

Research Paper

## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigated post-traumatic growth (PTG) of child trauma survivors in regard to self-concept clarity and resilience through a quantitative cross-sectional approach. One hundred sixty-two participants responded to PTGI-10, CD-RISC-10, and SCCS. Data analyses revealed a high positive correlation between PTG and resilience ( $r = .59, p < .001$ ) which signifies that higher levels of PTG are associated with greater psychological resilience. Conversely, self-concept clarity was found to be unrelated to PTG ( $r = -.06, p = .419$ ), which implies that PTG does not have considerable influence on self-identity clarity. The findings emphasize the capacity of PTG to build resilience and raise important considerations for practices and further studies.

**Keywords:** *post-traumatic growth, resilience, self-concept clarity, childhood trauma, psychological adaptation*

### Childhood Trauma and Long-Term Psychological Effects

The psychological effects of childhood trauma, through abuse, violence or neglect, are severe and often last throughout a person's life. These negative experiences create a chronic state of fear and utter helplessness, often leading to mental health complications later in life. Survivors are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, anger management difficulties, and PTSD. This occurs at least in part due to the fact one's childhood experiences influence key areas of one's brain development, personality development, and emotional regulation system.

Maltreatment of children is a significant issue in India. A national survey found out that 69% of the children suffered from physical abuse, 53% faced sexual abuse, and 49% faced emotional abuse. Such figures significantly demonstrate the need to explore and understand the impact of such negative experiences on an adult's mental health and their identity. While much of the research emphasizes on the negative outcomes, it is equally important to study the ability of individuals to adapt psychologically in the face of such trauma.

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## **The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma**

### **Post-Traumatic Growth: Growth In Possibility**

Not all trauma results in psychological dysfunction. For some individuals dealing with extreme hardships, there is such a phenomena as post-traumatic growth (PTG), which refers to when people experience positive shifts in their psychological wellbeing after they manage difficult life stressors. PTG involves having a better appreciation of life, better relationships, personal strength, newfound possibilities, and greater spiritual or existential understanding.

People who suffer from PTG do not merely return to average, but instead surpass that mark, and endure profound changes in how they view themselves. Such trauma forces an individual to reassess their values and priorities, thus constructing a more rich and meaningful life story. Following all sorts of trauma, be it death, natural catastrophes or loss enables PTG to exist mentoring along suffering rather than eliminating it.

Research suggests that individuals who experience PTG generally have better self-reported and observed psychological wellbeing, including mental functioning, emotional wellbeing, and overall satisfaction with life. Both PTG and resilience are perceived as beneficial elements linked to well-being. While resiliency is characterized by a person's ability to bounce back to pre-functioning levels, PTG is utilizing the psychological reserves that have developed to face myriad challenges head on.

### **Self-Concept Clarity in the Wake of Trauma**

The self-concept clarity, or the degree to which one's self-perceptions are stable and consistent with one's internal narratives, remains central to psychological health. Self-identity is an area that can be severely disrupted by trauma, particularly in childhood, leading to confusion, identity crisis, self-loathing, and other negative attributes. Studies indicate that low self-concept clarity is linked to experiencing more severe PTSD symptoms and emotional challenges among survivors of trauma.

On the other hand, high self-concept clarity is associated with resilience, ability to derive and attach meaning to events and general emotional wellness. Emerging adulthood (18-29 years) is considered a key period for identity crystallization. Trauma survivors during this period may grapple with a fragmented sense of self or, if the trauma is integrated into the self-narrative, achieve a more cohesive perception of identity. It is plausible that PTG enhances self-concept clarity through meaning reconstruction and positive identity affirmation processes.

### **Resilience and Its Psychological Role**

Resilience relates to the ability of an individual to bounce back from adverse experiences while maintaining psychological equilibrium. Trauma, emotions, and distress are part of the day-to-day life of such an individual. Resilience incorporates the notion of coping, emotional self-regulation, and support seeking and availing. Individuals high on the resilience scale may experience emotional distress, but maintain functioning, and return to baseline after the challenge.

