

Bachelor thesis

Receiving an apology in the context of
VOM: Examining the influence of
perceived sincerity on imagined victims'
feelings and needs.

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Abstract

This present research study is about imagined victims and their perceived sincerity of an apology, given by the offender within the process of VOM. It was examined, to what extent the perceived sincerity affected the victims' need for agency, the feelings of anger and fear and the perceived trustworthiness regarding the offender. In addition, the effect of trustworthiness the victim perceives concerning the offender on the willingness to forgive, the need to avoid the offender and the need for revenge is tested. It was expected that the victim's perceived sincerity has a lowering effect on the victim's need for agency and the feelings of fear and anger and an increasing effect on trustworthiness. The perceived trustworthiness was thought to also have an increasing effect on the willingness to forgive and a decreasing effect on avoidance and revenge. These expectations were tested by delivering either a sincere or insincere apology to the victims (total $N= 99$) and examining if the needs and feelings decreased after receiving this apology and if the trustworthiness of the offender increased. In the end, it was found, that the perceived sincerity of an apology just had a decreasing effect on the feeling of anger but, unexpectedly, not on the feeling of fear and the need for agency. Consistent with the hypotheses, the perceived sincerity increased the perceived trustworthiness and perceived trustworthiness also increased the willingness to forgive. In addition, it was found that the perceived trustworthiness has a decreasing effect on the need to avoid the offender, but no effect was found on the need for revenge.

Introduction

As a consequence of committing a crime, offenders are held accountable for their actions by criminal justice procedures, which include being arrested and punished but additionally, the criminal justice system also offers services for victims and offenders (Moriarty, 2017). Most often, this implies a rehabilitation programme for the offender. It is described as the most influential approach in the last 200 years because it assists the offenders to find, understand and solve the underlying problems that mitigated the decision to commit a crime (Ness & Strong, 2014). Nonetheless, criticism explains, the rehabilitation model fails to recognize all parties that are involved in a crime. Especially the victims, who are as much involved in the crime as the offender and also show a high need for rehabilitation and attention (Ness & Strong, 2014). Zehr (2015) and Chu (1991) describe that in the whole justice process, the victims are often considered as being people that can be ignored or wished to vanish to no further trouble the police, courts, and society. Contrary, the example of Justice Kelly demonstrates how much it can benefit the victims and their rehabilitation if they get considered and involved in the process. J. Kelly is a victim of rape, who was present when her offender was in court and received a sentence with prison time. The offender, while he walked out of the room, turned to J. Kelly, and said: “You understand that what I have done here demonstrates conclusively that what happened was not your fault” (Ness & Strong, 2014, p. 3). She described that the offender’s approach, his behaviour, and his words were the start of her psychological recovery (Ness & Strong, 2014).

This valuable situation of having the offender communicating with the victim was developed and is subject to the restorative justice system, in which also the victim is considered in the process of criminal justice. The restorative justice system (RJ) is the alternative to the conventional justice system. RJ aims to fulfil the needs of all parties that are involved in a particular crime - victims, offenders, and the community (Zehr, 2015). For example, hearing that the happenings of the offence were not J. Kelly’s fault could have positively influenced the needs she developed after the offence. Next to fulfilling the victims and offenders needs, RJ also tries to create awareness about offenders taking responsibility and repairing the damage. Furthermore, RJ is often used to handle minor criminal actions like vandalism, minor assault, theft, and burglary (Umbreit & Greenwood, 1999), but in some regions and some cases, RJ is also increasingly used in more severe criminal cases (Johnstone, 2013; Zebel, Schreurs & Ufkes 2017). Bazemore and Earle (2002) are even convinced that every crime can be restored, no matter how severe it is. To achieve all goals of RJ, there are different approaches and techniques, like restorative conferencing or sentencing circles (Johnstone, 2014) but the most commonly used and researched approach is Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) (Umbreit & Armour, 2011).

Victim-Offender mediation

VOM emerged for the first time in 1974 in Elmira, Ontario, US. When it appeared, it was first known by the name ‘Victim offender reconciliation program’ (VORP) (Zehr, 1995). Over time the name changed to Victim-Offender mediation and is also called victim-offender dialogue or victim-offender reconciliation, or victim-offender conferencing (Umbreit & Armour, 2011). VOM centres around having a conversation between the offender and the victim that is driven by dialogues to share personal narratives about the incident (Lewis & Umbreit, 2015; Umbreit, 2006; Umbreit & Armour, 2011; Umbreit & Hansen, 2017). The safe meeting for mediation is assured by a professional, who takes on the role of the mediator. In more detail, the whole process is divided into 4 steps (Umbreit & Armour, 2011). First, the mediator reaches out to both the victim and offender and afterwards checks if they are suitable for VOM. If they are labelled as suitable, the parties are contacted, and it is assured if both

the victim and the offender are voluntarily willing to participate. Second, the mediator meets with both participants and prepares them for the actual meeting in which they have to face each other (Lewis & Umbreit, 2015; Umbreit, 2006; Umbreit & Armour, 2011; Umbreit & Hansen, 2017). Then, the actual meeting takes place and fourthly, both the victim and offender are contacted after the meeting to have a follow-up with the mediator to check on them and to have a small evaluation about their impressions and satisfaction (Umbreit & Armour, 2011). The process of VOM can be personally facilitated, in a face-to-face meeting, in which both victim and offender take part. Alternatively, Van Dijk (2016) showed that the process can also be conducted via shuttle mediation or letter exchange and tests were conducted in which VOM was offered through video call and email exchange. Moreover, it was demonstrated that VOM is as effective as the conventional juvenile criminal justice system and statistics showed that it can even have better outcomes for both the victim and the offender than the traditional practice (Larsen, 2014). This is stressed by the research of Umbreit and Armour (2011), in which an overall satisfaction with the process of VOM, of up to 90% was found. Further advantages of VOM and reasons of the victim's participation are, that they have the chance to face their offender, discuss everything that went wrong, receive answers about the crime, share their story about the experience of the offence or help the offender improve (Choi, Green, & Kapp, 2010). In the end, up to 90% of all cases arrive at a restitution agreement (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Dissel, 2002; Spriggs, 2009; Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2004; Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2001).

Reconciliation is the wanted outcome, if two parties are having a conflict and reconciliation is nothing that can be achieved through distributing resources, but which has to include a transformation of the psychological attitude towards the other party (Staub et. al., 2005) and resolving emotional disputes (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). The needs and feelings of the victim were moved to the centre of attention because Nadler and Liviatan (2006) stated that conflicting parties need to solve their emotional issues if they want to reconcile. Attention should be paid to these emotional needs because if they are ignored, possible reconciliation could be blocked. These findings can be found again in the goals of VOM and RJ: (1) paying attention to the needs of the victim, offender, and (2) making sure that the offender completely understands the damage that was inflicted and be held accountable for the actions (Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2004; Umbreit, 2001). The focus lies on repairing the harm that was inflicted (Umbreit, 2006) because every human being has the aspiration to live a peaceful life (Lewis & Umbreit, 2015). But both victims and offenders have different aspirations how to restore what happened and to live a peaceful life again (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). As a result, Shnabel and Nadler (2015) formulated the needs-based model of reconciliation, which investigates and acknowledges the dimension of the needs from both the victims' and the offenders' perspectives. On the one side, the offender's needs are described by the moral-social dimension, which contains the characteristics of restoring morality, warmth, and trustworthiness. On the other side, the victim's needs are described by the agency dimension which is described by the characteristic's strength, competence, and influence. If someone experiences a threat to the agency dimension, like becoming a victim of a crime, a feeling of motivation to restore the agency dimension is created. This is caused due to the need to maintain a positive self-perception and to maintain a positive status in society (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015; Abele & Wojciszke, 2013).

After the need for agency, the victims also need to deal with negative feelings that appear after the offense. For example, victims felt upset, and they were struggling with the feeling of anger and fear (Umbreit, 1994; Umbreit, 1999). Research also showed that VOM can help to decrease those feelings of anger and fear (Umbreit, 1999). This is supported by the finding that a successful social interaction between the victim and the offender can decrease those feelings, which can be provided by VOM because it is guided by a mediator in a safe space and environment (Umbreit & Hansen, 2017).

Deciding to not participate in VOM left 66 per cent of the victims still upset and 31 per cent still with the fear of being revictimized. In contrast, after participating, just 11 per cent remained with this fear. This shows the importance of finding ways on how to solve the emotional barriers the conflicting parties are having, in order to keep the way of reconciliation open (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008).

There are some ways on how the emotional barriers are resolved, for example, the offender can empower the victims by communicating respect for their accomplishments and their skills. However, the major way is thought to be the apology-forgiveness cycle (Tavuchis, 1991), which moves the power of apologies to the centre of reconciliation. This cycle describes the process of the offender delivering an apology to the victim and as a result having the victim forgive the offender (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). It is further explained that this cycle gives the opportunity for interaction between both parties and which important role this interaction can play in supporting the interpersonal reconciliation (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). This interpersonal reconciliation can be described by the approach of the needs-based model and its reciprocated mechanism of satisfying needs. As a result, an answer to the question of how to solve or satisfy those emotional needs could be through the power of an apology. This is supported by Moore (1995) who found that giving and accepting apologies are the core elements of restorative justice and Umbreit (1994) showed that receiving an apology is also one of the top three reasons victims evaluate the mediation as being fair. So, investigating the power of apology further and testing how it can influence the victim's needs and feelings can be of high scientific and practical relevance. Consequently, this research will focus on the question:

In what way does an apology affect the victim's needs and feelings?

