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Post Traumatic Growth

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether emotional trauma can stimulate growth in an individual irrespective of one's age. A survey research design was utilized to carry out this study using the PTGI (post traumatic growth inventory). Findings indicate no relation between age and growth post trauma indicating that emotional maturity can take place at any time irrespective of age and we can say that PTG leads to wellbeing, the degree of well-being though still cannot be inferred.

Keywords: Post Traumatic growth, Social-Emotional development, Positive Psychology, Adolescents, Emotional maturity, General well-being, Post Traumatic Stress, and Erickson's theory of crises development.

Research Question: The current study sought to determine whether emotional trauma stimulates growth in an individual.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Healing comes from gathering wisdom from past actions and letting go of the pain that the education cost you."

Psychosomatic situations are inevitable. The aforementioned situation frequently results in trauma and aggravated emotions. The effects of stressful situations, of course, varies depending on the degree of trauma endured. Trauma is the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel a full range of emotions and experiences. Although many people experience negative decline post trauma. Many studies have demonstrated positive growth after adversity. This phenomenon has been researched significantly in the field of positive and developmental psychology. Although the main focus here is on the possibilities of positive change arising from the challenge of difficult circumstances, it is appropriate to begin with the reminder that difficult circumstances can produce psychological distress. This study recognizes that traumatic events are not to be viewed simply as precursor to growth. In this paper we examine whether trauma leads to emotional maturation irrespective of age. Social-Emotional development represents a specific domain of child development. It is a gradual, integrative process through which children acquire the capacity to understand, experience, express, and manage emotions and to develop meaningful relationships with others. Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life worth living (Peterson 2008). Adolescence is the period of transition between childhood and adulthood that involves biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes (Hurlock E.

1981). Emotional maturity is a process through which the personality continually strives for a greater understanding of emotional health, internally and internally. Erickson's theory of development Erikson maintained that personality develops in a predetermined order through eight stages of psychosocial development, from infancy to adulthood. During each stage, the person experiences a psychosocial crisis which could have a positive or negative outcome for personality development.

II. METHODOLOGY

(a) Research question: Can emotional trauma and stressful situations lead to emotional maturation?

(b) Description of method used:

(i) Survey - Survey research came into existence to study opinions, attitudes and social facts. The survey research uses different techniques for collecting

information. Included among these techniques are: personal interviews, questionnaires, telephonic surveys, and controlled observations

(ii) Questionnaire Survey – The questionnaire is used for collecting background and demographic information, information about past behaviour, attitudes and opinions, knowledge about a particular topic, and expectations and aspirations of the persons. This questionnaire survey intends to determine how many people witnessed growth (as an outcome) of a traumatic or an event that caused the individual stress.

(iii) Consists of predetermined set of questions that the respondent had to read and answer. There are 2 types of questionnaire surveys: open-ended questionnaires and close-ended questionnaires.

(iv) The type of questionnaire that will be used in this research essay is a close- ended questionnaire, where there will be a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 to 5-

1 = I did not experience this change as a result of my crisis.

2 = I experienced this change to a small degree as a result of my crisis.

3 = I experienced this change to a moderate degree as a result of my crisis. 4 = I experienced this change to a great degree as a result of my crisis.

5 = I experienced this change to a very great degree as a result of my crisis.

The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) is scored by adding all the responses. Individual factors are scored by adding responses to items on each factor.

(c) Survey size/data collected

The sample is selected from some adolescents of Vasant Valley School, and a few adults that had faced trauma - from the age of 15 to 75. Simple Sampling method was used to identify 25 subjects volunteered for this study. The aim of this survey was to determine the growth an individual would face (if any) after a traumatic or highly stressful event. 48% of the people that participated were 16 years old and all the participants were above the age of 15. 60% of the individuals that participated in this survey were female whereas 40% were male. It should be noted that this survey was completely voluntary thus, not subjected bias. None of the variables (discussed below) were manipulated to obtain a specific result. The analysis of data collected will be discussed in depth in the results section. The data collected was anonymous, and no names were asked for in the questionnaire. Higher the score on the scale greater the degree of growth post trauma

(d) Attach questionnaire/ test used/ interview questions/ experimental variables

The questionnaire used here was Tedeschi and Calhoun's (1996) developed the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) to assess post-trauma growth and self-improvement a person undergoes. A 21-item scale built on the five-factor model of Tedeschi, this inventory is one of the most valid and reliable resources for evaluating personal growth that follows a stressful encounter. Each question in the inventory has been assigned a factor ranging from (I,V)

The PTGI was initially developed to measure favourable outcomes of a stressful life event. But with time, it became more popular as a test that provides direction to the participants about their future actions and suggests scope for self-improvement (Cann, Calhoun, Tedeschi, & Solomon, 2010).

