

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Bachelor Thesis

**Victim-offender mediation and the self-selection bias: Examining a
multi-dimensional model to explain offenders' willingness to
participate**

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Abstract

Background: Victim-offender mediation (VOM) is a reliable and successful restorative justice solution. However, the offender's side is underrepresented in scientific discourse and, therefore, not a lot is known about potential factors which influence offender participation. Chances are that offenders who are willing to participate in VOM differ from those that do not want to take part. If a self-selection bias were to be found, this would mean that the effects of VOM, such as the reduction in recidivism rates may not be due to the intervention. Motivated by this, this study aimed to investigate whether atypicality existed among offenders. More specifically, whether certain offenders are better at perspective taking and are, thus, more willing to participate in VOM. Further, it was investigated whether this relationship was moderated by the context in which VOM is offered and mediated by an offender's proneness to experience guilt or take responsibility for the crime.

Methods: A convenience sample of 136 individuals was derived. Participants filled out an online survey in which they were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. In each condition, participants were asked to read two scenarios which differed regarding the crime's severity (low/high) and in which context VOM was offered (apart from legal proceedings/part of them). The crime manipulation entailed a scenario which asked participants to imagine themselves as the offenders of the crime. The manipulation was included in order to be able to compare groups of offenders; testing them for atypicality. After, the scenarios, participants answered questions concerning the investigated constructs.

Results: Statistical analyses revealed that perspective taking was a predictor of the willingness of an offender to participate in VOM. However, the context in which VOM was offered did not interact with that relationship. Moreover, guilt-proneness and responsibility taking were found to mediate the relationship of perspective taking and willingness to participate.

Conclusion: This study was the first attempt to explore differences in offender populations. It was shown that more serious offenders were worse in perspective taking, took less responsibility and felt less guilty. Even though a difference in willingness to participate was not found, offenders were atypical regarding the aforementioned factors.

Introduction

Over the past decades, restorative justice solutions have been thoroughly researched and validated in practice. In comparison to the largely applied retributive justice approaches, models of restorative justice were shown to be more effective in providing long-term conflict resolutions (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005; Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2004). More specifically, restorative justice approaches, in contrast to traditional, retributive ones, differ significantly regarding the involvement of the state in the process of conflict resolution. (Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2008). Within retributive justice, the punishment of the offender by the state is considered to be sufficient to compensate for the harm done to the victim in regard to the deprivation of their property or sanctity of life. However, the disciplinary measures are insufficient in dealing with the experienced normative transgression of the crime (Wenzel et al., 2008). This remaining conflict is addressed through restorative justice approaches by establishing a conversation between victims and offenders. The agency to find a solution which suits the individual needs of the victim and offender is, therefore, in the hands of the respective parties most affected by the crime (Gromet, 2012; Wenzel et al. 2008). In essence, the value of restorative justice lies within the empowerment of the victim, the offender and the community to find a solution to their conflict.

One of several programs employing restorative theories of justice is victim-offender mediation (VOM). In VOM, a dialogue between victim and offender is enabled either through indirect channels (letter/ e-mail exchange, shuttle mediation) or via more direct ones (video calling, face-to-face meeting), in the company of a mediator (van Dijk, 2016). Participation is completely voluntary for both parties. In the presence of the mediator, a safe environment is aimed to be established which may facilitate the development of a relationship and finally a shared, positive narrative (Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017; Umbreit et al., 2004). During mediation, participants can exchange their thoughts and feelings about the criminal act and its implications on their lives and satisfy their need for answers to remaining questions, for example, the offender's motives (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). From the victim's perspective, it is of importance to share their personal experience of the crime in order to witness the response of the offender. It was shown that VOM participants tended to have higher self-esteem following mediation and were better able to find closure which overall led to high satisfaction rates

(Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Laxminarayan, Lens, & Pemberton, 2015; Umbreit et al., 2004). But most importantly, victims received the chance to move on from the offence.

Advantages of VOM for offenders

Besides contributing to the enhancement of victim's coping abilities, VOM programs also offer benefits to offenders. In comparison to traditional justice approaches, offenders were more satisfied when they participated in some form of VOM (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Latimer et al., 2005). A study by Umbreit (1994) demonstrated that the multifold needs of offenders are adequately addressed in VOM. It was identified that offenders were able to deal with their own emotions and gain a better understanding of the victim's feelings. Further, they wished to redeem themselves in the eyes of the victim in order to be perceived as an individual with feelings rather than simply as a criminal (Choi, Green, & Kapp, 2010; Umbreit & Armour, 2011; Umbreit, 1994).

In addition, participation in VOM programs may also benefit offenders in court as their willingness to participate is deemed as a willingness to take responsibility for one's criminal actions. According to Coates & Gehm (1985), offenders who participated in VOM were more likely to have their sentences reduced and were also more likely to be sent to lower-level facilities than offenders who merely attended court. Lastly, participating in mediated contact also resulted in higher empathy towards the victim which was correlated with lower recidivism rates in the long-run (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Umbreit et al., 2004). Consequently, mediated dialogue also yields benefits for government administrations as the costs for the legal and correctional sector will be decreased due to lower recidivism rates.

Through specifically admitting juvenile offenders to VOM programs, the judicial branch does have a tool at hand which proves to be sufficient in preventing youth offenders from reoffending (Mulder, Brand, Bullens, & Van Marle, 2010). In turn, the tendency to become criminally persistent in adulthood is decreased. These societal and individual advantages of VOM have been validated through extensive research (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). Although VOM has been established to be beneficial, current scientific discourse cannot exclude the possibility of biased findings.

Research on VOM usually includes samples of participants who voluntarily participated in VOM (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Umbreit, 2004). The possibility that these lower recidivism

rates are due to pre-existing differences and not entirely the consequence of a VOM intervention cannot be eliminated.

The pitfalls of current research

VOM, utilising an entirely voluntary approach has been proven to yield lower reoffending rates for offenders who participated and high satisfaction rates for both victims and offenders. In consideration of the voluntariness of participation, it remains questionable whether the effects of VOM are entirely due to the intervention (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Latimer et al., 2005; Umbreit, 2004). Before participation, offenders might already present themselves with an inclination for desistance which, in turn, may motivate efforts of making amends for their actions (Claes & Shapland, 2017; Lauwaert & Aertsen, 2016; Ward, Fox, & Garber, 2014). If these motivations are already apparent in offenders and may yield to participation in VOM, the possibility of a self-selection bias in VOM research exists. Another factor of offender selectiveness is the context in which mediation is offered.

In the Netherlands, VOM is offered both complementary to traditional, in-court approaches and supplementary to legal proceedings (Perspectief herstelbemiddeling, 2018, mediation in strafzaken, 2019). The two approaches might elicit different motivations for an offender to participate in VOM. Complementary approaches (VOM part) offer the benefit of impacting the legal proceedings, for example yielding sentence reduction, advantages of supplementary approaches (VOM apart) concern more the emotional realm (Umbreit et al., 2004). Offenders who participate in a complementary VOM program might be more motivated by the reduction of punishment, whereas participants of supplementary approaches do not have the reinforcer of direct self-benefit through sentence reduction.

Furthermore, screening practices are utilised in order to filter offenders who might have a chance for reoffending during VOM sessions. Even though they are necessary for the stated reason, they foster a certain degree of homogeneity in the offender population. When looking at the screening practices of VOM employed by countries such as the United States of America it becomes apparent that the processes are “[...] selective about which offenders may participate” (Presser & Lowenkamp, 1999, p. 334). A criterion such as crime seriousness is utilised in order to select offenders for mediation. These procedures raise concerns. Studies suggest that VOM was especially effective in the reduction of recidivism when the crimes of the offenders were

more serious (Sherman, Strang, Mayo-Wilson, Woods, & Ariel, 2015). Therefore, through the exclusion of more serious criminal offenders, an efficient way of re-socialisation remains unutilised (Stewart et al., 2018). This hinders the reduction of recidivism rates. Overall, it was noted that the effects of VOM may be due to latent factors motivating offenders to participate in VOM. The question remains what these factors are that facilitate the will to participate and whether these systematically differ in the offender population.

