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# Boosting Identity Development: A Psychededucation Intervention for Young Adults

**Muhammad Naveed Umar**
Department of Psychology, Islamia College University, Peshawar

***Tahira Riaz** (Corresponding Author)
[1]Department of Psychology, National University of Medical Sciences, Islamabad
[2]Department of Psychology, Women University Mardan
Email: t_riaz_needo@yahoo.com

***Abid Khan** (Corresponding Author)
University of Malakand, Email: drabidkhan21@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the immediate effects of a one-day, psychoeducation intervention on identity crisis among emerging adults. Grounded in Erikson's psychosocial theory. The intervention aimed to promote identity exploration and commitment through experiential activities, techniques of psychoeducation that linked with Erickson's theory. Two groups were taken; Group one was experimental group who took an intervention through psychoeducation whereas group two (control group) was not introduced with any kind of intervention(treatment) as the same scale was filled by 22 students with two days laps. Pre-test/post-test design was employed with 22 participants in each group. A self-report The Identity Development Questionnaire (IDQ) developed by Koen Luyckx and colleagues in 2008 was used as pretest and posttest for measures and comparison. The results of the participants of experimental group showed significant improvements in identity-related outcomes following the intervention. As $t = -11$ as post-test scores are significantly higher than pre-test scores. The t-test was highly significant ($p < .001$), showed strong evidence the intervention improved identity scores. A paired-sample Cohen's d was calculated to assess the size of the change in identity scores before and after the intervention. The result was $d = 2.52$, indicating a very large effect. For control group the results from the pre-test and post-test scores of 22 students, who received no intervention**,** reveal no significant overall improvement. Some students showed slight gains, others experienced decreases, and several remained unchanged. As with (Post-Pre): ≈ -0.09 which showed very negligible mean difference.

**Keyword:** Psychology, Boosting, Development, Young Adults, Education, Intervention, Identity

## Introduction

One of the major stages in development is adolescence, which is defined by the dilemma of conflicting the identity formation and role confusion that is a concept that is founded on the Erikson psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1968). At this age, people are

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undergoing an active stage of trying out various roles, beliefs and values to create a cohesive sense of self. This failure to reach this coherence can lead to identity crisis, a state of uncertainty, confusion and psychological distress. Based on the concepts of Erikson, Marcia (1966) named four ego-identity statuses, identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement in accordance with the degree of exploration and commitment that one experiences. The statuses are useful in classifying the variations in the approach and resolution of identity problems among adolescents. The Marcia model has been at the heart of the empirical studies not only those that have been carried out in a longitudinal fashion to understand the identity aspects over time. The article by Schwartz et al. (2014) designed a structured identity status interview to investigate crossings of these statuses in adolescents and informs about the dynamics of the identity development. Moreover, group-based interventions that encourage the personal expression and reflection such as those described by Haug and O'Neill (2014) helping adolescents experience identity exploration processes and become less confused and gain self-awareness. The article by Marcotte and Levesque (2018) points to the paramount significance of psychoeducation to the identity development within the framework of the emergent adulthood that is linked to the heightened vulnerability to identity crisis. The authors have found that students who were attending a structured psychoeducational program were reporting a substantial change in their psychological well-being and a reduction in anxiety that was mediated by an increment in identity commitment and exploration. It was found that the program alleviated destabilizing effects of identity uncertainty by assisting participants to experience self-reflection, emotional regulation and develop coherent sense of self. This means that psychoeducational interventions, when strategized to address core areas of identity development, can be effective coping strategies to identity crisis among the young adults. In psychoeducation with problem-solving intervention, psychoeducation serves as a foundation by increasing participants, understanding of their own personality traits and interpersonal challenges. The mechanisms by building insight into one's own psychological patterns and learning structured strategies to navigate challenges align it with psychoeducational interventions targeting identity crises. (McMurran,2011)

**Objectives of the Study:**

This study aims to assess the impact of a one-day psychoeducational intervention on identity development among adolescents aged 12 to 18, based on Erik Erikson's psychosocial stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion. Participants will be divided into two groups: **Group One** will receive a one-day psychoeducation session focused on identity development, while **Group Two** will serve as a control group and will not receive any intervention only completing a pre-test and post test with a two-day interval. The objectives are:

To help adolescents (ages 12–18) understand the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage of Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of development.

