The tendency for interpersonal victimhood: The personality construct and its consequences

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ABSTRACT

In the present research, we introduce a conceptualization of the Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV), which we define as an enduring feeling that the self is a victim across different kinds of interpersonal relationships. Then, in a comprehensive set of eight studies, we develop a measure for this novel personality trait, TIV, and examine its correlates, as well as its affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences. In Part 1 (Studies 1A-1C) we establish the construct of TIV, with its four dimensions; i.e., need for recognition, moral elitism, lack of empathy, and rumination, and then assess TIV's internal consistency, stability over time, and its effect on the interpretation of ambiguous situations. In Part 2 (Studies 2A-2C) we examine TIV's convergent and discriminant validities, using several personality dimensions, and the role of attachment styles as conceptual antecedents. In Part 3 (Studies 3–4) we explore the cognitive and behavioral consequences of TIV. Specifically, we examine the relationships between TIV, negative attribution and recall biases, and the desire for revenge (Study 3), and the effects of TIV on behavioral revenge (Study 4). The findings highlight the importance of understanding, conceptualizing, and empirically testing TIV, and suggest that victimhood is a stable and meaningful personality tendency.

Social life is replete with situations that are open to interpretation. We wait for people who are late for meetings, are surprised by people who interrupt us when we speak, and are annoyed when co-workers tackle our initiatives. While some people overcome such incidents with relative ease, and view them as an unpleasant but an unavoidable part of social life, others tend to be preoccupied with having been hurt long after the event had ended; they consider themselves to have been victims of others' malevolent actions. The present research investigates this Tendency for Interpersonal Victimhood (TIV), which we define as an ongoing feeling that the self is a victim, which is generalized across many kinds of relationships. People who have a higher tendency for interpersonal victimhood feel victimized *more often, more intensely*, and for *longer durations* in interpersonal relations than do those who have a lower such tendency. Based on research on victimhood in interpersonal and intergroup relations, we present a conceptualization of TIV, introduce a valid and reliable measure, and examine its cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences.

1. The psychological dimensions of TIV: an integrative literature review

The psychological literature has primarily investigated victimhood in the clinical context as a personality disorder, or in the social context of intergroup conflicts. Reviewing and integrating these literatures reveal that both individual-level victimhood and collective victimhood are composed of four related dimensions: need for recognition, moral elitism, lack of empathy, and rumination.

Need for recognition refers to victims' motivation to have their victimhood acknowledged and empathized with (Hameiri & Nadler, 2017; Twali et al., 2020). At one end of the spectrum, experiencing trauma undermines previous perceptions about the world as a just and moral place (Janoff-Bulman, 2010). Recognition of one's victimhood helps reestablish victims' confidence in their perception of reality. However, at the other end, when in pain, almost each and every individual seeks acknowledgment of his or her suffering (Urlic, Berger, & Berman, 2010). This encompasses the victim's need for the perpetrator to take

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responsibility and express feelings of guilt (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994), and to garner compassion and support from others (Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Nadler, 2012; Urlic et al., 2010). Similarly, victims of intergroup conflicts and mass atrocities manifest a need for recognition of their suffering, whether by the actual perpetrators or by the general public (for a review, see Twali et al., 2020).

Moral elitism refers to the perception of immaculate morality of the self and the immorality of the other side. Victimhood has been associated with a sense of differentiation and moral superiority (Leahy, 2012). At the individual level, moral elitism may be used to control others by accusing them of immoral, unfair or selfish behavior, while seeing oneself as highly moral and ethical (Urlic et al., 2010), possibly as a defense mechanism against painful emotions (Berman, 2014a). Similarly, collective victimhood is based on beliefs about the justness of one's group's goals and positive image, while emphasizing the wickedness of the opponent's goals and characteristics (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009).

Lack of empathy refers to an oblivious reaction to others in general and to their suffering in particular. Clinical psychological thinking has argued that victimhood at the individual level is comprised of a pre-occupation with one's own suffering, and decreased attention and concern about others (Urlic et al., 2010). Empirically, victimhood was found to increase the sense of entitlement to behave aggressively and selfishly (Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010). Similarly, groups that engage in competitive victimhood tend to see their victimization as exclusive, thus minimizing or outright denying their adversary's suffering (Noor et al., 2012). Empirically, collective victimhood was found to be associated with entitlement to behave aggressively (Schori-Eyal, Klar, Roccas, & McNeill, 2017), and that priming individuals with their group's suffering resulted in reduced empathy toward those responsible for the state of victimhood (Čehajić, Brown, & Castano, 2008) and toward unrelated adversaries (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008).

Finally, *Rumination* refers to a focus of attention on the symptoms of one's distress, and its possible causes and consequences rather than its possible solutions (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008). Victims tend to ruminate over interpersonal offenses (McCullough et al., 1998), which perpetuates psychological distress long after the experience of interpersonal stressors has ended (Greenberg, 1995) and promotes aggression (Collins & Bell, 1997). Furthermore, the extent to which individuals ruminate has generally been conceptualized as a dispositional trait (Collins & Bell, 1997). Similarly, victimized groups ruminate over their traumatic events. For example, many Jewish-Israelis report that they are preoccupied with the Holocaust and fear that it will happen again, though most of them were not direct victims. However, this was not always the case, since in the early years after the Holocaust, although the survivors were suffering from severe post-trauma, the Holocaust was not prominent in Israeli discourse and was even considered, to some extent, contradictory to the Israeli identity. Israeli society only adopted a victimhood identity in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Holocaust became prominent in the Israeli narrative (Klar, Schori-Eyal, & Klar, 2013; Urlic et al., 2010) partially as a result of the Eichmann trial, where victims spoke out during the televised proceedings.

It should be noted that both on the individual and the intergroup levels, victimhood is not necessarily consecutive to a past victimization or trauma (Berman, 2014b; Schori-Eyal et al., 2017). Whereas actual trauma and victimization can have detrimental psychological consequences for individuals and groups, it is argued here that developing a victimhood mindset can also be dependent on other variables such as the context, socialization, and, as elaborated on below, attachment styles. Importantly, we do not equate experiencing trauma and victimization and the psychological state of victimhood. However, we do claim that they have certain psychological processes and consequences in common, and that a victimhood mindset can develop without experiencing severe trauma or victimization (Klar et al., 2013; Urlic et al., 2010).

2. Cognitive, emotional and behavioral consequences of TIV

The tendency to experience victimhood in interpersonal encounters (i.e., high-TIV) is expected to have cognitive, emotional and behavioral consequences. Cognitively, studies suggest that victimhood is associated with an external locus of control (Bar-Tal et al., 2009), and that intentional, harmful behaviors are seen as more hurtful (Vangelisti & Young, 2000). We reason that high-TIV is likely to be associated with individuals' sensitivity to both actual and potential hurtful behaviors, and expectations of hurtful behavior in ambiguous circumstances. When hurtful interactions occur, high-TIV is predicted to be associated with attributions of negative intentions on the part of the offender. Emotionally, high-TIV is expected to be associated with the degree of intensity and the duration of negative emotions following a hurtful event, due to rumination and the perpetuation of negative auto-biographical memory (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). Behaviorally, TIV is likely to be negatively associated with the willingness to forgive as long as the adversary had not taken the 'first step' by apologizing and expressing remorse (Tavuchis, 1991). Here, we hypothesize that this will be mediated by cognitive processes, such as perspective taking (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998), which are also posited to be negatively associated with high-TIV. Moreover, rumination over inter-personal offenses, which is associated with high-TIV, is likely to increase the desire for revenge against the offender (Collins & Bell, 1997).

