Exploring How Story-Focused Peer Counselling Impacts Sense of Purpose and Achievement Motivation

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Abstract: The problem of insufficient counseling service among high schools augments students' need for peer mental support. The present study utilized quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore how applying peer counseling using counselors' experiences about challenges and future directions results in Chinese junior high school students' shift in Sense of Purpose and Achievement Motivation by analyzing 173 questionnaire results and coding 10 interviewees' records. The findings suggest the following: 1) story-focused peer counseling has the potential to improve students' Sense of Purpose and Achievement Motivation; 2) perceiving peer counselors as role models helps students internalize and apply the insight gained from counselors' disclosure to their real-life situations; 3) self-projection influences how students leverage peer counselors' stories to address the academic challenges they face. Overall, this study contributes to understanding the effect of self-disclosure stories on peer counseling and provides practical implications for organizing peer counseling among high school students.

Keywords: Student Peer counseling, Self-disclosure, Sense of Purpose, Achievement Motivation, Self-Projection

1. Introduction

In the post-epidemic period, family economic crises, psychological distress, and mental illness are increasingly common among students around the world. In Chinese high schools, 41.8 percent of the students reported mental health problems. According to previous research, the prevalence of depressive symptoms among Chinese middle school kids is rising. These symptoms are linked to a number of detrimental effects, including poorer academic performance, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors [1], which are brought on by a lack of drive and purpose. Chinese adolescents are frequently subjected to cultural norms that place a premium on academic success, which may limit their chances of growing a feeling of personal fulfillment and purpose. According to studies, academic pressure (58.9%) and emotional disorders (55.5%) are the most prevalent dimensional symptoms of mental health issues among Chinese high school students. These symptoms are a result of the psychological strain that comes from parents' and teachers' expectations of students' GPA and ranking within the framework of the exam-oriented educational system [2]. Mental health problems remain a taboo topic, especially in the traditional exam-oriented environment. The fear of being viewed as abnormal, rejection by their peers, or discrimination by others on campus made it difficult for students to access care even if they were aware of their problems. While delays in

obtaining professional support are common globally, Chinese college students have relatively longer delays in accessing care when they experience mental health problems [3]. Studies have shown that, in China, people with mental health problems account for 63% of suicide deaths, and only 7% of these people have sought professional help before committing suicide [4]. At the same time, the mental health literacy level of adults in different cities in China is still low to moderate, resulting in a medium to high degree of stigma for mental illness in different populations. Due to the cultural stigma attached to mental health issues, the self-efficacy needed to seek help is often affected by the cross-cutting effects of stigma and loss of esteem [5]. Even though China has established the necessary infrastructure to offer counseling services to students in higher education institutions and has released new guidelines mandating that all higher education institutions have two or more on-campus counselors, the majority of secondary school students who require psychological support or mental health treatment lack the means to access counseling services. Students find it more difficult to communicate their emotions and ask for assistance when their depression gets worse because of an increase in withdrawal and indifference toward doing so.

While professional counseling is the gold standard for supporting mental health, it may not be available in all schools as it is resource-intensive. One promising approach is peer counseling, also known as peer support. Peer support for people with similar life experiences has been proven to be tremendously important in helping many move through difficult situations [6]. In general, peer support means that people who have similar experiences can better relate to each other and consequently offer more authentic empathy and validation. However, because peers are usually not professionally trained, their methods appear to be different from those of professional counselors. One thing they may be uniquely qualified to do is share their own stories. Existing social neuroscience research suggests that observing another person's experience can create a vicarious response in the observer and illuminate the same neural pathways [7], indicating how peers' stories of successfully overcoming challenges may encourage those who sought counseling to adopt similar mindsets or methods [8].

Given the mental health crisis among Chinese adolescents amidst the post-COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher aims to investigate how stories used in peer counseling may shape the Sense of Purpose (SOP) and Achievement Motivation (AM) among Chinese adolescents. In particular, our investigation was guided by the following questions:

● To what extent and in what ways do Chinese junior high school students report shifts in SOP and AM after going through peer counseling?

