

The Importance of Positive Psychological Interventions Based on Developing and Enhancing Personal Strengths in Achieving Post-Traumatic Growth for Crisis and Disaster Victims

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Abstract:

Positive psychology is grounded in an empirical conceptual framework that emphasizes the significance of building personal strengths to confront traumatic events. This suggests that negative life experiences can drive growth, maturity, and flourishing. Based on this assumption, the current study employs a descriptive approach to analyze and interpret experimental data concerning the relationship between personal strengths and post-traumatic growth (PTG). The analysis draws upon findings from prior studies conducted on individuals affected by attacks, earthquakes, and epidemics, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results indicate that certain personal strengths align effectively with PTG. For instance, strengths such as kindness, generosity, and love enhance interpersonal relationships; strengths like curiosity, creativity, and love of learning facilitate openness to new possibilities; and strengths such as appreciation of beauty, gratitude, and zest help individuals develop a greater appreciation for life. Additionally, religiosity fosters spiritual growth. These findings suggest that the development of personal strengths and PTG is not merely a Western cultural phenomenon. They underscore the necessity of focusing early psychological interventions on positive variables as part of efforts to support and accompany individuals exposed to trauma resulting from crises and disasters.

Keywords: Positive psychology; Personality strengths; Traumatic.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of psychological trauma has undergone a qualitative shift, revealing that exposure to adversity does not always result in psychological dysfunction. Studies suggest that adversity and hardship can serve as a springboard to higher levels of well-being, which may be considered one of the most significant benefits of positive investment in crisis management processes. Consequently, current research highlights the positive aspects of psychological trauma, emphasizing the importance of exploring the other side of the coin, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of human nature.

Notably, researchers such as Peterson and Seligman (2004) assert that life circumstances characterized by disruption and stress following disasters in some human societies may, in certain cases, lead to the emergence and development of personal strengths that were not prominent traits of individuals before experiencing adversity or trauma (Park, Peterson, &

Seligman, 2006, p. 17). In this context, Seligman (2002) describes personal strengths as protective barriers that shield the personality when exposed to trauma, preventing it from reaching a state of disorder and mitigating the resulting negative effects. These strengths are viewed as immunity or resilience against various forms of psychological illness or dysfunctional performance (Abu Halawa, 2006, p. 08).

Joseph notes that psychological trauma has been a subject of investigation for decades. It has been observed that while some individuals struggle to adapt, others thrive and move forward, experiencing positive transformation (Joseph, 2011, p. 03). This observation highlights the need to explore the experiences of those who succeed effectively in the aftermath of traumatic events, raising questions about the factors that enable such outcomes.

Accordingly, this study will delve into analyzing the role of personal strengths in promoting post-traumatic growth amid challenges and pressures. It aims to move beyond the limited, one-sided view that psychological disorders are the inevitable outcome of trauma. Instead, the study will examine the significance of positive psychological traits in personality and their role in crisis management and chronic stress situations. By emphasizing that positive psychological interventions focus on building, empowering, and amplifying what is right, the field of psychology shifts from merely addressing illness to fostering health. This perspective creates a supportive environment that enhances opportunities for success and optimal performance across all aspects of life and under all conditions.

1.1 Study Problem

Several studies have indicated that life-threatening experiences may lead to psychological impairments, most notably Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). However, Bonanno (2004) suggests that such psychological disorders appear in only a minority of individuals exposed to these events, leaving room for the possibility of other outcomes, including certain benefits. In this context, Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) explained that the positive psychological changes that can occur after exposure to a potentially traumatic event fall under what is now known as Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008, p. 214).

Therefore, it is essential to construct a comprehensive understanding of how individuals respond following adversity, recognizing that trauma has both negative and positive dimensions. Joseph emphasized this perspective, stating: "We have begun to understand that PTSD is a driver of transformation. Trauma forces individuals to confront challenges and places their lives at a crossroads. Therefore, we must look at PTSD and view it in a new light as a process of personal transformation in functioning" (Joseph, 2011, p. 01).

This suggests a preliminary conclusion that Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) can occur following exposure to potentially traumatic events. The effects of such events are not entirely negative, as they may include the growth of personal strengths (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008, p. 217).

In fact, psychological trauma has been a subject of research and inquiry for several decades, drawing attention to those who succeed in the aftermath of traumatic events. While some individuals struggle to adapt, others thrive and forge their path toward experiencing positive change (Joseph, 2011, p. 03).

Research findings indicate that exposure to traumatic experiences can sometimes correlate with an increase in personal strengths, aligning with the assumptions put forward by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995)—even if to a small extent, which is still considered of substantial value. These findings are particularly significant given the volume of theories and studies that have emphasized the psychological negative impacts of such events (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008, p. 216).

It appears that most therapeutic interventions in this field lack measures for positive processes and do not target them as part of the treatment experience. Instead, the focus has been solely on tools for symptom assessment and management. However, treatment within the framework of contemporary mental health does not conclude with the mere disappearance of symptoms (Ahmed & Younis, 2021, pp. 325-326).

