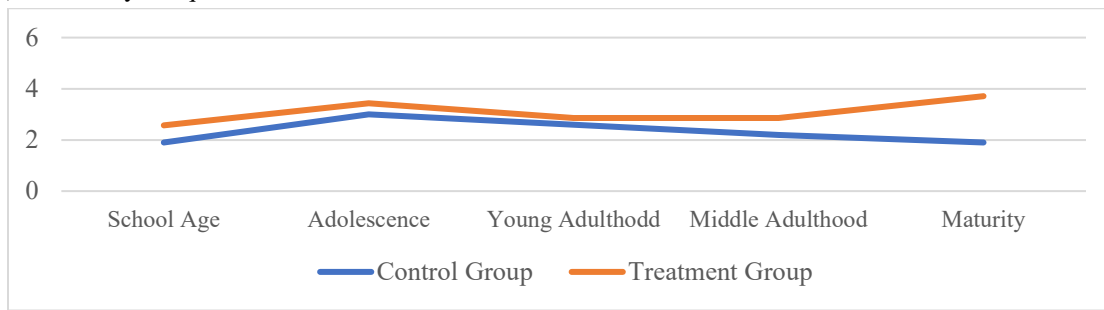
(b)   Feeling Confused about Life and Don't Have Any Plan for the Future
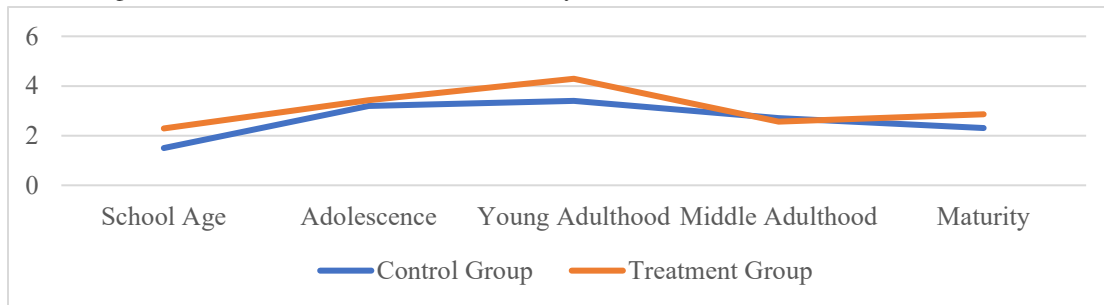
(c)   Feeling Unsure about One's Own Belief

(d)   Feeling Hateful that One Has to Be Part of the Society

Figure 5. Average Self-rated Degree of Treatment and Control Group Participants' Actions at Different Age Groups

The average identity crisis level during a different age period for the treatment and control group separately is shown. With age periods on the horizontal axis and numerical value for the degree of behavior on the vertical axis, in which:

6 represents "extreme";

4 represents "considerable";

2 represents "a little";

and 0 represents "not at all".

Each curve shows the trend of identity crisis. They are all used to measure one of the four actions mentioned in Cote's model.

Figure 5 (a) presents a similar degree of disobedience for both treatment and control group. However, the treatment group shows a significantly higher degree of identity crisis, approaching "considerable". Moreover, unlike the control group that reported consistent decreasing trend after adolescent period, the treatment group reported an increase in identity crisis level since young adulthood.

Figure 5 (b) reports a completely different trend of confusion between two groups. The control group shows a mild increase since adolescent period and soon decreases in similar slope after it reaches its peak at the young adulthood period. Throughout the process, the curve oscillates around "a little" and "considerable", but never truly reaches "considerable" level. Instead, it almost shrinks back to its original degree at the maturity period. In contrast, the treatment group reported a sharp increase since adolescent period and decreases after the young adolescent period. Its peak even surpasses the "considerable" level and shows an increase during the maturity period.

Figure 5 (c)'s two curves of unsureness are very alike. The control group has a lower starting identity crisis level and reaches its crest earlier in the adolescence period than that of the treatment group. Simultaneously, the treatment group reports mild increase and decrease as well, but reaches a higher crest at the young adulthood period.

Figure 5 (d) illustrates the differentiated degree of hatred between treatment and control group. Since hatred toward being part of the society is often an intense sensation, it's surprising that the treatment group reports a degree approaching "considerable". Although the control group's sensation reaches its peak at young adulthood, it never even exceeds "a little" of such anti-social sentiment.

Compared with the control group, there are frequent acute changes reported by the treatment group shown in Figure 5, which often begins during the adolescence period and reaches its absolute maximum at young adulthood, like Figure 5 (b), (c), and (d). This may be affected by school bullying experience during the adolescent period that treatment group participants all shared. The long-lasting impact could even be seen during the maturity period, such as in Figure 5(a), (b), and (d).

Discussion

Significance

The results collected from this study would shed a different light on future studies dealing with the psychology of bullied students, offering evidence that explains the reason behind their behavior. While individual responses clinical responses may vary, this study is the first one that focuses on the general case, offering insights into the potential status of the victims' identity formation. Additionally, this research helps address the long-standing social oversight and research gap by highlighting the prevalence of school bullying and victim blame, which affects approximately 27.27% of the population. By drawing attention to the issue of identity crisis, this study encourages increased funding for research and aims to prevent the problem from deteriorating further due to the lack of studies. Moreover, this research can inform clinical psychology experts and facilitate the development of more effective strategies to address the identity crisis faced by bullied students. It has the potential to raise awareness among teachers, clinical therapists, parents, and society as a whole regarding the problem of identity crisis due to victim blame in bullied students.