To deliver a structured, one-day psychoeducational intervention aimed at promoting self-awareness and identity exploration.

To compare changes in identity-related outcomes in experimental group with pre-test and pot-test before and after intervention.

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To compare changes in identity-related outcomes in control group over a short-term period (two days).

## HYPOTHESES

$H_1$: Adolescents in the psychoeducation group will demonstrate a significant decrease in identity scores immediately following the intervention, compared to both their pre-test scores and the post-test scores of the no-treatment control group.

$H_2$: Adolescents in the psychoeducation group will exhibit a significant increase in self-identity development after the intervention, as reflected in post-test scores, in comparison to their pre-test scores and to the control group, which is not expected to show significant change.

### Research Design

This study adopted a **Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)** with a **pre-test and post-test experimental and control group design** to evaluate the short-term effectiveness of a one-day psychoeducational intervention in addressing identity crises and fostering self-identity development among adolescents. Participants were randomly assigned to either an **experimental group,** which received a psychoeducational intervention and completed a post-test on the same day and a **control group,** which received no intervention and completed the post-test two days after the pre-test. This design enabled assessment of both immediate outcomes in the experimental group and natural variation over time in the control group.

### Participants

The sample was purposively sampled in Abbottabad model school in Chakdara by selecting 44 adolescents (12 to 18 years old) depending on their availability, willingness and suitability to participate in the study and fall within the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were that the participants had to be school going, fall within the given age, and be in a position to give informed consent with the consent of teachers. Following pre-screening, the participants were further divided into two equal groups, experimental group (n = 22) and the control group (n = 22) using simple randomization procedures (lottery method).

### Procedure

After the ethical clearance and consent procedures, the two groups went through a pre-test that evaluated identity development and identity crises. The experimental group was then subjected to a structured one-day psychoeducational intervention based on Identity vs. Role Confusion stage of Erikson. The session involved brief lectures, identity mapping, reflective talks and activities that were geared towards personal awareness and identity exploration. As soon as the session was over, the experimental group took a post-test to evaluate the short-term effect of the intervention. The control group that did not get an intervention was told to go on with their normal school activities. They were requested to fill the post-test precisely two days following the pre-test and a time-based comparison could be done without being exposed to any identity-related educational information.

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**Measures**

The primary instrument used was a validated identity assessment scale suitable for adolescents A self-report The **Identity Development Questionnaire (IDQ)** developed by KoenLuyckx and colleagues in 2008 was used as pre-test and post-test for measures and comparison. The tool measured constructs such as identity synthesis, role confusion, and self-concept clarity using a Likert scale. Higher scores more than 29 indicated more positive identity development and lower less than 29 identity confusion.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using **SPSS** (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). A**paired-samples t-test** was applied within each group to compare pre-test and post-test scores. An**independent-samples t-test** was used to compare the **post-test scores between the experimental group participants and control groups,** evaluating the immediate effects of the psychoeducational intervention against natural changes over time. The significance level was $p < .000$ which showed high level of significance.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional authority figure. Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was collected from students and teachers. Confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any time were ensured throughout the research process.

**Overview of Erikson's Theory**

Briefly explain the 8 stages of psychosocial development, focusing on the fifth stage (adolescence), where individuals explore personal identity. Discuss how identity formation involves exploring different roles (e.g., career, relationships, values) and how confusion can occur when these are not clearly defined.

**Pre-Test (before intervention on experimental group)**

**Objective:** Assess the current understanding of identity and self-awareness before the intervention.

On a scale from 1 to 10, responses of the students were taken in order to know that how confident were they about knowing their personal identity, their future, values in social and cultural context and their goals. The students were allowed to respond on paper with their consent.

**Educate, engage and clear misconception**

To effectively **integrate psychoeducation techniques** into an activity based on **James Marcia's Identity Status Theory** and **Erikson's identity development stage**, the goal is to educate, engage, and empower adolescents to reflect on their identity development process.