Resilience is the primary protective factor in recovering from trauma. For instance, people with high resilience are less vulnerable to developing trauma-related depression and anxiety. While suffering is never entirely eliminated, possessing resilience allows people to manage more effectively. It is also dynamically linked to post-traumatic growth (PTG): while

## **The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma**

distinct, the two constructs support each other. PTG, through hardship, may increase resilience by offering new coping aids and psychological resources.

PTG is shown to incrementally increase resilience over time. Both elements are important in the recovery process, and are associated with improved mental health. In this case, resilience is measured as a psychological trait with the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10), assessing the ability to positively adapt after childhood trauma.

### **The Indian Context: Emerging Adults and Cultural Influences**

This research concentrates on Indian emerging adults, the group experiencing the developmental shift from adolescence to adulthood. Following Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood, this stage is characterized by increased self-exploration, instability, and emerging self-sufficiency. Yet, in collectivist nations such as India, these young adults face familial pressures and cultural constructs that value togetherness.

While personal choices may be postponed, young adults in India seem to take on family responsibilities with a strong sense of community support that can act as a protective factor. This is perhaps one of the most important demographics to study as most trauma and PTG theories tend to focus on Western populations. India's cultural framework which includes community, spirituality, and family still heavily influence how trauma is dealt with and recovered from.

This sample was selected from the general population instead of clinical settings, adopting a community-based approach. This is more representative of how Indian youth attempt to cope with trauma recovery in their everyday lives. It also helps improve the external validity of the research outcome. Additionally, the approach helps address the existing literature gap on PTG and resilience in non-Western societies.

### **Research Aims and Significance**

This dissertation analyzes post traumatic growth, self-concept clarity, and resilience among Indian emerging adults with a history of childhood trauma. The primary hypothesis is that higher PTG will be positively correlated with greater self-concept clarity and higher resilience. This study employs three validated instruments: the PTGI-10 to measure PTG, SCCS for self-concept clarity and CD-RISC-10 for resilience.

This study is important for its distinct theoretical, empirical, and practical impacts. It examines the intersection of trauma psychology, identity development, and positive adaptation within a particular culture. It asks the question if PTG can foster identity discernment and psychological fortitude throughout an imitative life stage. This study also contributes to the literature on trauma within a cross-cultural context—specifically focusing on Indian citizens with a community sample. The study results could be applicable through culturally sensitive narrative therapy, group counseling, or resilience training aimed at facilitating PTG and identity transformation for young trauma survivors.

### **Broader Influences and Literature Integration**

To achieve holistic understanding, the literature review draws on an array of factors. PTG and resilience have their antecedents in individual traits such as optimism, emotional self-efficacy, and neuroticism. For example, high self-efficacy and optimism among subjects

## **The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma**

tends to correlate with claiming PTG, whereas high neuroticism poses challenges regarding identity and integration.

Also notable is the role of social support. The presence of family members, peers, and other community members is associated with improved outcomes from trauma and better self-concept clarity. The review examines other contextual variables such as gender, socioeconomic standing, and the kind of trauma, acknowledging that these factors affect the recovery psychosocial impact of trauma as well as the potential recovery.

Comparing Indians with the rest of the world highlights some striking contrasts. Indian survivors may have or draw upon some spiritual paradigms or community constructs that differ from the Western interpretation of trauma and growth. Lastly, the literature review includes studies on therapeutic techniques for PTG, resilience, and self-concept clarity to determine how these constructs can be developed with specially designed assistance.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma: A International And Indian Perspective**

Childhood Trauma (CT) has far-reaching effects on psychological growth, particularly affecting resilience, post-traumatic growth, and self-concept clarity. The latest research sheds light on this interplay, capturing the essence of both global trends and cultural subtleties, shifts within a society or group.

##### **1. Prevalence and Impact of Childhood Trauma**

India: Singha, Gupta, and Goyal (2024) conducted a study on 1326 undergraduate nursing students from India and found that 65 percent of students reported experiencing at least one form of CT, with emotional neglect being the most common form reported. Increased exposure to trauma was associated with low levels of resilience which suggested a greater need for instructional guidance in educational frameworks.

##### **ResearchGate**

Global: Daniélsdóttir et al. (2022) reviewed data from 26,198 women over 18 years old living in Iceland and identified a dose-response relation whereby higher Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) led to a lower coping ability and psychiatric resilience, especially in cases of emotional neglect and sexual abuse.