PTGI Factors

Factor I: Relating to Others Factor II: New Possibilities Factor III: Personal Strength Factor IV: Spiritual Change Factor V: Appreciation of Life

Experimental Variables

Post traumatic growth - Post traumatic growth is a concept describing positive psychological change experienced as a result of struggling with highly challenging, highly stressful life circumstances

Trauma - Trauma is any type of distressing event or experience that can have an impact on a person's ability to cope and function. Adolescents - The individuals at the period of transition between childhood and adulthood that involves biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes (Hurlock E., 1981). Adolescence begins from 10 to 13 years and ends between the age range of 18-20 years.

Question number/Degree	1	2	3	4	5
1	4%	4%	32%	44%	16%
2	8%	20%	16%	36%	20%
3	12%	12%	24%	40%	12%
4	-	8%	20%	40%	32%
5	20%	12%	20%	12%	36%
6	12%	28%	8%	32%	20%

7	8%	4%	28%	44%	16%
8	4%	4%	44%	36%	12%
9	24%	12%	24%	28%	12%
10	-	8%	20%	40%	32%
11	-	12%	28%	48%	12%
12	4%	8%	28%	40%	20%
13	12%	28%	16%	28%	16%
14	12%	12%	28%	32%	16%
15	8%	4%	20%	40%	28%
16	12%	8%	20%	32%	28%
17	4%	12%	24%	40%	20%
18	36%	8%	20%	20%	16%
19	4%	16%	20%	24%	36%
20	24%	8%	28%	20%	20%
21	8.3%	29.2%	29.2%	16.7%	16.7%

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1- To assess the growth (if any) after enduring trauma.

The data in the table suggests that 85% of the responses were above the third degree (I experienced this change to a moderate degree as a result of my crisis), presenting a positive correlation between growth and trauma.

Objective 2- To assess whether there was any relation between growth and age

There was no relation between age and growth post trauma indicating that emotional maturity can take place at any time irrespective of age indicating that emotional maturity can take place at any time irrespective of age.

There were many relationships between the PTGI, the PTGI factors, and personality. The PTGI was positively correlated with optimism, religiosity, and all the major dimensions of

personality except neuroticism (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996). According to Erickson’s theory of development, there are certain psychosocial crises that one must go through in order to develop their personality and self.

Erikson was interested in how social interaction and relationships played a role in the development and growth of human beings, thus stating that every experience or interaction will result in growth of one kind or another, similar to this post traumatic growth model.

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue	Age
1.	Trust vs Mistrust	Hope	0-1 ^{1/2}
2.	Autonomy vs Shame	Will	1 ^{1/2} - 3
3.	Initiative vs Guilt	Purpose	3-5
4.	Industry vs Inferiority	Competency	5-12
5.	Identity vs Role confusion	Fidelity	12-18

6.	Intimacy vs Isolation	Love	18-40
7.	Generativity vs Stagnation	Care	40-65
8.	Eco Integrity vs Despair	Wisdom	65+

Objective 3 – Does Trauma lead to General Well-Being in those subjected to it?

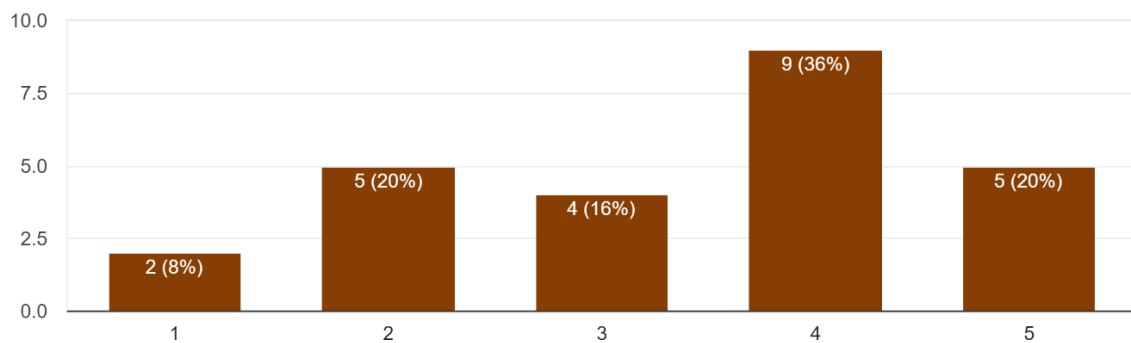
According to Crow and Crow, a person of any age group can be emotionally matured who has the capability to overcome the stress by neglecting certain emotion stimulators that have a direct bearing on the behaviour and attitude of the individual. As adolescence is known to be major period of development, the emotional maturity will have a definite impact on general well-being of adolescents

Studies suggest that trauma could make you more vulnerable to developing physical health problems, including long-term or chronic illnesses. This might be because trauma can affect your body as well as your mind, which can have a long-term impact on your physical health. With the advent of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), studies focusing on the positive impact of stress and its aftermath have been proliferating (Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009). However, focusing on positive aspects of a trauma or stressor while totally ignoring its negative impacts may lead to a serious misrepresentation of post-traumatic adjustment. Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and the ability to manage stress. Taking the above results into account we can say that PTG leads to wellbeing, the degree of well-being yet still cannot be inferred. Some hypotheses state that trauma (leading to growth, of course) leads to decreased wellbeing in the individual. PTG is a coping strategy and its effectiveness as a coping strategy mediates the relationship between PTG and wellbeing. Research is inconclusive as to which hypothesis is accurate and so further work is required.