2.1. Attachment style as a conceptual antecedent of TIV

Attachment style is likely to be a conceptual antecedent of TIV since early relationships with caregivers shape adult working models of interpersonal relations and strongly affect relational attitudes, emotions, and behavioral strategies (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2016), secure attachment is associated with positive representations of the self as worthy, valuable and lovable, and of others as available and trustworthy. Since these core beliefs should not be affected by daily offenses, secure attachment should be associated with low TIV. Avoidant attachment is associated with the experience of others as disappointing and rejecting, and a self-perception of being strong, capable, and independent, as well as behavioral strategies of self-reliance, reluctance to rely on others, and suppression of the need for others' attention and care (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Thus, avoidant attachment should not be associated with TIV. Finally, anxious attachment is associated with a combination of being unable to regulate hurt feelings, and being very sensitive to others' responses, and with an ambivalent perception of others that involves anticipating rejection or abandonment, while depending on others as a source of self-esteem and self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Thus, anxious attachment should be positively associated with TIV.

3. The current research

The current studies were designed to investigate the construct of TIV, its correlates, and its consequences. In part 1, we test the hypothetical four-dimensional construct of TIV through exploratory factor analysis (EFA; Study 1A) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; Study 1B). In Study 1C we examine the stability of the TIV over time (test-retest reliability), and its effect on the anticipation of being hurt by others. In Part 2 (Studies 2A-2C), we assess the construct (convergent and discriminant) validity of the TIV scale, and its nomological network, by examining its relationships with several psychological dimensions. This includes attachment styles as possible conceptual antecedents of TIV. In Part 3 we investigate the consequences of TIV, including negative attribution and memory biases, the willingness to forgive the perpetrator and the desire for revenge (Study 3) and actual behavioral revenge (Study 4).

4. Part 1: scale construction, and internal and test-retest reliabilities

The scale construction process took place in several stages. First, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 individuals, who were asked to describe in detail a hurtful event. Then, they responded to theoretically driven open questions referring to the four dimensions of victimhood. We thematically analyzed the interviews and conceptualized major subthemes reflecting the four dimensions. This yielded 29 items, which constituted the TIV scale. To validate the theoretical four-dimensional construct of TIV, we used EFA (Study 1A) and CFA (Study 1B).

4.1. Study 1A

4.1.1. Method
4.1.1.1. Participants. Participants were 249 Jewish-Israelis (142 women; M_{age} = 33.55, SD_{age} = 16.22). In this and all other studies, participants' age ranged from 18 to 73. Using a snowballing technique, 77 participants completed a hard copy of the scale in small groups. These included students from different academic campuses, and employees in different workplaces in Israel to which we had access. These participants were diverse, and came from various academic programs and workplaces. Their sole common denominator was their willingness to volunteer for this study. The remaining 182 participants completed the questionnaire administered by an online survey company. There were no differences between the two samples in terms of the means of the items, the loadings of the items on the different factors, or their demographics. In this and subsequent studies we recruited participants through the Midgam Project (MP), which is an opt-in panel that includes over 50,000 panelists aged 17 years and older in Israel. Unless indicated otherwise, participants that took part in one study were not allowed to take part in other studies. In exchange for participation, the online participants received 7 Israeli Shekels (ILS; the equivalent of US$2.00).

4.1.1.2. Procedure and measures. Participants were invited to participate in a study on transgressions in interpersonal relations. After completing the consent form, participants were given the questionnaire. Unless indicated otherwise, throughout the paper, all items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). After completing the questionnaire, the participants were thanked and debriefed (see supplementary materials for all study materials).

TIV. Participants were asked to recall and write down three interpersonal situations in three different types of relationships, i.e., hierarchical, communal, and equality-based (Fiske, 1992), in which they felt hurt. Participants were then asked to reflect generally on all of their relationships with others and to rate 29 statements.

4.1.2. Results and discussion
We conducted a first EFA using maximum likelihood and oblimin rotation. Based on this analysis, we eliminated items with cross loadings above 0.40 and weak loadings below 0.30 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Ultimately, 22 items remained (see Table 1 for the final TIV scale). A second EFA was then conducted with the remaining 22 items. The results revealed a four-factor solution with eigenvalues of 8.23, 2.52, 2.15, and 1.59 representing 37.42%, 11.47%, 9.78% and 7.26% of the variance, respectively, explaining 66% of the total variance (no cross-loadings were observed for any of these items). Analyses showed that participants' gender did not play a significant role as a covariate or moderator in the current and subsequent studies. Although the use of snowballing sampling yields an unrepresentative and potentially biased samples (Marcus, Weigelt, Hergert, Gurt, & Gelléri, 2017), it did not meaningfully bias the findings since no differences were observed between the snowball and online samples.

4.2. Study 1B

4.2.1. Method
4.2.1.1. Participants and procedure. Participants were 610 Jewish-Israelis (318 women; M_{age} = 39.96, SD_{age} = 14.14). They completed the study administered by MP and received 6.50ILS (US$1.80) for participation. The procedure was identical to Study 1A.

4.2.2. Results and discussion
To further test the factorial validity of the TIV scale, we used CFA with AMOS. The raw data for the 22 observed variables was used as a database for the measurement model. The specified model was tested with unstandardized coefficients obtained by the maximum-likelihood method of estimation (McDonald & Ho, 2002). It was hypothesized that a hierarchical model with one latent dimension and four method dimensions would yield a meaningful and coherent fit to the data (see Fig. 1). The model yielded a good fit to the data, χ^2 (192, N = 610) = 553.61, p < .001), with a comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.95, an incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.95, and a root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.05. The results indicated high levels of reliability for the TIV scale (α = 0.90) and for each of the dimensions (see Table 2 for reliabilities, means, SDs and correlations).

To ensure that the proposed hierarchical model was the best fitting model, we compared it to two alternative models: Model 1, a single factor model with no method factors, and Model 2, a four-method factor model (see Table S1 for a summary of the model indices). Chi-square tests between the hypothesized model and Models 1 and 2 were both significant, $\Delta\chi^2$ = 2207.85, Δdf = 6, p < .001, and $\Delta\chi^2$ = 8.34, Δdf = 2, p = .015, respectively, suggesting that the hypothesized model best fit the data.

The results of Studies 1A and 1B provided support for a theoretically driven scale measuring individuals' TIV. Specifically, Study 1A demonstrated that there are four distinct dimensions which describe different aspects of TIV. All four dimensions had high inter-reliability and were highly correlated with each other. Study 1B demonstrated that the TIV scale indeed consisted of four dimensions, and that TIV is best conceptualized as a hierarchical model with a one-factor solution that includes four method factors (i.e., need for recognition, moral elitism, lack of empathy, and rumination) and one latent factor.