Based on the above, the current theoretical study aims to emphasize the effectiveness of positive psychological interventions in addressing trauma victims affected by crises and disasters. This study seeks to uncover another dimension of the trauma narrative that has not been extensively explored in previous research: the possibility of positive outcomes emerging from negative life experiences. It underscores that research in this field aligns with the scientific principles and foundations granted to psychology, a significant portion of which is rooted in the experimental method. This approach aims to identify the personal strengths instrumental in rebuilding and developing capabilities that enable effective confrontation of various forms of weakness and incapacity.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following question:

Is growth and flourishing possible after trauma? If so, how can we leverage its aspects in psychological care and support for trauma victims resulting from crises and disasters?

1.3 Study Importance

In light of the above, the significance of the current research is highlighted as follows:

- Emphasizing the role of personal strengths in promoting post-traumatic growth, considering it a key factor in addressing stress disorders resulting from traumatic events.
- Identifying the strengths that can predict variables associated with post-traumatic growth based on findings from previous studies.
- Explaining and analyzing the theoretical framework underlying the theory that interprets the phenomenon of post-traumatic growth, which has been less explored in Arab studies.
- Highlighting the importance of developing research fields and clinical practices by adopting the positive aspects of personality in the context of care and intervention processes.

1.4 Study Objectives

The objectives of this study are summarized as follows:

- To identify the effectiveness of psychological interventions based on the principles of positive psychology.
- To explore the theoretical foundations of the concept of personal strengths and their active role in mitigating psychological suffering.
- To examine the nature of the relationship between personal strengths and post-traumatic growth in light of findings from studies conducted amidst crises and disasters across different regions of the world.

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Below, we explore the early psychological interventions based on the principles of positive psychology and their role in achieving growth and flourishing following exposure to trauma.

2.1 Contributions of Positive Psychology in Times of Disasters and Crises

The positive psychology movement emerged as a response to the notion that psychology had focused too narrowly on the medical model of abnormal and dysfunctional behavior. In

reaction to this trend, efforts were made to understand and improve the quality of life for individuals in the general population.

During the first half of the 20th century, psychology primarily focused on the darker aspects of human nature. The study of various disorders, weaknesses, and mental illnesses took center stage, with most research addressing negative emotions such as anger, depression, and guilt. Positive emotions and feelings were largely overlooked, with only a few studies dedicated to their exploration.

Psychology proved more successful in understanding negative aspects than in addressing positive dimensions. It unveiled much about individual deficiencies but provided limited insights into human potential, virtues, and achievable aspirations. Advocates of positive psychology identified these gaps and aimed to bring balance to the field. They encouraged more research into the positive aspects of human nature, such as optimism, empathy, compassion, creativity, positive emotions, and life satisfaction.

Joseph Wood (2010) notes that although the focus on positive functioning has garnered attention in recent years, it has a long history tracing back to James (1902) and his writings on healthy-mindedness, the contributions of the humanistic psychologist Rogers (1959) on optimal functioning, and Maslow's (1954) concept of self-actualization. Additionally, Jahoda (1958) provided definitions and insights into positive mental health, while Tedeschi, Park, and Calhoun (1998) explored the concept of Posttraumatic Growth. Thus, the idea of positive functioning is not new, but it has not been systematically integrated into clinical psychology (Ahmed & Younis, 2021, p. 323).

Therefore, positive psychological variables represent a concept worthy of attention and a novel perspective that merits integration into clinical practice. This integration could expand our therapeutic approach and broaden our understanding of treatment methodologies.

In applied scientific practice, there are arguments supporting the importance of positive psychology, discussed in light of the findings of each study. Researchers in this field have engaged with various variables, such as well-being therapy, gratitude, and post-traumatic growth, which have attracted the interest of new, young researchers emerging in the context of positive psychology. This trend could lead to the establishment of positive psychology as a separate branch of psychology, raising questions about how a distinct positive psychology system might coexist with aspirations for integration (Stephen Joseph, 2015, p. 824).

However, Joseph (2015) asserted that the greatest strength of positive psychology lies in its potential to transform mainstream psychology, rather than evolving into a new, separate system of applied psychology. At the same time, he acknowledged the expansion of psychological professional activities that would not have occurred without positive psychology. He noted that psychological theories would not have reached their current level without this development. Despite the foundational basis of positive psychology in humanistic theory, as established by Maslow and Rogers, traditional psychological theories failed to grasp the practical implications of their limited perspective on integration in human performance due to their adherence to the "illness ideology." This limitation forced them to revisit fundamental ideas through the lens of positive psychology.

Joseph further explained that, without the illness ideology, the distinction between the ranges of "-5 to 0" and "0 to +5" would dissolve. Thus, positive psychology offers an alternative to the illness ideology. This necessitates the development of new theoretical approaches capable of addressing the challenges and issues associated with traditional psychology within a positive psychological framework. For example, Pauwels (2015) introduced a new way of thinking about human reactions to adversity and stress. He proposed viewing PTSD and PTG as two separate responses, each with its own theoretical framework, yet interconnected within

a single theoretical structure. Such an integrative framework is neither purely positive psychology nor negative psychology (Bashen Hamza, 2022, pp. 73-74).