**James Marcia's Identity Status Theory**

Marcia expanded on Erikson's idea by identifying four identity statuses based on two dimensions:

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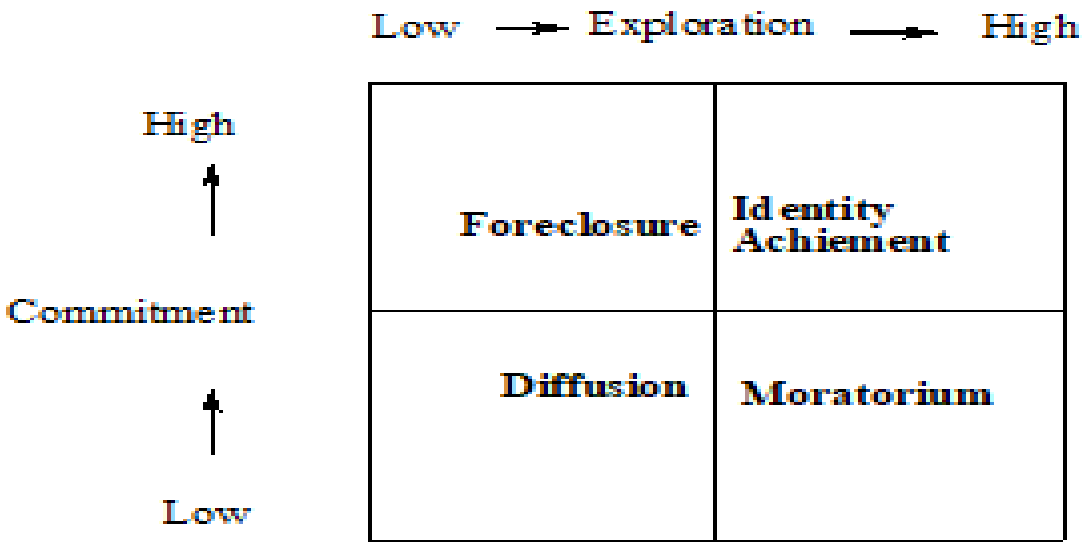
**Exploration** (trying out different roles/ideas)
**Commitment** (making decisions and sticking to them)

**Identity Diffusion**
No exploration, no commitment.
The person hasn't yet considered options or made any commitments.
Example: "I don't really think about the future. I'm just going with the flow."

**Identity Foreclosure**
Commitment without exploration.
The person accepts others' choices or beliefs without question (often from parents or authority).
Example: "I'm going to be a doctor because my parents expect me to."

**Identity Moratorium**
Exploration without commitment.
Actively exploring options, but not ready to commit.
Example: "I'm taking different courses and trying to figure out what fits me best."

**Identity Achievement**
Exploration + commitment**.**
The person has explored different options and made informed decisions about their identity.
Example: "I've thought a lot about it, and I want to pursue psychology because it fits my interests and values."




**Psychoeducational outcomes**
Erikson's 8-stage theory, typically occurring during adolescence (ages ~12–18). Different techniques of psychoeducation such as to "educate" helped young students to address about identity development and identity crises for better development and

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awareness in the start of intervention. The central question**:** "Who am I?" Adolescents "engaged" and "empowered" them through "reflect" they explore different values, beliefs, goals, and roles to form a stable sense of self. Success leads to a strong identity and the ability to stay true to oneself. Failure results in role confusion a weak sense of self, insecurity, and difficulty making decisions about the future.

**By the end of this activity, students:**
Understand the theory of identity formation
Identify their current identity status
Feel less anxious or confused about not having everything figured out
To explore and commit to aspects of their identity

**Cognitive restructuring and emotional normalization**
**Animated Video on Identity Crises**
**Objective:**
To provide a visual and narrative-based explanation of identity crises, helping students better understand the emotional and cognitive challenges that come with identity exploration and role confusion.

**Introduction to the Video**
Briefly introduced the video by explaining:
"Now we're going to watch a short-animated video that explores the concept of identity crises. Sometimes this can be confusing, and we might struggle with figuring out what role we want to play in the world. The video will show a character going through this process and trying to understand his identity. Pay close attention to how the character navigates this challenge." The video was on YouTube having link(http://nickkendig3.wixsite.com/my-site). Its duration was 6;30 minutes.