4.3. Study 1C

The main purpose of Study 1C was to examine the test-retest reliability of the TIV scale. We hypothesized that a significant correlation between people's TIV scores administered three weeks apart would emerge. Study 1C also aimed to examine the scale's validity by finding a significant correlation between individuals' score on TIV and their expectations that in ambiguous situations others would treat them in a negative and hurtful manner.

4.3.1. Method
4.3.1.1. Participants. Three weeks after the completion of Study 1B, we re-contacted the participants from Study 1B. Eventually, 202 Jewish-Israelis (102 women; M_{age} = 39.77, SD_{age} = 13.69) out of the original 610 participants (re-response rate of 33.1%) were recruited by MP and received 8ILS ($2.20). There were no differences between the two samples in terms of participants' TIV score, age, years of education, or gender.

4.3.1.2. Procedure and measures. The instructions for the TIV scale (α = 0.93) were identical to those in Studies 1A-1B. Then, participants were given 11 short vignettes describing ambiguous interpersonal situations. Participants were asked to imagine themselves in these situations (e.g., *"Imagine that you are trying to plan a family vacation and you divide up the tasks between your family members"*), and were asked to rate on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*very much likely*), in

Table 1
TIV Scale final item selection (Study 1A) and descriptive statistics (Study 1B).

Dimension	Item	M (SD)	Skewness	Corrected item–total correlation
Need for recognition 1	It is important to me that people who hurt me acknowledge that an injustice has been done to me	5.45 (1.68)	−1.05	0.85
Need for recognition 2	It is important to me that the person who offended me admits that his or her behavior was wrong	5.41 (1.64)	−1.00	0.84
Need for recognition 3	It makes me angry when people don't believe that I was hurt	4.57 (1.91)	−0.32	0.87
Need for recognition 4	It is important to me to receive an apology from people who offended me	4.85 (1.77)	−0.52	0.83
Need for recognition 5	It is important to me that the person who offended me feels guilty for what he or she did	4.62 (1.86)	−0.36	0.85
Need for recognition 6	I feel angry when people ignore my feeling of being hurt	4.59 (1.78)	−0.40	0.85
Moral elitism 1	I remain considerate of other people even when they don't deserve it	5.16 (1.55)	−0.83	0.87
Moral elitism 2	I think I am much more conscientious and moral in my relations with other people compared to their treatment of me	5.38 (1.47)	−0.74	0.83
Moral elitism 3	People often take advantage of my kindness	4.94 (1.71)	−0.46	0.81
Moral elitism 4	I give others much more than I receive from them	5.00 (1.53)	−0.44	0.81
Moral elitism 5	I feel that other people don't hesitate to take advantage of my weaknesses.	4.13 (1.86)	−0.03	0.80
Moral elitism 6	People demand a lot of me without expressing gratitude	4.08 (1.74)	0.01	0.82
Lack of empathy 1	When people who are close to me feel hurt by my actions, it is very important for me to clarify that justice is on my side	4.28 (1.70)	−0.22	0.85
Lack of empathy 2	People who are offended by me are only thinking of themselves	3.18 (1.69)	0.39	0.82
Lack of empathy 3	People who claim that I behaved wrongly want me to admit it so they can take advantage of the situation	3.28 (1.73)	0.42	0.82
Lack of empathy 4	People claim that I have hurt them because they cannot see that they are the ones hurting me	3.52 (1.71)	0.28	0.81
Lack of empathy 5	The main reason that people are offended by me is that they cannot see things from my perspective	4.13 (1.71)	−0.07	0.83
Lack of empathy 6	It is very important to me that people who were offended by me realize that they are also in the wrong	4.23 (1.76)	−0.09	0.83
Rumination 1	It is very hard for me to stop thinking about the injustice others have done to me	4.44 (1.83)	−0.30	0.91
Rumination 2	Days after the offense I am very preoccupied by the injustice done to me	4.07 (1.88)	−0.09	0.86
Rumination 3	I am flooded by more anger than I would like every time I remember people who hurt me	4.14 (1.88)	−0.12	0.86
Rumination 4	I am flooded by negative feelings every time I remember people who hurt me	3.97 (1.85)	0.02	0.85
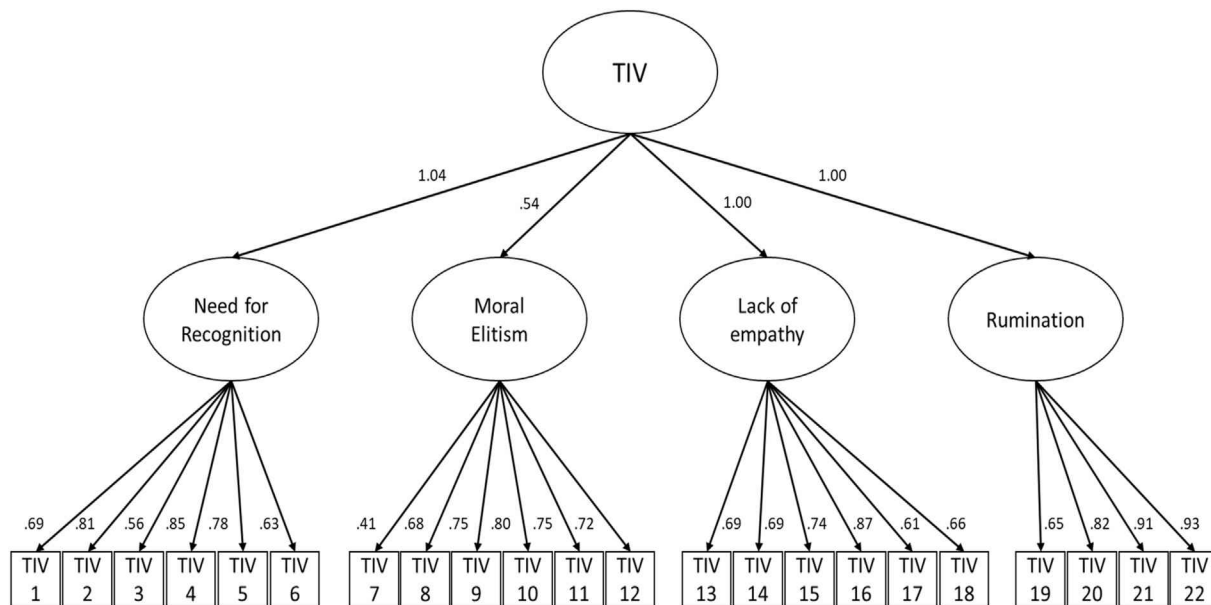
Fig. 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of the TIV Scale: A one-factor solution with four method factors (Study 1B). Unstandardized coefficients are shown. All beta coefficients were statistically significant (all *ps* < .05).

Table 2
Cronbach's alphas, means, SDs, and correlations between the four dimensions of TIV (Study 1B).