In an attempt to explore what has been previously proposed to be the pitfall of current scientific discourse, this research will be the, to the researcher's knowledge first study to focus on individual characteristics that produce pro-social behaviour, in this case, participation in VOM. Further, it will be investigated whether these characteristics differ in certain offender groups and, therefore, whether VOM programs are subject to a self-selection bias.

Determinants of prosocial behaviour

One possible determinant of other-oriented or prosocial behaviour is empathy. Consensus on a single applicable definition has not been reached. One possible way of conception is to understand empathy as the "ability to perceive and be sensitive to the emotional states of others, which can be coupled [...] with a motivation to care for their well-being" (Decety, Bartał, Uzefovsky, & Knafo-Noam, 2016, p. 2). In cognitive sciences, a distinction is made between an affective component and a cognitive one (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). Whereas affective empathy is defined as the ability to be emotionally reactive, cognitive empathy refers to the ability to understand the emotional sphere of others. Though, a two-factor model is commonly applied, in a study by Chrysikou and Thompson (2015) a two-factor concept of empathy was found to be insufficient in capturing empathy to its full extent. Resulting from that, it was suggested to use Davis' (1983) original four-factor conception of empathy.

In accordance with the aforementioned model by Davis (1983), the four factors supposedly constituting empathy are fantasy, perspective taking, empathetic concern, and personal distress. The first factor, fantasy was defined as the ability of a person to transpose themselves into a fictional character or person. Perspective taking, the second dimension, describes whether someone can see another person's point of view. According to Davis (1983), the third factor is empathic concern, which refers to the tendency of caring for the well-being of others. Lastly, personal distress is defined as the level of anxiety felt due to the misfortune or

suffering of others. All four factors have been shown to be dimensions of empathy (Davis, 1983; Leith & Baumeister 1998). However, in contrast to the other three factors, perspective taking seems to be more important in generating relationship-enhancing effects, especially during a conflict (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). During conflicts, individuals with better perspective taking skills were more efficient in the resolution of conflicts due to their better understanding of the other individual's perspective. Further, it was found that individuals who perceived their conversational partner to understand their perspective were more willing to open up and talk honestly throughout the conflict. Relating this to VOM, offenders with better perspective taking skills might be more inclined to participate in VOM because they are more inclined to display other-regarding (prosocial behaviour). Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: The better an offender's ability to take on another individual's perspective the more willing is the offender to participate in VOM.

Although perspective taking might motivate individuals to show positive regard for the needs of others, limited empathetic abilities can hinder other-oriented efforts. Several scholars have pointed towards empathy as a possible personality characteristic contributing to deviant behaviour if impaired (Eisenberg, Eggum, & Di Giunta, 2010; Hoffman, 2000; Leith & Baumeister, 1998). Though a predictive relation has not been established, research on offenders of serious crimes such as murders and sexual assault suggests that perpetrators lacked empathy for their victims (Holmqvist, 2008; Mariano, Pino, Peretti, Valenti, & Mazza, 2015). Thus, suggesting a correlation between empathy and the severity of the crime committed. In other words, criminals who may not be able to consider the implications their actions will have on the other person, do not have sufficient other-regarding mental capacities in place which might hinder them from committing crimes that attack the sanctity of others (Holmqvist, 2008; Mariano et al., 2015). Hence, the seriousness of the offence might have implications regarding the level of perspective taking more serious offenders are capable of displaying.

The proposed relationship between perspective taking and willingness to participate is entirely based on the theoretical assumption that understanding others' point of view will elicit an intrinsic motivation to help the individual in need. However, the willingness to participate in VOM can also be motivated through the extrinsic reward of reduction of punishment. In line

with Leith & Baumeister's (1998) explanation for a higher intent for prosocial behaviours resulting from a better understanding of others, it is argued that the context in which VOM is offered to an offender does impact whether he derives an intrinsic motivation or an extrinsic one. The following hypothesis was formulated:

H2: The relationship between higher perspective taking and a higher willingness to participate in VOM is moderated by the setting in which VOM is offered to the participant. It is predicted that this relationship is stronger for offenders who are in the VOM apart condition, than in the VOM part condition.

The concepts of guilt and shame have been shown to be connected to empathy and perspective taking and are considered an outcome of delinquent behaviour. Whenever an individual experiences moral failure, such as in the case of a crime, feelings of guilt or shame serve to fulfil coping functions (Gausel, Vignoles, & Leach, 2016; Leith & Baumeister, 1998). Whether a criminal feels shame or guilt is dependent on the evaluation of moral transgression. If the transgressor ascribes moral failing to his entire self, he is likely to feel shame, whereas if it is ascribed merely to the transgressive behaviour, feelings of guilt arise (Wolf, Cohen, Panter, & Insko, 2010). This, in turn, motivates the transgressor to either avoid confrontation with their moral fallacy in the case of felt shame or produce an approach tendency in the case of guilt. Whereas feelings of guilt are usually also accompanied by an urge to repair the damage done (Jackson & Bonacker, 2006, Wolf et al., 2010). Therefore, offenders with good perspective taking skills might be more guilt-prone due to a sense of moral failure. The experience of guilt might enhance the intent to participate in VOM in order to make up for their moral transgression.

Besides the connection between perspective taking and guilt, other research has indicated a correlation between the ability to adopt another person's point of view and taking responsibility for one's actions. A link has been further established between responsibility taking and the feeling of guilt (Zebel, Doosje, & Spears, 2009). In this sense, perspective-taking is proposed to increase guilt by facilitating the feeling of compassion for harmed others which then raises the perceived responsibility for the harm inflicted on the victim (Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Tangney 1994; Williams, 2012). Perceived responsibility, thus, acts as a primary appraisal for feelings of guilt (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Zebel et al., 2009). Therefore, characteristics

such as an offender's ability to consider the victim's point of view may be directly connected to an increased tendency to feel responsible for their crime. Consequently, felt guilt is enhanced to the extent that they want to make up for the damage they inflicted on the victim. Such a prosocial motivation may become apparent by an increased intention to get in touch with the harmed individual, for example by participating in VOM. Although the findings of the study by Zebel et al. (2009) only apply to a group context in which social identity played a significant role, this study will evaluate whether individual perspective taking is related to feelings of guilt. Moreover, whether a relationship also exists between perspective taking and the extent to which an individual feels responsible and if both responsibility taking and guilt-proneness predict prosocial behaviour. Based on the previous considerations, this final hypothesis was formulated:

H3: It is hypothesised that the relationship between perspective taking and the intention to participate in VOM is mediated by guilt-proneness and responsibility taking. Thus, offenders who are good in perspective taking are more likely to participate in VOM, because they experience more guilt and take more responsibility.

Current research

This study will investigate how perspective taking, guilt-proneness, responsibility taking, and the context in which VOM is offered to offenders influence the willingness to participate in VOM.

Further, the varying manifestation of perspective taking in more serious offenders will be utilised in order to be able to investigate the anticipated self-selection bias. As the researcher does not have access to real offender populations, this study will use a manipulation concerning crime severity in order to test for self-selection of offenders. In accordance with the findings discussed above, it is anticipated that the manipulation will increase the variance of offender perspective taking systematically. The entire model is represented in figure 1.

