

## Resolving Identity Crisis: Fabrication of Self by Building Signature Strengths

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### ABSTRACT

Character strength is a collection of positive traits that exist in a person in degrees. Previous research has provided knowledge about the importance of character strength building, but there is a lack of discussion on how it is important to remove identity crises. This research attempts to explain the prominent role for crystallizing signature strength building through life coaching skills in resolving identity crisis. This research consists of an intervention approach with pre-test and post-test assessments of identity crisis (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995). The signature strength of the students in the intervention group was checked through the VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) (Littman-Ovadia, 2015). The intervention group received sessions on life-coaching skills that were provided by following a self-made module. After giving the 6-months intervention to the students, the scores of the pre-test and post-test assessments of the intervention and control groups were calculated using a paired t-test. The results show that crystallizing signature strengths through life-coaching skills resolves identity crises.

**Keywords:** *Identity Formation, Life-Coaching Skills, Connecting the Dots Within, Character Building, Character Strength, Personality Development, Moral Development, Education*

Identity is the relatively stable feeling of self-uniqueness. When this stable feeling of self-uniqueness is disturbed, an identity crisis occurs. It can arise for a variety of reasons, as it is sensitive to both external and internal factors. As Rosenberg (1965) stated, adolescents face several problems in adolescence because of physical changes and unusual status ambiguity. There is also evidence that gender, age, intelligence, social skills, weak ego strength (Rosenberg, 1965), physical health, and appearance also affect the development of identity. The youth are forced to identify themselves as a result of these issues, which overwhelm them and demand solutions. Sometimes, a negative ego develops in a person. That is the phase when an identity crisis occurs. If a crisis occurs, it can affect behavior patterns, lead to role confusion, change the perception of oneself, and be responsible for the decline in mental health. It can be resolved by enhancing self-knowledge. When it is resolved, a person can incorporate all of his or her images into their personal identity and merge different roles (Erikson, 1968). It is important to resolve the identity crisis as it will affect one's long-term development, vocational path in life, education, marital, and other

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choices in life. A strong identity not only contributes to personal fulfillment but also fosters positive interactions with others and the broader community.

People are often confused about their strengths. They do not understand that their particular behavior is their strength or weakness. This is the reason to spread awareness about their character strength. It can promote greater knowledge of oneself. That is the reason, this research is based on signature strength building. To effectively develop and nurture character strengths, the role of Life Coaching Skills becomes essential. These skills serve as a transformative tool, enabling individuals to recognize, enhance, and apply their strengths across various domains of life. In this research, life coaching skills (self-made modules) have been strategically utilized to nurture signature strengths to resolve identity crises.

Identity crisis is a major issue among people. Despite this, this issue is almost untouched by the researchers. Some researchers have focused on the topic of identity crisis but they have not tried to develop one's signature strengths to resolve identity crisis. Studies have examined how individuals facing identity crisis, often characterized by uncertainty and confusion about their sense of self, can benefit from leveraging their inherent character strengths to navigate these periods of transition. Gallagher et al. (2019) found that adolescents with higher levels of hope are more likely to sustain movement toward goals and achieve greater academic success. Adolescents who display higher levels of resilience are more likely to emerge from identity crises with a stronger, more coherent sense of self (Koni et al., 2019). Hardy and Carlo (2011) found that moral courage and social responsibility, components of character strengths, are associated with positive identity development, especially during adolescence. Some studies have explored and found out the connection between some character strengths and identity crises. But no experimental research has been done to resolve the identity crisis by building signature strengths. This study, therefore, aims to close this gap in the literature and sets out to establish a link between them. The objective of the present research is to study the effect of signature strength building on identity crisis.

### *Sample*

The study consisted of a sample of 100 female college students ranging in age from 18 to 22 years from different colleges. The sample was taken from homogeneous socio-economic strata. Out of these 100 subjects, 50 each were randomly assigned to the Control group and the Intervention group, respectively.

### *Tests*

- Ego identity questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995): It has 32 measures that evaluate the exploration and commitment dimensions in eight domains, i.e., work, religion, politics, family, values, friendships, dating, and sex roles. A 6-point Likert scale is being used here. The overall score for exploration and commitment, which can each vary from 16 to 96, is determined by adding the item scores. The identification statuses of each participant were determined using median scores of 66.5 for exploration and 62 for commitment in order to allow comparison on the measure of status. Respondents who scored higher than the median on both dimensions were labeled as having established their identity, while those who scored below were labeled as being diffused. Moratorium was assigned to respondents who scored above the median on exploration but below it on commitment, and foreclosure to those who scored the opposite way. The age range for this scale is 18 to 24, with a mean age of 20. Test-retest reliability for this scale is 0.90, with internal consistency values of 0.80 for commitment and 0.86 for exploration.