Dimensions	N	Cronbach's Alpha	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Need for recognition	6	0.87	4.91	1.38	–			
2. Moral elitism	6	0.85	4.78	1.25	0.42**	–		
3. Lack of empathy	6	0.85	3.77	1.31	0.38**	0.40**	–	
4. Rumination	4	0.90	4.15	1.64	0.48**	0.36**	0.43**	–

Note: **p < .001.

a counter-balanced order, the probability of occurrence of positive (e.g., *"Most of my family members would do their tasks"*; α = 0.75) and negative (e.g., *"Eventually, I would have to do all the tasks myself"*; α = 0.71) scenarios in these situations.

4.3.2. Results and discussion

TIV scores at t1 and t2 were highly correlated ($r = 0.77, p < .001$), which establishes the scale's test-retest reliability. We also found that expectations of negative behaviors were correlated with TIV, both at t1 and at t2 ($r = 0.31, p < .001$, and $r = 0.32, p < .001$, respectively), such that the higher the TIV score, the more the person expected to get hurt in an ambiguous situation. Finally, TIV, both at t1 and t2, was not correlated with expectations of positive behaviors ($r = 0.09, p = .191$, and $r = 0.07, p = .272$, respectively). Table S2 summarizes the means, SDs and correlations between the variables in Study 1C.

The results of Study 1C support the scale's reliability across time. The finding that TIV scores predicted expectations of hurtful behavior toward oneself in ambiguous situations is one indication for the scale's validity. TIV was not associated with the expectation of positive behavior, which suggests that only negative stimuli trigger the victimhood schema. We address this issue in the general discussion. In Part 2, we provide further evidence for the scale's construct validity and its convergent and discriminant validities, and examine the role of attachment as one possible conceptual antecedent.

5. Part 2: assessment of construct, convergent and discriminant validities

5.1. Study 2A

Study 2A was designed to examine the convergent validity of the TIV scale. We hypothesized that higher TIV scores would predict greater (a) negative emotional intensity, (b) perceived duration of hurt feelings regarding offenses, and relatedly, (c) increased perceived severity of these offenses. We also hypothesized that while these emotional and interpretational consequences would be predicted by both TIV and the objective severity of the offense, TIV would predict these measures above and beyond the severity of the offenses, as well as participants' age and gender.

5.1.1. Method
5.1.1.1. Participants.
Participants were 161 Jewish-Israelis (82 men; $M_{age} = 42.23$, $SD_{age} = 15.11$). They were recruited for this study by MP and received 7ILS (US$2.00) for participating.

5.1.1.2. Procedure and measures.
One week after completing the TIV scale (α = 0.92), participants completed the second phase of the study, in which they were asked to imagine that they were the offended figure in four vignettes describing different offenses. Participants were randomly assigned to either the mild or severe offenses condition. To increase the external validity and generalizability of the study, we created four mild and four severe offense scenarios in four different types of interpersonal relationships involving a sibling, a close friend, a colleague and a manager at work. The vignettes were presented in randomized order.

After reading each vignette, participants rated eight items. The first item assessed the perceived severity of the offense on a 1 (*not severe at all*) to 7 (*very severe*) scale. The next three items assessed the intensity of hurt feelings (e.g., *"when I heard what my [sibling / friend / colleague / manager] had said I was flooded with negative emotions"*; α = 0.86). The last four items assessed the predicted duration of hurt feelings (e.g., *"I will carry my bad feelings about this conversation with me for a long time"*; α = 0.91).

5.1.2. Results and discussion
First, independent samples *t*-test showed that severe offenses

($M = 5.35$, $SD = 0.96$) were indeed perceived as more severe than the mild offenses ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.73$; $t(160) = 6.60$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.18$). Then, using Hayes' (2018) PROCESS (Model 1), we found that the manipulation did not moderate the effect of TIV on any of our DVs (all $ps > .160$). Thus, we ran three hierarchical linear regressions to assess the distinctive contribution of TIV in predicting our outcome measures. The results showed that above and beyond the severity manipulation, age, and gender, one week after it was measured, TIV significantly predicted the intensity ($β = 0.31$, $p < .001$), perceived duration ($β = 0.36$, $p < .001$), and the perceived severity ($β = 0.23$, $p < .001$) of the offenses (see Tables S3-S5 for complete information). Thus, Study 2A provided evidence for the convergent validity of the TIV, and also confirmed our hypothesis that feelings of hurt and victimhood are a result of both situational and personality (i.e., TIV) factors. Next, in Studies 2B−2C, to better understand the concept of TIV and its measurement, we assessed its links with other conceptually relevant personality dispositions reflecting both general and broad (e.g., the Big Five), and more specific (e.g., rejection sensitivity) personality tendencies using two different samples.

5.2. Study 2B

Based on our hypothesis that attachment styles are potential conceptual antecedents, we hypothesized that (1) because anxious-attached individuals are overly sensitive to others' reactions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016), anxious attachment should be positively related to TIV; and (2) because avoidant-attached individuals suppress their need for others' attention and care (Edelstein & Shaver, 2004) avoidant attachment should not be related to TIV. Furthermore, with regard to other conceptually relevant personality dispositions, we predicted that (3) because TIV and a person's score on the rejection sensitivity scale (Downey & Feldman, 1996) are related to the individual's tendency to overact to interpersonal offenses, scores on these two scales would be positively correlated. (4) Because TIV is said to characterize an intense self-focus, TIV scores were expected to be positively related to scores on the private and public self-consciousness scale (Scheier & Carver, 1985). (5) The willingness to forgive the person who hurt oneself has been found to be negatively related to *empathy* (McCullough et al., 1998), *rumination* over hurt feelings (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001), and *attributing intentionality* to the transgressor (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999), and rumination was found to increase the desire to revenge (Collins & Bell, 1997). Because these are conceptualized as either components of TIV (i.e., lack of empathy and rumination), or associated with it (i.e., attributing negative intentionality to the aggressor), we predicted that TIV would be associated with *lower willingness to forgive and a higher desire for revenge*. Finally, (6) because the perception that the self is treated unfairly so that one is entitled to be compensated is characteristic of high-TIV individuals, we expected a positive relationship between TIV and feelings of entitlement (Zitek et al., 2010).

5.2.1. Method
5.2.1.1. Participants and procedure.
Participants were 249 Jewish-Israelis (127 women; $M_{age} = 42.72$, $SD_{age} = 15.53$). They completed the study administered by MP and received 8ILS ($2.20) for participating. A week after completing the TIV scale (α = 0.92) participants completed the measures described below.

5.2.1.2. Measures.
Attachment styles were measured with the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) on a continuous scale assessing two types of attachment anchors, anxiety (α = 0.91) and avoidance (α = 0.79). People who score low on both anxiety and avoidance are defined as securely attached.

Rejection sensitivity was measured using the Rejection Sensitivity Scale (RSS; Downey & Feldman, 1996). For purposes of the present

study, we included the six items with the highest loading on the scale (e.g., "*You ask a friend to do you a big favor*"; α = 0.65). Answers to the hypothetical situations varied along two dimensions: (a) degree of anxiety and concern, ranging from 1 (*very unconcerned*) to 6 (*very concerned*) about the outcome (α = 0.78); and (b) expectations of acceptance or rejection ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 6 (*very likely*) (α = 0.71).