In the same context, numerous studies have highlighted the role of positive personality variables in confronting challenges during crises. For instance, the study by Shoshani and Slone (2016) examined the moderating role of personal strengths in the relationship between political violence and PTSD among youth who had lived for extended periods under conditions of war and political conflict. Similarly, the study by Fredrickson and colleagues (2003) revealed how positive emotions fostered growth in psychological resources (such as life satisfaction, optimism, and tranquility) before and after the events of September 11 in the United States (Algoe, et al., 2022, p. 304).

Positive psychology interventions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in preventing distress, promoting mental and psychological health, building new capacities, and helping the general population cope with this global crisis (Algoe, et al., 2022, p. 303). In a comprehensive review of positive psychology research, encompassing approximately 18,000 studies, Rusk and Waters (2013) found that many studies focused on positive processes that help individuals recover and rebuild from adversity. These processes include fostering levels of psychological resilience, flexibility, meaning, tolerance, and post-traumatic growth.

Similarly, the findings of Westerhof and Keyes (2010) revealed that individuals could endure high levels of distress during this global health crisis. Moreover, a longitudinal study by Casali, Feraco, and Meneghetti (2021) highlighted the importance of personal strengths in enhancing mental health and post-traumatic growth during the pandemic among a sample of Italian adults. These results align with a prior study conducted by Lau et al. (2006) during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) pandemic, which found that anxiety, isolation, and sleep problems were associated with social growth, personal growth, and gratitude among the general population (Algoe, et al., 2022, p. 304).

Increasing evidence highlights the extent of positive changes emerging within school communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Dempsey and Burke (2020), in a survey of nearly 1,000 school principals during the early lockdowns associated with the pandemic, reported that many individuals adopted new hobbies, established healthier personal routines, and engaged in regular exercise. They experienced a less stressful pace of life compared to the pre-pandemic period. Similar experiences were reported by parents; Lades et al. (2020) found that childcare during the lockdown led to increased positive emotions, more frequent physical activity, walking, gardening, and hobby pursuits (Burke & Arslan, 2020, pp. 137-138).

Additionally, a study involving 384 students from four Chinese universities conducted by Yang et al. (2020) analyzed the mediating roles of three positive psychological variables—resilience, social support, and coping strategies—in their relationship with stress caused by COVID-19. The findings showed that students who employed high levels of positive refocusing (shifting attention to the positive aspects of life), positive reappraisal (focusing on what can be learned from the situation), and positive planning (thinking about the future) experienced reduced levels of psychological distress, including stress, fear of infection, insomnia, and depression (Algoe, et al., 2022, pp. 304-305). These findings underscore the need for further studies to shed light on such positive changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building on the above, the significance of psychological interventions rooted in the principles of positive psychology becomes evident. Positive psychology adopts a perspective focused on fostering the strengths of human capabilities—both in good times and bad. It provides a proactive approach to creating supportive environments for individuals by emphasizing engagement and participation in social life, improving the quality of relationships, and focusing on the scientific elements of happiness and well-being.

Emerging research, as highlighted by Peterson (2006), states: "We have come to understand that positive psychology is about well-being, not about being happy all the time. Studies have focused on exploring the contribution of human strengths and flourishing, enabling individuals to succeed."

The aim of positive psychology strategies is to shift the balance, where positive experiences outweigh negative ones (Bransford, Simunds, Starks, & Vermeland, 2020, pp. 02-04). Positive psychology achieves its goals by empowering and building various personal strengths, providing a foundation for resilience and growth.

2.2 Personal Strengths in the Context of Positive Psychological Interventions

The study of positive personality traits is one of the key areas of research in positive psychology. According to Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005), this field aims to investigate positive emotions, individual attributes, and the broader experiences of individuals in a scientific manner, particularly within positive institutions (such as the family, school, and community), which serve to prevent mental distress and promote mental health. The findings of research in this area aim to deepen our understanding of human strengths and personal experiences, focusing on happiness and well-being. These topics, as described by Park, Peterson, and Sun (2013), revolve around the [development and activation] of personal strengths (Noronha & Dametto, 2016, p. 98).

Building on several studies, the health framework developed by Peterson Christopher and Seligman Martin classified virtues and the human strengths they encompass based on several assumptions and foundations. These strengths are considered psychological mechanisms resembling traits, which can be observed, scientifically studied, and measured. They vary in levels between individuals, forming the basis for individual differences [in their positive aspect] (Boniwell, 2012, p. 105).

This classification process identified 24 personal strengths, viewed as mechanisms that facilitate the realization of virtues. These strengths are considered universal and have been affirmed by philosophers, religious figures, and leaders. Thus, the strengths were organized into six overarching virtues, which represent the foundational principles shared across various religious and philosophical beliefs, embodying the concept of a "good character."

This framework led to the development of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), designed to describe individual differences in personal strengths. It considers these strengths as a multidimensional construct composed of a family of interconnected positive traits (Ghabari, 2018, p. 105). The VIA-IS provides a comprehensive and effective tool for assessing 24 different strengths, enabling research on the collective and interactive effects of personal strengths (Park & Peterson, 2003, p. 21). Below is a diagram illustrating the virtues and the personal strengths they encompass, as outlined by (Niemic, 2017, p. 26).