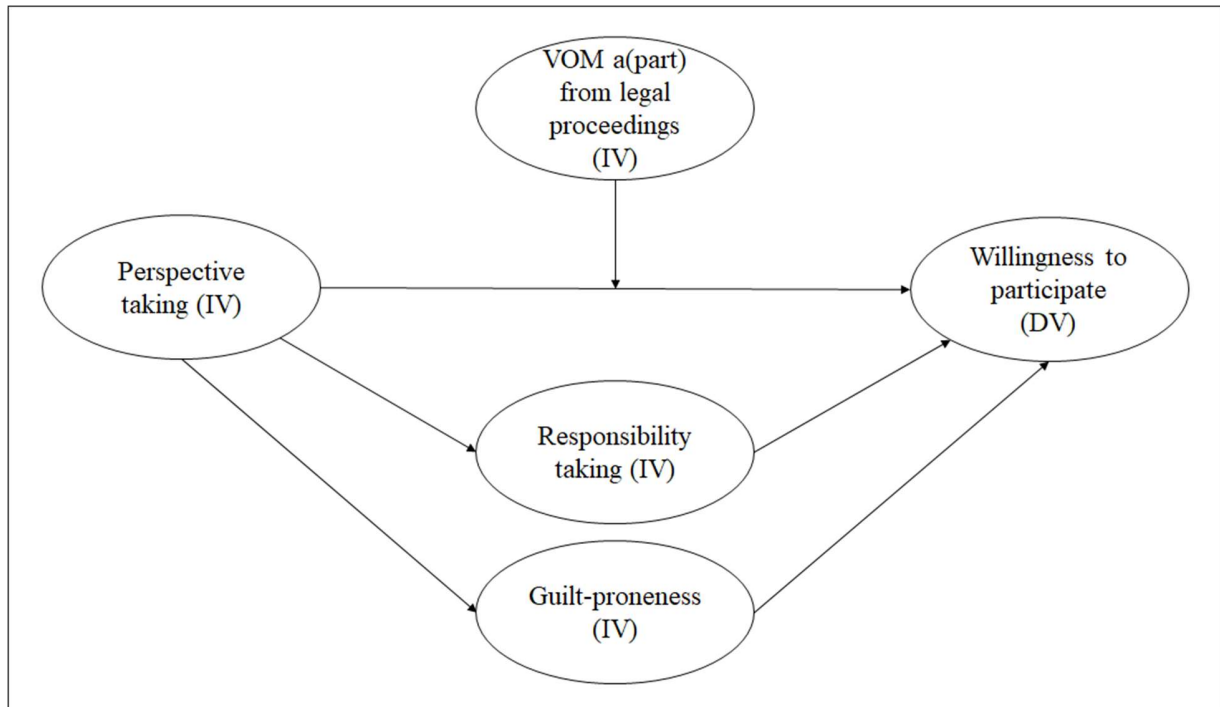


Figure 1. Theoretical model (IV=independent variable, DV=dependent variable)

Methods

Design

This study employed an 2x2 experimental survey design. The participants were randomly allocated to one of four experimental groups. First, they were assigned to either a high crime severity or a low crime severity condition, where the participants had to read scenarios which differed in the seriousness of the crime. The low severity crime chosen was an example of fraud, whereas the more serious crime represented a case of physical assault. In both conditions, the scenarios served to make the participants take on the role of the perpetrator of the crime displayed. Secondly, the participants were also allocated to one of two ‘VOM (a)part’-conditions which also entailed a scenario in the form of a written text. Participants in the ‘VOM apart’ condition received an invitation to a VOM session from the victim of the crime which stood apart from any legal proceedings. In the ‘VOM part’ condition participants were informed about VOM during the process of a legal proceeding, therefore enabling the option of sentence reduction if they participated. Through this manipulation, it was expected that the varying motivations might alter the respondent’s tendencies to participate in VOM.

Participants

Via convenience and snowball sampling a sample of 156 people was drawn from the researcher's social network and through the SONA system for undergraduate students of the University of Twente. Of the 156 respondents, 18 had to be excluded due to not completing the questionnaire. Mainly, because these participants did not answer any of the 32 questions they were supposed to answer. Further, 2 more participants were excluded as their response time was under 2 minutes and their monotonous extreme answers (either strongly disagree or strongly agree) suggested that they had not sufficiently read and answered the questionnaire. Also, they both failed to answer any one of the control questions asking information on the scenarios correctly. Of the remaining sample of 136 people 64% were female (n=87) and 36% were male (n=49). The mean age was 24.92 with a standard deviation of 8.99 and a range of 18 to 63 years. Most of the participants were German with 75% (n=102). The other respondents were either Dutch (7%, n=9) or were of different origin than Dutch or German (18%, n=25). Also, data on the educational level of the respondents was collected. Of the 136 individuals, 63% (n=85) had a high school degree, 15% (n=21) a Bachelor's, and 14% (n=19) a Master's degree. 5% (n=7) indicated that they had achieved a different educational level than the displayed options. For a more detailed account of the distribution see Appendix D, table 8.

Materials

The service Qualtrics was used to create an online questionnaire comprised of the following scales, with a total of 32 items and 4 scenarios (only two displayed to each participant due to random allocation).

Depending on the experimental allocation participants read one of two crime scenarios followed by one of two VOM scenarios. In the low crime severity scenario participants were asked to imagine that they are in financial trouble which leads them to offer a non-existing tablet on an online marketplace for sale. The tablet is sold; however, the victim does not receive the product and in turn, reports the incident to the police (see Appendix A). The high crime severity story read that the participant went to a local pub with their partner, either male or female depending on their gender. There, a stranger approaches and flirts with their partner while the participant went to the bar to pay the bill. The protagonist of the scenario is not amused to see a stranger flirting with their partner which leads to a verbal and finally a physical confrontation.

The victim falls and hits their head after being pushed. The incident is also reported to the police (see Appendix A). The ‘bar’- scenario was created and validated in a study by van Gelder, de Vries, Demetriou, van Sintemaartensdijk, & Donker (2019) which assessed the immersion of VR methods for research. The scenario was slightly adapted and re-written into a male and female version of the scenario which was done to tailor the story to either gender to make it more immersive. The ‘fraud’- scenario has also been validated in previous research. It was taken from a study by Rosies (2017).

Following the crime scenario, the research subjects also read either the ‘VOM apart’ scenario or the ‘VOM part’ scenario. The ‘VOM apart’ scenario described that the protagonist of the story, thus, the participant received a letter that entailed the victim’s request for a mediated victim-offender meeting and a short description of the procedure and content of victim-offender mediation (see Appendix B). The ‘VOM part’ scenario entailed that the participant is informed by their lawyer about the possibility of VOM and also about the chance of sentence reduction if one participates. It included the same information about the procedure and the content of VOM as the other scenario. These two scenarios were based on the assumption that the context where VOM is offered aside from any legal proceedings will facilitate offender participation in a VOM program. The description of VOM was added merely in order to inform participants as it was not expected that the option of victim-offender mediation programs is well known to the general public.

Variables

Following the description of the 4 scenarios, the 32 survey questions and their respective constructs will be explained. A duplicate of the online version of the survey can be found in the Appendix (see Appendix C). All questions were measured with a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Willingness to participate (DV). The scale was comprised of 6 items, written as statements with which participants had to indicate their agreement, for example: “*I would like to have a conversation with the victim during victim-offender mediation*”. The conducted factor analysis suggested that the six items measured a unidimensional construct. One factor was extracted with an Eigenvalue of 3.67. All items loadings were above .61. Measures of the reliability of the scale suggested that the exclusion of item 5 (“*I would like to get in contact with*

the victim on my own”) would yield a Cronbach’s alpha of .90. The respective item was excluded, raising reliability from acceptable $\alpha=.76$ to excellent $\alpha=.90$.

Perspective taking (IV). Participants had to answer 10 items intended to measure their level of perspective taking (for example: *“I can understand that the victim is angry with me”*). The factor analysis suggested three factors with an Eigenvalue higher than 1 which led to the exclusion of items 4, 6, and 9.¹ Thereby, items 4 and 9 loaded on factor 3, item 6 on factor 2. A reason suggested is the deviating topic of the items as all items ask for the offender’s impression about what the victim might think of him/her. A second factor analysis with the seven remaining items suggested that the scale measured a unidimensional construct. One factor was extracted with a value of 3.12. Factor loadings of the seven items were all above .47. The reliability of this measure remained similar and still acceptable with a Cronbach's alpha of .79.

Responsibility taking (M). The scale of responsibility taking was comprised of 6 items in total. An example is: *“I feel responsible for repairing the damage of the offence”*. The results of the factor analysis suggested that the items measure a unilateral construct. A single factor with an Eigenvalue above one, namely 3.06. Factor loadings for all items were above .48. Reliability proved to be acceptable ($\alpha=.78$). Thus, all items of the initial scales were retained and used in the consecutive analyses.

Guilt-proneness (M). The construct of guilt-proneness was measured with seven items such as *“Thinking back to the offence, I feel regret”*. A factor analysis suggested that the item measured a unidimensional construct since one factor with an Eigenvalue over 1 was found, namely 3.97. All items’ factor loadings were above .53. A reliability analysis suggested that α could be improved from acceptable $\alpha=.69$ to almost excellent levels $\alpha=.89$. After the exclusion of item 1, the scale was comprised of six remaining items.