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- VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) (Littman-Ovadia, 2015): Littman-Ovadia (2015) created a 120-item abbreviated version of the VIA-IS. The 24 subscales of this 120-item version of Cronbach's coefficients ranged from .69 (leadership) to .90 (creativity) in the derivation sample used to generate the short form, with a mean of .79. Internal consistency coefficients ranged from .64 (leadership) to .90 (spirituality) when this short form was given to an independent sample, with a mean of .78. Regarding validity data, it was discovered that there was a strong convergence between the VIA-120 and the VIA-IS in terms of relationships with both positive and negative outcomes. The outcomes also showed that both types' factor structures had good convergence.

### *Procedure*

Rapport-building was done with the participants and then psychometric assessment was used to check the status of identity. Those who were in the status of identity crisis were selected for further experiment. Two groups were formed i.e. an intervention group and a control group. Then, identify the signature strengths to subjects in the intervention group. The intervention group provided signature strength-based life coaching through self-made modules that would bring the subjects closer to the ideal vision and would be helpful in removing their identity crisis. A customized module specifically designed by the researcher for signature strength building was utilized in this study. Intervention sessions, lasting 40 to 50 minutes once a week, were conducted over a period of 6 months, ensuring a systematic and structured approach to achieving the desired outcomes. After the 6 month, a re-assessment or post-testing of the subjects (both groups) was done in this stage to identify the effectiveness of life coaching skills in removing identity crises. After that, the subjects were prepared to terminate the relationship. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, the test of normalcy, and a paired sample t-test.

## **RESULTS**

This section provides a detailed analysis of the data using descriptive statistics. It summarizes the key characteristics of the dataset, such as measures of mean, standard deviation, and the distribution of variables. The purpose of this analysis is to offer a comprehensive understanding of the sample and to establish a foundation for subsequent statistical tests and relationships examined in the study. The below table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the pre-test and post-test scores of the intervention group and control group concerning Identity Crises. This analysis provides a comparative overview of the mean and standard deviation within each group, highlighting any observed changes resulting from the intervention. This detailed examination sets the stage for understanding the overall impact and effectiveness of the intervention before moving to further statistical analyses.

*Table no. 1 shows the descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test of intervention group and control group of identity crisis.*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Pre-test identity crisis of intervention group</b>	50	119.2800	7.90773
<b>Post-test identity crisis of intervention group</b>	50	135.6600	4.74926
<b>Pre-test identity crisis of control group</b>	50	126.0800	5.61645
<b>Post-test identity crisis of control group</b>	50	128.0000	4.63351

For the intervention group, the pre-test scores for identity crisis showed a mean of 119.2800, which significantly increased to 135.6600 post-intervention, highlighting the effectiveness of the intervention in lowering identity crisis. Increment in the mean score of the identity

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crisis means participants lead to the identity achievement. In contrast, the control group's mean scores for identity crisis remained relatively unchanged from 126.08 to 128.00, indicating minimal variation.

To ensure the robustness and reliability of the findings the test of normality has been presented. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used for  $n > 50$ , whereas the Shapiro test is better suited for small sample sizes ( $< 50$  samples), however it can also handle larger sample sizes. The present research consists of a sample size of 100 (50 of intervention group and 50 of control group). The table 2 shows the test of normality for identity crisis.

**Table 2- Tests of Normality for identity crisis**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
Pre-test identity crisis of intervention group	.101	.200	.970	.230
Pre-test identity crisis of control group	.104	.200	.982	.623

The results for the normality test on “identity crisis” were first analyzed. In the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the Intervention Group had a statistic of 0.101 and a significance (Sig.) value of .200, while the Control Group had a statistic of 0.104 and a Sig. value of .200. Similarly, in the Shapiro-Wilk test, the Intervention Group had a statistic of 0.970 and Sig. value of 0.230, while the Control Group had a statistic of 0.982 and Sig. value of .623. Since the Sig. values in both tests for both groups were greater than 0.05, this indicates that the “identity crisis” data in both groups followed a normal distribution.

The results indicated that the data was normally distributed, as all significance (Sig.) values were above 0.05. However, further analysis of skewness and kurtosis values suggested deviations from normality. To address this discrepancy, we applied the z-score transformation method, converting skewness and kurtosis values into z-skewness and z-kurtosis. The excess kurtosis or skewness values might be divided by their standard errors to produce a z-score. Z-value  $\pm 1.96$  is adequate to prove data normality for small sample sizes ( $n < 50$ ) (Ghasemi & Zahediasal, 2012). To determine significant normality, reference values of either an absolute skewness value  $\leq 2$  or an absolute kurtosis value  $\leq 4$  may be employed (Kim, 2013).

**Table 3- Skewness and kurtosis value, and transformed z-values of Identity crisis**

Group	Sample size	Skewness	SE <sub>skewness</sub>	Z <sub>skewness</sub>	Kurtosis	SE <sub>kurtosis</sub>	Z <sub>kurtosis</sub>
<b>Intervention Group</b>	50	.511	.337	1.516	-.133	.662	-0.201
<b>Control Group</b>	50	-.271	.337	-.804	-.172	.662	-0.260

All the calculated z-skewness and z-kurtosis values lie within the acceptable range of -1.96 to +1.96, indicating that the data are normally distributed, thus supporting the assumption of normality for further statistical analyses.

A paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the change in scores between the pre-test and post-test for both the intervention and control groups. This method allowed for an assessment of the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing the mean differences over time within each group. The results provided insights into the statistical significance of the observed changes. The below Table 4 provides the results of a paired sample t-test, which

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was conducted to compare the mean identity crisis scores of participants before and after the intervention within the Intervention Group.

**Table 4- shows paired sample t-test of identity crisis in the Intervention Group and control group.**

		Mean	S.D	S.E Mean	t	Sig.
<b>Pair 1</b>	Pre-test identity crisis of intervention group - Post-test identity crisis of intervention group	-16.38000	7.94853	1.12409	-14.572	<b>.000</b>
<b>Pair 2</b>	Pre-test identity crisis of control group - Post-test identity crisis of control group	-1.92000	4.12479	.58333	-3.291	<b>.002</b>

**Pair-1:** The difference in means between the pre-test and post-test scores is -16.38, indicating an improvement (or increase) in the identity crisis scores post-intervention. The t-test yielded a t-value of -14.572, which suggests a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The p-value is .000, which is statistically significant at the conventional alpha level (e.g.,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result implies that the intervention had a statistically significant effect on the identity crisis scores. The significant increase in the identity crisis scores from pretest to post-test suggests that the intervention may have had a substantial impact on the participants' identity crisis levels.

**Pair: 2:** Control group received no intervention during the intervention time period. The difference in means between the pre-test and post-test scores is -1.92000, indicating a slight improvement (or increase) in the identity crisis scores in post-test. The t-test yielded a t-value of -3.291, which suggests a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The p-value is .002 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

This result implies that the control group had also a statistically significant effect on the identity crisis scores. Although the p-value suggests statistical significance in the control group also, as well as the intervention group, but, the observed mean difference was only 1.9, which is minimal. To further evaluate the practical significance of this difference, Cohen's d was calculated. The effect size was found to be  $d < -0.373$ , indicating a negligible effect. Therefore, while the statistical analysis suggests significance, this result is unlikely to have any practical implications. Cohen's d is used to assess the practical significance of the results. According to Cohen (1988), a value of d less than 0.2 indicates a very small effect size, suggesting that the observed difference between pre-test and post-test scores, though statistically significant, has negligible practical relevance. The calculated Cohen's d value in this study is -0.373, which falls below the threshold of 0.2, indicating a very small effect size. This suggests that while the pre-test and post-test scores show a statistically significant difference, the practical significance of this difference is minimal. In other words, the observed difference is unlikely to have a meaningful impact in real-world contexts.

If the same procedure applied for the pre-test and the post-test identity crisis scores of the intervention group, the value of Cohen's d test observed was -2.51, which represents a very large effect, indicating that the intervention had a profound and positive impact on reducing the identity crisis among participants, while a small effect implies a minor or negligible

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impact. Cohen's  $d = 0.2$  indicates small effect;  $d = 0.5$  indicates medium effect,  $d = 0.8$  indicates large effect and  $d > 1.0$  indicates the very large effect.

Here, there is a need to clarify the reason why statistical differences are observed in this analysis. The reason could be Natural Variability. The control group did not receive any intervention; thus, the observed difference in scores may simply reflect natural variability or measurement noise rather than a meaningful change. And last but not the least, Random errors in measurement could also contribute to the small but statistically significant difference observed in this analysis (Cohen, 1998).

So, it is concluded that, while the paired sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores for the control group, the negligible mean difference and small effect size suggest that the result lacks practical significance. These findings are likely due to natural variability or random measurement errors, rather than any substantive change.

The intervention implemented in this study utilized Life Coaching Skills, a novel approach designed to address and alleviate identity crisis. This Life Coaching Skills-based module, developed specifically for this research, aimed at helping individuals tap into their inner strengths and build confidence, thereby reducing psychological challenges related to identity and self-perception. The results of the study revealed a significant positive effect of this intervention on participants. After engaging in Life Coaching Skills activities, there was a substantial reduction in both identity crises. The statistical analysis confirmed that the intervention had a significant impact, with participants showing notable improvements in their identity formation and self-worth.

### **Limitations**

This is a fresh research on this topic. No previous research studies have been found to directly support this research. Only female participants have been taken in this research. Hence, the generalizability of this research can be impacted.

### **Future Implications**

Research can be conducted on male participants and different demographic areas. This can expand the knowledge about this topic. This research will be helpful for mental health professionals and counselors. They may use this approach as a new therapeutic method for helping people through identity struggles. The findings from this research can be incorporated into educational curricula to help students understand their strengths and promote self-development.

This study has provided valuable insights into the role of life coaching in addressing identity crisis, impostorism, and strengthening signature strengths. While certain limitations exist, the findings contribute significantly to the understanding of psychological interventions in identity development. It is hoped that this research will inspire further exploration in this area and pave the way for future advancements in life coaching practices.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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