● What roles do role model effect and self-projection play in students' shifts in mindset after peer counseling, and particularly, how do they relate to students' sense of purpose and achievement motivation?

To answer these questions, this study pays attention to assessing teenage participants' psychological situations, investigating how they perceive and recall their counseling experiences, and how they practice what they gained from counseling in real life.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Positive Psychology

2.1.1. Sense of Purpose

Damon et al. defined purpose as people's stable and generalized intention to achieve something that gives meaning to their lives and contributes to matters beyond the self [9]. Centered on Damon et al. definition of purpose, Sharma et al. developed the Sense of Purpose (SOP) Scale, consisting of three subscales: awareness of purpose, awakening to purpose, and altruistic purpose [10], which were

respectively defined as the extent to which people are clear and conscious about their purpose in life, the extent to which people are actively engaging in the process of gaining clarity and exploring their purpose in life, and the altruistic purpose as people's resolve to make a positive difference in society. Purposeful feeling is a complex issue because it is part of everyday life and is usually taken for granted. Selye et al. observed that purposeful use of time is a biological necessity and maintained that "our brain slips into chaos and confusion unless we constantly use it for work that seems worthwhile to us". It is through working with SOP that people are able to realize their hopes and aspirations, satisfy their needs, and cope with the environment, thereby directly influencing the state of their health [11].

Students' mental health can be highly predicted by their sense of purpose in life. People who have a defined purpose in life are more likely to develop positive psychology, have pleasant emotional experiences, and garner social support. According to research, pupils who have a clear sense of their mission in life are more likely to anticipate favorable outcomes and feel a wide range of pleasant feelings [12]. Additionally, teenagers' life goals have a beneficial impact on how they connect with their peers and how they perceive social support.

2.1.2. Achievement Motivation

Motivation is generally regarded as the drive to achieve targets and the process to maintain the drive. Motivation provides an important foundation for complete cognitive behavior, such as planning, organization, decision-making, learning, and assessments [13]. Bornholt & Goodnow defined *achievement motivation* as the drive to work with diligence and vitality, to constantly steer toward targets, to obtain dominance in challenging and difficult tasks, and to create a sense of achievement as a result [14]. This definition consists of three elements: the stimulation of personal capabilities, constant efforts with drive, and obtaining a sense of satisfaction. In the words of Trusty, "Achievement Motivation is a desire to do well relative to some standard of excellence [15]." It is a social form of motivation involving a competitive desire to meet standards of excellence. In the field of education in particular, achievement motivation can be understood as the expectancy of finding satisfaction in mastery of complex and challenging performances and has been found to correlate significantly with mental health ($p < .001$) [16].

2.2. Peer Counselling

2.2.1. Overview of Story-focused Peer Counselling

Peer counselors use tales to answer psychological questions put forth by students. In return, the counselors share how they handled similar issues in the past. The first clinicians to use therapist self-disclosure techniques were Rogerians in the late 1950s [17]. Self-disclosure facilitates sharing experiences and life stories, making it a crucial component of peer support. Peers are defined as individuals who have had similar experiences and who can offer "empathy and validation" to those who are struggling with mental illness. They are distinguished from professional counselors who use traditional counseling methods by their non-hierarchical nature, reciprocity, and empowerment [18]. The story helps normalize unfamiliar and sometimes alarming emotional experiences, as the characters in the story are often relatable to ordinary people. Counselors' sharing of personal experiences has also been found to have positive effects on clients, such as providing new insights and perspectives for change, improving therapeutic relationships, and encouraging self-disclosure by clients [19]. Peers can also use self-disclosure to model emotionally healthy behaviors, such as seeking social support and positive communication patterns. Peers who have overcome difficult life pressures and successfully managed academic stress or negative emotions can be role models for those struggling with similar issues. This is in line with theories of how peer support works through role modeling and social learning [20].