**Discussion After the Video**
After watching the video, a brief group discussion was held. For evoking curiosity and interest, the following questions were discussed.
"What did you notice about the character's experience with identity confusion?"
"Can you relate to any of the struggles the character went through?"
"How did the character begin to resolve or understand their identity crisis?"

**Communication skill development and emotional regulation**
Erikson's theory was reinforced and discussed how identity vs. role confusion is a key part of adolescence, as through "emotional normalizing technique" it was discussed that it's completely normal to experience confusion about one's identity during this time. Explained that Erikson believed overcoming the crisis led to a sense of a stable and committed identity Moreover, discussed the question, "How do you think watching this video" also helped students to "challenge" their negative thoughts and "restructuring" with positive ones which ultimately will help them to understand their own identity struggles

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**Behavioral activation and planning**
**Yarn circle Web Activity:**
**Objective:**
To help students visualize how their identities are influenced by various factors (family, friends, school, culture, etc.) and to understand how identity is interconnected with others in the social environment.

**Materials Needed:**
A large ball of yarn
A classroom with a space where students could sit in circle.

**Activity Steps:**
**Step 1: Introduction**
In this step the activity was explained to the participants:
Our identities are shaped by various factors: the people we interact with, the experiences we have, the roles we play, and the values we hold. Just like threads in a web, all these aspects are connected to form who we are.

**Step 2: Identifying Roles and Influences**
In this step participants were asked to think “self-reflection technique” about their identity with questions:
"What role do you identify with most?"
"Who has influenced your sense of self?"
"What is a core value that defines you?"

**Step 3: Passing the Yarn**
The facilitator started by holding the end of the yarn, sharing their own answer to one of the prompts. For example, "I identify as a mentor because I enjoy helping others learn."
After sharing, the facilitator held onto the end of the yarn and toss the ball to another participant who also shares their answer to the same or a different prompt (e.g., "I am an athlete; I believe in teamwork"). Through these prompts “modeling” participants showed different characters as behavioral model.
As the yarn was passed, each participant catched it and hold onto a section of the yarn while continuing the sharing process. “Self-reflection” and “motivational affirmation” techniques were used to encourage students for identity development.

**Step 4: Building the Web**
The yarn created a web as the participants toss it around. Over time, the web connected everyone, symbolizing how their identities were intertwined with others. After everyone has shared their connection, the web was visible to all. The web showed that no one’s identity was isolated.

**Discussion and Reflective Aspects**
How does this web indicate the interculturalness of our identities?
What shocked you when other people talked about themselves?

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How is this knowledge of interconnectedness applicable to identifying identity crisis and role confusion?
Talk about how identity is created by a network of forces and relationships with other people and it is also natural to hold many roles and to be confused about the role.
Discuss how Erikson theory proposes that we have a problem with identity in adolescence as we are attempting to establish sense of these interconnections, and some times we may even feel torn in opposite directions.

**Advantages of the Yarn Web Activity:**
The students will have an opportunity to physically observe how they are influenced by other people, which supports the notion that the identity is not created in a vacuum.
Listening to personal accounts of people and their identity can make students understand each other.
Through this, students will be able to consider their own identity formation and their roles and the development of their sense of self.
The nature of the activity is group based, which makes the intervention more interactive.

**Cognitive reframing and metaphor**
**Tree Activity:**
**Objective:**
To help students visualize their personal identity development over time, including their roots (past influences), trunk (current self), and branches (future aspirations or evolving roles).

**Materials Needed:**
White sheets of paper (one per student)
Marker, or a pencil,

**Instructions:**
**Set Up:**
Each student took out a sheet of paper and drawing materials.
Explain the activity: "Just like a tree grows and changes over time, so do we. Today, we're going to create a personal tree that represents who you are, where you've come from, and where you're going."

**Drawing the Tree:**
Asked each student to draw a tree with three parts: as these parts were taken as "metaphor" for "cognitive reframing" and "cognitive restructuring"

**Roots (Past Influences):**
At the bottom of the tree, draw the roots. These represent the influences, people, and experiences that have shaped their identity so far. Encourage students to think about their family, culture, values, early childhood experiences, and past relationships.

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**Trunk (Current Self):**
The trunk represents who they are today, their core beliefs, personality traits, strengths, and challenges. What aspects of their identity they are currently building and standing on? Encourage students to think about their roles and how they define themselves right now.