Figure (01) illustrates the classification of human virtues and the personal strengths they encompass, according to the framework developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004)



Source: (Niemiec, 2017, p. 26)

Figure (01) illustrates the 24 personal strengths and their associated human virtues, as classified by Peterson and Seligman (2004). These strengths are assessed using the Values in Action (VIA) tool, which evaluates the components of good character. According to this framework, a good character comprises 24 personal strengths that individuals possess in varying degrees, highlighting individual differences in how these strengths are utilized across daily, professional, and academic life. Personal strengths serve as pathways and components indicative of human virtues.

The project for classifying strengths and virtues underscores the hypothesis of positive psychology, which focuses on the traits of good character that make life worth living (Park & Peterson, 2004, p. 08).

Good character traits are what we seek in leaders, teachers, students, colleagues, parents, and children, as well as in friendships. Good character is not merely the absence of weaknesses or problems but rather a well-developed family of positive traits. These traits facilitate the

construction of a fulfilling life by reactivating and developing individual strengths and their associated virtues, aiming to achieve happiness and well-being (Bashen Hamza, 2022, pp. 317-318).

Enhancing personal strengths can arise from exposure to challenging life circumstances, as negative experiences may drive individuals toward positive change. This phenomenon can be observed in people who have endured the hardships of war, natural disasters, severe economic pressures, illnesses, serious injuries, or job loss. Despite the misery and suffering associated with crises, some individuals manage to develop their potential and capabilities in the aftermath of such conditions.

For instance, a study by Peterson and Seligman (2003) found that during the six months following the September 11 attacks, levels of personal strengths such as religiosity, hope, and love were notably high among American participants. These results were not observed among European participants. Additionally, a study by Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2006) indicated that recovery from physical illness was associated with increased levels of strengths such as bravery, kindness, and humor, while recovery from psychological disorders was modestly linked to higher levels of strengths like appreciation of beauty and love of learning (Park & Peterson, 2009, p. 06).

The findings of the study by Casali, Feraco, and Meneghetti (2021) during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of certain virtues and their associated personal strengths in enhancing mental health levels and achieving post-traumatic growth. Regression analyses demonstrated that the virtue of transcendence was uniquely associated with mental health, while the virtue of humanity was specifically linked to post-traumatic growth. This underscores the positive correlation between personal strengths and both mental health and post-traumatic growth during the pandemic. Furthermore, evidence suggests that post-traumatic growth mediates the relationship between personal strengths and mental health.

The study by Duan and Guo (2015), conducted on a Chinese community sample exposed to earthquakes, indicated the possibility of all participants experiencing Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG). The study provided several insights into the role of virtues and certain personal strengths in achieving PTG, emphasizing that individuals who utilize a variety of virtues and strengths possess different psychological resources. These resources can be effectively utilized and enhanced in various contexts.

For instance, individuals with a high level of the virtue of relationships (or the virtue of humanity, which includes strengths such as kindness, generosity, and love) are more skilled at seeking social support from friends and relatives to recover from trauma and achieve growth. Similarly, the virtue of vitality (or the virtue of wisdom, encompassing strengths like ingenuity, curiosity, openness, and love of learning) enables individuals to perceive less stress, thereby reducing psychological pressure. Studies by Yang et al. (2014b; 2015) indicated that individuals with high levels of the virtue of vitality are more likely to express their concerns, alleviating tension and improving mental health. After direct exposure to traumatic events, most of these individuals maintain psychological balance without showing signs of PTSD, as supported by the findings of Bonanno et al. (2007).

Moreover, the study by Prati and Pietrantonio (2009) revealed that social support significantly contributes to PTG. Individuals who actively use the virtue of relationships (or humanity) are more likely to adopt supportive mechanisms to overcome the challenges caused by trauma. Thus, personal resources and strengths related to the virtue of relationships (or humanity) are essential.

Finally, the virtue of conscientiousness (or the virtue of courage) consistently enhances indicators of positive mental health while reducing psychological distress. This finding aligns

with the study by Hagger (2010). Furthermore, Duan et al. (2015) concluded that utilizing the virtue of conscientiousness (or courage) directly reduces psychological stress, irrespective of stress levels. Personal strengths associated with this virtue help regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to resolve conflicts caused by trauma, ultimately fostering PTG (Duan & Guo, 2015, pp. 06-08).

Several studies have highlighted the positive relationship between personal strengths and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG). For example, a study by Peterson et al. (2008), which included 1,739 participants from various countries, found that strengths such as kindness and generosity, love, bravery, hope, and religiosity showed strong correlations with PTG compared to other strengths (Duan & Guo, 2015, p. 02).

Furthermore, the framework developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) for classifying personal strengths aligns with the components of PTG identified by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995). According to Linley and Joseph (2004), individuals who experience life-threatening trauma and recover from it are likely to learn valuable lessons about the significance of life, which refines their character and leads to growth and maturity. Surveys have confirmed that personal strengths can reflect PTG (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008, pp. 214-215).