2.2.2. Role Model Effect

Existing research revealed that individuals with lower levels of performance demonstrated increased self-efficacy and performance after observing higher-performing coworkers [21]. Social role models are relevant to others with whom an individual can identify and who provide an inspiring example for personal achievement. Role models can be friends, family members, or members of one's social group. Role modeling can be defined as direct or indirect interactions with significant others that potentially influence an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors through the process of modeling [22]. Individuals generally compare themselves with similar others to evaluate their own behavior, in particular to others who are better off, and this process can inspire people to pursue important goals simply by observing a role model [23]. Negative role models may inspire individuals not to do the same as they did, while positive role models can stimulate them to perform a similar behavior.

2.2.3. Self-Projection

Counseling clients can see their own concerns and anxieties and see themselves reflected in the story when they relate to the problems experienced by the characters in the stories that counselors tell [24]. Given that others have encountered comparable circumstances, this gives clients confidence that they are not incompetent. Clients may benefit from this type of story-sharing by overcoming a fixation on their individuality and self-imposed seclusion. In recent years, scientists have shown that the capacity to envision experiences unrelated to one's current perceptual environment is supported by a network of brain regions. This set of regions—known collectively as the default network—comprises the medial prefrontal cortex, precuneus, posterior cingulate, and lateral parietal cortex and has been linked repeatedly to tasks in which people consider their own mental states and traits, imagine themselves experiencing fictitious events, consider experiencing possible events in the future, or recall their experiences from the past [25]. Interestingly, the involvement of these same regions has consistently been reported in studies in which participants explicitly consider other people's mental states. That is, the same neural regions that subserve the human capacity to contemplate oneself experiencing events outside of the here-and-now also subserve the capacity to imagine the mental states of other people. This overlap suggests that the cognitive mechanisms underlying people's ability to mentally conjure up fictitious experiences are also those that allow people to mentalize the internal states of others, consistent with the notion that perceivers engage in similar types of self-projection regardless of whether the counterfactual experience they are considering involves thoughts about a hypothetical time and place or the possible goings-on of another mind [26].

3. Methods

To understand how Chinese junior high school students may experience shifts in mindsets after going through peer counseling, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine both quantitative and qualitative data, which allowed the researcher to develop lines of inquiry as they emerged in the data. The goal of this study is to better understand the mechanisms by which peer counseling influences high school students' sense of purpose and achievement motivation.

3.1. Participants

A total of 176 students aged between 13 and 18 years old were recruited through convenience sampling to participate in this study. These participants included 46 males, 122 females, and 8 nonbinary students primarily from middle-class families. They were enrolled in either traditional public schools, home schools, or international schools in China. 30% of these students have experienced professional counseling and 33% have experienced peer counseling.

3.2. Data Sources

3.2.1. Questionnaire

This study collected questionnaires from 176 participants using Qualtrics about their demographics, peer or counseling experiences, Sense of Purpose (SOP)—scale adopted from SOPS-2 [27], Achievement Motivation (AM) [28], Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) [29], stress level—a seven-item measure from Liu and Lu [30], and self-rated academic score (e.g., top 10%). The questionnaire was designed to be completed in 15 minutes. Participants were allowed to fill out the questionnaire anonymously, with the option to provide contact information upon completion.

3.2.2. Interview

This study interviewed 10 participants (6 males and 4 females, aged 12-16, middle-class, who have experienced 5 months to 3 years of counseling) who were randomly selected from the students who have experienced peer counseling. These 10 students participated in a story-focused-based counseling project called "Teen Growth" to be interviewed about their experience of stories in tutoring and their changes about their feelings before and after tutoring. A semi-structured interview protocol was designed by the author to understand their peer tutoring experiences and how those experiences influenced their mindsets. In order to create pertinent interview questions regarding these ten participants' SOP and AM, the author carefully examined their questionnaire responses prior to the interview. Online, one-on-one interviews took place using the Tencent Meeting platform, lasting roughly twenty minutes for each participant. In the role of interviewer, the author delved into the participants' experiences with peer counseling, paying particular attention to how such encounters affected their drive for achievement and sense of purpose. Tencent Meeting was used to record and transcribe every interview.