The importance of a sincere apology

Choi's and Severson's (2009) showed in their research that victims often have the feeling that an apology was not sincere, even if the offenders described it as being sincerely given. So, what makes an apology sincere? Different studies revealed different elements that determine a sincere apology (Benoit, 1995; Kirchhoff, Wagner & Strack, 2012; Schneider, 2000). Schneider (2000) described 1) acknowledgement, (2) affect, and (3) vulnerability as the three core elements of a sincere apology. 'Acknowledgement' means that the offender needs to acknowledge the damage done to the victim as well as their relationship and that the offender affirms to have wronged the victim (Souder, 2010). Schneider's (2000) element 'affect' includes accepting the responsibility for the wrongdoing. In different experiences, 'affect' was also named 'regret' or 'shame'. Parallel, Souder (2010) also described that the offenders need to show that they regret what they have done; and resolves to abstain from such wrongdoing in the future". The last point 'vulnerability' means that offenders have to offer an apology even if they are not sure it will be accepted and that they need to hold themselves personally accountable for the incident, without giving excuses (Schneider, 2000). In more detail, Kirchhoff, Wagner and Strack (2012) concluded that 10 different elements determine the sincerity of an apology. The first element is the 'statement of apology' itself. This is for example, "I am sorry; I want to apologize". Other elements are "naming of the offence (saying what one is apologizing for), taking responsibility, attempting to explain the offence (without an external attribution, because it would then be an excuse by definition), conveying emotions (such as shame and regret), addressing emotions and/or damage of the other, admitting fault, promising forbearance (saying that one will not repeat the offence), offering reparation, and a request for acceptance of the apology" (Kirchhoff, Wagner & Strack, 2012). These ten elements also contain the before mentioned, important elements of acknowledgement, affect, vulnerability and the three elements described by Souder (2010). Therefore, it was decided, that the ten elements of a sincere apology by Kirchhoff, Wagner and Strack (2012) will be used to create a sincere apology for this research. In order to test, how the sincerity of an apology

influences the victim, there will be another apology in this research, which aims to be perceived as insincere. As a result, the different influences a sincere and an insincere perceived apology could have can be investigated. This means a less sincere apology needs to be created, by omitting elements from the apology. Taking the research of Benoit (1995) into account, it becomes clear that denial and evading responsibility are elements that should be avoided in order to deliver a sincere apology. Further, a study by Robbennolt (2003) showed that the offender's apologies in which they took the responsibility for the offence and not give justifications had a significant effect on the victim. More elements that could be altered in order to manipulate the perceived sincerity, but taking the previous research into account, it is concluded that just changing the two elements of describing oneself as not being responsible and giving justifications are elements that can modify a sincere apology as being perceived as less sincere. Consequently, this research will focus just on the effect these two elements may have on the perceived sincerity. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: An offender's apology is perceived as less sincere if he does not take responsibility and gives justifications for his behaviour.

Referring back to the victim's needs, research showed that victims need the offenders to acknowledge their responsibility for the offence and the damage they have caused. If the offender does so, a "debt" is given that only the victim can enforce by forgiving or agreeing on a reconciliation. This act of giving a debt makes the victim gain more power and control of the situation back. Therefore, the offender shifts the power back to the victim which as a result, shows to satisfy the victim's needs for agency. This can also be labelled as 'empowering the victim' (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). These findings were shown by experiments of Shnabel & Nadler (2008), demonstrating that participants of a competition who were treated very harsh by judges had the highest need for power and after receiving a message from the judges including empowerment statements, they showed a high readiness to reconcile. Hence, the victims need to solve their emotional issues (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006), the emotional barrier 'need for agency' was resolved through this message. Therefore, it can be hypothesized, that an apology can be the medium to empower the victim and as a consequence, positively influence the victim's need for agency.

Not only the need for agency is thought to be influenced by an apology, but also the feeling of anger and fear. This is because, a victim in the study of Umbreit (1994) reported, that the feeling of fear decreased while communicating with the offender and whilst seeing that the offender is a real person (Umbreit, 1994). Those findings are stressed by a case, in which a family member of an involuntary manslaughter victim reported that he was very angry at the offender till he got answers to his questions and that after receiving those answers, the family and he could finally move on (Choi, Green, & Kapp, 2010). In addition, Robbennolt (2003) showed that an apology in which responsibility for the offence was taken decreased the victim's anger towards the offender. This finding gives a new indication of the influence a sincere apology can have on feelings. In addition, Van Dijk (2016) found that a richer apology (in this case through a richer communication channel) can positively affect the victim by lowering the feelings of fear and anger. Further, it was also concluded that a richer apology is also perceived as a more sincere apology (Dijk, 2016). Concludingly, it is of interest if the perceived sincerity directly has an effect on the feelings of fear and anger. Since not only the feelings of fear and anger are subject of this research, but also the influence an apology has on the need for agency, the following hypothesis is stated:

H2: Victims who perceive the apology as more sincere have a higher restored need for agency and lower feelings of fear and anger.

Along with the apologies' positive effects on the victim's need and feelings, Kador (2010) found that being able to say 'I'm sorry' can already help to restore the base characteristics of trust, transparency, accountability, and humility. After being victimized, victims lose trust and cannot describe the offender as trustworthy anymore (Kim et. al., 2004). However, trustworthiness is a key factor for the interaction between people and determines the type of relationship they have (Abele & Wojciszke, 2013), which emphasized the importance of restoring trustworthiness between victim and offender in order to repair the relationship.

In everyday life, people within a society or community trust each other and do not mistrust fellow humans because there is the "trustworthy until proven otherwise" assumption (Kim et. al., 2004). Therefore, people have the expectation that also strangers do not commit crimes and offend other people in society (Witvliet et al., 2020). Society has positive expectations regarding the people in their surroundings and if this is violated and ruptured by committing a crime, trust is immediately reduced and it just can be restored through reparation (Kim et. al., 2004; Witvliet et al., 2020). The mistrust and destroyed trustworthiness are mirrored in the fear and especially the fear of revictimization, the victims experience after the offence (Umbreit, 1999). The offender needs to show trust repair efforts in which the negative trusting beliefs are changed into positive ones. (Kim et. al., 2004). To bring this idea further, Kador (2010) showed that a sincere and well-formulated apology can reconstruct the destroyed trust which can rebuild and save relationships. So, trust can be repaired through a sincere apology, but would a victim rate the offender as more trustworthy after receiving a sincere apology? It is already known from the needs-based model, that the offender needs to restore the social-moral dimension, which includes restoring morality, warmth, and trustworthiness (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). So, on basis of this model, it could be expected, that the offender's trustworthiness might be restored if the offender's apology is perceived as sincere because, as already hypothesized, a sincere apology gives the victim the strength, competence and influence back, which makes it more likely that the victim acts favourably towards the victim. This means, that a sincere apology is a tool and approach that starts the chain of giving a sincere apology, satisfying the victim's needs and as a result perceiving the victim as trustworthy. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Victims who perceive the apology as more sincere, perceive the offender as more trustworthy

Furthermore, to understand the relation between the perceived sincerity and its effect on the victim's needs and feelings, perceived trustworthiness is added to this model. Hence, is expected that the effect the sincerity of the apology has on the victim's needs and feelings is mediated by the victim's perceived trustworthiness of the offender. This is because it is described that perceiving the offender as trustworthy is key to the relationship between victim and offender and that this trustworthiness is necessary for further influence the apology has on the victim (Abele & Wojciszke, 2013). This means that the mediator perceived trustworthiness modifies the relationship between the perceived sincerity and the victims' needs and feelings in a way that the relation of sincerity and needs/feelings shows a different relationship when trustworthiness is included. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H4: The relation between the sincerity and the victim's needs and feelings is mediated by a higher perceived trustworthiness

Forgiveness

Forgiveness in connection to restorative justice involves leaving the wrong behind, renouncing revenge and retaliation, and having a prosocial orientation that aims to transform the offender and, more

generally, the relationship between victim and offender (Witvliet, 2020). RJ paves the way to bring both the victim and the offender together to “involve them in a voluntary, respectful, two-way, dialogue, to negotiate a mutually agreeable resolution to repair the harm caused, and start on the path towards reconciliation, healing, forgiveness, rehabilitation, and reintegration” (Dhami, 2012; p. 46). A way to facilitate those intentions could be the previously mentioned apology-forgiveness cycle, which highlights the importance of an apology, which gives the conflicting parties the possibility to convert their relation (Tavuchis, 1991). Furthermore, the apology is seen as the key turning point which can lead the victim to forgive the offender (van Stokkom, 2002; Witvliet et al., 2020). Moreover, it was found that an apology’s sincerity through responsibility-taking, mediates forgiveness (Schumann, 2012; Witvliet et al., 2020)). This raises the question, if trustworthiness, which was previously identified as the key point in the relationship between victim and offender, can also demonstrate this positive effect on forgiveness. As a result, in this research, both variables will be connected, and it will be tested if the perceived trustworthiness of the offender also influences the victim's willingness to forgive. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: The more the offender is perceived as trustworthy, the more the victim is willing to forgive.

The research model summarises all hypotheses and outlines the relationships. This model can be seen in figure 1.

Current research

This research will analyse the relationship between the perceived sincerity of an apology and the victims need for agency, and feelings of anger and fear. Furthermore, the effect of perceived sincerity on trustworthiness and willingness to forgive will be examined. Within this study, imaginary victims will be used, who will imagine being the victim in a written crime scenario.

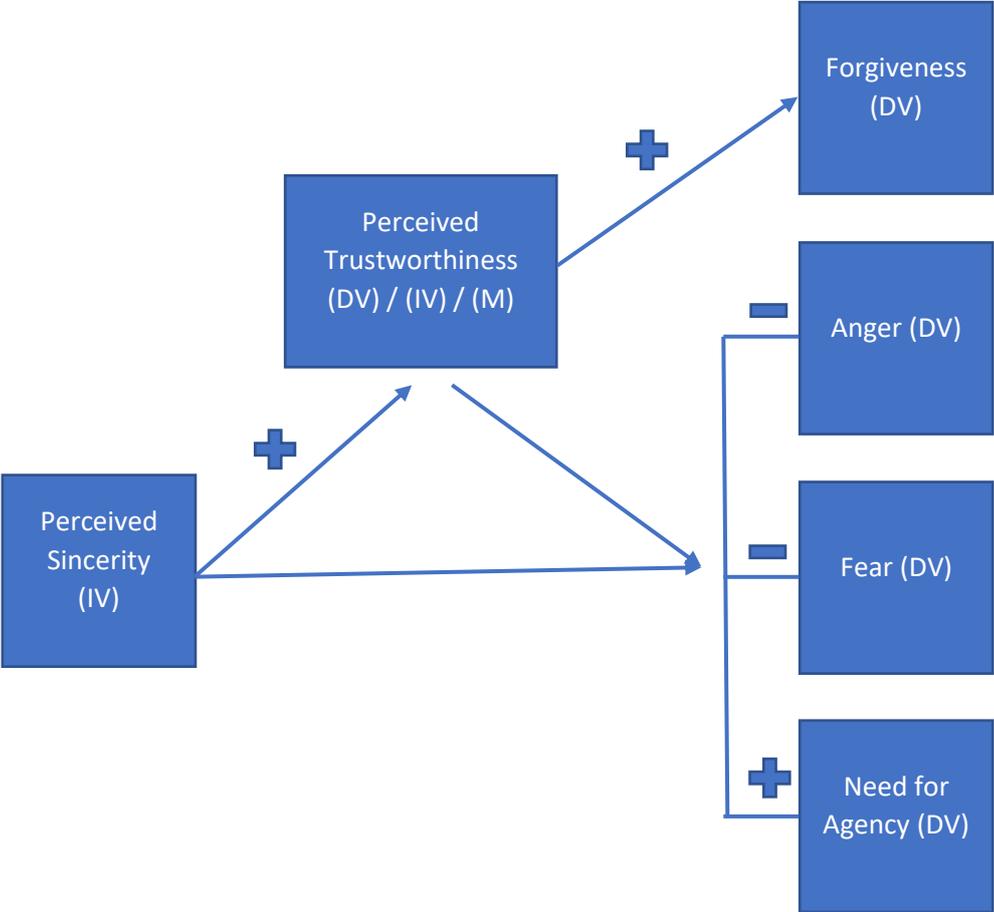


Figure 1: research model (IV= independent variable; DV= dependent variable)

Method

Research design

This research used an experimental study because the participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. The conditions were two different apology options. Group one was the 'sincere group', which received an apology in which the offender takes personal responsibility for the offence and gives no justification. Group two is the 'insincere group', which received an apology without the offender taking personal responsibility, but giving justifications for his behaviour. The experimental manipulation of sincerity is the independent variable in this research. The victim's need for agency, the feelings of anger and fear, perceived trustworthiness and forgiveness are the dependent variables. Perceived trustworthiness is not only the dependent variable that is influenced by perceived sincerity but is also the independent variable in the relationship to forgiveness. Furthermore, trustworthiness is also once a mediator variable, which is mediating the relationship between perceived sincerity and the need for agency and the feelings of anger and fear. The participants were asked to fill in a survey after reading a crime scenario. Therefore, a survey design was included.