The struggle with traumatic events can lead, along with the possibility of posttraumatic growth, to a revised life story (McAdams, 1993).

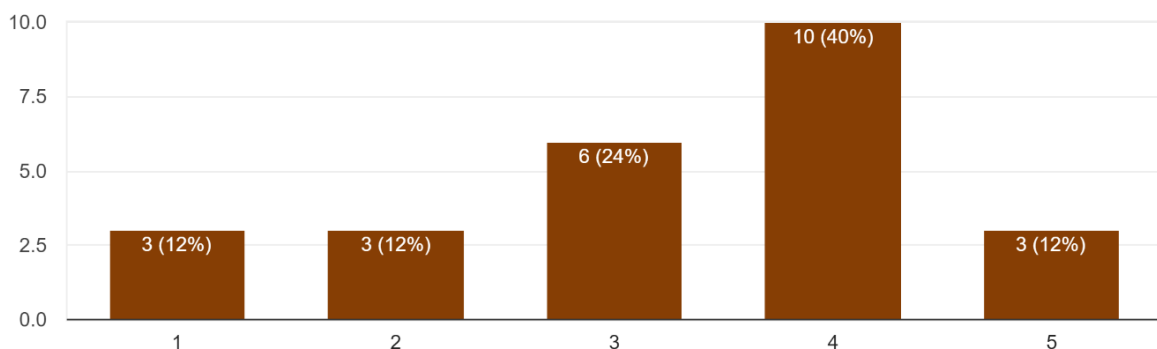
2. I have a greater appreciation for the value of my own life.

25 responses



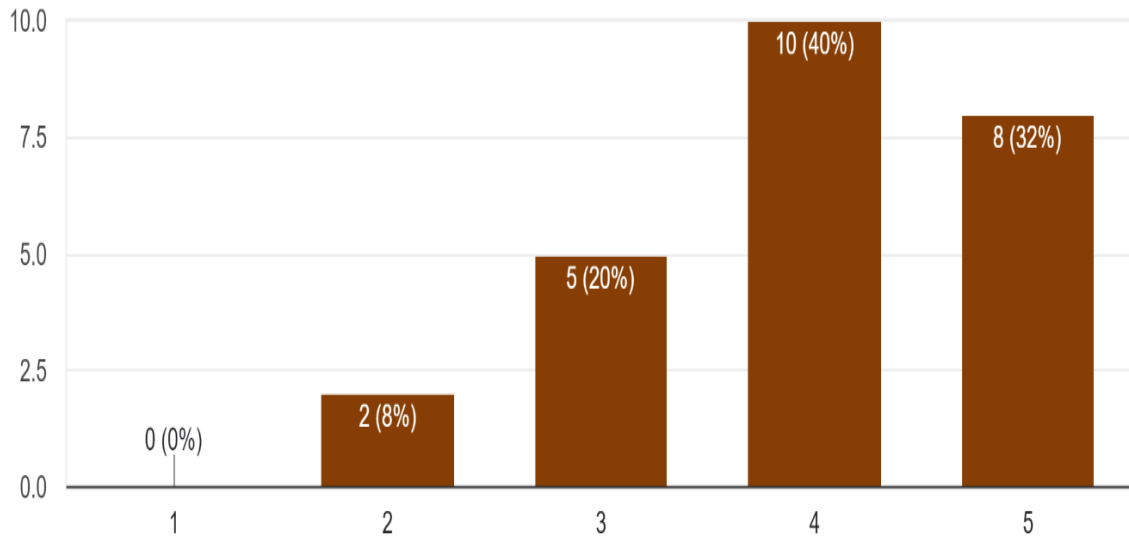
3. I developed new interests.

25 responses



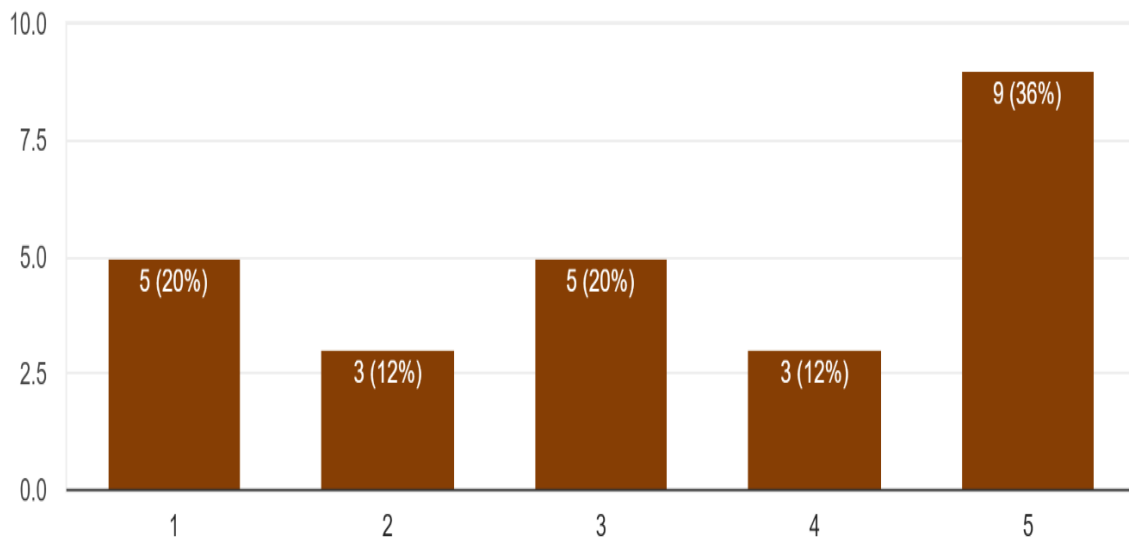
4. I have a greater feeling of self-reliance.