3.3. Data Analysis

3.3.1. Questionnaire

The statistics analysis of the questionnaire was conducted after importing Qualtrics data to the SPSS software. In this paper, we include the preliminary analysis of the between-sample t-test results to show the differences in Academic Score, Stress Level, SOP, AM, and PANAS between high school students who have or have not experienced peer counseling. The analysis of other questions asked in the questionnaire and the correlations between scales used in the questionnaire will be carried out in future studies.

3.3.2. Interview

The analysis of transcribed interview data occurred in four stages:

3.3.2.1. Phase One: Memoing

This stage of the analysis focused on understanding how high school students memorize stories in peer counseling and their recorded changes before and after the counseling process. The author drew primarily on the personal background of the students, students' narration of their previous challenges, and students' narrative memos about their counseling experiences. The author studied these data to understand the contrasting results and students' memories and feelings of being counseled through stories.

3.3.2.2.Phase Two: Code Development and Coding

The coding process began with open coding to highlight emerging patterns in the data, resulting in a list of initial codes. The author then consulted the conceptual frameworks from the Sense of Purpose survey from Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma [27] and Achievement Motivation from Hermans [28] and developed the final codes through an iterative process of reading through the data and considering the conceptual frameworks in light of participants' interview data. The coding yielded two cognitive effect codes regarding the process and two positive emotion codes regarding the outcome.

Table 1: Codes on students' demonstration of sense of purpose, achievement motivation, role model effect, and self-projection

Code	Code definition	Styles
PROCESS: Cognitive Effect Codes		
Role Model Effect	After perceiving counselors' positive personal qualities, behaviors, or achievements, students spontaneously felt inspired to improve themselves (without explicit instructions from counselors)	"Since they are at a similar age and now have high academic achievements and rich experience, I am willing to listen to their stories to learn"
Self-Projection	Students subconsciously projecting the counselor's experience to themselves	"I found that they had similar experiences to us in the past, but now they have improved so much that I think I can do what they are doing"
OUTCOME: Positive Factors Codes		
Sense of Purpose	Students recognizing order, coherence, and/or purpose in their life or discussing how they were able to remain hopeful in the face of stressors	"I used to get discouraged easily, but now that I have a longer-term vision, I find that I can stay positive and believe in myself."
Achievement Motivation	Students exhibit the internal drive to pursue work that they perceive to be valuable in the achievement of their goals.	"After I started setting goals, I felt like I could hear my actions towards those goals rather than just doing things that I was assigned for no reason."

After reducing the data to only those data extracts encoded in these codes, the analysis was focused on understanding how story-focused peer counseling impacts students' challenge-solving and students' memory of processing these stories. Through the final step of coding the simplified data set, the author identified different results for students depending on whether or not they self-project.

3.3.2.3.Phase Three: Co-occurrence analysis

Once all data was coded, coded data was analyzed to determine which codes co-occurred more or less frequently. The author also selected the 10 interviewees' questionnaire results for their present sense of purpose and achievement motivation scales in statistics. Findings, as presented in the next section, describe these trends.

3.3.2.4. Translation

Since the research questionnaire and interview protocol were in English, the author used machine translation to transform these materials into Chinese and edited the language used for coherence, ensuring they were understandable for the students. After collecting Chinese interview recordings for coding, the author translated the sample answers and contents into English for the Findings section.