##### **2. Resilience: Protective Factors and Mediators**

Attachment and Self-Competency: Watters, Reed-Fitzke, and Wojciak (2024) conducted research on 289 emerging adults with a history of ACE and reported that disrupted attachment and perceived competence relatively explained high levels of anxiety and depression, proving the necessity of focus on these domains to enhance resilience.

Personality Traits: In a study of adults with cumulative trauma (CT) exposure, Linnemann, Berger, and Teismann (2022) found that greater neuroticism was related to lower resilience while greater conscientiousness was associated with greater resilience.

Self-Concept Clarity: Lassri et al. (2022) researched 65 young adult women in Israel, pointing out that survivors of childhood sexual abuse with low self-concept clarity

## **The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma**

demonstrated more dissociative symptoms, revealing the identity crisis that is protective self-identity.

### **3. Post-Traumatic Growth: Facilitators and Barriers**

**Cognitive Processing:** Ferris and O'Brien (2022) reviewed 25 studies and asserted that trauma-exposed youth utilize positive cognitive strategies, such as reappraisal and deliberate rumination, which are consistently associated with higher PTG.

**Resilience as a Mediator:** Among South Korean adults, Lee, Yu, and Kim (2020) reported that resilience fully mediated the relationship between post-traumatic stress symptoms and PTG, noting stronger effects in individuals with a higher level of childhood trauma.

**Type of Trauma:** PTG was qualitatively lower among survivors of sexual violence as was reported by Refaeli and Shir (2025) studying 285 Israeli women trauma survivors. Paradoxically, greater self-blame was associated with higher PTG suggesting that survivors engage more deeply, cognitively, with the trauma.

### **4. Socioeconomic Status and Its Influence**

**India:** Suchday et al. (2025) noted that for Indian adolescents, childhood trauma was associated with anger issues regardless of their socioeconomic status. However, lower perceived socioeconomic status (SES) and parental education seemed to worsen emotional outcomes.

**Global:** Willey et al. (2022) found that Black participants with lower SES reported significantly greater post-traumatic growth (PTG) during the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to higher-SES White participants, implying that prior disadvantage may enhance coping and sense-making abilities.

### **5. Differences Due to Gender**

**PTG and Resilience:** Wei et al. (2021) noted that trauma-related depression was more pronounced among adolescent girls in China, however, resilience was particularly high among women, especially after emotional abuse, which played a protective role.

**Self-Concept Clarity:** Peleg, Hasson-Ohayon, and Levy (2023) argued that high self-concept clarity served as a protective factor for women who experienced childhood sexual abuse, shielding them from dissociative symptoms, underscoring the importance of active self-identity formation.

### **6. Therapeutic and Intervention-Based Methods**

**Resilience Interventions:** Lee, Yu, and Kim (2020) recommend that therapy should aim not only to alleviate PTSD symptoms, but also to cultivate resilience by enhancing emotion regulation, building social support, and employing cognitive reframing strategies.

Integrating mental resilience interventions such as cognitive behavioral therapy or mindfulness into the education system can help prevent future mental health challenges in adolescents.

## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

### *The Guardian*

#### **7. Social Support and Relationships**

Schaefer et al. (2018) demonstrate that support from family, optimism, and positive coping mechanisms, particularly resilience-focused religious practices, enhanced resilience in emerging adults who experienced childhood abuse.

Cultural Context: Mishra and Dutt (2024) pointed out that the absence of social support had little bearing on PTG or flourishing, suggesting culture may mediate social support's impact on Indian emerging adults with childhood trauma.

#### **8. Personality and Dispositional Traits**

Emotional Social Self-Efficacy and Locus of Control: In studying university students with childhood trauma, Türk-Kurtça and Kocatürk (2020) found that those with higher emotional self-efficacy and internal loci of control to be significantly more resilient.

Big Five Personality Traits: An, Ding, and Fu (2017) reported that extraversion and conscientiousness facilitated PTG, spanning direct and indirect influences, while neuroticism was linked to less PTG due to ineffective coping strategies resulting from heightened neuroticism.

#### **9. Self-Concept Clarity Post Childhood Trauma**

Global Meta-Analysis: Melamed et al. (2024) meta-analyzed 134 studies and found that trauma inflicted during childhood has a small to moderate negative self-concept impact, which is worse for survivors of sexual abuse or multiple traumas.