Research by Park and Peterson (2006c; 2009a) demonstrated that higher levels of strengths such as hope, kindness, generosity, social intelligence, self-regulation, and insight serve as barriers against the negative effects of stress and trauma. According to Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) and Peterson et al. (2008), various dimensions of PTG correspond to specific strengths. For instance (Niemiec, 2013, p. 18):

- Kindness, generosity, and love improve relationships with others.
- Curiosity, creativity, and love of learning promote openness to new possibilities.
- Appreciation of beauty, gratitude, and zest enhance individuals' appreciation of life.

Given these findings, the effectiveness of positive psychological interventions aimed at fostering personal strengths cannot be overstated. Understanding the benefits of positive psychology has become an urgent necessity for advancing sciences that help individuals and communities confront challenges. Numerous studies have proven that activating and amplifying personal strengths makes individuals more resilient, aiding in their recovery from adversity and facilitating PTG.

2.3 The Nature of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG)

The concept of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), introduced in 1995 by clinical professors and researchers Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun, has garnered significant interest among researchers. It is now widely used to describe the field of study that investigates how trauma can serve as a catalyst for greater well-being. Joseph (2011) remarked that “everything changed with the advent of positive psychology, which opened the door for psychologists to start thinking about post-traumatic growth” (Joseph, 2011, p. 18).

Several terms describe the positive changes individuals experience after facing adversity. These include:

- Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG)
- Stress-Related Growth
- Benefit-Finding
- Perceived Benefits
- Thriving

- Strength Conversion
- Positive Psychological Changes
- Flourishing
- Positive Adjustment
- Positive Adaptation

However, the concept of PTG is the most commonly used framework to describe the positive changes that occur as a result of the psychological and cognitive efforts to cope with difficult circumstances (Ramos & Leal, 2013, pp. 44-45).

The concept of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), according to Tedeschi, refers to the idea that trauma has positive aspects despite its pressures and suffering. Personal strengths provide individuals with determination and resilience, leading to positive changes in their lives and enhancing their ability to withstand challenges (Younis, 2018, p. 19).

Numerous studies have documented the importance of this concept. Researchers and medical professionals from diverse cultures across four continents have affirmed that PTG exists in all societies. Evidence of PTG has been observed among:

- Earthquake survivors in Turkey and Japan
- Palestinians exposed to violence and killings
- Prisoners detained due to political conflicts in the Middle East
- Latin American immigrants in the United States
- Chinese students in Australia
- World War II survivors in Germany
- War survivors in former Yugoslavia

It has thus become clear that PTG is a multidimensional construct present across various cultures, encompassing elements related to self-change, personal relationships, and appreciation of life.

The findings of multiple studies reflect the notion that pain and suffering can act as catalysts for growth. The challenges individuals face are essential for developing PTG, and the most stressful events are strongly associated with post-traumatic growth. This was evident in experiences from Kosovo and Germany. Furthermore, research has verified that indicators of PTG can coexist with symptoms of distress, as shown in a study conducted on Palestinians and Latin Americans in the United States (Weiss & Berger, 2010, p. 190).

In light of these findings, Joseph (2011) acknowledges that many trauma survivors have experiences they can never forget, which continue to haunt them for the rest of their lives. Positive psychology, which studies Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), does not deny this reality. Instead, it simply recognizes that there is “another side of the coin.” Amid profound psychological pain, survivors can also gain new, valuable perspectives on life, including acknowledging the acquisition of new personal traits and developing deeper and more satisfying relationships with others.

Three existential themes lie at the heart of PTG:

-Recognition of Life's Impermanence: Acknowledging that life is not static and circumstances can change.

-Psychological Mindfulness: This reflects self-awareness and understanding how one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are interconnected, along with flexibility in personal change.

-Personal Agency: Recognizing one's responsibility for life choices and understanding that these choices have consequences.

Trauma brings awareness of these three existential truths. This awareness, in turn, sparks changes in how individuals talk about themselves, feel about life, and live their lives. This perspective does not imply avoiding negative reactions to adversity. Regret, disappointment,

and distress are inevitable parts of life, and it would be naive to think otherwise. Those who find growth in adversity accept this inevitability. They are realistic about themselves, objective in their outlook, capable of forming deep and meaningful relationships, non-materialistic, balanced in their approach to life, and possess common sense and a sense of humor. However, during times of trauma, survival concerns often take precedence.

Subsequently, there are attempts to overcome the emotional consequences of trauma. Therefore, care providers should focus on addressing the medical and emotional challenges faced by survivors before dealing with the deeper issues related to meaning and post-traumatic growth (Joseph, 2011, pp. 37-40).

2.4 Areas of Post-Traumatic Growth

Post-traumatic growth has been divided into five areas according to the model proposed by Calhoun and Tedeschi (1996; 1998; 2004a), which are: A Greater Sense of Personal Strength; New Possibilities; Warmer, More Intimate Relationships With Others; Appreciation of Life; and Spiritual Change (Ramos & Leal, 2013, p. 45).

2.4.1 Greater Appreciation of Life with a Shift in Priorities

A life filled with vitality and new experiences helps reduce boredom and motivates individuals to pursue achievements by fostering a sense of capability, appreciation of life, and the energy needed to accomplish goals. This sense drives individuals to share experiences with others and engage in activities that bring about accomplishments. It stems from their appreciation of life and its significance, encouraging them to utilize available psychological and environmental resources to realistically and logically understand life pressures (Abu Aisha, 2017, p. 61).