4. Findings

4.1. Overview

4.1.1. The Overview of Questionnaire Findings

A between-sample t-test was performed to compare Academic Score, PANAS, Academic Stress, AM, and SOP in participants who experienced and did not experience story-focused peer counseling. There was a significant difference in the Sense of Purpose between peer-counseling customers (Group 1) ($M = 48.61$, $SD = 15.81$) and students with no peer counseling experiences (Group 2) ($M = 42.12$, $SD = 15.30$), $t(174) = .031$, $p = 0.045$. Although with no significant difference, Group 1 attained higher Achievement Motivation ($M = 44.59$, $SD = 11.13$) compared to Group 2 ($M = 40.79$, $SD = 12.79$), $t(174) = 1.570$, $p = .120$. In addition, there was a significant difference in PANAS - positive of Group 1 ($M = 26.63$, $SD = 4.12$) and Group 2 ($M = 24.20$, $SD = 4.45$), $t(174) = 2.376$, $p = .007$, and also a significant difference in PANAS - negative of Group 1 ($M = 25.57$, $SD = 4.26$) and Group 2 ($M = 23.63$, $SD = 4.72$), $t(174) = 2.094$, $p = .039$, which indicated the dissimilar emotional status between students who have or not encountered story-focused peer counseling.

Table 2: Between-sample t-test results

	t-test			
	Whether participants experienced story-focused peer counseling		t	p
	Yes (Group 1)	No (Group 2)		
Academic Score	68.42 ± 25.50	60.58 ± 20.84	1.679	0.096
PANAS - positive	26.63 ± 4.12	24.20 ± 4.45	2.736	0.007**
PANAS - negative	25.57 ± 4.26	23.63 ± 4.72	2.094	0.039*
Academic Stress	17.13 ± 5.27	15.76 ± 5.38	1.246	0.216
Achievement Motivation	44.59 ± 11.13	40.79 ± 12.79	1.570	0.120
Sense of Purpose	48.61 ± 15.81	42.14 ± 15.30	2.031	0.045*

$* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01$

Since these questionnaires with students' self-reported data were collected only after counseling, the author carried out one-on-one interviews with students who have experienced story-focused peer counseling to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their counseling experience. Specifically, this study aims to unpack how these students cognize and get inspired by the stories shared by their counselors, and ultimately leverage what they learned from the counselor to tackle challenges they faced at school.

4.1.2. The Overview of Interview Findings

This paper is interested in exploring how teenage participants process the stories presented by their peer counselors on establishing their purposes and overcoming challenges to achieve goals. In response to the first research question, all of the participants reported their experience of some type of mindset growth during peer counseling, but the trajectories of this growth varied among individuals. This implies that while everyone experienced some amount of mindset growth, not all of them were able to relate their personal experiences with the counselors' stories. As a result, whether these students decided to work on their original goals or were inspired to follow the counselors' trajectory varied from person to person. Details on shifts in mindset will be discussed in the following section.

In response to the second research question, the role model effect appeared to be a common factor among all participants in their mindset growth during peer counseling. The presence of role models in the counseling session may have influenced participants to adopt positive attitudes and behaviors toward personal development. This suggests that exposure to peers who demonstrate a growth mindset can inspire individuals to develop similar patterns of thinking and behavior.

4.2. Factors that shift in mindset occurred during peer counseling

4.2.1. Deepening Sense of Purpose

Through coding, we identified two types of shifting in mindset, including sense of purpose shifts and achievement motivation. The analysis of interview transcripts revealed that some participants experienced a deepening of their sense of purpose following their engagement in peer counseling. This deepening of SOP was often illustrated in moments when participants discussed how they resolved internal struggles between possible life paths and were able to stay positive and clear about their goals with personal agency. For example, Participant A (High SOP, High AM, average score, average academic stress), discussed his internal struggle with the fact that the pursuit of his hobbies was incompatible with traditional schooling, but his long-term goals required him to follow a traditional schooling path. This struggle left him with a weak sense of purpose, but after hearing about how his peer counselor managed two seemingly incompatible life paths, he felt inspired to push forward.