Procedure

The participants received a link either via social media or through SONA systems. The link redirected the participants to the online survey provided by Qualtrics (see Appendix C for the questionnaire). First, the subjects were informed about the aim and structure of the study. Then, they were notified about their rights as participants such as informed that taking part was

¹ Item 4: *“I cannot imagine what the victim must feel like”*, Item 6: *“I cannot understand that the victim may think of me as a bad person”*, Item 9: *“I cannot understand that the victim dislikes me as a person because of my actions”*

voluntary, or that it is possible to exit the study at any given point or they may withdraw their data at any given time. Finally, they gave their informed consent by clicking ‘proceed’ with which they started the actual questionnaire. Ethical approval for the study was given by the Ethics Committee of Behavioural Management and Social sciences (BMS).

In the first section, the participants answered demographic questions. More specifically, they had to indicate their gender, age, nationality, and educational level. This was done at the beginning of the survey because depending on their gender they were assigned either a male or female version of the high crime severity scenario. The low crime severity scenario was gender neutral. Following the demographics, the subjects were randomly allocated to either one of the crime severity conditions as well as to either one of the VOM conditions. The participants were then asked to read both scenarios carefully.

In the next section, respondents answered questions concerning the various scales previously discussed. First, they were asked about their willingness to participate, then they were asked to react to the statements presented for the measurement of perspective taking. This was followed by the scales of responsibility taking and guilt-proneness. Finally, six control questions were posed. These items served as manipulation checks as well as to determine whether the questionnaire was taken seriously and if participants paid attention to its content. An example may be: *“I found it hard to answer how I felt as an offender”*. This order was chosen to avoid direct effects of the three scales measuring the independent and mediating variables on the ‘willingness to participate’-scale. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were debriefed extensively about the true nature of the research and thanked for their participation (see Appendix C). Users of SONA systems received their SONA credits after successful completion of the survey.

Results

Descriptives and correlations

Table 1 serves to give an overview of the descriptives of the main variables: willingness to participate, perspective taking, responsibility taking, guilt-proneness, and the variable VOM conditions. For all variables mean scores, as well as standard deviation and correlations of the four variables, can be found.

Overall, the mean scores for all variables were above the neutral level of 4.00. For the scale willingness to participate the mean scores of the respondents was high ($M=4.91$). However, in comparison with the mean scores on the other scales, willingness to participate has the lowest mean score. The mean scores of perspective taking ($M=5.52$), responsibility taking ($M=5.35$), and guilt-proneness ($M=5.58$) were all significantly higher. Important to notice are the positive correlations of all the variables. This was expected as the constructs were assumed to relate to each other due to their innate similarity of construct. A person having high perspective taking skills was expected to be more inclined to take responsibility or feel guilty. A Person's r test showed statistically significant correlations (at the .01 level) between the three independent variables and the dependent variable willingness to participate. More specifically, with an increase in perspective taking an increase in willingness to participate can be observed ($r=.29$, $n=136$; $p=.02$). However, it is important to note that results showed that this relationship is stronger for both of the mediating variables on the dependent variable ($r=.40$, $n=136$; $p<.001$; $r=.48$, $n=136$; $p<.001$). The strong positive correlations found for perspective taking, responsibility taking and guilt-proneness were expected due to the assumed association of these constructs. Interesting to note is the high correlation of responsibility taking and guilt-proneness ($r=.79$, $n=136$; $p<.001$) which may indicate towards a reciprocal occurrence of guilt and taking responsibility.

Table 1
Descriptives of and correlation between the main variables

	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Willingness to participate	136	4.91	1.33	-	.29**	.40**	.48**	.31**
2. Perspective taking	136	5.52	.86		-	.67**	.58**	.20*
3. Responsibility taking	136	5.35	.96			-	.79**	.08
4. Guilt-proneness	136	5.58	.95				-	.10
5. VOM condition	136	-	-					-

Note. * correlation significant at the .05 level (two-tailed), ** correlation significant at the .01 level (two-tailed). All scales ranged from 1 to 7. VOM condition coded as 0=VOM apart, 1=VOM part.

Manipulation effects

Before considering the tested hypotheses a quick overview of the effects of the manipulation on the main variables shall be given (see Appendix D, table 5-7 for detailed values).

Overall it was found that the crime severity manipulation did produce different outcomes in the two groups. An independent t-test revealed that there was no significant difference in means between the high and low crime severity group for willingness to participate ($t=-.34$, $df=134$, $p=.73$). However, for the remaining variables, significant differences in means were found. Mean scores of perspective taking in the low crime severity group were significantly higher ($t=-5.21$, $df=134$, $p<.001$) compared to the scores of the high severity groups ($M_{HS}=5.18$, $SD_{HS}=.91$; $M_{LS}=5.89$, $SD_{LS}=.63$). For responsibility taking the mean scores were also higher in the low severity groups ($M_{HS}=5.00$, $SD_{HS}=.88$; $M_{LS}=5.74$, $SD_{LS}=.88$). The difference was statistically significant ($t=-5.21$, $df=134$, $p<.001$). The manipulation also had an effect on guilt-proneness; mean differences were significant ($t=-2.96$, $df=134$, $p<.001$) with a higher mean score in the low crime severity group ($M_{HS}=5.36$, $SD_{HS}=1.00$; $M_{LS}=5.83$, $SD_{LS}=.82$).

An independent t-test also revealed significant effects for the VOM condition manipulation. Mean scores for the dependent variable differed significantly in the two conditions ($t=-3.72$, $df=134$, $p<.001$) with a higher mean score in the VOM part condition ($M_{apart}=4.50$, $SD_{apart}=1.42$; $M_{part}=5.30$, $SD_{part}=1.11$). The same pattern was apparent for perspective taking. The difference in mean scores was significant ($t=-2.37$, $df=134$, $p=.02$) and the mean of perspective taking was higher in the VOM part than in the VOM apart condition ($M_{apar}=5.34$, $SD_{apar}=.97$; $M_{part}=5.68$, $SD_{part}=.73$). For the remaining independent variables responsibility taking and guilt-proneness, mean score comparison did not yield significant differences ($t_{RT}=-.89$, $df_{RT}=134$, $p_{RT}=.38$; $t_{GP}=-1.15$, $df_{GP}=134$, $p_{GP}=.25$).

Hypothesis testing

The first hypothesis stated that people with a better ability to take on another person's perspective showed a higher willingness to participate in a victim-offender mediation program than individuals who demonstrated to have worse perspective taking skills. A univariate regression analysis was performed in order to test the prediction. Thereby, perspective taking was the independent variable, willingness to participate the dependent one. The demographic factors of gender, age, nationality and educational level were added to the analysis as covariates

in order to control for noise. A significant model was observed [$F(5,130)=3.35; p=.01$] with an adjusted R -squared of .08 (see table 2). The analysis showed that perspective taking was significantly predicting willingness to participate ($B= .44, SE= .13, p=.001$), when controlling for the variables gender, age, nationality, and educational level.

In summary, hypothesis 1 was confirmed which means that perspective taking, indeed, was found to be a valid predictor of an offender's willingness to participate in a victim-offender mediation program.

Table 2

Regression coefficients for perspective taking and the demographic variables as predictors of offenders' willingness to participate in VOM (n=136).

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta (β)</i>	<i>p</i>
Perspective taking	.44	.13	.29	.001
Gender	.28	.24	.10	.28
Age	.01	.01	.06	.52
Nationality	.40	.23	.15	.09
Educational level	-.01	.14	-.01	.92

Note. Model was found to be statistically significant [$F(5,130)=3.35; p=.01$] with an adjusted R -squared of .08.

The second hypothesis entailed the prediction that the way VOM is offered, either aside any legal proceedings or as part of such, would interact with the validated predictive relationship of perspective taking on willingness to participate. Hence, a moderation effect between perspective taking/VOM condition and willingness to participate was expected. PROCESS Procedure for SPSS version 3.3 by Hayes (2018) was used to test this. The main effects for perspective taking, presented in table 3, were shown to be significant, $B=.38, SE=.13, p=.001, CI [.13, .64]$. The same accounted for VOM conditions, $B=.68, SE=.22 p=.001, CI [.25, 1.11]$. However, no significant interaction effect was found for perspective taking and VOM condition on the dependent variable, $B=.13, SE=.26 p=.62, CI [-.38, .64]$. The interaction model was statistically

insignificant [$F(1,132)=.25$; $p=.62$) with an adjusted R -squared of .002. In consideration of the results, the anticipated interaction effect was not found, therefore hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Table 3

Regression coefficients of perspective taking, VOM condition and their interaction as a predictor of willingness to participate (n=136).