Participants

In total, 133 participants filled in the online questionnaire study, but in total data of 99 participants could be included and used for further analysis. Two participants disagreed with the informed consent, which directly ended the survey and therefore their data could not be included. One participant neither agreed nor disagreed with the informed consent in the beginning as this question was skipped. However, he filled in the complete questionnaire and also agreed upon his data being used at the end of the questionnaire. Therefore, this data will be included. A total number of 32 participants did not answer more than 50 per cent of the questions, which made their data not suitable for further analyses. One participant answered 24 questions but excluded 27 questions. Of the 133 participants who started the questionnaire, 99 completed the study and answered all questions. That makes a response rate of 74 per cent. The participant sampling was a convenience and snowball sampling because all participants were chosen based on their availability. Forty per cent of those participants were male (n=40) and sixty per cent were female (n=59). The average age of the participants was 23 years (SD= 7.86). The youngest respondent was 18 years old and the oldest was 64 years old. Most of the participants were German (n= 83; 84%), 9 percent was Dutch, and 6 participants had other nationalities (Spanish [n=3], Finnish [n=1], Bolivian and American [n=1]). One participant did not indicate a nationality. The participants also indicated different educational backgrounds. The HAVO/VWO/Gymnasium/High school was completed by 52 participants (52%), 12 participants VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule (12%), 26 participants completed their bachelor's degree (26%) and 6 their master's degree (6%). Additionally, four participants indicated to have another educational background (4%). One participant was in the first year of university, one participant had a bachelor at an applied university, one had the vocational baccalaureate, and one was doing his apprenticeship. The measurement of being victimized before showed that 27 per cent (n= 27) have already been victimized before and 72 per cent (n= 72) knew someone who has been a victim before. Compared to the research of Van Dijk (2016), the percentages of this research are twice as high, which shows that the majority of the participants already had experiences with criminal behaviour and victims. In the

end, the random allocation of the apologies assigned 57 participants (58%) to the sincere apology and 42 participants (42%) to the insincere apology.

Table 1

Demographics of sincere and insincere apology

Demographics	Sincere apology	Insincere apology	Total
Gender			
Female	36 (36.4%)	23 (23.2%)	59 (59.6%)
Male	21 (21.2%)	19 (19.2%)	40 (40.4%)
Ethnicity			
German	45 (45.5%)	38 (38.4%)	83 (83.8%)
Dutch	7 (7.1%)	2 (2.0%)	9 (9.1%)
Spanish	2 (2.0%)	1 (1.0%)	3 (3.0%)
Finish	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Bolivian	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)
American	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Age			
18-20	19 (19.2%)	11 (11.1%)	30 (30.3%)
21-23	28 (28.3%)	24 (24.2%)	52 (52.5%)
24-26	7 (7.1%)	5 (5.1%)	12 (12%)
53-64	3 (3.0%)	2 (2.0%)	5 (5.1%)
Educational background			
HAVO/VWO/Gymnasium/High school	28 (28.3%)	23 (23.2%)	51 (51.5%)
VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule	5 (5.1%)	7 (7.1%)	12 (12.1%)
Bachelor's degree	17 (17.2%)	9 (9.1%)	26 (26.3%)
Master's degree	4 (4.0%)	2 (2.0%)	6 (6.1%)
The first year of university	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Bachelor at an applied university	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Vocational baccalaureate	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Apprenticeship	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Victimized before			
Been a victim of crime before	17 (17.2%)	10 (10.1%)	27 (27.3%)
Know someone who has been a victim	42 (42.4%)	30 (30.3%)	72 (72.7%)

Materials

Every participant received and read the same scenario about a person who is a victim of a burglary in their apartment. 50€, a computer, and some technical supplies were stolen, as well as a lot of personal, valuable belongings being destroyed. The scenario was inspired by the study of Witvliet et al. (2008). It was written in the first-person perspective because participants were asked to imagine themselves being the victim in the story (see appendix A). After reading the scenario, the participant received a short introduction to VOM. It was explained that some weeks after the crime, the court contacted the

participant and informed them, that the offender was caught. They were informed that the further procedure of the justice process could be by participation in a victim-offender dialogue. More detailed information about VOM was given under the premise that an officer from a mediation bureau contacted them and explained that VOM is about having the opportunity to be part of the justice process, meeting the offender and being able to talk with each other in the presence of a trained mediator. In addition, some advantages of taking part were outlined (see Appendix A). Furthermore, it was explained that participation was voluntary for both the victim and the offender and that if they could agree on how to solve the crime, this could be communicated back to the public prosecutor. The public prosecutor would consider this agreement when deciding which punishment the offender should get if punishment is still necessary after the mediation. Further information about the decision the offender made about participating in VOM was not given. Following this, it was measured whether the participant was willing to participate.

In this research, participants received and read an apology letter written by the offender. The participants were randomly assigned to one out of two apologies (sincere apology and insincere apology). In the sincere apology, the offender takes responsibility for his actions. In the insincere apology, the offender does not take responsibility, gives justifications for his behaviour, and plays the severity of the offence down. The apologies were based on the apologies used in the study of Kirchhoff, Wagner & Strack (2012). They identified ten elements of an apology and found that victims are more willing to forgive (especially after more severe offences) if the apology contains more elements and is therefore considered more complete. In the apology used in this research, first, the offender gave the statement of apology and conveyed his emotions and then addressed the emotions of the victim. The elements ‘taking responsibility’ were included in the sincere apology, but not in the insincere one. Additionally, the elements ‘naming offence’, ‘attempt at explanation’, and ‘admitting fault’ were modified for the insincere apology to make the apology more coherent, because if for example the element ‘naming the offence’ would not have been changed, the offender would have said:” There is no excuse for breaking into your apartment, taking and destroying your belongings”. This formulation clearly shows no justifications for the crime which would in contrast to the intention indicate a sincere apology. Hence, this element is changed into:” I did not hurt you physically and only took some things from your apartment”, which clearly shows the element of adding justifications. Further, those modifications were also made to ‘attempt at explanation’ and ‘admitting fault’. Then, the elements ‘forbearance’, ‘reparation offer’, and ‘acceptance request’ were included in the same way in each apology. In table 1 the elements of the apologies and the exact formulation of both apologies are given.

Table 1

Elements of apology and formulation in apology

Elements of apology	Formulation sincere apology	Formulation insincere apology
Statement of apology (2x)	I am writing this letter to you because I want to apologize to you + I am sorry (at the end of the letter)	“
Conveying emotions	I feel terrible and ashamed for what happened	“
Addressing emotion of the other (2x)	I realize now how upset you must be, because of what I did + I can imagine what this situation	“

	has done to you and that you are very angry with me	
Taking responsibility	I take full responsibility for it	/
Naming offence	There is no excuse for breaking into your apartment, taking and destroying your belongings	And I did not hurt you physically and only took some things from your apartment
Attempt at explanation	I cannot justify my behaviour, because it can never be justified, but I want you to know that I completely lost control of the situation	However, I really couldn't help it. I urgently needed money and completely lost control of the situation. (<i>And I did not hurt you physically and only took some things from your apartment</i>) to make some money.
Admitting fault	But now I realise that my behaviour was completely wrong and that this should have never happened in the first place	So I would say no big harm done.
Forbearance	I promise you what happened will never happen again	“
Reparation offers	I would like to make you an offer of reparation if you	“
Acceptance request	I deeply hope you can accept my apology	“

Variables

The questionnaire used in this research contained three independent and three dependent variables that will be explained in more detail. The questionnaire with all items is attached in appendix A.

Independent variables

The independent variables were the perceived sincerity of the apology, the trustworthiness of the offender, and the victim's willingness to forgive the offender. All independent variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Perceived sincerity (IV). The variable perceived sincerity of the apology was measured with nine items. Seven items that were used are from the questionnaire by Giner-Sorollea and Zebel (2020) and two items were adopted from the questionnaire by Van Dijk (2016). One example for the questions by Giner-Sorollea and Zebel (2020) is “I have the feeling that the offender was honest with me” and one example from Van Dijk (2016) is “I have the feeling that the offender sincerely wanted to apologize to me”. Five items needed to be recoded. A factor analysis indicated that the items measured three underlying constructs with Eigenvalues of 3.34, 1.26 and 1.14. Four items, which all deal with a positive statement of the offender's honesty, responsibility, sincerity, and intention, loaded on the first component. One item for example said: “I have the feeling that the offender was honest with me”. The item “I can't really judge whether the excuse was sincere” loaded on the third component and item seven (“I have the feeling that the offender wants to avoid being held responsible for his actions”) did

not load high on any underlying component and therefore did not add information to the underlying constructs. The other items (e.g.: “I doubt the offender feels responsible”, “I doubt that the offender was sincere to me”) loaded on the second component. To form a valid and reliable scale, the items loading high on the first factor were used as a scale to measure perceived sincerity, because they directly asked about the offender's sincerity, honesty, responsibility, and intention in contrast to the other items, which asked whether they have doubts about the offender's sincerity and responsibility. The factor analysis performed on the new scale indicated that the items measure one underlying construct with an Eigenvalue of 2.25. In addition, the scale showed an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .74.