Extract 1:

> *I was confused about my inadaptability to the exam-oriented education, but my consultant told me that he prepared for the international application and the domestic college entrance examination at the same time. If I prepare for the two schools at the same time, I will inevitably be too busy. I have struggled with it, but after learning about the experiences of my seniors, I strengthened my yearning and chose to walk in the two directions together. Found that everyone in the process of growing up will face more or less different difficulties. Success is piled up by setbacks and I think these setbacks are for me again and again to hone, can make me better to achieve success. I think if someone can do it, then I can do it, maybe. — Participant A*

When Participant A heard his counselor's story of being able to manage a complicated internal dilemma, he found that he could follow the exact solution of studying to manage a similar internal dilemma. Once he was able to see the future outcome, his sense of purpose became more stable and secure. Prior to hearing his counselor's story, his mind was fixated on the challenge, but after hearing the story, he could see a possible future for himself. This type of clarifying process was evidenced in all of the interviews. While participants described varying levels of their sense of purpose deepening, all evidenced some level of such deepening.

Similarly, Participant B (High SOP, High AM, low score, average stress) experienced a long period of stagnation in her piano skills practice, while her matched counselor was also a professional percussion player previously. The counselor's story of his future planning and undergraduate life after suspending his musical learning provided the participant with the reference to various musician pathways and enhanced her desire to follow certain solutions about the continuity of her music career.

4.2.2. Deepening of Achievement Motivation

An analysis of interview transcripts revealed that all participants experienced an improvement in their achievement motivation after their engagement in peer counseling. This improvement was often illustrated in moments when they perceived their counselors as role models and admired their personal and academic achievements, consequently feeling inspired and driven to pursue their goals. For example, Participant F (High SOP, Average AM, low score, high academic stress), different from Participant A, her motivation for higher achievement stemmed from what she perceived as a high level of achievement attained by her counselor. Instead of dealing with targeted problems (such as difficulties in learning pressure) by learning from others' experiences and making herself feel in control of the goal through successful cases, she developed a stronger desire for her future goals in general under the influence of the role model.

> **Extract 2:**
> Before, I focused more on getting good grades as the primary purpose, and I didn't have much idea about the school I wanted to take the exam in the future. However, after I got to know my counselors because they came from a very good learning environment, I wanted to be that excellent student, and this desire came from my own admiration for their high GPA and ranking. At this time, when I set a goal, I will feel more fresh and want to do it. I am more willing to pay and plan for my future accomplishments, so I am trying to learn how those peers and seniors achieve high academic scores and balance their time by different methods.
> —Participant F

When this participant heard his peers describing learning achievements and excellent environments in key schools, he felt admiration for such academic achievements and platforms. After setting the peer as a role model, Participant F compared himself to him and drew achievement motivation from the desire to achieve the corresponding accomplishments. After listening to the story, he noted that his original desire for success became more vivid and that he felt inspired to apply the mentor's method to his efforts.

Also, Participant D mentioned his counselor's sharing of attending Art training camps for college application and outstanding state ranking, and the description of the counselor's excitement encouraged the participant to use her training methods to get a better art profile. Compared to Participants A and B's SOP excerpts focusing on following similar future pathways and purposes, the accomplishments of counselors inspired participants F and D's pursuit of excellence by applying similar methods to overcome academic challenges. As stated above, AM refers to obtaining dominance in challenging tasks and creating a sense of achievement as a result.

4.3. The Role that Self-projection and Role Model Effects Play in Participants' Mindset Shifts

4.3.1. The Role of Role Model Effect in Participants' SOP and AM

The similarity between role models and role aspirants, levels of role model success, and role aspirants' beliefs about whether abilities are fixed or malleable influences the perception of role model qualities, namely goal embodiment, attainability, and desirability [31]. High school students who experienced story-focused peer counseling reflected that their admiration for the counselor's high performance or problem-solving skills in the stories inspired them to pursue purposes and increase efforts. Students

were asked to rethink the factors that make them engage in personal experiences. Their replies suggest that the interactions with high-performing peers and the awareness of their similar situations help them evaluate their behaviors through compare and contrast. Participant J (High SOP, High AM, moderately high score, low stress) stated her expectation to follow the counselor as her role model to increase her self-efficacy and academic score.