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	CI (LLCI, ULCI)
Perspective taking	.38	.13	.001	.13, .64
VOM condition	.68	.22	.001	.25, 1.11
PTxVOM	.13	.26	.62	-.38, .64

Note. The confidence interval was one of 95%. The model was statistically significant [$F(3,132)=7.75$, $p<.001$] with R -squared=.18

The third hypothesis proposed that the factors of responsibility taking and guilt-proneness mediated the validated predictive relationship of perspective taking on willingness to participate. The total effect of perspective taking through the mediating variable responsibility taking on willingness to participate was statistically significant [$B=.44$, $SE=.13$, $p<.001$, (.19, .69)]. Thereby, the indirect effect of perspective taking via responsibility taking and on willingness to participate was significant [$B=.42$, $SE=.11$, (.24, .67)], while the direct effect of perspective taking on the dependent variable was not statistically significant anymore [$B=.05$, $SE=.16$, $p=.75$, (-.27, .38)]. This suggests that the relationship between better perspective taking skills and an increased willingness of an offender to participate in VOM is explained by an individual's heightened tendency to take responsibility. Therefore, the first part of hypothesis 3 was confirmed.

For the second part of the third hypothesis, the same analysis was conducted with guilt-proneness as the assumed mediator of the relationship of the original independent variable on the dependent one. While the direct effect of perspective taking on willingness to participate was not statistically significant [$B=.02$, $SE=.14$, $p=.88$, (-.26, .31)], when guilt-proneness was added as a mediator, the indirect effect of perspective taking via guilt-proneness on the dependent variable

was [$B=.39$, $SE=.14$, $(.14, .69)$]. The total effect of the independent variable on the dependent one was [$B=.44$, $SE=.13$, $p<.001$, $(.19, .69)$]. This suggests a complete mediation with the respective model. Both responsibility taking and guilt-proneness were shown to successfully mediate the relationship of perspective taking on willingness to participate. Therefore, hypothesis three was fully confirmed. For an overview of the two investigated relationship see figures 2 and 3. For the detailed values see tables 10 and 11 in Appendix E.

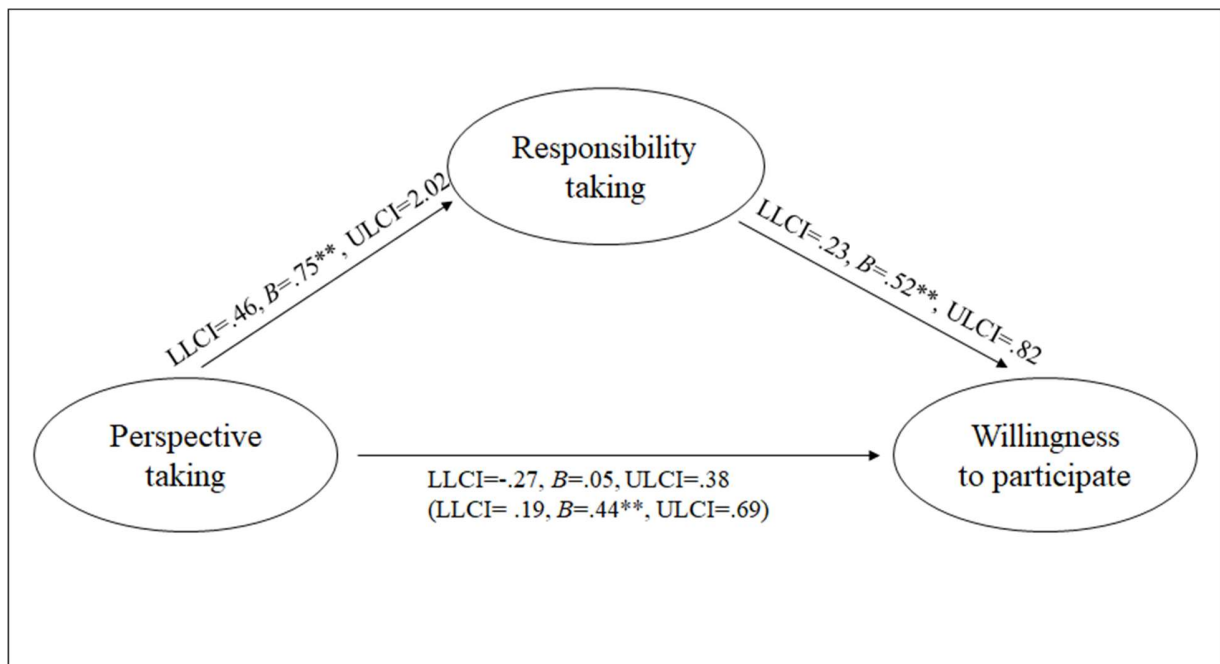


Figure 2. Relationship of perspective taking on willingness to participate mediated through responsibility taking. Effects marked with ** are significant at the .01 level. The total effect of the new relational model can be found in brackets.

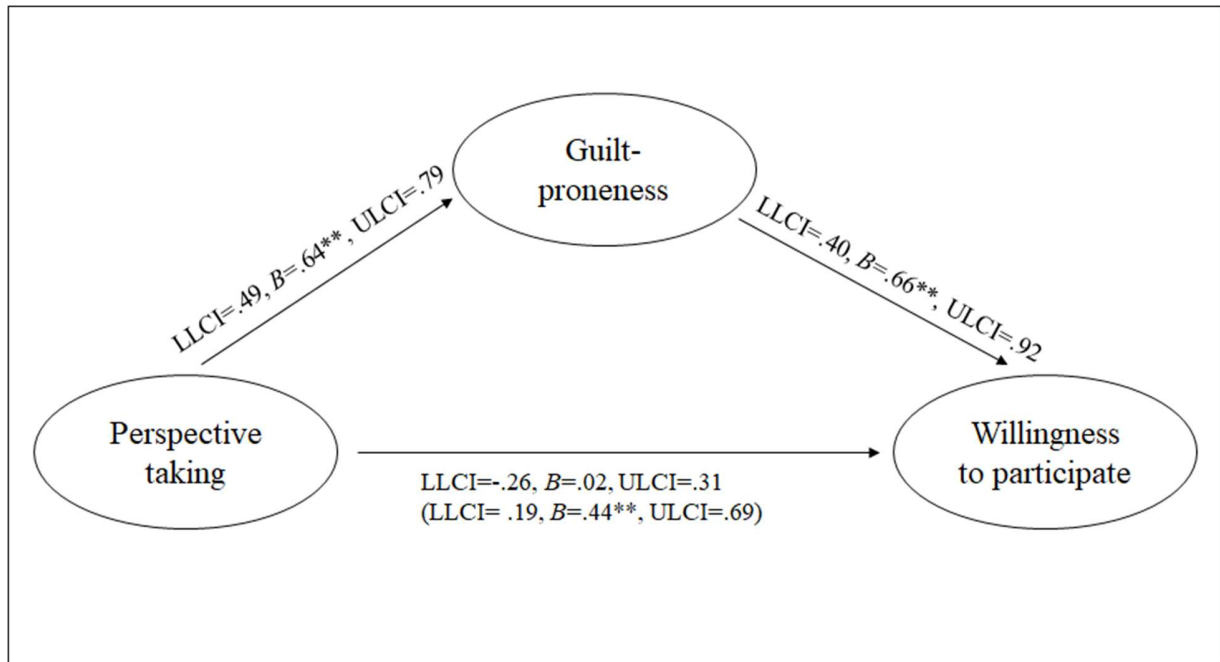


Figure 3. Relationship of perspective taking on willingness to participate mediated through guilt-proneness. Effects marked with ** are significant at the .01 level. The total effect of the new relational model can be found in brackets.