Trustworthiness (IV). The trustworthiness of the offender was measured with four items. The items were based on the scales ‘Trusting GSS’ and the scale for ‘Trusting evidence’ (Ben-Ner & Halldorsson, 2010). One example for the questions used is „I think the interaction with the offender is trustworthy“. Two items needed to be recoded. The factor analysis showed that the items measured two underlying factors with an Eigenvalue higher than 1. The first with an Eigenvalue of 2.3 and the second 1.1. The two items measuring the victim's attitude towards an actual interaction between the victim and the offender (e.g.: ‘I will watch out and be careful dealing with the offender’) loaded high on factor one. Apart from that, the formulation of the other two items are more directing to the construct 'trustworthiness' and indeed include the words 'trust' or 'trustworthiness'. Therefore, it is concluded that those items truly measure the construct of trustworthiness. As a result, these items are extracted from the scale. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between item one (“I can trust the offender”) and item three (“I think the interaction with the offender is trustworthy”). A positive correlation between the two items was found ($r = .512, n = 98, p < .001$).

Forgiveness (IV). The victim's forgiveness was measured on a scale of 11 items. Ten of the items are adopted from the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) by McCullough et al., (2006) (Basford et. al., 2014). For example, questions like:” I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health” were used. In addition, the Single-Item Forgiveness (SIF) (Witvliet, et. al., 2020) scale with the item “I forgive him” was used to measure the forgiveness. The degree of forgiveness the victim is perceiving was once measured after the participants received the apology. Three items needed to be recoded. Factor analysis showed that this scale is measuring three underlying constructs with Eigenvalues of 3.9, 2.0 and 1.2. The item “I forgive him” loaded on all three underlying factors. This item will be extracted and used as one scale, as the Single-Item Forgiveness (SIF) (Witvliet, et. al., 2020) to measure the construct forgiveness. Four items loaded high on factor one which can be described as dealing with a feeling of revenge rather than with forgiveness. For example, one item says:” I want him to get what he deserves” and another:” I'll make him pay”. Therefore, these items will form the scale to measure revenge. New factor analysis showed that there was one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue higher than 1. All four items load high on this factor. In addition, this scale showed an acceptable Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .76$). The other three items loaded high on component 2, which all described to avoid the offender. For example, one item said:” I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible” and another one:” I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him”. As a result, this scale will be used to measure avoidance. The factor analysis showed indeed that there was one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue higher than 1. All items load high on this factor. The reliability analysis showed an acceptable Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .76$). Three items, that did not load significantly on any of the components needed to be excluded from the scales. For example, one item stated:” I have given up my hurt and resentment”.

In conclusion, there are three new scales constructed from the previous scale forgiveness. First, there is the new forgiveness scale, which is measured by the SIF. Next, there are the other two scales, one measuring the need for revenge and the other need to avoid the offender.

Dependent variables

Need for agency (DV). The need for agency was measured with three items. One example of the items is "I have difficulties solving daily problems". This need was measured twice in the survey. Once before reading the apology and once after reading the apology. This enables us to analyse, how the apology influences the victim's need for agency. One item needed to be recoded. A factor analysis with the items on the pre-test indicated that the three items measured one unidimensional construct. The analysis showed one factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.08. The factor loading of all questions is above .74. This scale also shows good reliability of .77. The three items measuring the need for agency on the post-test also showed one underlying factor, with an Eigenvalue of 2.19. Additionally, all items had high factor loadings for the underlying factor. Furthermore, this scale also displayed good reliability ($\alpha=.81$).

Anxiety was measured with six items and anger with three items. The scale for this measurement was adopted from Gröbe (2013). The scale was originally in Dutch but was for this study translated into English. The participants had to indicate to what extent they feel a certain feeling while thinking about the offender. Anxiety was measured with the items 'nervous, restless, panicky, insecure, tense' and anger with the items 'angry, furious, frustrated'. Fear and anger were also measured twice. Once before the apology and once after, to be able to analyse how the apology affects the victims' feelings.

Anger (DV) Firstly, the factor analysis of the anger pre-test and post-test showed that both have just one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.1. In both conditions, all items load high on the underlying factor. Furthermore, both scales showed sufficient reliability ($\alpha=.78$).

Fear (DV). The analysis of fear measured before receiving the apology showed in the pre-test as well as the post-test a factor analysis with a one-dimensional construct with an Eigenvalue higher than 1. For the pre-/ and post-test, the factor loadings indicate that all items load high on the component. The pre-test showed a very good Cronbach's alpha of .90 and the post-test of .91.

Control variables

At the beginning of the survey, the participants were asked to give some demographic information and answer some control questions. The control questions were about whether the participants have already been a victim of a crime or if they know someone who already had been a victim of a crime.

Additional variables

In addition to the independent and dependent variables, the variable willingness to participate in VOM was also included and measured after reading the introduction into VOM and offering the victim to participate in VOM. It should be controlled and analysed, whether the willingness to participate influences the dependent variables. For example, if the victim is not willing to participate, they can react differently to the apology and have different views and feelings toward the offender. Therefore, the influence of the willingness to participate was measured with one item: "I am willing to participate in Victim-Offender Mediation".

Procedure

The online platform Qualtrics was used to create and distribute the survey. The use of Qualtrics makes the process of creating the survey and filling in the questionnaire easier for the participants. Furthermore, with the use of Qualtrics, a lot of participants can be reached in a short time. Next to Qualtrics, the student study pool system SONA was used to address more student participants to take part in the study. As compensation for participating, the students received 0.25 'SONA credit points'. Before the data collection was started, the study was viewed and approved by the Ethics committee of the Behavioural science faculty of the University of Twente. In the first step of the study, the participants had to read and agree to the informed consent form, in which it was stated that their anonymity was guaranteed through the whole process of the survey by anonymizing their data. They were also informed that their participation is completely voluntary, that they could withdraw from the study without further explanation at any time and that they have the opportunity to omit any question if they do not feel comfortable answering. It was also mentioned that the study would approximately take 15 minutes.

After agreeing to the informed consent, demographic data was collected. More specifically, the participants were asked to give information about their age, gender, nationality, and educational background. After that, it was asked whether the participants already had been a victim of a crime or if they knew someone who already had been a victim. The next part of the questionnaire was the crime scenario, in which they were asked to imagine themselves in the role of the victim. The scenario was followed by the items to measure the victims fear, anger, and need for agency. Then the victim received the introduction to VOM and the offer to take part (see materials). Subsequently, the participant's willingness to participate in VOM was measured. After that, the participants received the information that the researchers are additionally interested in their responses to an apology that is given by the offender. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the apology conditions. The items measuring the sincerity of the apology followed. Then, the victim's feelings of anger and fear and the need for agency were measured again. This was followed by the items measuring the trustworthiness of the offender and at last, it is measured how willing the victim is to forgive the offender. Before the participants had to answer the questions, they were repeatedly asked to imagine themselves being the victim, whilst answering the questions. In the end, the participants were debriefed about the real purpose of the survey.

Results

Descriptives and correlations

When looking at the given overview in table 3, it can be seen that the mean score on fear ($M=5.12$) and anger ($M=5.20$) is significantly higher on the pre-test compared to the post-test (fear: $M=4.48$; anger: $M=4.04$). This shows that after receiving the apology, an overall decrease in fear and anger is displayed. The score for the need for agency in the pre-/ and post-test did not have that big of a difference (pre-test: $M=3.74$; post-test: $M=3.43$). Since a 7-point Likert scale was adopted, a score of 4 was considered neutral. In general, the participants scored above neutral on the fear ($M=5.12$) and anger ($M=5.20$) pre-test and on willingness to participate in VOM ($M=5.17$). The perceived sincerity showed the lowest score, which means, that the participants, on average, rate the apologies' sincerity under the neutral level and tendentially negative ($M=3.09$).

Looking at the correlations it can be seen that there is a negative correlation between the sincerity of the apology and the victim's feeling of anger and the need for agency (table 3). This finding is in line, with the expectations according to the research model. However, the relationship between

the perceived sincerity and the feeling of fear is not significant and therefore not as expected. Important to highlight is the negative correlation between trustworthiness and feelings of anger, feelings of fear and the need for agency in both pre-/and post-test. This relationship is expected as part of hypothesis four, in which a mediator effect of trustworthiness to the relationship of perceived sincerity and the need and feelings. In addition, a positive correlation between forgiveness, anger on the pre-/ and post level and agency pre-test was found. Contrary, a negative relationship between feelings and forgiveness was expected, not the found negative one. Nevertheless, according to the expectations, a negative correlation between forgiveness and fear on the post-test was found. Next to forgiveness, avoidance shows positive correlations with anger, fear, and agency on both the pre-/ and post-test. This shows that the more anger, fear and need for agency the victim experiences, the more they want to avoid the offender. The positive correlation between the perceived sincerity and the perceived trustworthiness, showing that if the victim perceives the apology as more sincere, they also perceive the offender as more trustworthy, was as expected, according to the research model. Furthermore, a positive correlation between trustworthiness and the variables forgiveness, avoidance and revenge can be seen. This means, that the higher the victims perceive the offender as trustworthy, the less they are willing to forgive the offender. However, the more the victim perceives the offender as trustworthy, the less they want to avoid the offender or have revenge, which is more in line with the expected research model. The relationship between trustworthiness and forgiveness should be checked in later analysis.

Table 3

Descriptions of and correlations between the main variables

	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Anger pre-test	99	5.20	1.44	-	.69**	.51**	.12	.16	.15	.21*	-	-	.18	.26**	.18
2. Anger post-test	98	4.48	1.31	-		.41**	.44**	.21*	.21*	-	.35**	.28**	.06	.40**	.06
3. Fear pre-test	99	5.12	1.40			-	.50**	.42**	.35**	-.16	-.22*	-.18	.05	.38**	.05
4. Fear post-test	98	4.04	1.37				-	.46**	.43**	-.14	-.22*	-.24*	-.07	.28**	-.07
5. Agency pre-test	99	3.74	1.50					-	.73**	-	-.08	-.21*	.19	.30**	.01
6. Agency post-test	98	3.43	1.44						-	-	-.20*	-.18	-.00	.22*	-.00
7. Perceived sincerity of the apology	99	3.52	1.03							-	.56**	.35**	-	-	.11
8. Trustworthiness of the offender	98	3.09	1.21								-	.52**	-	-	.29**
9. Forgiveness	98	4.44	1.53									-	-	-	.17
10. Revenge	98	3.55	1.23										-	.48**	.32**
11. Avoidance	98	4.95	1.21											-	.25**
12. Willingness to participate	99	5.17	1.6												-

Note. *p<0.05; **p<0.01. All variables were measured on a scale from 1 to 7.