Extract 3:

> I didn't have much idea about how to ask for help from my family and the kind of school I wanted to enter in the future…I know that I can set some famous scientists as my role models, but they are too far away from reality, so my counselor told me how she failed her physics, found help using communication strategies, and got a maximum. This made me reflect on my life and how I can use the resources around me, cause I'm bad at Maths.—Participant J

As is evident in this quote, the connection between participants' current challenges and counselors' reflections before reaching excellence made her concentrate on the realistic implementation of solutions to find assistance and properly communicate with her accompanies. In addition, the narrations from the above-mentioned participants have all indicated that their motivation to follow the steps of their peer counselors to achieve certain academic goals resulted from the positive role model effects.

4.3.2. The role of self-projection in participants' SOP and AM

As discussed above, the sharing of challenges may help students come out of self-imposed isolation by realizing and projecting themselves to the solutions to academic or mental problems. The high accomplishments are attributed to their desire to follow counselors' pathways. In the analysis of how participants reflected on themselves by listening to the peer counselors' experiences and mimicking the strategies used by the peer counselors to improve their personal performance, the author noted two different types of ways that students processed and benefited from the stories: (1) students identifying with their peer counselors as role models, and (2) students observing their peer counselors as role models.

From their narrations, both types of students found that peer counseling supported them in deepening their sense of purpose and achievement motivation. Those students who observed and admired their peer counselors' experiences without projecting themselves onto the role models described how they learned methods for pursuing goals and addressing problems from their peer counselors. On the other hand, those students who identified with their role models and imagined themselves in their counselors' positions described their goals and orientations towards achievement as being transformed by their peer counselors, demonstrating stronger motivation for academic achievement and increased awareness of their sense of purpose.

Table 3: Two types of self-projection observed from students

How students process and benefit from peer counselor's stories	Definition	Example
Identifying	Students project themselves onto the counselors as role models and imagine themselves in	Participant G (High SOP, Average AM, low score, average stress): "There was a boy who shared his experience of being isolated in school, but he didn't seem to have made any mistakes but just expressed it in a different way from others,

Table 3: (continued).

	counselors' experiences	which impressed me deeply. His perspective as a victim describes how he's been treated by other people, and then I think, maybe I'm doing these things to other people unintentionally and without realizing it. However, he was able to enter Cornell University and overcome the social difficulties, and I felt that his method of listening to others and reflecting on himself could be applied to me"
Observing	Students do not project themselves onto the counselors and focus mainly on using the methods and strategies for improving personal achievement shared by counselors	Participant E (Average SOP, Average AM, low score, average stress): "I don't have much memory of the story, but the one I do remember is the tomato clock, which is 25 minutes to study and 5 minutes to rest because it sounds like a good method for someone like me who is easily distracted, and now I will use it to prepare for the high school entrance exam." Participant H (Average SOP, Average AM, average score, low stress): "They mentioned ways to change roles, such as writing their homework as if they were a princess correcting notes, trying to take care of their children. Role-playing allows me to focus more on the fun side of completing a task."

5. Discussion

5.1. Sense of purpose and achievement motivation in story-focused peer counseling

From the preliminary analysis, there is evidence within this sample to suggest that high school students who received story-focused peer tutoring scored higher on the SOP, AM, and PANAS scales. However, these scores were only assessed at a single time point, and such assessments are susceptible to the influence of many confounding variables. Additional research is needed before a conclusion can be drawn on whether story-centered peer tutoring enhances the sense of purpose and positive affect among high school students. It is also important to note that participants in this study were recruited from convenience sampling. Consequently, caution is needed before generalizing our findings to other samples of students from different demographic backgrounds.