According to Calhoun and Tedeschi (2001), this occurs as a result of cognitive restructuring related to coping with trauma. The individual recognizes their vulnerability and understands that certain events cannot be predicted or controlled. Through this awareness of life's uncertainties, they begin to reconsider the importance previously assigned to specific events. They start paying attention to small things once deemed trivial or unimportant, leading to a shift in priorities and a greater appreciation of life (Ramos & Leal, 2013, p. 45).

Richard (2020) highlighted this by stating that when confronted with fear and loss, we often become better at noticing what we still have—things we may have previously overlooked—by acknowledging that the essential aspects of living and working should be appreciated.

Therefore, individuals who have faced challenging and difficult life events often develop a heightened appreciation of life. They strive to find ways to turn adversity into benefits, which fosters the development of post-traumatic growth (Abu Aisha, 2017, p. 61).

2.4.2 Warmer, More Intimate Relationships with Others

Personal relationships, with their emotional bonds, are fundamental to enhancing and developing life experiences. Relationships with others have a significantly greater impact on people's lives compared to thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Following crises, studies by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996; 2001; 2004a) have shown that individuals often seek help and support from family and friends. As a result of increased self-disclosure about personal negative experiences, individuals may notice a higher emotional connection with others. They become better at accepting help from others, benefiting from existing social networks, or investing in new ones.

According to Richard (2020, para. 28), trauma can help establish new relationships and make people more grateful for the relationships they already have. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a) also noted that there may be a re-evaluation of relationships, making some relationships more significant while others may weaken or even (Ramos & Leal, 2013, pp. 45-46).

Changes in personal relationships are critical, as they can lead to the development of social and emotional support. This support is one of the most important factors protecting individuals from the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Self-disclosure and the ability to express emotions and feelings contribute to better and more beneficial adaptation and growth (Abu Aisha, 2017, pp. 61-62).

2.4.3 A Greater Sense of Personal Strength

Individuals are often surprised by how successfully they manage the aftermath of trauma, noticing that they are better prepared to face future challenges. These experiences frequently provide a clearer picture of expanded knowledge, skills, and resilience, opening up greater possibilities for growth (Tedeschi, 2020, p. 24).

According to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a), the sense of increased personal strength may accompany an awareness of individual vulnerability and a clear understanding of the negative impact of traumatic events on one's life. However, this realization often leads to recognizing a greater capacity to handle future challenges and adversities by actively changing situations that need improvement. Lindstrom et al. (2011) observed that individuals clearly recognize that, after a traumatic event, they possess more skills and strengths compared to their pre-trauma selves (Ramos & Leal, 2013, p. 46).

This ability to acknowledge the impact of crises, critique, frustration, and failure—and to endure and confront them—is a characteristic of a mature and strong personality, marked by a sense of responsibility. Abu Eisha (2017) explained that post-traumatic growth enhances the feeling of personal strength. Individuals derive confidence and a sense of development and growth either from their social relationships or from within themselves.

2.4.4 Existential Thought Change Leading to Spiritual and Religious Enrichment in Life

Challenges often compel individuals to direct their core beliefs toward deeper engagement in religious practices to push forward with life. According to Richard (2020), this process coincides with raising numerous existential questions about morality, contributions to improving society, and the fundamental motivations for existence (Tedeschi, 2020, p. 32).

An individual's journey to achieve their goals often begins with a search for the meaning of life. This search is influenced by prior emotionally painful and uncomfortable experiences, and the extent to which traumatic events, where they confronted the inevitability of death, affected them. Individuals typically do not resolve their issues immediately, as forming new meanings in life and integrating them into their broader personal understanding requires a long-term process (Abu Aisha, 2017, p. 63).

Tedeschi and Calhoun (2001; 2004) noted that during stressful circumstances, belief in religious entities may strengthen after trauma. This strengthened faith serves as a coping mechanism that aids cognitive processes in finding meaning. However, even non-religious individuals may experience spiritual growth, which is not limited to those with an already strong spiritual or religious connection (Ramos & Leal, 2013, p. 46).

The role of spiritual changes and their impact on psychological functioning is crucial for accelerating the process of positive adaptation. This underscores the importance of religious and spiritual interventions in helping individuals readjust to negative events and foster growth.

Thus, spirituality, religious engagement, and pre-trauma beliefs significantly influence post-traumatic growth (Abu Aisha, 2017, p. 63).

2.4.5 Discovering New Possibilities

During the process of confronting adversity and crises, individuals often discover new options for their lives across various domains. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996; 2004a) noted that creating a new life path is associated with adopting a new philosophy of life, which alters previous assumptions and core beliefs, leading to new possibilities and opportunities that did not exist before (Ramos & Leal, 2013, pp. 46-47).

It is important for individuals to shift their focus toward changing routine priorities, ensuring that these changes incorporate what truly matters in life. At the same time, they should seek new, achievable goals that align with a realistic choice model. Post-traumatic growth appears to be closely related to individuals who demonstrate flexibility in replacing unattainable goals with realistic objectives suited to their circumstances. These individuals are more adaptable than those who abandon their goals and wait for new ones to emerge or pursue impossible goals.