Discussion

In the scientific community, very little focus has been placed on researching the reasons and possible factors that lead to the participation of offenders in victim-offender mediation (VOM). The aim of this study was to derive a theoretical framework from existing studies on prosocial behaviour and research in the context of VOM which could be tested in order to provide a foundation for further research efforts. Finally, this yielded insights into whether a self-selection of offenders occurs. More specifically, this study investigated whether an offender's willingness to participate in VOM is influenced by their perspective taking skills, their ability to take responsibility, how guilt-prone they are and in which context mediation is offered to them. It was expected that offenders with a better ability to take on another person's perspective were also more willing to take part in a VOM program to meet with a victim. The results gave sufficient evidence to support this notion. Higher perspective taking led to a higher willingness to participate in VOM which is in line with the findings of Leith and Baumeister (1998). The ability

to take on another person's perspective may very well make an individual more empathetic which may produce the inclination to help even if one has been in conflict with that person.

In addition, different factors influencing the relationship between perspective taking and willingness to participate were investigated. Offenders who were more prone to experience guilt or were more inclined to take responsibility besides having good perspective taking skills were indeed more willing to participate in VOM. In a study by Zebel et al. (2009) similar patterns were found for perspective taking and feelings of guilt though they occurred in a group context with a strong influence of group identification. The outcomes of this study point towards the possibility that the effect of higher guilt via perspective taking which leads to more support for the reparation of harm may also work in an individual context, apart from the implications of group identification. Moreover, both responsibility taking and guilt-proneness were shown to raise the tendency to participate in VOM, in other words raising the tendency to repair the harm done. Further, the outcomes of this study strengthen the assumption that responsibility taking and guilt are associated. Therefore, responsibility taking might, indeed, serve as a primary appraisal for guilt as suggested by Zebel et al. (2009). A claim that can be further substantiated referring to two studies by Roseman, Spindel, & Jose (1990) and Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz (1994). Whether guilt only arises after an individual felt responsible for their actions should be investigated in further research efforts.

The findings of this study are in line with the outcomes of the study by Leith & Baumeister (1998) and can be further explained by Williams (2012). According to Williams (2012), when taking on another person's perspective, people are able to not only experience from a different stance but may also prioritise the interests of another individual. Besides, perspective taking was not only shown to operate at a cognitive level by producing the motivation for benevolent behaviours but also producing compassionate behaviour (Williams, 2012). In situations of conflict, such as in the current study, perspective taking increases responsibility taking and, thereby, can produce feelings of guilt which in turn generate the motivation for other-oriented behaviour. Thus, explaining why there is an increased tendency to participate in VOM. Moreover, in the research from Jackson and Bonacker (2006) and Wolf et al. (2010), it was shown that guilt arises from a dissonance between one's moral self-image and an immoral act. The heightened tendency to participate in VOM should also be explained by the motivation to not simply show regard to another person but also by an intrinsic need for restoration of self-

image. This drive is further enhanced when the public image was threatened as well (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). Hence, even though the participants were not members of specific in- or out-groups as in the study by Zebel et al. (2009), they may have been motivated by a perceived threat to their belongingness to society. A possible latent factor that should be accounted for in further research.

The context in which VOM is offered, whether as part of the legal procedure or aside from it, was found to make a difference regarding offender participation. In the groups in which VOM was offered as part of the legal proceedings, ‘offenders’ indicated that they were more willing to participate than ‘offenders’ in the ‘VOM apart’ groups. This suggests that the advantage of sentence reduction through participation may play a role in influencing offender willingness. This relation, considered on its own, could be interpreted as a selfish interest of offenders to participate in VOM to serve their own cause of getting their sentence reduced. However, ‘offenders’ of the ‘VOM part’ group were also better at perspective taking, responsibility taking, and guilt-proneness which to some extent might alleviate the likeliness of self-interest as the only possible explanation for a higher willingness to participate. A possible confounding factor which might have caused this difference is discussed in the following section.

Limitations and suggestions

An important limitation of this study was the artificiality of the offenders. Students and friends were asked to imagine how they felt as an offender which may not represent how real offenders might have felt in a situation similar to the scenarios. Measuring concepts such as perspective taking, responsibility taking, and guilt-proneness is vague considering the possibility that offenders who participate in VOM may be a very homogenous sample with systematically low/high perspective taking skills. Hence, the results of this research need to be validated with ‘real’ criminal offenders in order to be able to generalise the findings. To improve the current design of the study, convenience sampling could still be utilised as a sampling method but only individuals who have (actually) committed a crime should be included. This would make it possible to tailor the questionnaire to the offence which the (formerly) criminal individual committed. It is suggested that the questionnaire entails a short statement that probes the participant into imagining their previous crime and maybe asking for key features of the crime in order to

classify the severity.² Thus, only a scenario concerning the context in which VOM is offered would be presented. In this way, it would be possible to assess the possibility of self-selection of offenders while still having the opportunity for convenience sampling which is more feasible for an undergraduate research project.

Another crucial limitation is the manipulation with the scenarios. If this line of research is continued, standardised scenarios should be used in order to exclude the possibility that the variances are due to latent factors and not the crime severity manipulation itself. The difficulty would be to find a scenario that can be modified in such a way that the crime is perceived as more severe while the crime is remaining similar regarding its main features. A possibility might be to write up a scenario of a bank robbery where the offender does not physically harm someone in the low crime severity conditions but attacks someone physically with a weapon in the high crime severity scenario. However, it still needs to be ethically acceptable to present the scenarios to the participants, thus, the crime cannot be too violent and too psychologically harming. Besides, the VOM (a)part scenarios should also be improved. In the current version for both scenarios the possibility cannot be excluded that the way VOM is offered, either by a lawyer or by the victim may have a confounding effect on the manipulation. In order to account for that, the scenarios should be more alike regarding the communication channel through which the offender learns about VOM. A possible solution might be that the only channel through which the offender learns about the option of mediation is a mediation agency. The agency approaches the offender in the VOM part scenario directly in court, whereas the offender in the VOM apart scenario is approached out of court.

Also, a concern is how realistic the ‘VOM apart’ scenario is. In the scenario, the offender receives a request for VOM by the victim via mail. In reality, it is more common that VOM requests are posed by the criminal offender than by the victim (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Presser & Lowenkamp, 1999). Although it might not be authentic, for the purpose of the research it was a sufficient way to avoid the possibility of biased results. If the participant would have read a scenario that described the offender as the individual requesting mediation, this might have produced distorted answers concerning the willingness to participate. In other words, if the scenario would have included that the offender asks for VOM, this would have inclined that he

² Suggestion: similar to this research, crime could be classified as low severity when no physical violence was displayed, as high when it entails physical violence.

might be more willing to participate. It might have seemed illogical that participants were asked to imagine themselves as an offender requesting VOM which would have been followed by the question whether they want to participate in VOM. Therefore, a possible bias was avoided, although the scenario may not correctly represent reality.

Besides improving the written scenarios, the measures also need refinement. Although the scales for willingness to participate, responsibility taking, and guilt were valid as well as reliable, the scale for perspective taking needed adjustment. As reported before, three items had to be excluded because they were not consistent with the rest of the items. The reason that is suggested is a methodological error that can arise if negatively framed items are formulated and used (Weijters, Baumgartner, & Schillewaet, 2013). This should be kept in mind for further usage of the current measures.

Implications

Overall the setup of this research project was sufficient, and it certainly not only had limitations. A strong point was the almost equal distribution of participants across the various experimental conditions which in turn allowed more reliable results. Moreover, the manipulation seemed to have worked according to the expectations as more serious offenders were found to score lower on perspective taking and the associated constructs. For future research, a similar design can be utilised which incorporates the suggestions to minimise possible limitations.

One of the biggest assets of this study is that it provides, to the researcher's knowledge, the first cue for a self-selection bias in VOM programs. Even though the findings cannot be generalised due to the artificiality of the participants as offenders, the results suggest that offenders who committed more serious crimes have indeed a worse understanding of the perspective of other individuals and are, thus, more inclined to take responsibility or experience guilt which resulted in the intention to participate in VOM. Motivated by these findings, further research should explore whether these differences in the nature of offenders exist, first, in real offender populations and secondly, when comparing offenders that did not want to participate and those who wanted to. Still, the current study was the first to demonstrate that offender populations are atypical which in turn might have implications on participation and reoffending rates.