Victim sensitivity was measured using the Victim Sensitivity subscale of the Justice Sensitivity Scale (JSS; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Maes, & Arbach, 2005), assessing sensitivity to injustice inflicted to the self (e.g., "*It makes me angry when others receive an award which I have earned.*"; α = 0.82).

Self-consciousness was measured using the Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS; Scheier & Carver, 1985). Eight items refer to the tendency to overthink about hidden aspects of the self (e.g., "*I am always trying to figure myself out*"; α = 0.69); and seven items refer to the tendency to overthink about matters of public display (e.g., "*I care a lot about how I present myself to others*"; α = 0.70).

Forgiveness was measured on the Transgression Relation Interpersonal Motivation (TRIM) scale (McCullough et al., 1998), adjusted to refer to the three different types of interpersonal relationships (hierarchical, communal, and equality-based). Participants were asked to think about a person for each of these three types of relations and read: "*when* [the name of the person] *makes me angry or hurt my feelings, I…*" Then, participants were asked to answer three questions indicating agreement with items referring to revenge, avoidance and benevolence. These items were aggregated, such that higher scores meant *less* willingness to forgive (α = 0.62).

Entitlement to immoral behavior was measured using three items we developed for the purposes of the current study that assessed the extent to which participants felt entitled to hurt other people (e.g., "*I am entitled to hurt the people who hurt me*"; α = 0.77).

5.2.2. Results and discussion

To test attachment as a predictor of TIV, the TIV scale was regressed on both the anxious and avoidant attachment sub-scales of the ECR scale (see Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011). As expected, TIV was significantly predicted by anxious attachment ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < .001$), but not by avoidant attachment ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = .160$).

We then found that TIV was positively correlated with participants' rejection sensitivity ($r = 0.23$, $p < .001$), victim-sensitivity ($r = 0.49$, $p < .001$), private consciousness ($r = 0.27$, $p < .001$), public consciousness ($r = 0.42$, $p < .001$), and motivation for revenge ($r = 0.28$, $p < .001$); but not with motivation for avoidance ($r = 0.10$, $p = .104$), and motivation for benevolence ($r = 0.03$, $p = .646$). The correlation between TIV and the forgiveness scale indicated that higher scores on TIV meant a greater lack of motivation to forgive ($r = 0.15$, $p = .015$; see Table S6; for correlations with each of TIV's dimensions, see Table S7).

Finally, using multiple regression analysis (see Table S8), we found, consistent with our expectations, that TIV predicted entitlement ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$) better than all other measures. In fact, other than motivation for revenge ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = .002$) and private consciousness ($\beta = -0.16$, $p = .027$), none of other measures significantly predicted entitlement ($ps > .115$).

Study 2B provided evidence for the construct validity of TIV. Furthermore, TIV was found to be associated more strongly with a desire for revenge than with a desire for avoidance, which is consistent with the notion that rumination and righteous indignation enhance the motivation for revenge (McCullough et al., 1998). TIV was also found to predict entitlement to engage in immoral behavior. That is, although people with TIV see themselves as morally superior to others, they feel they deserve to hurt others when they feel victimized. The fact that TIV predicted entitlement better than other personality tendencies attests to the predictive validity of the scale. We further examined the construct validity of TIV in Study 2C.

5.3. Study 2C

Based on our conceptual framework, we hypothesized that: (1) TIV would be positively related to an exaggerated sense of relational entitlement, because the feeling of victimhood enhances the need for reparation, compensation, and expectations of special treatment (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011). (2) TIV would be positively related to rumination-depression, which is a method of coping with negative mood that involves self-focused attention, and is characterized by self-reflection as well as a repetitive and passive focus on one's negative emotions (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). (3) TIV would be negatively related to trust in other people (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). (4) TIV would be positively related to neuroticism because, like neuroticism (Bolger & Schilling, 1991), TIV exposes people to more stressful relational situations and heightens negative emotional reactions to these situations. Finally, (5) TIV would be unrelated to the other Big Five dimensions; i.e., openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness.

5.3.1. Method

5.3.1.1. Participants and procedure.
Participants were 249 Jewish-Israelis (132 women; $M_{age} = 41.42$, $SD_{age} = 15.29$). They completed the study through MP and received 8ILS ($2.20) for participating. Similar to the previous studies, participants completed the TIV scale (α = 0.92), and then a week later, completed all other measures.

5.3.1.2. Measures.
Sense of Exaggerated Relational Entitlement (SRE) was measured with three subscales (i.e., vigilance with respect to the negative aspects of the partner and the relationship, sensitivity to relational transgressions and frustrations, and expectations of the partner's attention and understanding) from the SRE scale (e.g., "*When I am not getting what I deserve from my partner, I become very tense*"; α = 0.85). The SRE and its subscales are reliable measurement tools (αs > 0.73), and are associated with emotional problems, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, but are only moderately associated with narcissism and a global sense of entitlement (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011).

Rumination was measured on the Ruminative Responses Scale (RRS; Treynor, Gonzalez, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003). Participants were asked to think about how they behave when they feel depressed or sad (e.g., "*Think 'what am I doing to deserve this'?*" α = 0.90).

Trust was measured on the Dyadic Trust Scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980; e.g., "*I feel that I can trust my partner completely*"; α = 0.89).

The Big Five personality dimensions were measured using the Mini-Markers Scale (Saucier, 1994). For purposes of the current study, we used the three to four highest loading items from each subscale, resulting in 19 items overall. These items assessed, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), participants' openness to experience (α = 0.81), conscientiousness (α = 0.73), extraversion (α = 0.65), agreeableness (α = 0.68), and neuroticism (α = 0.76).

5.3.2. Results and discussion

As expected, TIV was positively correlated with participants' exaggerated sense of relational entitlement ($r = 0.32$, $p < .001$) and rumination ($r = 0.39$, $p < .001$), and negatively correlated with trust ($r = -0.18$, $p = .004$). Furthermore, TIV was positively correlated with neuroticism ($r = 0.38$, $p < .001$), but was unrelated to openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, or agreeableness ($rs < |0.05|$, $ps > .536$; see Table S9; for correlations with each of the TIV dimensions, see Table S10). Thus, the results of Study 2C provide further support for our predictions as to the discriminant validity of TIV.
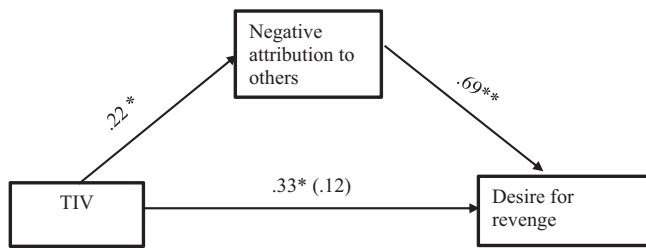
Fig. 2. Study 3 mediation model. Negative attribution of hurtful behavior on the part of others mediates the relationship between TIV and the desire for revenge. Unstandardized coefficients are shown. *p < .05; **p < .001.