25 responses



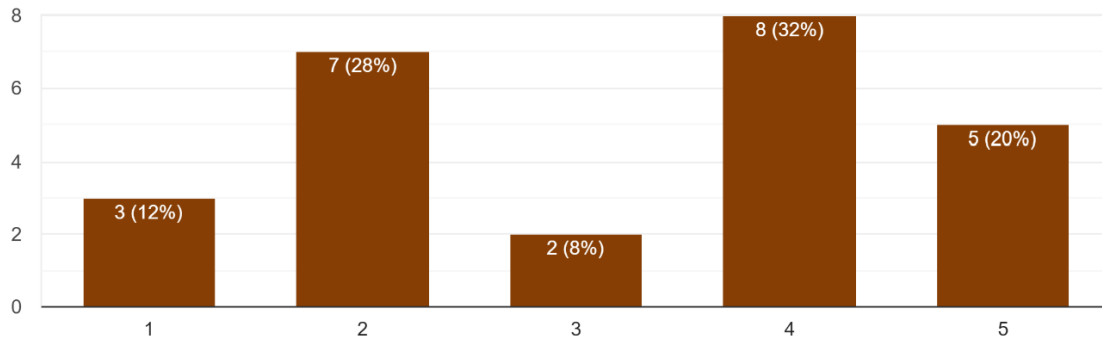
5. I have a better understanding of spiritual matters.

25 responses



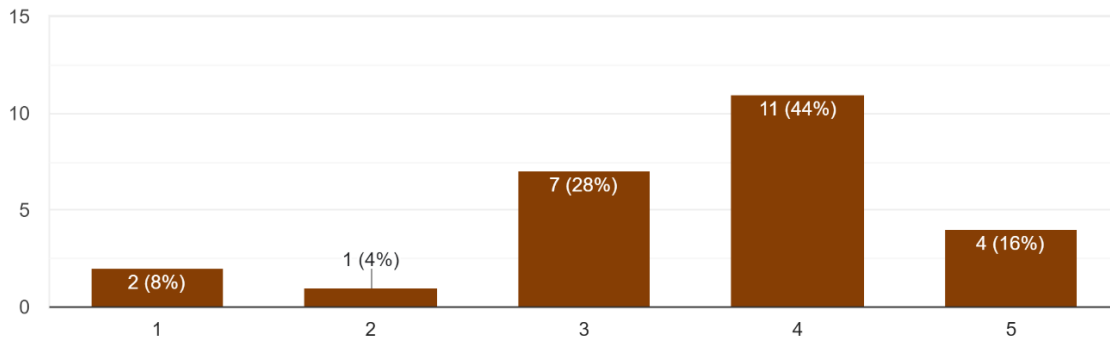
6. I more clearly see that I can count on people in times of trouble.

25 responses



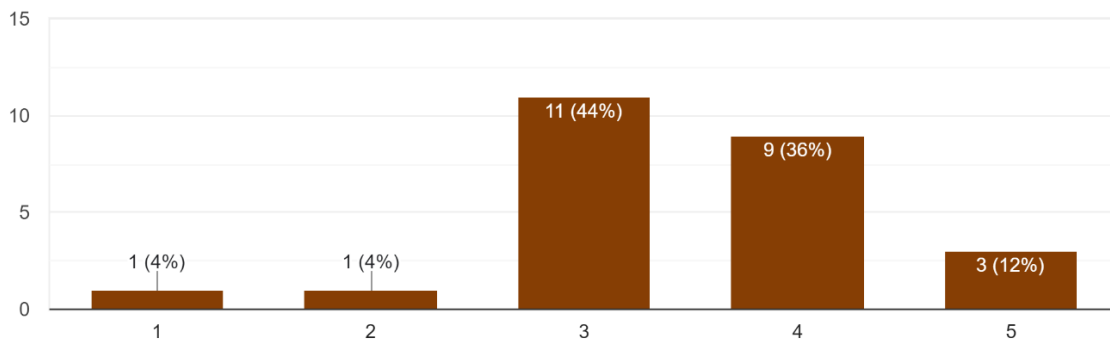
7. I established a new path for my life.