Further implications are that the findings validate previous research which suggested that perspective taking skills predict prosocial behaviours and adds to that by showing that responsibility taking and guilt-proneness are factors that mediate this relationship. More thoroughly understanding the mechanisms that enhance the willingness of offenders to participate in VOM may also have practical implications. This research may serve as another step towards understanding offender motivation for participating in victim-offender mediation programs. It shows that empathy in the form of perspective taking can significantly increase the willingness to participate in VOM. Even though this may not predict actual VOM participation, increasing the willingness of offenders will eventually increase participation and decrease unscheduled termination of mediation.

Perspective taking as a skill can be learned through frequent practice (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Leith & Baumeister, 1998). Incorporating exercises into existing restorative justice programs which teach criminals or prisoners this skill, may provide the foundation for higher offender participation rates. Further, assigning offenders tasks to enhance their perspective taking skills may make VOM more feasible with more serious offenders. This is particularly interesting considering the larger reduction in re-offending for more serious offenders found by Sherman et al., 2015 or Stewart et al., 2018. By enabling VOM for those criminals that need re-socialisation the most a significant societal impact could be made as the overall crime rates will be lowered if offenders are reintegrated.

Overall, this study yielded significant findings concerning offender atypicality and may, thus, serve as an outline for future research into the subject.

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Appendix A: Scenario description

Scenario 1: Fraud - low severity crime

Imagine yourself in the following situation

You have been in financial trouble for a while now: you had to pay off your student loans and you have some debts with family members you have to pay. You also got fired and temporarily perceived some financial payment from the government. This made your financial situation even worse. The need for money was very high at that moment and you have found another way to get your money.

You have created an account on a second-hand selling website (Ebay) and you put an iPad up for sale. Surprisingly, you received many responses from potential buyers. Eventually, you decided to agree on an offer of a buyer who could not pick up the iPad himself. The buyer wanted to transfer the money to you so that you could send the iPad via the parcel service. Of course, you have not sent this iPad to the buyer, because you do not even have this iPad in your possession. Luckily, you received the money, which means that you can at least pay part of your debts.

The buyer of the iPad did not leave it this way and after many attempts to get in touch with you, she called the police to track you down. One day, the police are at your doorstep for a deposition and question you about this issue. Through your account number and your account on the website, the police have managed to find your name and address. The victim is a 24-year-old woman and you have never seen her before. She was looking for an iPad for a small price because she needed it for work. She thought she could trust you and did not think that someone would mislead her. You are accused to have committed fraud.

Scenario 2: Bar accident - high severity crime

Female version

Imagine yourself in the following situation.

It's Friday night and you are out with your boyfriend to a local pub in the city centre. You and Rene, with whom you have been dating for two years now, went to the pub to get some food. The food was great and you enjoyed a few glasses of wine with it. After the main course, you decide against taking dessert or coffee but to head home instead. You walk to the bar to pay. The bartender asks you whether you enjoyed the food while presenting you the bill of €47,-. You tell him the food was great while paying him with a €50,- note and tell him to keep the change.

While returning to your table you see a girl in her 20s that you don't know standing close to and talking with Rene. Walking back to your table you hear him ask for Rene's phone number.

The following dialogue unfolds:

YOU: "What's going on? Are you hitting on my boyfriend?"

GIRL: (keeps looking at Rene) "I don't see a ring on his finger so he can talk to whoever he wants to."

YOU: "Rene, let's go."

GIRL: (to you): "Maybe you should go."

YOU: (louder) "I am not talking to you!"

GIRL: (turning towards you): "But I am talking to you."

YOU: (raised voice) "Fuck off!"

GIRL: (raised voice) "You fuck off!"

YOU: (raised voice and threatening) "And now stop it!"

At the same moment, you lose your temper and give the girl a big push. The girl loses her balance, trips and falls. She bumps her head against another table and loses her consciousness for a while. You see blood on her head. The girl files a report to the police. You are accused of physical assault.

Male version

Imagine yourself in the following situation.

It's Friday night and you are out with your girlfriend to a local pub in the city centre. You and Rene, with whom you have been dating for two years now, went to the pub to get some food. The food was great and you enjoyed a few glasses of wine with it. After the main course, you decide against taking dessert or coffee but to head home instead. You walk to the bar to pay. The bartender asks you whether you enjoyed the food while presenting you the bill of €47,-. You tell him the food was great while paying him with a €50,- note and tell him to keep the change.

While returning to your table you see a guy in his 20s that you don't know standing close to and to talk with Rene. Walking back to your table you hear him ask for Rene's phone number.

The following dialogue unfolds:

YOU: "What's going on? Are you hitting on my girlfriend?"

GUY: (keeps looking at Rene) "I don't see a ring on her finger so she can talk to whoever she wants to."

YOU: "Rene, let's go."

GUY: (to you): "Maybe you should go."

YOU: (louder) "I am not talking to you!"

GUY: (turning towards you): "But I am talking to you."

YOU: (raised voice) "Fuck off!"

GUY: (raised voice) "You fuck off!"

YOU: (raised voice and threatening) "And now stop it!"

At the same moment, you lose your temper and give the guy a big push. The guy loses his balance, trips and falls. He bumps his head against another table and loses his consciousness for a while. You see blood on his head. The guy files a report to the police. You are accused of physical assault.

Appendix B: Description of VOM procedure

VOM 1: Apart from legal proceedings

A few weeks after your final court hearing, you receive a letter in your mail explaining that the victim of the crime you committed, is asking you to come together for a dialogue as part of a victim-offender mediation (VOM) program.

The letter entails the following description of VOM:

VOM seeks to enable victims and offenders of a crime to come together for a dialogue. The goal of VOM is to establish an environment where it becomes possible for the two parties to exchange their thoughts and feelings about their experience of the crime. The dialogue offers the opportunity to discover how the other individual has felt and what implications your actions may have had on the other person and their life. It will take place in a safe environment in the presence of a neutral mediator. Participation is voluntary for both parties and the conversation is confidential.

VOM 2: Part of legal proceedings

A few weeks after the incident you consult with your lawyer. He tells you that the criminal prosecutor offered the option of victim-offender mediation (VOM) and the victim of the crime is willing to participate. He further informs you that by participating in VOM your sentence might be lower since the criminal prosecutor will take the outcome of the mediation into account when deciding which punishment should be imposed. He explains that it could demonstrate the willingness to make up for what you did.

He hands you a flyer with the following description of VOM:

VOM seeks to enable victims and offenders of a crime to come together for a dialogue. The goal of VOM is to establish an environment where it becomes possible for the two parties to exchange their thoughts and feelings about their experience of the crime. The dialogue offers the opportunity to discover how the other individual has felt and what implications your actions may have had on the other person and their life. It will take place in a safe environment in the presence of a neutral mediator. Participation is voluntary for both parties and the conversation is confidential.

Appendix C: Paper version of survey

All notes in brackets only serve an explanatory function they were not included in the actual questionnaire.

Thank you for your interest in this study!

The following survey aims to investigate the feelings of criminal offenders after they have committed a crime.

You, as the participant, are asked to imagine yourself in the role of the offender by reading a written scenario. While reading, you should pay close attention to the information given in the

scenario as you will be asked about certain details later on. Please, try to really imagine yourself in the role of the offender! After the scenario, you will be asked to answer questions about your feelings as the offender.

Completing this survey will take you approximately 15 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers, but your honesty is important! If you have any suggestions or remarks, you can follow the instructions at the end of the survey.

Before starting the questionnaire, please read the information below

Please be aware that participation in this study is completely voluntary, and that you can end the survey at any time. You may withdraw from this research at any point. Under no circumstances will your real name or identifying information be included in the report of this research. Nobody, except the researcher and the research supervisor, will have access to this anonymised material in its entirety. Your data is treated confidentially and the research results are published anonymously. No personal data will be given to third parties without your expressed permission. If you have any questions, you may contact Pascal Mehlan (p.mehlan@student.utwente.nl).

If you have any complaints about this research, please direct them to the Secretary of the Ethics Commission of the faculty Behavioural, Management, and Social Sciences at the University of Twente via e-mail: ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl.

I declare that I read and understood the foregoing information. I agree with participating in this study by clicking "proceed".

What is your gender? (Options: Female/Male)

What is your age in years? (-text option-)

What is your nationality? (Options: between Dutch/German/Others, namely -text option-)

What is your highest (finished) finished education at this moment? (Options: Secondary education (VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule/Middleschool)/Secondary education (HAVO/VWO/Gymnasium/Highschool)/Bachelor's degree/Master's degree/Other)

Please read the following scenario carefully. It is important that you understand the content and that you remember what has been said in order to proceed.