6. Part 3: the cognitive and behavioral consequences of TIV

6.1. Study 3

Study 3 was designed to explore processes of attribution and memory related to TIV. We hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between TIV and attributing negative feedback to the negative properties of the offender. This hypothesis draws on the notion that enduring feelings of victimhood are associated with an external locus of control (Bar-Tal et al., 2009). We expected that the negative attributions characterizing TIV would include the stable and unstable characteristics of the offender, such as mood, unrealistic expectations, and malicious intentions.

We hypothesized that high- compared to low-TIV participants would be more preoccupied and emotionally involved with issues of offense and hurt, such that the recall of negative hurt feelings and negative offenses would be more frequent and pronounced among them. In line with the results of Study 1C, in which only negative items were associated with TIV, we also hypothesized that TIV would be unrelated to internal attribution or to words indicating positive emotions. We also posited that negative attribution would mediate the relationship between TIV and the desire to seek revenge. Finally, in order to extend the external and predictive validity of the TIV scale, participants for this study were recruited from those who participated in Study 2C, approximately five weeks after its completion. We used participants' TIV scores from Study 2C for the purposes of the current study.

6.2. Method

6.2.1. Participants

Approximately five weeks after the completion of Study 2C, we re-contacted the participants from Study 2C. They were not aware of the relationship between the two studies. Participants were 113 Jewish-Israelis (58 men; M_{age} = 41.31, SD_{age} = 14.87). They completed the study administered by MP and received 8ILS (US$2.20) for participating.

6.2.2. Procedure and measures

Participants completed the TIV scale (α = 0.91) as part of Study 2C. Then, they were asked to read a vignette and imagine that they were lawyers who had received feedback from their senior partner. The vignettes were written so that it was unclear whether the criticism was justified. This ambiguity, which we pilot tested, enabled us to test for attribution. After reading the vignette, participants responded to 13 items assessing different reasons for the senior partner's feedback. Seven items assessed the attribution of the negative feedback to the offender (negative characteristics, mood, malicious intentions and expectations, e.g., "*I got the feedback because the senior partner's expectations were not realistic*"; α = 0.87). Six items assessed the attribution of negative feedback to the self (abilities, characteristic or performance; e.g., "*The feedback is an indication of my performance*"; α = 0.81). Then, participants were asked to rate three items that assessed their desire to

seek revenge (α = 0.88) and five items derived from the TRIM Scale (McCullough et al., 1998) that assessed their desire to avoid the offender (α = 0.95). Finally, participants read that they would see a list of emotions on the next screen and were asked to memorize as many as possible. Participants then saw a list of 10 negative emotions on the right side of the screen (i.e., guilt, shame, disappointment, misery, betrayal, anger, helplessness, grief, irritation, and sorrow) and 10 positive emotions on the left side of the screen (i.e., warmth, stability, strength, calm, trust, passion, energy, joy, fulfillment, and freedom). After 50 s, the list disappeared, and participants were asked to write down the words they recalled.

6.3. Results and discussion

Consistent with our expectations, TIV was positively correlated with increased negative attributions of the offense to properties of the offender (r = 0.22, p = .010) and higher recall of negative emotions (r = 0.21, p = .022). Furthermore, as expected, TIV was neither correlated with attributions of hurtful behavior to the self (r = 0.00, p = .898), nor with the recall of positive emotions (r = −0.08, p = .390). Finally, TIV was related to the desire for revenge (r = 0.68, p < .001); but not to the motivation to avoid the offender (r = 0.09, p = .345; see Table S11).

Next, using Hayes' (2018) PROCESS (Model 4), we tested the mediation model outlined above. The model, presented in Fig. 2, shows that as expected, the higher a participant's TIV, the more he or she tended to attribute the criticism of the senior partner to his or her negative properties, which in turn led to a greater desire for revenge, yielding a significant indirect effect (*effect* = 0.20, 95% Confidence Interval (CI) = [0.00, 0.43], SE = 0.11).

Study 3 showed that TIV was correlated with negative attribution of a hurtful behavior (negative feedback) to the offender and with recall of negative emotions, but not with the attribution of negative feedback to the self, or with the recall of positive emotions, reflecting the results in Study 1C. We elaborate on this issue in the general discussion. As expected, increased negative attribution of a hurtful behavior to the offender mediated TIV and the desire to seek revenge, which sheds light on the underlying cognitive mechanism. Unexpectedly, we did not find an association between TIV and the desire to avoid the offender. We explore this in the general discussion.

6.4. Study 4

Study 4 was designed to further explore the consequences of TIV by assessing participants' behavioral revenge, by allowing participants to inflict monetary punishment on an ostensible partner who offended them on the Dictator Game. We hypothesized, based on the results of Study 2A, that TIV would positively predict the extent of revenge, regardless of the severity of the offense. We further hypothesized that there would be an interaction between the severity of the offense and TIV, such that the effect of TIV on revenge would be more pronounced in mild offenses, compared to moderate and severe offenses. We reasoned that mild offenses leave more room for subjective interpretation, and thus would be viewed as more hurtful in the eyes of high- vs. low-TIV participants. Severe offenses leave less room for interpretation, and thus would be viewed as hurtful by all participants, regardless of their TIV score. Further, this study examined the psychological mechanism underlying the relationship between TIV and revenge. We hypothesized that the association between TIV and revenge would be mediated by the experience of negative emotions, and by entitlement to immoral behavior. We found that entitlement was predicted by TIV in Study 2B, and previous work has shown that it mediated the relationship between feelings of victimhood and selfish behavior (Zitek et al., 2010).

6.4.1. Method

6.4.1.1. Participants. Participants were 181 Jewish-Israelis (94 women;

M_age = 42.08, SD_age = 15.45). They completed the study administered by MP and received 8ILS ($2.20) for participating.

6.4.1.2. Procedure and measures. Participants completed the TIV scale (α = 0.92). Then, they were invited to play the Dictator Game, in which they were led to believe that they were playing against another person, when in fact the whole procedure was computerized. After an ostensible raffle, they were told that their opponent was chosen to be the one who has the power to divide a sum of 10ILS between the two of them, and that the participants have no other choice but to accept this proposal. The participants were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the severe offense condition, participants were told that they were allocated 1ILS, while their opponent kept 9ILS for himself. In the moderate offense condition, the division was 3ILS to the opponent's 7ILS, and in the mild offense condition, the split was 4ILS to the opponent's 6ILS (see SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014).

After this manipulation, participants were asked to complete the dependent variables questionnaire. First, as a manipulation check, two items assessed the extent participants felt hurt (e.g., "*Please rate the extent to which you feel hurt about the division of the money*"; r = 0.53, p < .001). Then, participants were given the opportunity to take off a percentage of the money their opponent earned from 1 (100% of his gains) to 11 (0% of his gains). This item was reverse scored, such that the higher the score, the greater the behavioral revenge. Importantly, participants were made aware that they would not be given the money they decided to remove from their opponent's gains, making such a decision to reflect pure revenge. We then assessed participants' negative emotions on three items assessing anger, humiliation, and hopelessness (α = 0.88). Finally, we assessed entitlement to immoral behavior with three items (e.g., "*I deserve to act immorally towards the other participant*"; α = 0.88). We also evaluated other measures; i.e., participants' positive emotions, need for agency, and motivation for revenge for exploratory purposes, which we did not include in the final analysis.