25 responses



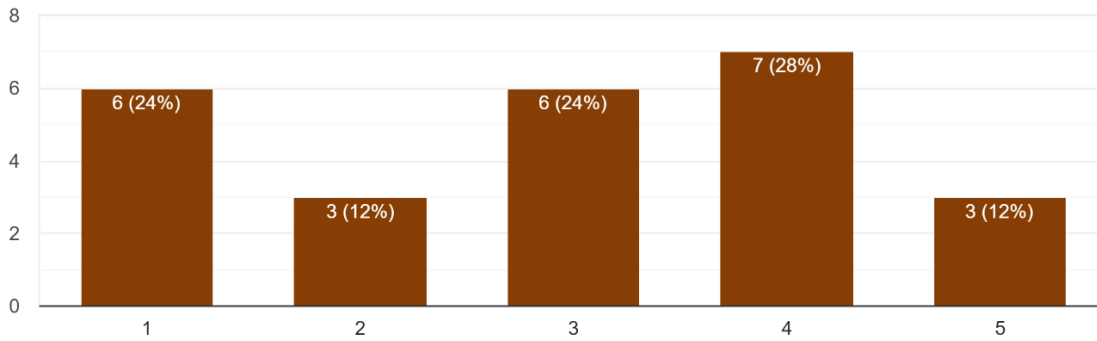
8. I have a greater sense of closeness with others.

25 responses



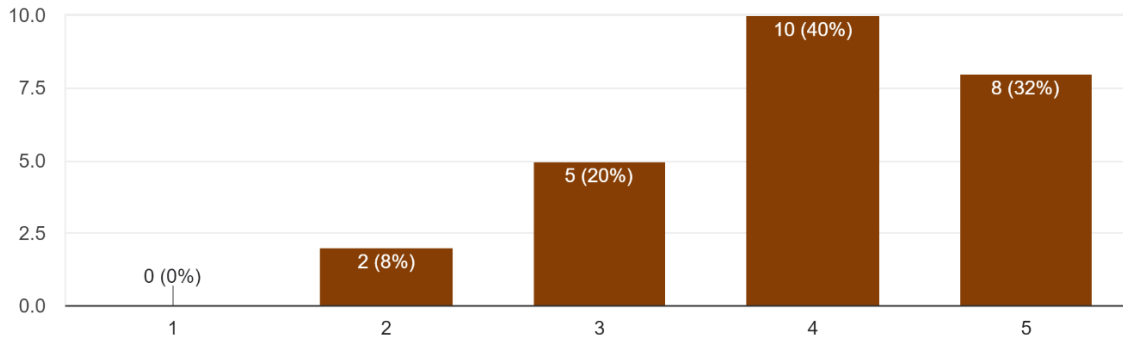
9. I am more willing to express my emotions.

25 responses



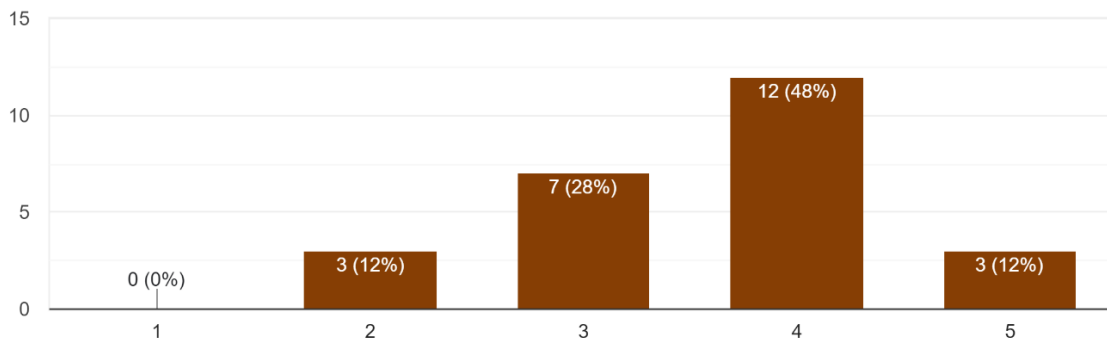
10. I know better that I can handle difficulties

25 responses



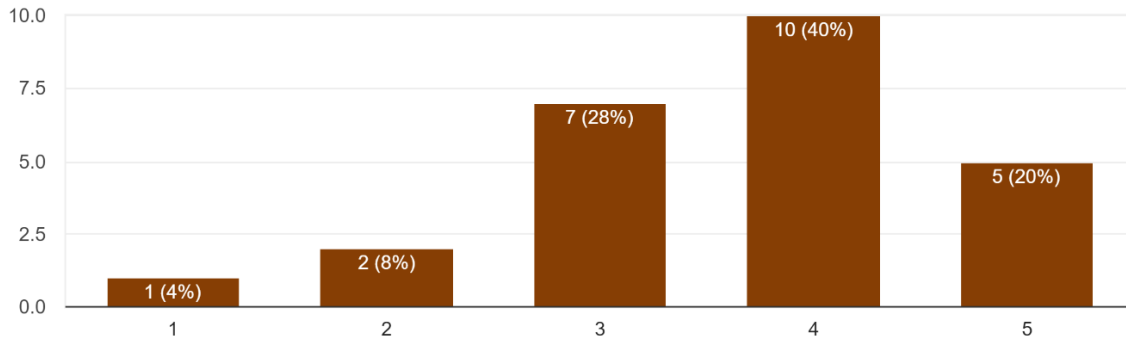
11. I am able to do better things with my life.