(Note: Now, one of the in Appendix A and B described scenarios would be displayed. Thereby, one crime scenario and one VOM scenario were randomly chosen. For the high crime scenario, based on the participant's answer for the question 'Gender' either the female version for female participants displayed or the male version for participants that selected 'Male' as their gender.)

(Note: From this point on the items for each construct appeared together in a matrix table. The participant had to indicate their agreement with the item on a seven-point Likert scale. The range of the scale was the following: 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4= Neither agree nor disagree, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree.

Images of the scale as they appeared are given below. The order indicates the order of display.)

Please read the statement below. Indicate your agreement by choosing the option that best applies to you							
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I would like to get in contact with the victim	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would not want to meet the victim in person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to have a conversation with the victim during victim-offender mediation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to participate in victim-offender mediation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like get in contact with the victim on my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I probably will not participate in victim-offender mediation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 3. Image of the scale for willingness to participate, as presented in the online survey.

Please read the statements below. Indicate your agreement by choosing the option that best applies to you

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I can put myself in the victim's shoes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can understand that my actions may have caused harm to the victim	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that my actions had an impact on the victim's life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I cannot imagine what the victim must feel like	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can understand that the victim is angry with me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I cannot understand that the victim may think of me as a bad person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can understand that the victim feels sad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can imagine that the victim is ruminating (constantly thinking) about the offence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I cannot understand that the victim dislikes me as a person because of my actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can understand that the victim is afraid to be victimised again	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 4. Image of the scale 'perspective taking', as presented in the online survey.

Please read the statements below. Indicate your agreement by choosing the option that best applies to you

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel responsible for the offence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't feel responsible for the harm the victim has suffered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not the only guilty person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel responsible for the damage the offence has caused	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel responsible for repairing the damage of the offence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to make up for what I did	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 5. Image of the scale 'responsibility taking', as presented in the online survey.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I cannot stop thinking of what I did	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think back to the offence, I feel guilty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think back to the offence, I feel tension	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thinking of the offence, I feel regret	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think back to the offence, I feel bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think back to the offence, I want to apologise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thinking of the offence makes me want to make up for what I did	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 6. Image of the scale 'guilt-proneness', as presented in the online survey.

Please evaluate the following statements. Indicate your agreement by choosing the option that best applies to you

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the scenarios were realistic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to imagine myself in the role of the offender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe I could have done what the offender did	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found it hard to answer how I felt as an offender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 7. Image of the scale ‘Control questions’, as presented in the online survey

The following questions are based on the scenarios you read before. Please select the correct option

Where did you commit the crime? (Options: In the library/ In a bar/ At home/ I don’t remember)

(Note: The option ‘In a bar’ was correct for the high crime severity conditions, ‘At home’ for the low crime severity conditions)

How were you informed about VOM? (Options: You received a letter/ My lawyer gave me a flyer, I googled it, I don’t remember)

(Note: The option ‘You received a letter’ was correct for the VOM apart conditions, ‘My lawyer gave me a flyer’ for the VOM part conditions)

Thank you for participating in this survey! Your response has been recorded.

As you may have noticed, this survey was designed to investigate the relation of personality characteristics on the intention of an offender to participate in victim-offender mediation. The specific concepts of concern were perspective-taking, guilt-proneness, and responsibility taking. In addition, you were allocated to one of two experimental groups which differed in the severity of the crime committed. Namely, fraud - low severity and physical assault - high severity.

If you have any questions, concerns, or remarks, you are welcome to send an e-mail to p.mehlan@student.utwente.nl

Appendix D: Descriptives and distributions

Table 5

Comparison of means via an ANOVA for the four main variables between all four experimental conditions. (n=136).

Conditions	<u>1 (n=35)</u>	<u>2 (n=37)</u>	<u>3 (n=30)</u>	<u>4 (n=34)</u>			
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
WP	4.38 (1.43)	5.35 (1.07)	4.63 (1.41)	5.25 (1.17)	4.82	3	.01
PT	4.89 (1.00)	5.46 (.73)	5.87 (.61)	5.91 (.66)	13.01	3	.01
RT	4.88 (.79)	5.11 (.96)	5.73 (.88)	5.75 (.90)	8.52	3	.01
GP	5.13 (.97)	5.57 (1.00)	5.89 (.76)	5.77 (.88)	4.48	3	.01

Note. Condition 1 represents the high severity and VOM apart group, condition 2 the high severity and VOM part group. Condition 3 represents the low severity and VOM apart group, condition 4 the low severity and VOM part group. Willingness to participate was abbreviated with WP, perspective taking with PT, responsibility taking with RT, and guilt-proneness with GP.

Table 6

Comparison of means for the dependent variable and the three independent variables between the high crime severity and low crime severity conditions (n=136).

	<u>HS (n=72)</u>		<u>LS (n=64)</u>				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Willingness to participate	4.88	1.35	4.96	1.32	-.34	134	.73
Perspective taking	5.18	.91	5.89	.63	-5.21	134	.01
Responsibility taking	5.00	.88	5.74	.88	-4.94	134	.01
Guilt-proneness	5.36	1.00	5.83	.82	-2.96	134	.01

Note. In this case HCS stands for high crime severity. LCS stands for low crime severity. Two-tailed p-values are given.

Table 7

Comparison of means for the dependent variable and the three independent variables between the VOM apart and VOM part conditions (n=136).

	<u>VOM apart (n=65)</u>		<u>VOM part (n=71)</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Willingness to participate	4.50	1.42	5.30	1.11	-3.72	134	.01
Perspective taking	5.34	.97	5.68	.73	-2.37	134	.02
Responsibility taking	5.27	.93	5.42	.98	-.89	134	.38
Guilt-proneness	5.48	.95	5.67	.94	-1.15	134	.25

Note. Two-tailed p-values are given.

Table 8

Distribution of participants on the demographic variables per experimental condition (n=136)

	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>		<u>Nationality</u>			<u>Educational level</u>				
	<i>M (SD)</i>	Female	Male	Dutch	German	Other	SE1	SE2	Bachelor	Master	Other
High severity											
VOM apart (n=35)	27.03 (12.32)	22 (63%)	13 (37%)	1 (3%)	28 (80%)	6 (17%)	3 (8%)	16 (48%)	6 (17%)	6 (17%)	4 (10%)
VOM part (n=37)	25.97 (8.60)	26 (70%)	11 (30%)	0 (-%)	30 (81%)	7 (19%)	0 (-%)	22 (60%)	6 (16%)	8 (21%)	1 (3%)
Low severity											
VOM apart (n=30)	24.47 (9.09)	16 (53%)	14 (47%)	6 (20%)	17 (57%)	7 (23%)	1 (3%)	23 (77%)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)
VOM part (n=34)	22.00 (2.83)	23 (68%)	11 (32%)	2 (6%)	27 (79%)	5 (15%)	0 (-%)	24 (70%)	7 (21%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)
TOTAL	24.92 (8.97)	87 (64%)	49 (36%)	9 (7%)	102 (75%)	25 (18%)	4 (3%)	85 (63%)	21 (15%)	19 (14%)	7 (5%)

Note. For the high crime severity groups is n=72, for the low crime severity groups n=64. For the VOM apart conditions is n=71, for the VOM part conditions n=65. SE 1= Secondary education 1. Secondary education 1 entails VMBO, Realschule, Hauptschule, Middle school. SE 2= Secondary education 2. Secondary education 2 includes HAVO, VWO, Gymnasium, High school.

Appendix E: Mediation analyses

Table 10

Regression coefficients of perspective taking and responsibility taking on willingness to participate (n=136)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	CI (LLCI, ULCI)
Perspective taking	.75	.07	.001	(.46, 2.02)
Responsibility taking	.52	.15	.001	(.23, .82)
Willingness to participate	.05	.16	.75	(-.27, .38)

Table 11

Regression coefficients of perspective taking and guilt-proneness on willingness to participate (n=136)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	CI (LLCI, ULCI)
Perspective taking	.64	.07	.001	(.49, .79)
Guilt-proneness	.66	.13	.001	(.40, .92)
Willingness to participate	.02	.13	.88	(-.26, .31)