Identity Disruption: Vartanian et al. (2023) noted a relationship where greater exposure to adverse experiences during childhood was associated with much lower self-concept clarity in Australian adolescents which caused greater body image dissatisfaction and increased susceptibility to social comparison.

#### **10. India and The World**

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Wadji et al. (2023) surveyed people in Cameroon, Canada, Japan and Germany, discovering that more severe physical and emotional abuse correlated with lower resilience among adults, but participants from Cameroon exhibited the most resilience and PTG, indicating cultural and communal factors.

Institutional Care in India: Thomas et al. (2022) explored the psychosocial outcomes of child sexual abuse survivors in institutional care in Kerala and found greater emotional wellbeing and longer time spent in stable living conditions associated with greater resilience.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Aim*

Study the influence of positive post-traumatic growth on self-concept clarity and personality resilience among people who experienced childhood trauma.

### *Objectives*

- Evaluate the relation between PTG and resilience.
- Evaluate the relation between PTG and self-concept clarity.
- Find out whether PTG is a significant predictor of resilience and self-concept clarity.

# The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

## Rationale

This study analyzes how PTG manifests in relation to resilience and self-concept clarity among survivors of childhood trauma. Psychological trauma is known to cause a majority of psychological challenges; however, sometimes, the opposite might also be the case. Understanding these relationships would enhance therapeutic approaches to identity.

## Hypotheses

- H1: There is a positive relationship between PTG and resilience as well as self-concept clarity.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between PTG and self-concept clarity or resilience.

## Research Design

A quantitative correlational approach was employed to investigate the relationships between PTG, resilience, and self-concept clarity.

## Sample

This sample consists of 162 adult people self-reporting to have experienced childhood trauma. They were selected using convenience sampling through social media and academic circles.

## Tools Used

- PTGI-10: Assesses positive change after trauma (10 items;  $\alpha = .91$ )
- CD-RISC-10: Measures resilience (10 items;  $\alpha = .88$ )
- SCCS: Evaluates self-concept clarity (12 items;  $\alpha = .86$ )

## Procedure

The participants took part in an internet-based survey which consisted of a consent form, demographic questions, as well as three different standardized questionnaires. Data were scored according to established protocols, including reverse scoring where applicable. The analyses conducted were descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and linear regression with SPSS and Python.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Statistical Analysis Report

#### Step 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
PTGI	30.43	11.25	0	49
SCCS	35.99	7.38	19	56
CDRISC	30.73	8.73	4	48

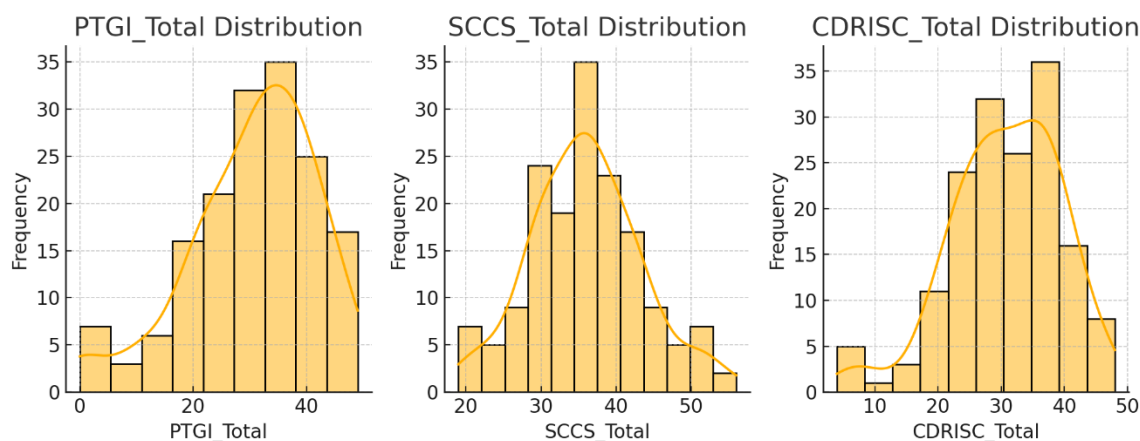
Interpretation: Participants on average reported moderate scores for Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), Resilience, and Self-Concept Clarity. PTG and Resilience scores span a wider range, suggesting more variability among respondents.

## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

### Step 2: Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

Variable	W-Statistic	p-value	Normal?
PTGI Total	0.947	0.0000	No
SCCS Total	0.986	0.0946	Yes
CDRISC Total	0.974	0.0039	No

Interpretation: SCCS is normally distributed, while PTGI and CDRISC deviate slightly from normality. Given the sample size (N=162), Pearson's correlation and linear regression are acceptable due to robustness.



Histogram: Distribution curves of each variable.

### Step 3: Correlation Analysis (Pearson's r)

Variables	r	p-value	Significant?
PTG ↔ Resilience	0.59	0.0000	Yes
PTG ↔ Self-Concept	-0.06	0.4190	No

Interpretation: PTG and Resilience show a strong and significant positive correlation, whereas PTG and Self-Concept Clarity do not show a significant relationship.

### Step 4: Linear Regression Analysis

#### Model 1: PTG predicting Resilience

β (slope): 0.460  
 Intercept: 16.72  
 R<sup>2</sup>: 0.35  
 p-value: 0.00000

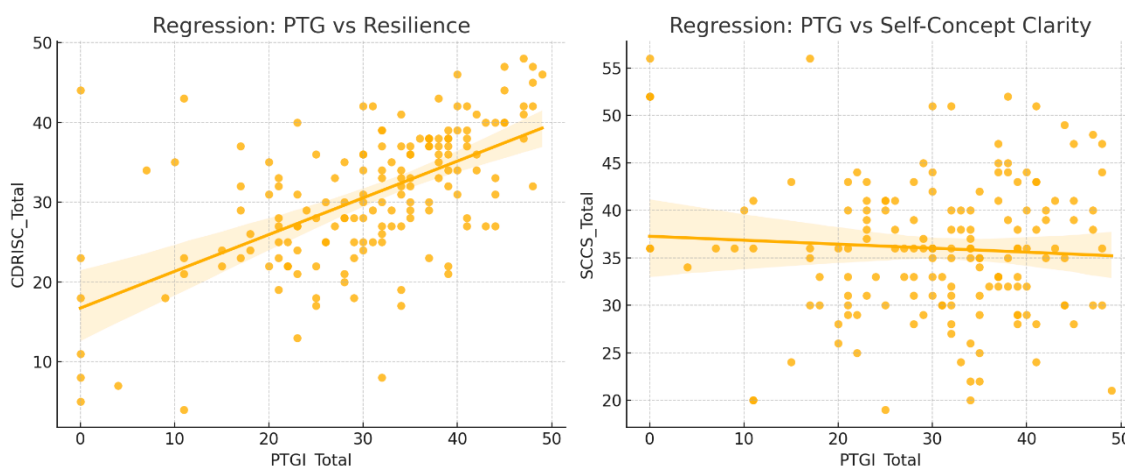
Interpretation: PTG significantly predicts Resilience.

#### Model 2: PTG predicting Self-Concept Clarity

β (slope): -0.042  
 Intercept: 37.27  
 R<sup>2</sup>: 0.00  
 p-value: 0.41905

Interpretation: PTG does not significantly predict Self-Concept Clarity.

## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma



Visualizations: Regression lines for PTG vs Resilience and PTG vs Self-Concept Clarity.

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables. The mean PTG score was 30.43 (SD = 11.25), the mean resilience score was 30.73 (SD = 8.73), and the mean self-concept clarity score was 35.99 (SD = 7.38). Minimum and maximum values for PTG were 0 and 49, respectively, for resilience were 4 and 48, and for self-concept clarity were 19 and 56.

### **Normality Testing**

Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted to assess normality. The PTG ( $W = 0.947, p < .001$ ) and resilience ( $W = 0.974, p = .0039$ ) scores were not normally distributed, while the self-concept clarity scores approximated a normal distribution ( $W = 0.986, p = .095$ ). Given the sample size ( $N = 162$ ), Pearson's correlation was deemed appropriate.