6.4.2. Results and discussion

To examine whether the offense severity manipulation was effective, we conducted a one-way ANOVA that showed that there was a main effect for condition (F (2, 178) = 10.80, p < .001, η_p^2 = 0.11), such that both severe (M = 5.04, SD = 1.59) and moderate (M = 4.58, SD = 1.67) offenses were perceived as more severe than the mild offense (M = 3.73, SD = 1.48; both ps < .004). There was no significant difference between the severe and moderate offenses (p = .117).

To examine the effect of our manipulation as moderated by TIV on our DVs, we ran a series of analyses using Hayes' (2018) PROCESS (Model 1) for a multicategorical independent variable by implementing indicator coding (Hayes & Montoya, 2017). We report the effects of TIV and the interaction effects below. For the effects of the manipulation, see supplementary materials. For means, SDs and correlations see Table S12. First, participants' behavioral revenge was significantly predicted by TIV (b = 0.38, 95%CI = [0.01, 0.76], SE = 0.19, t = 1.97, p = .050), such that the higher the TIV, the more they took revenge. Contrary to our hypothesis, the condition × TIV interaction was not significant (p = .477). However, a simple slopes test revealed a pattern of results that was consistent with our hypothesis. Specifically, whereas TIV significantly predicted the degree of revenge in the mild offense condition (b = 0.61, 95%CI = [0.04, 1.17], SE = 0.29, t = 2.12, p = .035), it did not in the moderate and severe offense conditions (b = 0.05, 95%CI = [−0.65, 0.75], SE = 0.35, t = 0.15, p = .881; and b = 0.36, 95%CI = [−0.41, 1.13], SE = 0.39, t = 0.93, p = .356, respectively). Next, TIV significantly predicted the extent to which participants experienced negative emotions, and felt entitled to behave immorally following the offense (b = 0.84, 95%CI = [0.49, 1.19], SE = 0.18, t = 4.71, p < .001; and b = 0.63, 95%CI = [0.30, 0.96], SE = 0.17, t = 3.74, p < .001, respectively), such that the higher the TIV, the more participants experienced intense negative emotions, and entitlement to behave immorally. Neither DVs were predicted by the
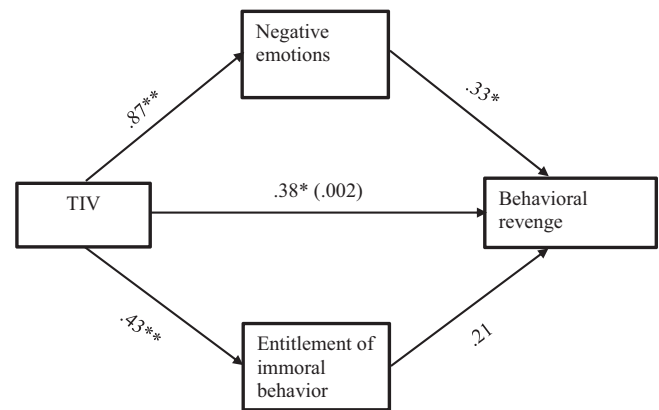
Fig. 3. Study 4 mediation model. Experienced negative emotions and entitlement to immoral behavior mediated the relationship between TIV and behavioral revenge. Unstandardized coefficients are shown. *p < .05; **p < .001.

condition × TIV interaction (both ps > .260).

Finally, using Hayes' (2018) PROCESS (Model 4), we tested a mediation model in which (i) TIV increased negative emotions and entitlement (ii) which, in turn, increased behavioral revenge, while controlling for the effects of the condition. The model, presented in Fig. 3, showed that, as expected, the higher participants' TIV, the more they experienced negative emotions and felt entitled to behave immorally. However, only the experience of negative emotions predicted behavioral revenge, in turn, yielding a significant indirect effect for negative emotions (*effect* = 0.29, SE = 0.13, 95%CI = [0.03, 0.53]), but not for entitlement (*effect* = 0.09, SE = 0.06, 95%CI = [−0.03, 0.22]).[2]

The results of Study 4 indicated that TIV was strongly associated with behavioral revenge, echoing the results of Studies 2B and 3. Furthermore, after being exposed to an offense, TIV was associated with an increased experience of negative emotions, and, replicating Study 2B, entitlement to immoral behavior. These variables mediated the relationship between TIV and behavioral revenge when examined separately in the mediation models. However, when they were examined together, the experience of negative emotions prevailed as a stronger predictor of behavioral revenge. Finally, although we hypothesized that TIV would moderate the effect of the severity of offense on behavioral revenge, no interaction was found, consistent with the results of Study 2A. We did find tentative corroboration for our hypothesis when we analyzed the simple slopes, in that TIV significantly predicted revenge in the mild offense condition, but not in the moderate offense and severe offense conditions.

7. General discussion

The current studies strongly suggest that the tendency for victimhood in interpersonal relations is a stable personality characteristic. Deeply rooted in the relations with primary caregivers, this tendency affects how individuals feel, think, and behave in what they perceive as hurtful situations throughout their lives. The findings contribute both theoretically and empirically to the exploration of victimhood in interpersonal relations. Theoretically, we showed the robustness of TIV based on an integration of the social and clinical psychological literature. Empirically, the findings validated TIV through an exploration of its cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences, as well as the role of attachment style as a conceptual antecedent.

The results of the eight studies confirmed our conceptualization of

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[2] When we tested a mediation model for each mediator separately, we found that they both significantly mediated the relationship between TIV and behavioral revenge. See supplementary materials.

TIV and the psychometric properties of its scale. EFAs and a CFA (Studies 1A-1B) indicated that the TIV scale is best conceptualized as a hierarchical model with four method factors, representing the four dimensions of TIV; i.e., the need for recognition, moral elitism, lack of empathy, and rumination, and one latent factor. Study 1C documented the scale's good test-retest reliability. The scale also exhibited good convergence validity, as it showed that high-TIV individuals experienced feelings of hurt more intensely, and for longer periods of time (Study 2A). Moreover, we showed the scale's adequate construct validity, since it was positively correlated with rejection sensitivity, victim sensitivity, private and public consciousness (Study 2B), exaggerated entitlement in romantic relations, lack of trust, rumination-depression, and was unrelated to the Big Five personality dimensions, except neuroticism (Study 2C).

In addition to being psychometrically sound, the TIV scale exhibited satisfactory predictive validity with regard to cognitive, affective, and behavioral phenomena. Cognitively, high-TIV individuals were more likely to expect that others would hurt them in ambiguous situations (Study 1C), perceive offenses as more severe (study 2A), and attribute more malicious intent and negative characteristics to the offender (Study 3). Emotionally, high-TIV individuals were more likely to experience feelings of hurt more intensely, and for longer periods of time (Studies 2A and 4), and recall negative emotions more easily (Study 3). Across studies, TIV predicted various negative cognitive and emotional outcomes, but was unrelated to positive interpretations, attributions, or recall of positive emotional words. Thus, negative, but not positive stimuli, appear to activate the victimhood schema.