**Branches (Future Aspirations and Evolving Roles):**
The branches are a sign of their hopes, dreams, the roles that they are yet to discover or ones that they desire to gain in the future. What are their new roles or identities that they desire to expand? This may be as far as career, relationship, value or personal development.

**Reflection and Sharing:**
After the learners have drawn their trees, have them consider their drawings. They might take into account such questions as:
How has your identity been constructed up to this point? What can the roots of your tree tell you about this?
How is the trunk a manifestation of what you are today, at your core?
What are several of your future branches?

**Discussion:**
Group discussion this involved discussing the following points after the students had time to think:
How can the precursors of our identity make us remain grounded as we venture into the roles?
So what does this mean in terms of challenges as we encounter them and bend or change or alter the trunk ( our present selves ).
How do the branches reflect not only a wish towards the future, but also a current process of identity building? How does uncertainty come in to play in our identity formation?
How do we develop, evolve and change as a tree?
Communication and assertive technique: The Seed Planting.
Students were requested to identify one particular goal or activity that they will work on to keep developing their identity (e.g. I will pursue my interest in art by taking a course, I will be open to my family more about my desired future).

**Psychoeducation and the Tree Activity have benefits that are as follows:**
It allows students to model the image of growth and identity exploration, and the influence of the past with the help of the concrete visualization of the idea (awareness technique).
Ones are made to contemplate their identity, their origins, their current state, as well as their future (complicated thoughts).
The activity allows students to express themselves creatively while learning about personal development. (communication skill)
The activity provides a natural platform for students to share their personal stories and learn from each other's experiences. (assertive technique and emotional regulation)

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The tree metaphor is a natural fit with Erikson's theory, illustrating how identity is formed in stages and through exploration of different roles. (metaphor one of important aspect of psychoeducation for better insight and avoid personal attack)

**Future orientation and commitment**
**Letter to Future Self Activity**
**Objective:**
To help students reflect on their current identity, goals, and aspirations. Writing a letter to their future selves encourages them to think about their future identity and the steps they need to take to evolve.

**Materials Needed:**
Paper (letter-size)
Pens or markers

**Instructions:**
**Explanation:** Started by explaining the activity to students:
"Today, you're going to write a letter to your future self. In this letter, you'll talk about who you are right now, the challenges you are facing in your identity development, your goals, and what you hope for your future. It's a chance to set intentions for who you want to become and how you want to grow."

**Cognitive reframing, emotional regulation and problem-solving skills through psychoeducation**
Provide students with some prompts to guide their letter writing. Here are some suggestions:
"Describe who you are right now. What are your strengths, challenges, and roles?"
"What do you find most confusing or challenging about figuring out your identity?"
"What are your dreams or goals for the future? What kind of person do you hope to become?"
"How do you want to grow over the next few years? What steps will you take to achieve these goals?"
"What advice would you give to your future self about staying true to who you are?"

**The Letters and Reflect Back Collection**
The letters were then tabulated in a file after writing and provided a group reflection session. Asked volunteers to tell a little bit of their letter (or only the overall ideas) in case they would be comfortable. This move made students open up and share with one another and also share their identities.

**Discussion Questions:**
What did you find out about yourself when you wrote your letter?
How did it feel when you thought about who you would become in the future and what you have to do to become it?

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**The Letter to Future Self Activity has several benefits**:
It provides students with an opportunity to self-reflect on what they are and explain what they wish to accomplish in the future. (self-reflection)
The act of writing the letter makes them reflect on their dreams and goals to achieve. (assertiveness)
The letter makes students relate with their future and thus they always feel continuity and development. (problem solving skill)
It has the power to empower because it enables students to see the individual that they aspire to be and the process that they should take to achieve that (emotional safety).

**Group 1 Post-Test (Post-intervention with experimental group)**
**Descriptive Statistics Table:**
**Table 1 basic statistics for both pre-test and post-test scores.**

| | Pre-test Scores | Post-test Scores |
|---|---|---|
| **Mean** | 24.05 | 38.7 |
| **Median** | 25 | 40 |
| **Standard Deviation** | 4.63 | 3.27 |
| **Minimum** | 14 | 32 |
| **Maximum** | 29 | 45 |

**Interpretation:**
The participants had lower score in the pre-test on average, indicating an identity crisis. The mean score was significantly improved after the intervention. The reduction in standard deviation of 4.63 (pre-test) and 3.27 (post-test) indicates that the scores of the participants got more consistent following the intervention. The lowest and highest values indicate that the participants had very low (14) and high (29) pre-test scores, but post-test scores were between 32 and 45, which is an overall improvement.