Hypothesis testing

The first hypothesis states that the apology is perceived as less sincere when the offender does not take responsibility for his apology and gives justifications for his behaviour. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of an apology on the perception of sincerity. With the two conditions of sincere apology and insincere apology, a manipulation is intended. The ANOVA analysis shows that there was not a significant effect of apology on the perceived sincerity at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1,97) = .96$; $p = .33$]. This means that hypothesis one is not confirmed.

The effects of the apology

The second hypothesis states that victims who perceived the apology as more sincere have a higher restored need for agency and lower feelings of fear and anger. In order to test this hypothesis, a regression analysis was conducted. Thereby, the victim's need for agency and the feelings of fear, and anger were the dependent variables. The independent variable would have been the manipulation of sincerity, but as no significant difference was found, the individual variations of perceived sincerity were used as the independent variable. It was further controlled for gender, age, nationality, educational background, willingness to participate, if the participant had been a victim before or knows someone who had been a victim before, and for the pre-test of need for agency and feelings of fear and anger. The executed multiple regression analysis to test if an apology that is perceived as more sincere can predict the participant's need for agency, and the participants' feelings of fear and anger. The analysis showed that a significant model was found for agency [$F(15,82) = 8.21$; $p < .001$] with an adjusted R-squared of .54, fear [$F(15,82) = 3.83$; $p = .004$] with an adjusted R-squared of .19 and anger [$F(15,82) = 6.50$; $p < .001$] with an adjusted R-squared of .51. However, further analysis showed that perceived sincerity did not significantly predict the need for agency ($B = -.12$, $SE = .11$, $p = .264$) and the feeling of fear ($B = -.10$, $SE = .13$, $p = .434$) but that the model was found significant because the measurements on the pre-tests, that were controlled for, significantly predicted the need for agency ($B = .67$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$) and fear ($B = .42$, $SE = .11$, $p < .001$) on the post-test (see table 4). However, it was found that perceived sincerity significantly predicted the feeling of anger ($B = -.25$, $SE = .10$, $p = .011$). This shows that the more the victim perceives the apology as sincere, the lower the feeling of anger gets.

To conclude, hypothesis one was partly confirmed, because the perceived sincerity significantly predicted the decrease of anger. Nevertheless, a significant relationship between the perceived sincerity and the victim's feeling of fear and need for agency could not be found.

Table 4

Regression coefficients for perceived sincerity, the need and feelings on the pre-test, gender, age, nationality, educational background, willingness to participate and being victim before and knowing a victim predicting the need and feelings on the post-test (n=98).

Need / Feelings	Predictor	B	SE	Beta (β)	p
Agency	Agency pre-test	.67	.08	.68	<.001
	Perceived sincerity	-.12	.11	-.09	.26
	Gender				
	Male	-.25	.23	-.09	.28
	Age				
	18-20	.02	.25	.01	.93

	24-26	-.22	.39	-.05	.57
	53-46	.84	.49	.13	.09
	Nationality				
	German	-.49	.42	-.13	.25
	Dutch	-.27	.53	-.05	.61
	Educational background				
	VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule	.60	.35	.13	.09
	Bachelor's degree	.13	.27	.04	.63
	Master's degree	-.35	.51	-.06	.50
	Other education	-.05	.50	-.01	.91
	Willingness to participate	.00	.07	.00	.96
	Being victim before	.02	.24	.01	.92
	Knowing victim	.32	.24	.10	.19
Fear	Fear pre-test	.42	.11	.43	<.001
	Perceived sincerity	-.10	.13	-.08	.43
	Gender				
	Male	-.21	.33	-.08	.52
	Age				
	18-20	-.50	.31	-.02	.87
	24-26	.77	.48	.19	.12
	53-46	.27	.61	.04	.66
	Nationality				
	German	-.79	.53	-.22	.14
	Dutch	-.85	.66	-.18	.20
	Educational background				
	HAVO/VWO/Gymnasium/High school	.01	.34	.00	.99
	VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule	.11	.50	.02	.83
	Master's degree	-.70	.64	-.12	.28
	Other education	-.57	.64	-.09	.38
	Willingness to participate	-.02	.09	-.02	.84
	Being victim before	.06	.31	.02	.85
	Knowing victim	-.40	.31	-.13	.19
Anger	Anger pre-test	.55	.08	.60	<.001
	Perceived sincerity	-.25	.10	-.20	.01
	Gender				
	Male	-.21	.21	-.08	.31
	Age				
	18-20	.19	.23	.07	.41
	24-26	.35	.36	.09	.33
	53-46	.87	.47	.15	.07
	Nationality				
	German	-.01	.40	-.00	.99
	Dutch	.31	.49	.07	.54
	Educational background				
	HAVO/VWO/Gymnasium/High school	-.49	2.5	-.19	.05
	VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule	-.51	.38	-.12	.19
	Master's degree	-.33	.49	-.06	.50
	Other education	-.37	.48	-.06	.45

Willingness to participate	-.03	.07	-.03	.69
Being victim before	.13	.23	.05	.57
Knowing victim	-.52	.23	-.18	.03

The third hypothesis suggests that the victims who perceive the apology as more sincere, as a result, perceive the offender as more trustworthy. The independent variable was the perceived sincerity of the apology, and the perceived trustworthiness of the offender was included as the dependent variable and it was also controlled for gender, age, nationality, educational background, willingness to participate, if the participant had been a victim before or knows someone who had been a victim before. In order to test if the perceived sincerity of the apology can predict the perceived trustworthiness, a regression analysis was executed. This analysis found a significant model [$F(14,83)=2.76$; $p<.001$] with an adjusted R-squared of .27. This model showed that perceived sincerity significantly predicted the offender's trustworthiness ($B=.53$, $SE=.09$, $p<.001$) (see table 5). In conclusion, hypothesis three is confirmed.

Table 5

Regression coefficients for perceived sincerity, the need and feelings on the pre-test, gender, age, nationality, educational background, willingness to participate and being victim before and knowing a victim predicting the perceived trustworthiness (n=98).

Variable	Predictor	B	SE	Beta (β)	p
Trustworthiness	Perceived sincerity	.48	.07	.57	<.001
	Gender				
	Male	-.06	.20	-.03	.77
	Age				
	18-20	.12	.22	.05	.58
	24-26	.03	.34	.01	.92
	53-46	.52	.44	.11	.25
	Nationality				
	German	-.31	.38	-.11	.42
	Dutch	-.19	.47	-.05	.68
	Educational background				
	VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule	-.27	.32	-.08	.41
	Bachelor's degree	.03	.24	.02	.89
	Master's degree	-.54	.44	-.13	.22
	Other education	-.62	.44	-.13	.17
Willingness to participate	-.04	.07	-.06	.55	
Being victim before	-.02	.22	-.01	.92	
Knowing victim	.04	.22	.02	.88	

Note. The model was found to be statistically significant [$F(14,83)=2.76$; $p<.001$] with an adjusted R-squared of .27.

The relation between the sincerity and the needs of victims

The fourth hypothesis states that the relation between the perceived sincerity and the victim's needs is explained by higher perceived trustworthiness. Important here is, that the hypothesis stating that the perceived sincerity can significantly predict the victim's feeling of fear and need for agency was partly rejected. But it was found that the perceived sincerity predicts the victim's feeling of anger. Following this finding, it will be hypothesized and tested that just this relationship is mediated by the variable perceived trustworthiness. This means, that the perceived sincerity directly influences the feeling of anger and also indirectly through the mediator perceived trustworthiness. This hypothesis is

going to be tested by using Hayes PROCESS in SPSS with perceived sincerity as the independent variable (IV), feeling of anger as the dependent variable (DV) and perceived trustworthiness as the mediator (M).

As a first step, the main effect of perceived sincerity on the feeling of anger was shown to be significant ($B=-.43$, $SE=.12$, $p<.001$, $CI [-.67, -.19]$). This finding shows that the participants who perceive the apology as more sincere have a significantly lower feeling of anger. Next, the indirect effect of the independent variable on the mediator was tested. It was checked if the perceived sincerity can significantly predict the mediator perceived trustworthiness, which indeed was confirmed ($B=.66$, $SE=.10$, $p<.001$, $CI [.47, .86]$). The next step showed that the relation between perceived trustworthiness and the feeling of anger was proven significantly ($B=-.55$, $SE=.11$, $p<.001$, $CI [-.77, -.32]$), which means, that the higher the offender is perceived trustworthy, the less the victim feels angry. Importantly, the indirect effect of perceived sincerity via perceived trustworthiness on the feeling of anger was significant ($b = -.36$, $SE = .09$, $95\% CI [-.54, -.19]$) whereas the direct influence of perceived sincerity on the feeling of anger, with the mediator, perceived trustworthiness was not significant anymore ($B = -.071$, $SE = .13$, $p = .62$, $CI [-.33, .20]$). In conclusion, the decreasing effect a (perceived) sincere apology has on the feeling of anger is explained by the degree of trustworthiness the victim assigns to the offender. This means, that the fourth hypothesis was confirmed.

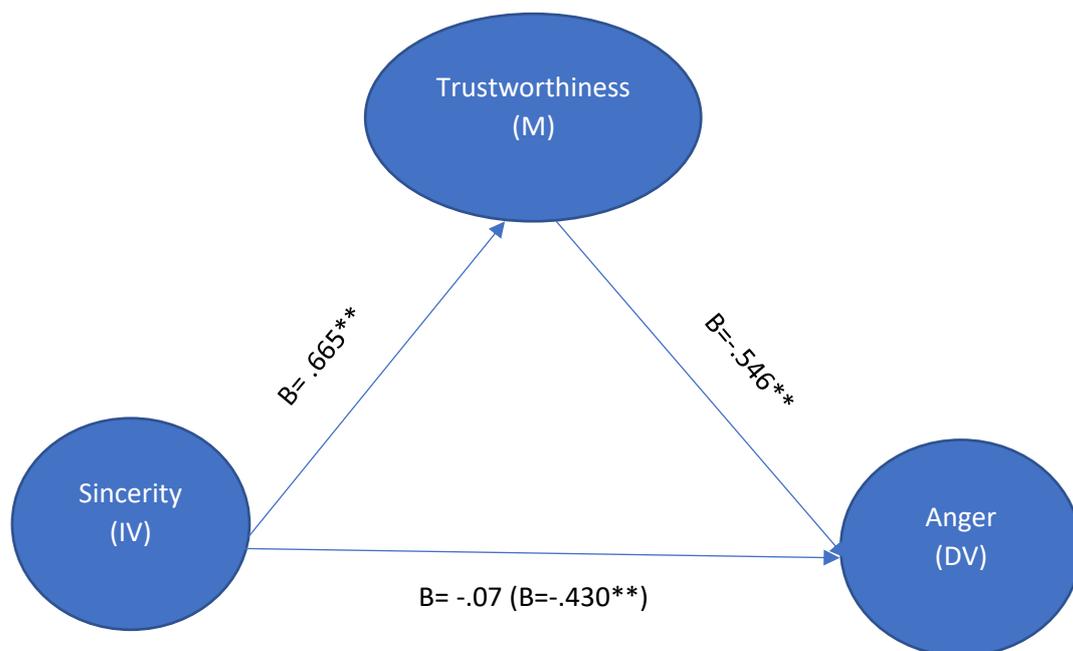


Figure 2: mediation of the perceived trustworthiness on the relation between the perceived sincerity and the feelings of anger (** $p<.001$).