Limitations

In addition to any potential rejections of the study's results themselves, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the control variable, identity formation, was not fully controlled throughout the survey. As the survey measures the real-life effect of school bullying and victim blame on identity formation, other variables were not thoroughly controlled. It is possible that participants' identity crisis may not be a direct result of their school bullying or victim blame experiences, but rather influenced by other factors. This issue was identified during the statistical analysis of the collected data. Although there may be some discrepancies in the data, a careful examination of the treatment group data revealed that most participants, despite their traumatic experiences, reported understandable social conditions during the introductory question part. The introductory question was originally designed to engage participants in the survey, but it also provided additional information about their social well-being.

Another limitation that impacts the credibility of the research is the small sample size. Due to the limitations imposed by COVID-19, the research timeframe was greatly restricted, resulting in a limited number of subjects. Their experiences varied significantly, with some participants having experienced school bullying, while others experienced victim blame alone. All participants, except those with both victim blame and school bullying experiences, were included in the control group. This may introduce discrepancies within the control group. With a larger sample size, participants could be classified into more specialized groups.

The Area for Future Research

Further research could be conducted in the same field to address the limitations in data collection while considering the broader aspects of influential factors in the identity formation process. This would lead to more comprehensive and accurate results, as school bullying also plays an important role in the identity formation process (Salmon et al., 2018; Sanchez, 2019; Bogaerts, et al., 2021). Moreover, future studies could aim to enlarge the participant pool, including juveniles from all age groups, to provide inclusive and effective research outcomes for all young victims. Research could also be conducted on topics beyond victim blame, exploring the influence of other factors on students' identity formation process or other psychological developmental stages proposed by Erik Erikson, thus establishing a helpful database for clinical psychologists working with patients from different age groups and levels of identity formation.

Fulfilment of Current Research Gaps

This study addresses several research gaps that previously existed in this field of study. Primarily, the research targets bullied students who have experienced victim blame during their adolescent period, a group that has not been thoroughly studied in previous research mentioned in the literature review. Existing research mostly focuses on bullied students (Sanchez, 2019; Salmon et al., 2018), but there are various types and forms of bullying (Salmon et al., 2018), including the combination of school bullying and victim blame. Based on the collected data, 27.27% of all targeted participants reported experiencing both school bullying and victim blame. This data highlights the overlooked problem of school bullying combined with victim blame that persisted for a significant period of time. Compared to the most prevalent forms of school bullying, such as verbal insults (33.8%) and body shaming (46.8%), 27.27% remains a high percentage and can even be ranked as the second most prevalent among boys.

Simultaneously, the focus of this research is on the identity formation of bullied students. Previous studies have explored various aspects of the psychological and physical status of bullied students, but only "The Effects of Bullying on Identity" in Counselor Education Capstones (Sanchez, 2019) actually measures the potential linkage between identity formation and school bullying. However, that research only provides a theoretical correlation based on the paper's content and Erik Erikson's theory mentioned in his books. In contrast, this research focuses on providing quantitative evidence and demonstrates a negative correlation between identity formation and school bullying, offering a satisfactory answer to the initial hypothesis. Furthermore, unlike Sanchez's research, this study suggests that the correlation between school bullying, victim blame, and identity formation may not be limited to causality; it may imply other types of connections as well, given that the survey only provides evidence of an interrelated relationship. Ethnic identity and the social environment affected by school bullying experiences, as suggested by Sanchez, could be the cause of students' identity formation failure. Based on this, it is hypothesized that what truly changes a student's identity formation is not solely the experiences of school bullying or victim blame, but rather the feeling of exclusion from society. However, this hypothesis still requires further evidence to be proven.

Conclusion

The analysis of research findings obtained through James E. Cote's Identity Crisis Modality Model leads to the conclusion that the treatment and control groups rarely exhibit similar trends or levels of identity crisis. Figure 5 above shows a noticeable variation in the trend from the control to the treatment group.

As depicted in Table 3, out of the 33.33% of participants who reported having experienced school bullying, 27.27% of them also experienced victim blame. Although participants may be unwilling to share their experiences, the available data size indicates a significant number of victim-blaming incidents targeting bullied students. This finding highlights the prevalence of victim blame experiences among bullied students and encourages further research on the topic. The quantitative evidence suggests the negative consequences of victim blame on bullied students. The treatment group generally reports a higher level of identity crisis, which starts showing an increasing tendency since the adolescent period (Figure 5(b); Figure 5(d)), with frequent acute changes in the level compared to the control group (Figure 5(c)). Identity crisis behaviors even persist in some individuals during maturity (Figure 5(a); Figure 5(b)), a long period of time after their school bullying victimization experiences. This finding demonstrates the significant role played by victim blame on bullied students and their identity formation. Based on the data collected from the identity crisis modality model, the treatment group exhibits a greater tendency to report higher levels of identity crisis with fluctuations. Since all members of the treatment group share one common characteristic—school bullying and victim blame experiences—a positive correlation between these traumatic experiences and the development of identity crisis can be inferred.

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