25 responses



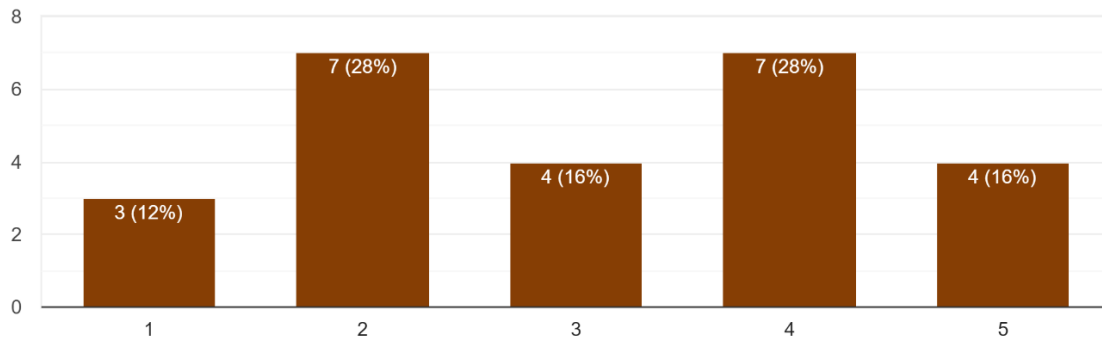
12. I am better able to accept the way things work out.

25 responses



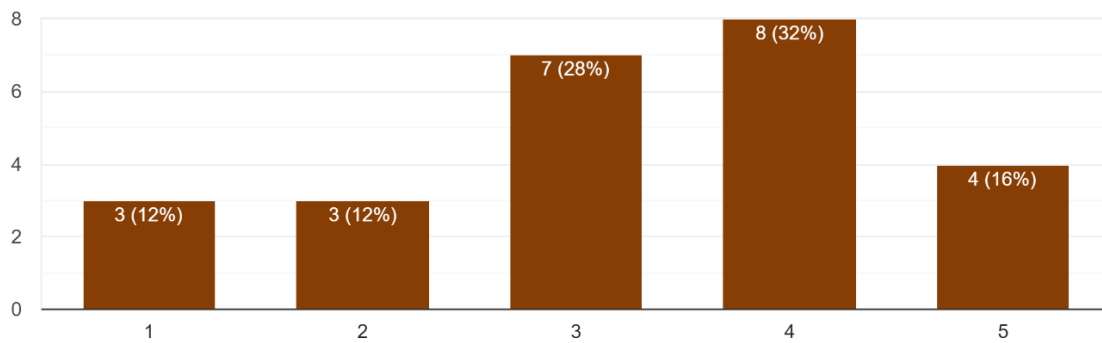
13. I can better appreciate each day.

25 responses



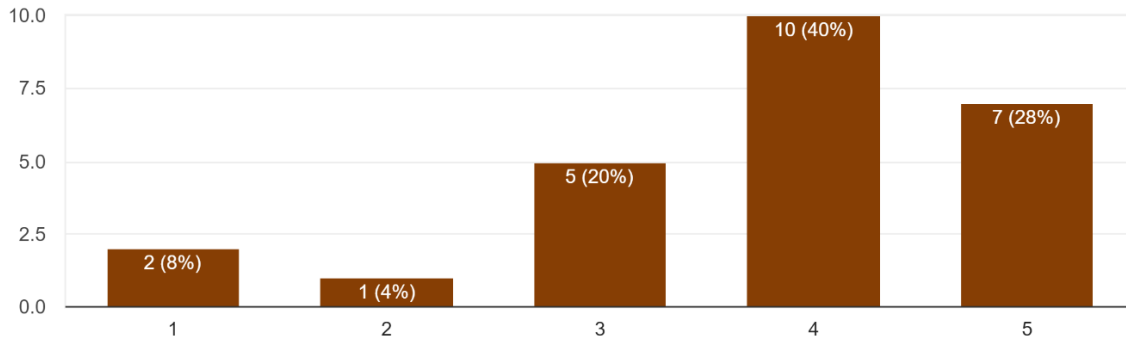
14. New opportunities are available which wouldn't have been otherwise.