The relation between trust, forgiveness, revenge, and avoidance

To test the fifth hypothesis – the more the offender is perceived as trustworthy, the more the victim is willing to forgive - a regression analysis was conducted. The perceived trustworthiness served as the independent variable, the willingness to forgive as the dependent variable and it was controlled for gender, age, nationality, educational background, willingness to participate, if the participant had been a victim before or knows someone who had been a victim before. This regression analysis found a significant model [$F(14,83)=5.27$; $p=.002$] with an adjusted R-squared of .21. Further, it showed that perceived trustworthiness significantly predicted the willingness to forgive ($B= .65$, $SE= .13$, $p<.001$).

That means, the more the victims perceive the offender as trustworthy, the more they are willing to forgive. Consequently, the fifth hypothesis is accepted. Besides the variable willingness to forgive, the earlier analysis showed, that items from the original scale used to measure forgiveness from two other scales measuring revenge and avoidance. Independent from the hypothesis, it was tested, if trustworthiness can next to forgiveness also predict the need for revenge and avoidance. So, perceived trustworthiness as the independent variable, and revenge as the dependent variable showed an insignificant model [$F(14,83)=2.16$; $p=.115$] with an adjusted R-squared of .07. However, it was shown that perceived trustworthiness significantly and negatively predicted the need for revenge ($B= -.34$, $SE= .11$, $p=.004$). As a result, it was confirmed that the more the victims perceive the offender as trustworthy, the less they need to exert revenge. Another analysis with avoidance as the dependent variable showed similar results. A significant model [$F(14,83)=3.39$ $p=.001$] with an adjusted R-squared of .22 was found, which showed that perceived trustworthiness significantly predicted avoidance ($B= -.38$, $SE= .10$, $p<.001$).

Since it was found that perceived trustworthiness significantly predicts the need for avoidance towards the offender, this variable was added to the existing research model.

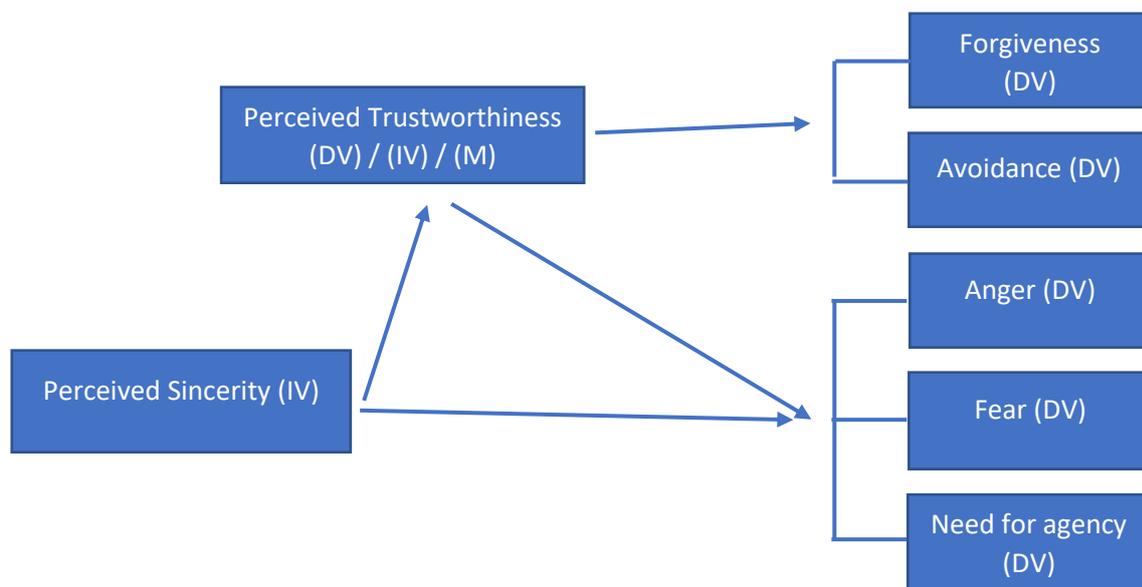


Figure 3: new research model (IV= independent variable; DV= dependent variable)

Other notable results

A notable result that was not expected was the negative correlation between the perceived sincerity of the apology and the need for avoidance as well as the positive correlation between the perceived sincerity and the willingness to forgive. In order to test this finding, a linear regression analysis was conducted. Thereby, the willingness to forgive and the need for avoidance were the dependent variables and the perceived sincerity in each case the independent variable. It was also controlled for gender, age, nationality, educational background, willingness to participate, if the participant had been a victim before or knows someone who had been a victim before. First, the regression analysis showed a significant effect that the perceived sincerity predicts the willingness to forgive ($B=.48$, $SE=.15$, $p=.002$) which showed, the more the apology is perceived as sincere, the more the victim is willing to forgive. Furthermore, a significant model was found for the relationship between the perceived sincerity and avoidance ($B=-.45$, $SE=.11$, $p<.001$), which shows that the more the apology is perceived

as sincere, the less the victim has the need for avoidance. Next to the perceived sincerity were also the willingness to participate ($B=-.17, SE=.08, p=.028$) and the gender (being male) ($B=-.55, SE=.24, p=.025$) predicting the need for avoidance. These findings showed, that being male, perceiving the apology as more sincere, or being more willing to participate, the less the victim wants to avoid the offender.

In addition, another significant effect of a control variable on a dependent variable was found. Regression analysis showed that knowing someone who has been a victim before has a significant effect on the feeling of anger ($B=-.52, SE=.23, p=.027$). Consequently, knowing someone who has been a victim in the past decreases the victim's feelings of anger.

Discussion

Research around victim-offender mediation has been the subject of quite numerous studies. Nevertheless, little focus was placed on how to improve the quality of the mediation in order to get a better and more satisfying outcome for both the offender and victim. Instead, for example, the effect on the offender and their recidivism and severity of reoffence were subject to a lot of studies. However, many factors are determining a satisfying outcome. In this case, the factors that are thought to influence the outcome of VOM too are the victim's and offender's needs. In further analysis of the VOM construct, it got clear, that an offender's apology is playing a big role in the process of VOM and should be considered when talking about approaches to improve the outcome. For that reason, this research aimed to get new insight into the importance and effects a sincere apology has on the victim. Hence, the research question was: In what way does an apology affect the victim's needs and feelings?

Discussion of the results

First, this research showed that an apology offered by the offender in the setting of VOM with the characteristics of not taking responsibility for the offence and giving justifications was not perceived as less sincere compared to an apology that was considered a complete apology. This finding was not in line with the expectation that a complete apology is perceived as more sincere. However, a possible explanation why both apologies were perceived as rather insincere could be that apologies are perceived as more sincere when they are delivered in person, face-to-face. This is because of the presentational aspects like nonverbal cues, for example, body language that is included and delivered in more rich conditions (Choi & Severson, 2009; Dijk, 2016). As a consequence, it could be concluded, that perceived sincerity is indeed, like Tavuchis stated, an element that is added in face-to-face conversations by non-verbal cues. Furthermore, when evaluating both apology conditions, it can also be said that both do not differ extensively from each other. The four elements 'naming offence', 'attempt at explanation', and 'admitting fault' were omitted or transformed to make the apology appear less sincere. However, the other six elements of the sincere apology were unaltered and there the 'insincere apology' contained for example 'conveying emotions' and a 'reparation offer'. This shows that there were more sincere elements in the insincere apology than insincere elements. To create an insincere apology, more and more severe changes could have been made.

Another impact could be that that receiving an apology letter might not be the first communication step in a VOM process, but for example introducing each other, talking about the offence and consequences, combined with answering questions (Umbreit & Hansen, 2017). This could have helped both the victim and offender to build some kind of relationship, to rate the trustworthiness of the offender or even already build up some trust. As it was outlined, the perceived trustworthiness plays an important role in relationships in general but also in VOM. Following this point, it might also be an explanation that since the apology letter was the first communication step in this research, the victim

did not receive any further information on the offender despite the crime description and the letter of apology. This possibly gives not enough input to build a relation to the offender, which is according to Tavuchis (1991) a necessity to deliver an apology. Consequently, the participants in this study had to make judgments about the sincerity of the apology solely on the written words in the apology. In future research, some background information of the offender could be given to the victim before receiving the apology letter. Furthermore, in future research in crime scenarios in which the victim does not have any additional information, this can be included through for example a short statement of the mediator. Additionally, something like a profile (for example including the name, a picture, the age) would be handed to the victim in order to know more about the offender and being able to process and judge the apology better. However, being able to observe the offender while delivering the apology would be the best case especially regarding the perceived sincerity as the non-verbal cues would be visible. For example, using a face-to-face approach or video calls, like already used in the research of Van Dijk (2016). This research already showed that a richer perceived communication channel is also perceived as more sincere but through a richer communication channel. This supports, that further research should test if manipulating the content of the apology in a richer communication model can determine the perceived sincerity.

Second, this research did not show the expected effect of perceived sincerity on the need for agency. Contrary to this finding, it was previously found that the act of giving an apology is like giving a 'debt' which gives the victim control of the situation and the power of self-determination (the freedom of how to react to the apology) back. This shift in possessing the power is thought to satisfy the victim's need for agency (Shnabel & Nadler, 20015). However, an increase in agency in relation to a higher perceived sincerity was not found. The fact that both apologies were perceived as slightly insincere is also of importance for the agency. Maybe, the victim needs to perceive the apology as sincere in order to have the impression, that the offender shifts the power over the victim back. Therefore, having the impression that the offender just gives the apology without being sincere, might evoke the impression that the offender still makes use of the power and control he gained and is not willing to give the debt back.