Therefore, alongside perseverance and continuous effort to achieve one's objectives, it is essential to know when to let go of a goal and replace it with a more suitable one. This adaptability enhances a person's ability to cope effectively (Abu Aisha, 2017, pp. 62-63).

2.5 The Theoretical Interpretive Model of Post-Traumatic Growth

Some theorists have explained Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) as a self-regulation mechanism tied to an innate biological tendency to protect oneself from distress caused by negative circumstances. According to Ford, Tennen, and Albert (2008), individuals perceive this growth after dealing with stress and trauma, seeing themselves as stronger people who have overcome difficulties and suffering.

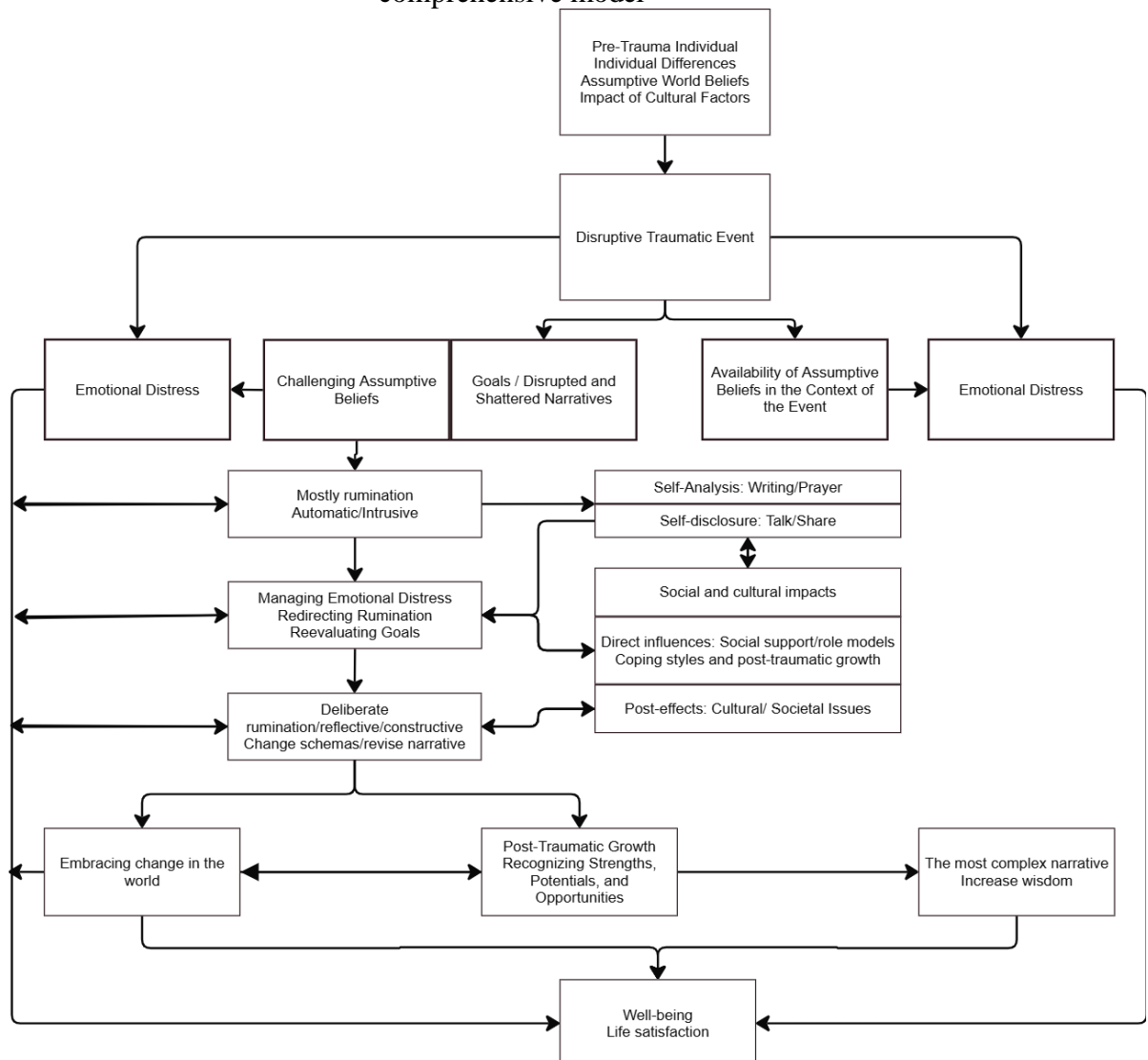
To provide a more comprehensive explanation of PTG, Zoellner and Maerker (2006) proposed the Janus-Face Model, which offers two perspectives on how PTG occurs: (1) the illusory aspect and (2) the constructive aspect. In line with the work of Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a; 2004b), the authors suggested that the constructive component represents growth resulting from successfully coping with negative circumstances. This type of growth is associated with significant changes in personal cognitive schemas and positive adaptation to trauma.