25 responses



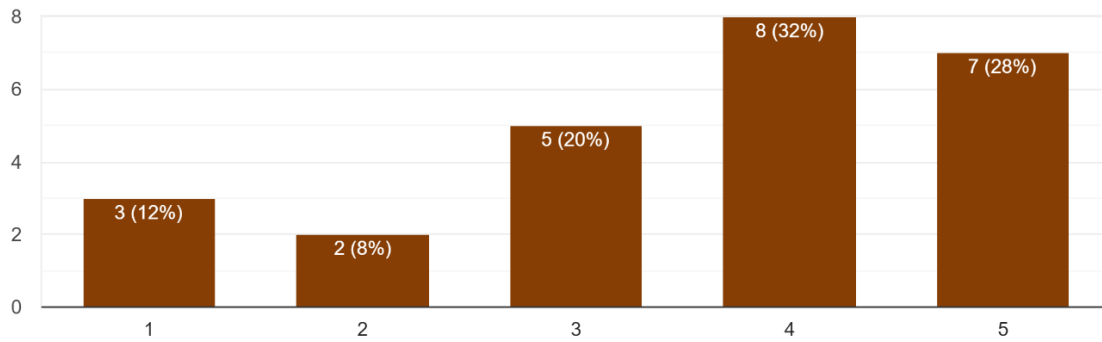
15. I have more compassion for others.

25 responses



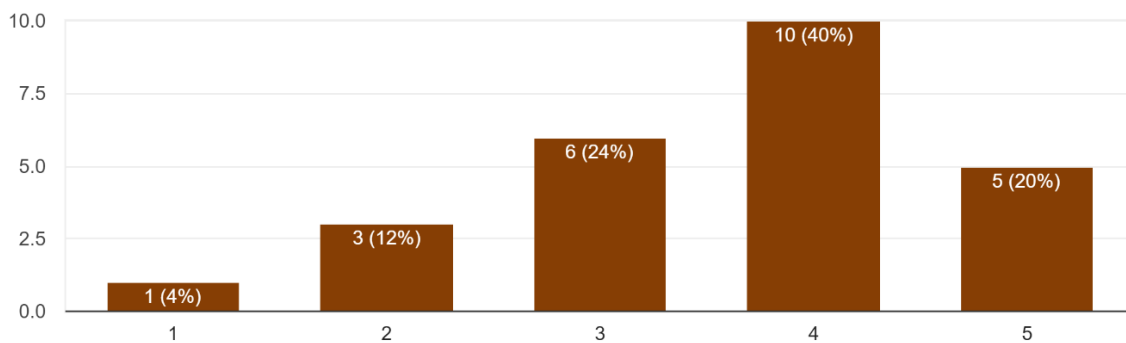
16. I put more effort into my relationships.

25 responses



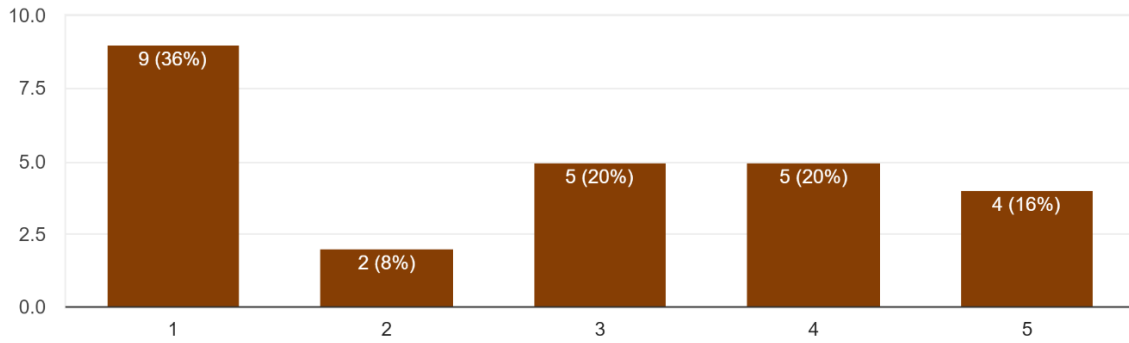
17. I am more likely to try to change things which need changing.