In contrast, this research did show that the perceived sincerity influences the feeling of anger. The higher the apology was perceived as sincere, the less the victims felt angry. This finding is in line with Robbennolt's (2003) as it was shown that apologies in which the offender took responsibility for the offence had the same decreasing effect on the feelings of anger. However, different than described in the findings of Zebel (2012) and Van Dijk (2016), the effect of perceiving the apology as more sincere and therefore having a decreasing effect on the feeling of fear was not found. A possible explanation for this finding might be, that the feeling of fear is intense, which does not get solved easily as it was shown in the research of Umbreit (1999) in which some victims remained with the feeling of fear even after they participated in VOM. Besides, as already pointed out, both apologies in this research are perceived as slightly insincere. Therefore, it needs to be highlighted, that in this condition was not unexpected that an apology which is perceived as insincere did not have a decreasing effect on the victim's fear. On the other side, it could be the case that the feeling of anger was decreased, because both apologies contained at least seven out of ten elements associated with a sincere apology. Therefore, it appears that the elements in the insincere apology like 'conveying emotions', 'forbearance' or 'reparation offer' had the decisive effect on the victim's feelings that decreased the anger. Concludingly, this just shows, that omitting the elements of 'responsibility taking', 'naming offence', 'attempt at explanation', and 'admitting fault' did not significantly change the perceived sincerity. In future research where the aim is to manipulate the apology in order to have one that is perceived as sincere and one as insincere, the content of both apologies should differ significantly. It

would be of interest if a more drastic difference between the apologies could achieve this kind of manipulation. However, this research showed that even a complete apology is not perceived as sincere, it seems as if the communication channel needs to be changed in order to find out more about the effects and a sincere perceived apology can have. For future research, using VOM face-to-face or through video calls that increase the perceived sincerity, it could be tested if in this case, manipulating the content of the apologies like in this research has the expected effects on both the need for agency and the feeling of fear.

Third, the expected effect a higher perceived sincerity of the apology has on the perceived trustworthiness of the offender was proven. This outcome could be explained by the finding that a sincere and well-formulated apology can restore the trustworthiness and the trusting relationship between two conflicting parties (Kador, 2010). Moreover, the findings of this research partly strengthen the assumptions the needs-based model makes because it is shown that the formulation and communication of an apology influences the offender's trustworthiness (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). Another proven expectation was that that trustworthiness is mediating the relationship between perceived sincerity and feeling of anger. Likewise, trustworthiness is the agent that explains the underlying mechanism of the relationship between the perceived sincerity and the feeling of anger. According to this finding, a possible explanation could be that trust is the key to every relationship and needs to be present to make a proper interaction possible (Abele & Wojciszke, 2013). Meaning that based on this research, the effect the perceived sincerity has on the feeling of anger can be explained through perceiving the offender as trustworthy. This stresses the importance of trustworthiness in connection with the influence perceived sincerity has on the victim's needs.

Moreover, it was found, that if the victim perceives the offender as more trustworthy, they are more willing to forgive the offender, which is in line with the expectations and also with the results shown by Dhami (2012). Namely that already the act of participating in VOM positively influenced the willingness to forgive the offender. Further research confirmed that an apology's sincerity influences forgiveness (Schumann, 2012; Witvliet et al., 2020). Additionally, Kim et. al. (2004) described the fact that an offence violates the "trustworthy until proven otherwise" approach and that this trust needs to be restored in order to forgive the offender. In addition, the findings of Kador (2010) can also add information to support this research's finding. He found that there is no simple apology that restores the trust and relationship to achieve forgiveness. If forgiveness wants to be achieved, the apology needs to be complex and need to be thoughtful. Nevertheless, there could be more than only an apology letter that is perceived as rather insincere to lead the victim to a high willingness to forgive. In addition to the relationship between trustworthiness and forgiveness, it was also found that higher perceived trustworthiness had a decreasing effect on the need for avoidance but not on the need for revenge. A possible explanation for this finding could be, that if the victims perceive the offender as trustworthy, they can believe what they are saying and can decrease their thoughts about avoiding the offender after the offence. Furthermore, an increasing effect on the need for avoidance was also having the willingness to participate and being male. But in contrast to this finding, research showed that males and females have different coping mechanisms in conflict situations namely that in comparison to females, males are more prone to avoid conflicts (Brahnam et. al., 2005). However, this finding shows that male has a decreasing effect on the need for avoidance. As a result, further research could investigate the role gender is playing in VOM and especially for the coping mechanisms willingness to forgive, need for avoidance and need for revenge. Moreover, the feeling of anger and the need to take revenge are similar constructs. However, the perceived sincerity of the apology had a decreasing effect on the feeling of anger but not on the need for revenge. This could be explained by the fact that anger is aimed at changing the situation that is perceived as unjust, and revenge is aimed

to restore the self (Van Doorn, 2018). Through receiving a sincere apology, the victim could have perceived the apology as the 'debt' that is given (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008) which would make an unjust situation just. But being able to restore the self after an offence, receiving a sincere apology might not be enough to achieve this.

Next to the result that perceived trustworthiness influences the willingness to forgive, it was found that the perceived sincerity also affects those variables. So, perceiving the apology as more sincere does not only have an effect on the feeling of anger and the perceived trustworthiness but also shows more powerful influences. It seems as if perceiving the sincerity and the perceived trustworthiness are the ground for comprising influences on the victim. Another unexpected finding showed that knowing someone who has been a victim in the past decreases the victim's feelings of anger.

Limitations

A limitation of this research is that the participants had to imagine being the victim in a crime scenario. Imagining being a victim by reading the scenario and not being involved in a real situation is not an easy task, especially if they have never been in a similar situation before. Following this point, this research only included short information the victim received about the VOM process and that they are thought to be suitable to participate. Except that, the participant just received a written apology letter and has to make decisions if they perceive the offender as trustworthy if they are willing to forgive the offender and how they are feeling about revenge or avoiding the offender. Normally, the process of VOM entails a complete session in which the offender and victim can have a conversation, ask questions and being able to exchange everything they are occupied with. After having the possibility of communicating, the victim has a lot more impressions and also received a lot more input which then determines how trustworthy the offender is and how willing the victim is to forgive. And as a limitation, this possibility of such a communication is not given in this procedure and all judgments the participants made are based on solely the apology letter, which could also have an influence on the authenticity of the participants' ratings.

Moreover, the feelings of anger and fear are very intense feelings which makes it even more difficult to put oneself into this crime imagination. Hence, this can have a distorting effect on the rating of the victim's feelings and the findings regarding the apology's effects. Furthermore, the scenario was inspired by the research of Witvliet et al. (2008) but the details and story linings were invented for this research. This also applies to the apology that was based on the research by Kirchhoff, Wagner & Strack (2012). Therefore, no real apologies, that were given by offenders were used. If real apologies had been used, the outcomes could have given more information about the reality and nature of apology-giving. But for this research project, artificial means were used to be able to control for the chosen variables. However, this means, that the findings of this research do not reflect the influences real apologies and scenarios possibly have. Furthermore, the way of receiving the apology could also have an influence on the perception. The apology was kind of anonymous because the victim does not know a name, a face, or any other information about the offender. So, the apology was completely isolated from interpersonal or sympathising factors like the appearance through face, the voice and the body which can have a big impact on the perceived sincerity (Lee, 2005). This would be included in a research in which the offender and victim meet face-to-face, and the offender delivers the apology letter in person. In this condition, a lot of different factors would be included and need to be considered. Another minor limitation was, that the apology letter was not a handwritten letter but a computer written text on a display. Maybe the apology would have had different influences on the victim if they would receive a paper on which the offender wrote the apology by hand. This could have made the

research conditions more similar to reality. But most importantly concerning the sincerity of the apology is the absence of non-verbal cues. Lee (2005) describes that sincerity in an apology needs presentational aspects like non-verbal cues for example body language and facial expressions.

Implications

This research project gave new insight, into the perceived sincerity of apologies. It was shown, that neither the apology in which the offender is not taking responsibility and giving justifications nor the complete apology was perceived as sincere. As already discussed, there are possible explanations for these findings. Nonetheless, this research showed that achieving that the victims perceive an apology as sincere is not easy and that probably more factors are involved than solely the content of perceived sincerity. Although, it should also not be forgotten that all participants react differently to the describes crime scenario and that perceived sincerity is a highly subjective impression. There will never be something like a manual that guides an offender to deliver a sincere apology because the issue of subjectiveness plays an important role in situations with different people.

Furthermore, the biggest asset of this study is the importance of trustworthiness showed to have for the VOM process and especially for fulfilling the victim's feeling of anger, increasing the willingness to forgive, and decreasing the willingness to avoid the offender. In the needs-based model of Shnabel and Nadler (2015), regaining trust was named as one of the needs, the offender has to satisfy. However, this research presented, that the restored trustworthiness can also positively affect the victim and that trustworthiness between the victim could be assigned as the base for further positive effects VOM can have on both parties. As a result, in the practice of VOM, the victim and offender, together with the mediator should actively focus on establishing a trusting relationship. Further research could investigate if there are processes and approaches, which can strengthen the trust between both parties before receiving an apology. In this case, the possible positive effects the apology has on the victim can fully come across because the victim could be more able to believe what the offender is saying.

Another implication this research has is on the needs-based model (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015) is that the findings take the assumptions made in the model further and indicate that not every apology can restore the offender's trustworthiness, but that the higher the apology is perceived as sincere, the more the offender is perceived as trustworthy. As the goal of the model is to fulfil the victim's needs as best as possible (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015), it could be of advantage to focus on the apologies' properties and elements. This approach could increase the perceived sincerity and as a result, maximize the effects of the victim's and offender's needs. As well as this shows the positive effects a sincere apology can have, there are also hints given, that not every apology is having effects on the victim's needs. If the content of an apology is poor and perceived as highly insincere, then the possible positive influence of the apology could be highly impaired which makes it even more important to focus future research on the quality and the impact apologies can have. In addition, this research project shows once again how powerful an apology can be. Looking at the ratings of sincerity, it gets clear that even if the apologies are perceived as slightly insincere, still, the sincerity has an effect on the victim's feeling of anger, the perceived trustworthiness, the willingness to forgive and the need to avoid the offender. The results give new ideas and visions of how influential and powerful apologies could be if they are truly perceived as sincere.