On the other hand, the illusory component, proposed by Taylor et al. (2000), represents the perception of PTG as a positive illusion—a distorted belief in growth that does not actually exist. This illusion serves a defensive function, helping individuals avoid distress and cognitive processing of their situation. According to Affleck and Tennen (1996), the perception of illusory growth is an attempt to maintain psychological balance and avoid changing one's virtual worldview. Zoellner et al. (2008) noted that this type of growth occurs in trauma survivors who exhibit intense stress symptoms.

During the coping process, Zoellner and Maerker (2006) predicted a decrease in stress symptoms, a reduction in illusory PTG, and an increase in awareness of constructive PTG (Ramos & Leal, 2013, p. 47).

As research on this topic expanded, Calhoun et al. (2010) developed a comprehensive model of the PTG process, illustrated in Figure (02). This model was revised based on new data to enhance our understanding of PTG processes.

Figure (02): Illustrates the stages of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) according to a comprehensive model



Source: (Calhoun, Cann, & Tedeschi, 2010, p. 06)

The diagram developed by Calhoun et al. (2010) in Figure (02) illustrates the pathways of growth, beginning with the pre-trauma phase and culminating in the positive changes that can occur after struggling with life crises. One of the latest revisions to this model acknowledges that the event itself can challenge some individuals' assumptive worlds, resulting in a traumatic impact, while for others, the event may easily fit within their existing assumptive beliefs.

Therefore, it is essential to consider that a variety of cultural influences can play a significant role in shaping these assumptive beliefs, which in turn determine how the event is perceived.

However, it is also important to note that emotional distress is still likely to occur after experiencing stressful events, even when those events align with one's assumptive beliefs, such as in the case of accepting the death of a loved one.

Another aspect of the process included in the revised diagram is the nature of the relationship between Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) and indicators of well-being or life

satisfaction. It is important to note that individuals can experience growth and distress simultaneously. For some individuals, PTG can lead to the development of new wisdom, ultimately resulting in well-being.

Growth is more likely to be associated with the sense of wisdom gained through narratives that acknowledge the complexity of the world, rather than with simplistic indicators of happiness or depression.

The revised diagram also clarifies the interaction between rumination and levels of distress. Shortly after the traumatic event, rumination in the form of intrusive thoughts is likely to be positively associated with both emotional distress and the disruption of assumptive beliefs.

Over time, this rumination can transition into less intrusive and more deliberate forms, representing efforts to understand the event and reconstruct assumptive beliefs. Levels of distress can motivate individuals to work toward making sense of the experience, which, in turn, may influence the distress they are experiencing (Calhoun, Cann, & Tedeschi, 2010, pp. 05-07).

3. Commentary on the Theoretical Framework

The concept of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), introduced by Tedeschi and Calhoun in the mid-1990s, is one of the ideas that has garnered considerable attention from a broad range of researchers. They formulated the notion that individuals can gain certain benefits after experiencing traumatic events, impacting various aspects of their personality. This idea has been supported by numerous studies and philosophies throughout human history, which convey the belief that personal gains can be found in suffering.

The observation that stressful events and trauma can lead to positive psychological changes is also present in the teachings of major religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as in existential philosophy and humanistic psychology. These traditions recognize that positive transformations can arise from suffering. Though this concept has deep theoretical roots, it was not fully embedded in traditional psychology until it was crystallized through research in the field of positive psychology. This development has allowed PTG to become a subject of experimental investigation and one of the primary areas of focus in psychological research over the past decade.

PTG represents one of the most significant contributions of positive psychology to psychological care for trauma victims. By focusing on strengthening personal capacities, this approach demonstrates that such interventions are as valuable as those aimed at alleviating symptoms of illness and disorder. PTG undeniably contributes to the building and development of character.

In this way, positive psychology offers a proactive approach to creating thriving communities that support their members. By adopting various scientific methods aimed at developing human strengths, this approach can help enhance mental health levels and improve individuals' ability to perform optimally in the face of challenges.

Conclusion

The achievements of positive psychology in measuring indicators of personal strengths have laid the groundwork for Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG). These developments have mapped out a comprehensive view of personal growth and development following trauma—contrary to expectations—demonstrating that positive psychological changes can emerge in personal strengths.

Through the analysis of experimental data, several factors have been identified that effectively predict the enhancement of PTG, including personal strengths, self-disclosure, satisfaction with social support networks, spiritual growth, and optimism. Together, these factors contribute to the development of PTG. Many findings indicate that the different dimensions of PTG align with specific personal strengths. For example:

- Kindness, generosity, and love improve relationships with others.
- Curiosity, creativity, and love of learning promote openness to new possibilities.
- Appreciation of beauty, gratitude, and zest help individuals develop a greater appreciation for life.
- Religiosity supports spiritual growth.

This area of research has revealed how trauma can serve as a catalyst for flourishing.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on these findings, it is necessary to expand the application of the PTG model to psychotherapy and clinical practice. This expansion can enhance our understanding of the role of growth in psychological adjustment to trauma. Additionally, extending the study of PTG to the healthcare context should include the families of survivors and the members of their social support networks. This broader approach will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how growth after trauma develops and benefits individuals and their communities.

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