**Table 2 Interpretations of output**

| statistics | Value |
|---|---|
| Mean difference | -15.82 |
| Std. Deviation of diff | 6.28 |
| Std. Error Mean | 1.34 |
| 95% CI Lower Bound | -18.60 |
| 95% CI Upper Bound | -13.04 |
| t-value | -11.82 |
| df | 21 |
| p-value (2-tailed) | .000 ($p < .001$) |

The average score **decreased by 15.82 points** by calculate (pre-test – post-test), so

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**post-test scores were higher by 15.82 points.** The **t-test is highly significant**($p < .001$), showing strong evidence the intervention improved identity scores. The 95% confidence interval does **not include zero** (from -18.60 to -13.04), confirming the difference is reliable. Given your large t and mean difference (~15), expect a large effect size. **Difference scores (pre-test – post-test) are negative (between -18 and -13).** Post-test scores are **higher than pre-test** by about 13 to 18 points on average. As **t = -11** (a large negative t-value). Since the mean difference is negative, it confirms post-test scores are significantly higher than pre-test scores.

$d = 15.82/6.28 \approx 2.52$

**Cohen's d = 2.52**, which is a **very large effect size** (indicating a strong change after the intervention).A paired-sample Cohen's d was calculated to assess the size of the change in identity scores before and after the intervention. The result was **d = 2.52**, indicating a very large effect.

**Group 2 Pre-test and post-test with control group**

Pre-test and post-test were executed for identity crises on control group. Control group was not given any type of intervention. 22 students of identity crises were taken and pre-test was employed after few days again the same test was taken as record for post-test. Both times tests were calculated and results were drawn.

**Table 3 Pre-test and Post-test Data (No Intervention)**

| Student | Pre-test | Post-test |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 20 | 17 |
| 2 | 23 | 22 |
| 3 | 25 | 25 |
| 4 | 22 | 20 |
| 5 | 26 | 27 |
| 6 | 19 | 22 |
| 7 | 29 | 29 |
| 8 | 17 | 16 |
| 9 | 29 | 27 |
| 10 | 24 | 16 |
| 11 | 21 | 18 |
| 12 | 18 | 16 |
| 13 | 20 | 22 |
| 14 | 24 | 22 |
| 15 | 14 | 16 |
| 16 | 16 | 17 |
| 17 | 22 | 20 |
| 18 | 26 | 24 |
| 19 | 14 | 16 |
| 20 | 16 | 18 |
| 21 | 19 | 19 |
| 22 | 20 | 22 |

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**Descriptive Analysis**
**Total Students: 22**
**Mean Pre-test Score: ≈ 21.05**
**Mean Post-test Score: ≈ 20.95**
**Mean Difference (Post - Pre): ≈ -0.09**

**Interpretation**
The results from the pre-test and post-test scores of 22 students, who received no intervention, reveal no significant overall improvement. Some students showed slight gains, others experienced decreases, and several remained unchanged.
**Positive Changes:** Observed in students 5, 6, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, and 22.
**Negative Changes:** Seen in students 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, and 18.
**No Change:** Students 3, 7, and 21.
These mixed findings, together with the fact that there was practically no difference in mean scores, provide evidence to the fact that the lack of any structured intervention did not cause systematic improvement in the performance of the students.

**Conclusion:**
The results of the pretest versus the posttest scores of 22 students who were not subject to any intervention show no significant differences. The low average change and the lack of consistent individual results support the realization that in the absence of a deliberate intervention to be improved natural change either rise or fall which is insignificant, is random and cannot be changed beneficially and cognition or behavior.

**Closing Discussion**
Ask the students to consider the future and how they can apply the tools and concepts they have learned today to solve identity crisis. Requested students to give a major lesson learned during the day. This may either be what they desire to concentrate on in their personal lives or a new insight into identity crisis.

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