Additionally, including the need for agency as a variable that is affected and in the best case satisfied in VOM is innovative. The need for agency is described as the need a victim develops after a crime or in general in a conflict. In past research, this need was used under the construct of 'having an

impact'. Therefore, different studies investigated how having an impact could look like and which needs this has further. For example, Umbreit et al., (1994) found that 'having an impact' could be achieved by creating awareness about the responsibilities offenders have or by sharing the inflicted pain with the offender. However, no focus was put on satisfying the need of agency through different kinds of apology can increase the feeling of agency again. Even if in this research it could not be proven that an apology that perceived as more sincere increases the need for agency, it gave new ground to find means that can rehabilitate the victim after an offence.

Besides, additional research could investigate which elements in this research were actually perceived as sincere and which elements were in general recognized by the participants. Furthermore, the possibility to control how willing the victims are to accept the apology would give new insights into how the apology affected the victims. Then a distinction between accepting the apology and forgiving the offender would be possible. This could be beneficial, as forgiveness is described as a rare achievement in VOM but often victims are willing to accept the apology. This would give, next to asking explicitly how the participants perceived the elements in an apology, new insight into the perception of the participants and should be included to be able to make more valid assumptions about the attitude the victims have towards the apology.

In the end, based on this research project, a practical recommendation about the role sincerity plays in apologies can be given. Of course, offenders that prepare themselves for delivering an apology are not encouraged through this research to take an example of a perfect apology and deliver it. This would not reflect the unique situation each offender has with the victim. However, the offender could be taught and guided in the process of arriving at a sincere apology that can be delivered to the victim. A possibility to do this could be in the first meeting with the mediator, in which the offender will be prepared for the actual meeting. In addition, working on an apology, thinking about the offence, looking back and reappraise what happened, could help the offender to deliver an apology that is given truly sincere which increases the likelihood that the apology is perceived as sincere. As identified in this research, the offender should pay attention to the ten elements that should be present to deliver a good apology. Focussing on taking full responsibility, naming the offence, and attempting to explain the offence without giving justification is important for a good apology. Additionally, including a statement of apology ('I am sorry'), conveying the own emotions and addressing the emotions of the victim, forbearance, reparation offers, and an acceptance request is crucial to make a written apology as sincere as possible. And offenders who are aiming to repair the relationship as much as possible with an apology should have in mind, that this act of apologising is like giving a debt back to the victim. Further, offenders need to be aware that they took the feeling of being in control and having the power over the situation from the victim and that they have to give this feeling of power back. Putting effort and time into coming up and delivering an apology can also retrospectively be beneficial for the offender. This is because if they can deliver an apology that is perceived as sincere, they are regaining to be characterised as trustworthy. At last, it can be said, that this research highlighted the importance of sincerity in connection with trustworthiness for the VOM which could lead to improvements in the overall outcome and satisfaction of both parties in VOM.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Example of questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study! This survey is conducted to examine the needs of victims after an offense. In the following online survey, you are asked to read a crime scene, in which you should imagine yourself in the role of someone who has become a victim of a burglary.

Before starting the questionnaire, please also read the consent form below. I appreciate your time and effort.

Marie Walenzik

Informed Consent

To assure your privacy and to make sure that your identity cannot be identified, all data will be anonymized. Answers to the questions are only used for research aims. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without further explanation. Further, you are free to omit any question. I believe there are no known obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with this research study. However, there might be some discomfort due to sensitive topics like crime and violence in this study. To the best of our ability, your answers in this study will remain confidential and always remain anonymous. It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete the research study. In order to take part in the study, you need to agree with this informed consent.

I agree

I disagree

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other

What is your age in years?

What is your nationality?

- Dutch
- German
- Other _____

What is your educational background?

- VMBO/Realschule/Hauptschule/Middleschool
- HAVO/VWO/Gymnasium/Highschool
- University (Bachelor)
- University (Master)
- Other _____

Have you ever been a victim of a crime?

- Yes
- No

Do you know someone who has ever been victimized?

- Yes
- No

THE SCENARIO

Please read the following crime scenario and imagine yourself being the victim. While reading, make sure that you pay attention to the information given because you cannot return to the described scene later on. It is a sunny Sunday evening in May. You have been away for the weekend with a friend, to relax and enjoy the sun. Still feeling the last beams of sunlight on your face, you walk towards the front door. You want to put your key into the door when you notice that the door is open. A shiver runs down your spine and you immediately feel extremely nervous and anxious because you don't know what happened and what awaits you inside. With shaking hands and knees, you push the door wide open. As you walk in, you're frightened, because you step over shattered glass on the floor. The loud crunching sound echoes in your ears while you see that all your belongings are spread all over the floor in your living room. Someone must have broken into your home. You are anxious, panicking, and hastily looking around to find a heavy object to defend yourself, not knowing if you are alone right now. You see a heavy lamp. You grab it and go through all the rooms, to check if someone is still in the house.

Phew, luckily every room is empty. Now, after you are certain that nobody is in the house you call the police. In the meantime, till they arrive, you begin to search for the most important items that you left at home. You noticed that your computer and other technological supply are missing. You also had 50€ in a drawer, which is gone, but most importantly you realize that a lot of objects were destroyed that have personal value for you. These items are not replaceable because they belonged to very dear loved ones of yours. You feel how the anger rushes through your body and how the sadness fills your eyes with tears. All those memorable items are destroyed. You notice that you started to cry. Suddenly you hear the doorbell, and every inch of your body frightens. But you realize, it is just the police. You tell them what happened. After documenting everything, they leave and you are left behind, alone in your apartment. You repeatedly think about the break-in, and you are not only feeling angry, but also anxious. Why did the robber break specifically into your house, and will he come back? Since the break-in, you have severe problems sleeping at night, worrying if someone is in the apartment. Also, you repeatedly check if all doors and windows are closed properly. Because you still don't know why your home was selected for the burglary, you try to make it seem like you don't have valuable items at home, as well as leaving the light on so that it seems like you are always at home.

We are now interested how you would feel when being victim of a robbery. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

Thinking about the offender I feel...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
angry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
frustrated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
furious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
tensed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
nervous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
restless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
panicking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
uncertain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
anxious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please still imagine to be in the role of the victim and indicate to what extent you agree/disagree to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have difficulties with solving daily problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it hard to deal with challenges in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have control over things that happen in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Introduction into VOM

A few weeks after the crime, the court contacts you as they caught the man that broke into your home. You get informed about the further procedure of the justice process and about the option to participate in a victim-offender dialogue. The public prosecutor thinks that it might be good for you and the offender to have the option to participate in victim-offender mediation. An officer from a mediation bureau gets in contact with you and explains to you the following about victim-offender mediation: In this case, instead of directly punishing the offender, you have the opportunity be part of the justice process, by participating in a victim-offender mediation. Through mediation you and the offender have the opportunity to talk with each other, in the presence of a trained mediator. In this conversation you will be able to ask questions that bother you since the break in and let the offender know how you feel and how the crime impacted your life. On the other hand, the offender gets the opportunity to become fully aware of the harm that he caused, can take active responsibility, and can even take the initiative to repair the harm.

Participation is voluntary for both, you and the offender and the conversation is highly confidential. However, if you and the offender can come to an agreement on how to solve the crime, this agreement can be communicated back to the public prosecutor, but only after permission from you and the offender. The public prosecutor will take this agreement into consideration when deciding which punishment the offender should get, if a punishment is still necessary after the mediation.

Please still imagine to be in the role of the victim and indicate to what extent you agree/disagree to the following statement

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am willing 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"/>

Thank you for indicating to what degree you would like to participate in Victim-Offender Mediation. Now, we are interested in how you would respond to an apology, given by the offender, when you would decide to participate in Victim-Offender mediation.

In a moment, the offender in the scenario will give you a written apology. Afterward, we want to ask you a few questions about how you feel about this apology.

The apologies

The sincere apology

The offender writes you the following

Hello, I am writing this letter to you because I want to apologize to you. I feel terrible and ashamed for what happened. I realize now how upset you must be, because of what I did. I take full responsibility for it. There is no excuse for breaking into your apartment, taking and destroying your belongings. I cannot justify my behaviour, because it can never be justified, but I want you to know that I completely lost control of the situation. I can imagine what this situation has done to you and that you are very angry with me. But now I realise that my behaviour was completely wrong and that this should have never happened in the first place. I promise you what happened will never happen again. I would like to make you an offer of reparation if you agree. I deeply hope you can accept my apology. I am sorry.

The insincere apology

The offender writes you the following:

Hello, I am writing this letter to you because I want to apologize to you. I feel terrible and ashamed for what happened. I realize now how upset you must be, because of what I did. However, I really couldn't help it. I urgently needed money and completely lost control of the situation. And I did not hurt you physically and only took some things from your apartment to make some money. So I would say no big harm done. Nevertheless, I can imagine what this situation has done to you and that you are angry with me. I promise you what happened will not happen again. I can make you an offer of reparation if you agree. I hope you can accept my apology. I am sorry.

Please still imagine to be in the role of the victim and indicate to what extent you agree/disagree to the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I doubt that the excuse was sincere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can't really judge whether the excuse was sincere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I doubt that the offender was sincere to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the feeling that the offender was honest with me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the feeling that the offender takes responsibility for his actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I doubt that the offender feels responsible for his actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the feeling that the offender wants to avoid being held responsible for his actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the feeling that the offender sincerely wanted to apologize to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I have the feeling that the offender contacted me, for my well-being

After reading the apology, please still imagine to be in the role of the victim and indicate to what extent you agree/ disagree to the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I find it hard to deal with challenges in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have difficulties with solving daily problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have control over things that happen in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If I would think back to the offender two weeks after the crime I would feel...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
angry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
frustrated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
furious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
tensed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
nervous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
restless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
panicking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
uncertain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
anxious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please still imagine to be in the role of the victim and indicate to what extent you agree/disagree to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I can trust the offender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When interacting with the offender I will be careful and watch out	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the interaction with the offender is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will watch out and be careful dealing with the offender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

After receiving the apology, please still imagine to be in the role of the victim and indicate to what extent you agree/ disagree to the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I'll make him pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish that something bad would happen to him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am living as if he doesn't exist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want him to get what he deserves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am avoiding him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have given up my hurt and resentment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to see him hurt and miserable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I forgive him	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This is the end of the study. As you may have noticed, this survey was aimed to measure how the offender's apology influences the victim's needs (fear, anxiety, need for agency). Further, it was determined how the apology influences the perceived trustworthiness of the offender and the willingness to forgive the offender. Now that you know the real aim of the study, you might want to withdraw your consent.

Being informed about the aim of the study, do you still agree on the initial conditions under which your answers are used for this research?

- Yes, I agree.
- No, I want to withdraw from the survey.

If you have any questions, concerns, remarks, or want to know the outcomes of the study, feel free to send an email to Marie Walenzik (m.walenzik@student.utwente.nl).