### **Correlation Analysis**

Pearson's correlation revealed a significant positive relationship between PTG and resilience,  $r(160) = .59, p < .001$ . No significant correlation was found between PTG and self-concept clarity,  $r(160) = -.06, p = .419$ .

### **Regression Analysis**

A simple linear regression was performed to predict resilience from PTG. The model was significant,  $F(1,160) = 87.64, p < .001, R^2 = .35$ . PTG significantly predicted resilience ( $\beta = 0.460, p < .001$ ), indicating that increases in PTG were associated with increases in resilience.

Another regression was conducted with self-concept clarity as the dependent variable and PTG as the predictor. This model was not significant,  $F(1,160) = 0.66, p = .419, R^2 = .004$ . PTG did not significantly predict self-concept clarity ( $\beta = -0.042, p = .419$ ).

## **DISCUSSION**

The current study outcomes only partially tested the original hypothesis as a significant positive correlation was found between post-traumatic growth (PTG) and resilience but not with self-concept clarity. The results indicate that respondents with childhood trauma and high levels of PTG also tend to be more resilient. This agrees with existing literature that appreciates the notion that adversity can stimulate growth in coping strategies and emotional toughness (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

## **The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma**

The supportive link between PTG and resilience as previously mentioned is found in Khosravi et al. (2021) who reported that people scoring high on PTG showed more psychological resilience to trauma. Prati and Pietrantonio (2009) also noted in a meta-analytic review that PTG was positively related to well-being outcomes including personal strength and coping and other associated parameters.

Yet, contrary to the hypothesis, PTG did not significantly predict self-concept clarity. This could be due to self-concept being analyzed as a broader construct incorporating identity, personal beliefs, and self-understanding. While PTG indicates some form of positive change perception after experiencing challenges, it does not reflect a coherent and stable identity. Campbell et al. (2003) have pointed out that self-concept clarity is defined as the clear understanding of oneself and it is susceptible to a number of other processes like social context, bounds of cognition, and emotional regulation and tactics which are not necessarily operated by PTG.

No relationship between PTG and self-concept clarity also might symbolize differences of individuals in relation to trauma's processing and making meaning of it.

Joseph and Linley (2006) argue that while PTG does bring forth the facet of positive reinterpretation, there is no guarantee the trauma is integrated into the self-narrative resulting in coherent self-concept performance due to lacking narrative structure.

The strong prediction of resilience as an outcome of PTG marks the need to support post-traumatic growth in therapeutic practices. Supporting notion construction and positive reevaluation may enable trauma sufferers to develop coping skills that lead to enhanced healing.

In summary, the study adds to the literature on the outcomes of PTG, particularly the adaptive ones, and illuminates the interactions among psychological resilience and identity-related constructs.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study sought to evaluate the impact of post-traumatic growth on the development of resilience and self-concept clarity among adults with a history of childhood trauma. It was established that PTG was a significant predictor of resilience, but it did not correlate with self-concept clarity.

Post-traumatic growth does aid in enhancing psychological resilience, which justifies the amplified adversity found in the lives of some individuals. PTG's lack of direct impact on the structural clarity of identity aspects highlights that it may not aid one's identity development.

PTG as a protective negative factor of depression indicates that while it aids resilience building, it does leave gaps in self-concept accuracy, making further study on the matter needed.

### **Limitations**

When interpreting the results of this study, several limitations should be taken into account. Firstly, the sample was recruited using convenience sampling, which poses an issue

## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

regarding generalizability. Secondly, all measures were based on self-report, meaning there may be response bias. Thirdly, the non-longitudinal design does not allow causal interpretations. Furthermore, some variables such as current mental health status, existing support systems, or therapy history, alongside PTG and psychological outcomes, were not controlled in this study.

### *Future directions*

The study would be more helpful if researchers implemented longitudinal designs for assessing changes in PTG and its impact on resilience and identity over time. Including qualitative approaches would also enhance the analysis by obtaining a deeper understanding of how people process and interpret trauma. Additionally, the study could be expanded by incorporating mediators and moderators like social support, coping strategies, or even emotional regulation to gain a more comprehensive understanding of post-traumatic growth. Using a wider diverse sample would also increase the value of the study's conclusions.

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## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

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## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

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## The Role of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) in Shaping Self-Concept and Resilience Among Survivors of Childhood Trauma

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

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