In order to offer a more thorough understanding of the effects of story-centered peer counseling on students, interviews were done. In response to peer counseling, students in this study showed varying degrees of depth in their sense of purpose and accomplishment motivation, which helps to address RQ1. When students talked about how they overcame internal conflicts between potential life routes and were able to remain upbeat and clear about their goals with personal agency, it was frequently evident that their sense of purpose had deepened. When students saw their counselors as role models and felt inspired and encouraged to pursue their own goals as a result, their accomplishment motivation was frequently enhanced.

5.2. Role model effect and self-projection in story-focused peer counseling

To answer RQ2, the qualitative analysis of the interview data revealed that the role model effect and self-projection mechanism play important roles in the relationship between purposeful story peer counseling and achievement motivation among high school students. Students who visualized themselves in the experiences of the counselors and projected themselves onto them, in particular, showed greater academic accomplishment motivation and a heightened feeling of purpose awareness. We can hypothesize that if participants are able to self-project and relate their own experiences to those of the storyteller, the effectiveness of story-focused peer therapy may be increased. This study did, however, also show that some participants did not project their future selves onto the counselor during peer counseling. Enhanced emotional awareness and self-awareness have been associated with this phenomenon [32]. This implies that human characteristics like emotional transparency or the similarity of two people's experiences of personal development may influence how successful peer counseling is.

One of the main findings from this study is that the effectiveness of story-focused peer counseling may be improved if students can identify with their peer counselors and use the insights gained from counselors' disclosure to address the academic challenges they face. If this is the case, facilitators of such story-focused peer counseling could develop strategies that support participants in engaging in constructive ways of self-projection. In addition, our findings from the interview data seem to be in line with previous research, which indicated that participants could perceive their counselors as congruent and willing to be "known as persons" when counselors disclose personal stories especially when there are similarities shared. This perception can increase participants' feelings of warmth, friendliness, and understanding. On the other hand, counselors' non-disclosures were highly likely to be unhelpful for participants [33].

6. Conclusion

The current findings of this paper imply that story-focused peer counseling potentially has a range of positive influences on high school students, especially on the development of their Sense of Purpose and Achievement Motivation. The role model effect positively influenced students' shifts in mindset after peer counseling, as observing and engaging with peers exhibiting high levels of sense of purpose and achievement motivation can inspire students to develop similar patterns of thinking and behavior. The level of self-projection can impact how students benefit from counselors' sharing of personal experiences. This involves students identifying with the problems of their role models and taking inspiration from the methods their counselors used to overcome obstacles in their day-to-day lives and achieve remarkable success in networking or academics. Students were more likely to describe their goals and orientations toward achievement, showing stronger motivation for academic achievement and increased awareness of their sense of purpose, when they specifically identified with their role models and saw themselves in their counselors' positions. The part that follows will provide recommendations for further study as well as implications for peer counseling practitioners.

Based on the findings from the interviews, this paper would like to make a few suggestions for peer-counseling practitioners and facilitators. Firstly, practitioners may try to begin the peer counseling sessions with questions about what kinds of solutions participants want to obtain from counselors' stories of overcoming challenges. Secondly, having participants elaborate on their questions first and then having counselors share their own stories in response to the questions brought by the participants may be a potentially beneficial format of peer counseling.

Previous studies suggest that mental self-projection— "the ability to shift perspective from the immediate present to alternative perspectives" [25]—may play a key role in supporting participants to use story-focused peer counseling to enhance their achievement motivation. However, the findings

from this study are limited. More research is needed to investigate desirable and practical approaches to facilitate participants' engagement in self-projection. Future research might also investigate (1) the elements in story-focused peer counseling and counselor's disclosure that improve participants' ability to address challenges, (2) approaches to help participants identify with the purpose/motivation shared by the role models, (3) whether the peer role models' stories can be broadly applied to counselor training, and (4) strategies to help participants make the most use out of the stories and methods shared by the counselors.

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