Behaviorally, high-TIV individuals were less willing to forgive others after an offense, and more likely to seek revenge rather than avoidance (Studies 2B and 3) and behave in a revengeful manner (Study 4). We argue that one possible explanation for the low avoidant tendencies of high-TIV individuals stems from their need for recognition. Behaviorally, this might be expressed by being ambivalent with regard to whether to maintain contact with their offenders and receive recognition of their victim status, or to completely avoid them. The fact that TIV was associated with anxious attachment, which is characterized by ambivalent relationships with others, but not with avoidant attachment, lends credence to our argument. Furthermore, the cognitive and affective implications of TIV seem to underlie its behavioral outcomes. The desire for revenge was mediated by negative attributions to the offender (Study 3) and by negative emotions and entitlement to immoral behavior (Study 4). The clinical literature on victimhood (Urlic et al., 2010) may explain how moral elitism, lack of empathy and the desire for revenge can manifest simultaneously among high-TIV individuals, and thus enable them to feel morally superior even though they exhibit aggression. According to this literature, victimhood is strongly dissociated from agency, and therefore decreases individuals' belief that they can deal with difficulties in their interpersonal relations. Victimhood is also dissociated from aggressiveness, because any resemblance between the victim and the perpetrator is experienced as threatening, as it may deny the victim potential compensation, closeness and empathy from others.

Finally, we found that anxious (but not avoidant) attachment was correlated with TIV, and thus may serve as a conceptual antecedent (Study 2B). From a motivational point of view, TIV seems to offer anxiously attached individuals an effective framework for their insecure relations that involve gaining others' attention, recognition, and compassion, and at the same time experiencing and expressing negative feelings. These findings correspond to previous theoretical accounts and empirical evidence that argue that attachment plays a significant role in individual differences after experiencing trauma and victimization (Arikan, Stopa, Carnelley, & Karl, 2016). However, it should be noted that while attachment was found to be associated with different psychological responses to trauma, including victimhood, exposure to severe trauma can affect the psychological response irrespective of individual attachment style (Pearlman & Courtois, 2005). The

relationships between trauma, attachment, and TIV await further examination in future research. Relatedly, the need for recognition of high-TIV individuals may also be used for constructive relationship building. Unlike avoidance, it fosters and provides opportunities for contact, communication, and change (Twali et al., 2020). However, such opportunities for contact should be approached with due caution, as clinical psychological accounts suggest that recognition of suffering by itself is often not enough to promote change and might in fact only strengthen high-TIV individuals' claims of victimhood and sense of entitlement (Berman, 2014b).

7.1. Implications, limitations and future research

The present research has important implications for both clinical and social psychology. It provides a better understanding of the way processes of interpretation, attribution, and memory reinforce feelings of victimhood and retaliatory behaviors, which could be treated with different types of therapy (e.g., CBT, schema therapy) to decrease these negative cognitive biases. The relationship between anxious attachment and TIV can also be assessed in therapy to understand the core needs of people with TIV. The findings also contribute to a better understanding of interpersonal conflicts, by suggesting that both situational factors, such as the severity of the offense, and personality factors (TIV) play a pivotal role in the intensity and perceived duration of hurt feelings.

Two dispositional traits related to TIV have been examined in the past; namely, narcissism and self-esteem, and deserve comment. Similar to TIV, narcissism and self-esteem both involve a general focus on the self and a strong sense of entitlement (Stronge, Cichocka, & Sibley, 2016). In addition, narcissism, but not self-esteem, was found to be associated with experiencing ambiguous situations as more hurtful and involved showing more hostility toward others (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Mooney, 2003). Furthermore, we argue that the self-esteem of high-TIV individuals would be unstable, based on the relationship between TIV, anxious attachment, external locus of control, and sensitivity to imagined or actual offenses. An unstable self-image also characterizes narcissism (Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998) and leads, in turn, to vulnerability to threats to the self (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

We also posit that both narcissism and TIV are characterized by vulnerability to threats to the self, but that the content of these threats would be different. Narcissists present themselves to the world as strong, capable, and talented (and relatedly, differently from TIV, narcissism was found to be associated with extraversion; Stronge et al., 2016). Therefore, threats are related to anything undermining their grandiosity and superiority, such as extraordinary abilities, achievements or positive qualities. In contrast, the self-presentation of high-TIV individuals is that of a weak victim, who has been hurt and is therefore in need of protection; a considerate and conscientious person who must face a cruel and abusive world. Threats to high-TIV individuals are related to anything that can undermine their self-image of moral superiority; or elicit doubts from their environment as to whether the offense occurred, the intensity of the offense, or their exclusivity as victims. These, and additional hypotheses should be examined in future research.

While the current research makes important first steps in establishing the TIV conceptualization, much work remains to be done. First, the current research was conducted among Jewish-Israelis, which were shown to have a 'perpetual victimhood' representation of their history (Klar et al., 2013). As a group that has suffered persecution and threats of annihilation, Jewish-Israelis are raised in a culture that emphasizes the continuity between past and present/future sufferings (Klar et al., 2013). Nevertheless, we argue that TIV is relevant to other contexts and populations. Preliminary evidence indicates that the TIV scale had sufficient reliability and convergent validity in convenience and representative samples of Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. (Hameiri, Moore-Berg, Guillard, Falk, & Bruneau, 2020). Nevertheless,

future research should extend the external validity of TIV. This research can also take a cross-cultural perspective to examine whether TIV varies across different contexts and populations and is related to cultural norms and education.

Second, the current research relied on an online survey company to recruit participants and described the studies as dealing with interpersonal transgressions. This might have hindered our external validity, as this prompt might have solicited the participation of online participants who are more willing to discuss their history with victimization. While we cannot completely rule out that this might have led to some bias in our results, previous research indicates that online samples provide similar results to face-to-face ones, but are more diverse (Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013). Furthermore, participants tended to use the entire range of the TIV scale, with the TIV scale means falling slightly above the mid-point of the scale. These means correspond to the results obtained in a study with a representative sample of Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. that was not presented as dealing with interpersonal transgressions (Hameiri et al., 2020).

Third, although our studies were sufficiently powered to detect medium-sized correlations and differences between two or three manipulated conditions, they were relatively underpowered to detect a small effect-sized interaction. Future research could further explore whether the role of TIV increases in ambiguous situations (e.g., mild offenses; see Studies 2A and 4), which leave more room for subjective interpretation than severe offenses.

Finally, another intriguing path for future investigation is what happens to high-TIV individuals when they are in power or leadership positions. Ample research has indicated that the powerful are more likely to behaviorally pursue their values and goals (for a review see Guinote, 2017). Future studies could directly investigate whether high-TIV powerholders feel less inhibited to express hurtful feelings and behaving in a vindictive way. Overall, the measure presented here provides a reliable and valid instrument that may be useful in future investigations of theoretically driven hypotheses on the social consequences of victimhood as a personality trait.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Rahav Gabay: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft. **Boaz Hameiri:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft. **Tammy Rubel-Lifschitz:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - original draft. **Arie Nadler:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - original draft, Supervision, Funding acquisition.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110134.

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