25 responses



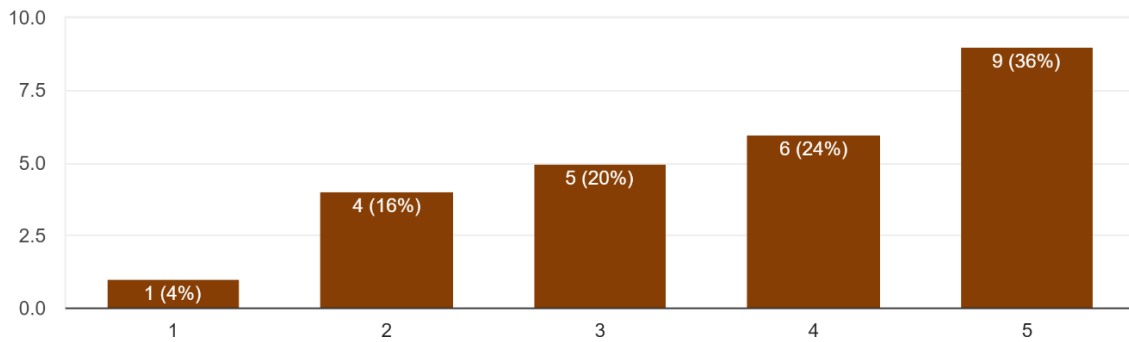
18. I have a stronger religious faith

25 responses



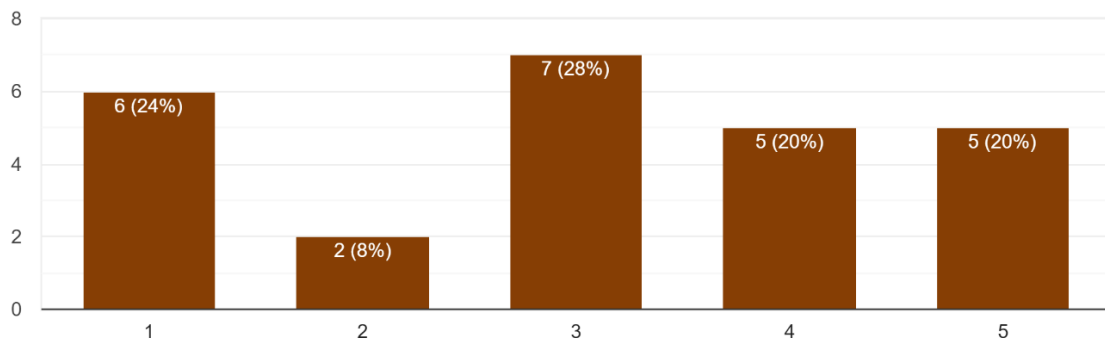
19. I discovered that I'm stronger than I thought I was.

25 responses



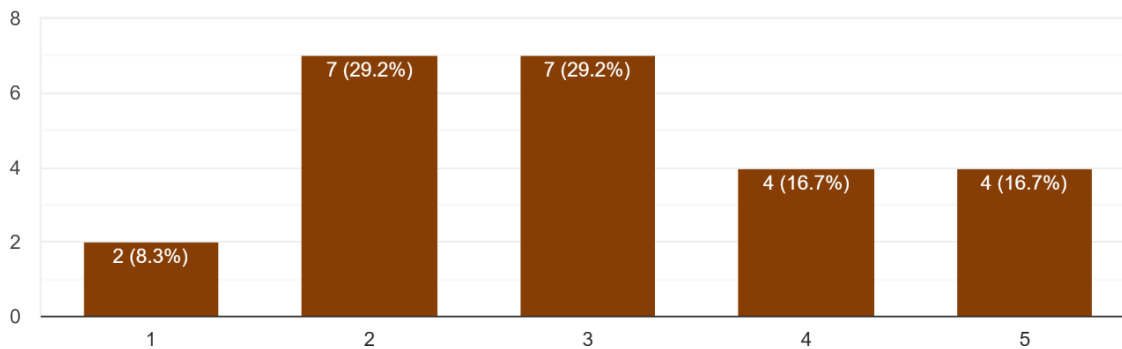
20. I learned a great deal about how wonderful people are.

25 responses



21. I am better at accepting I need others.

24 responses



1. I changed my priorities about what is important in life. (V)
2. I have a greater appreciation for the value of my own life. (V)
3. I developed new interests. (II)
4. I have a greater feeling of self-reliance. (III)
5. I have a better understanding of spiritual matters. (IV)
6. I more clearly see that I can count on people in times of trouble. (I)
7. I established a new path for my life. (II)
8. I have a greater sense of closeness with others. (I)
9. I am more willing to express my emotions. (I)
10. I know better that I can handle difficulties. (III)
11. I am able to do better things with my life. (II)
12. I am better able to accept the way things work out. (III)
13. I can better appreciate each day. (V)
14. New opportunities are available which wouldn't have been otherwise. (II)
15. I have more compassion for others. (I)
16. I put more effort into my relationships. (I)
17. I am more likely to try to change things which need changing. (II)
18. I have a stronger religious faith. (N)
19. I discovered that I'm stronger than I thought I was. (III)
20. I learned a great deal about how wonderful people are. (I)
21. I better accept needing others. (I)

Suggestions and Limitations

the PTGI has good internal consistency, acceptable test-retest reliability, and that among persons reporting a variety of life difficulties, scores on the scale are approximately normally distributed. In addition, responses are generally unrelated to the motive to appear socially desirable.

Improvements in assessments

The issue of whether the experienced events produced changes in fundamental assumptions or strengthened existing beliefs cannot be answered unambiguously by referring to the PTGI scores. Persons reporting benefits may have experienced a qualitative shift in their views, and therefore report an "extreme" change, or a quantitative shift might also feel "extreme" to some persons. Means on the scale indicate that persons experiencing severe trauma tend to report a great degree of change, while persons reporting no extraordinary events report a "small" to "moderate" degree.

Some other limitations of the questionnaire are that the instructions were not as clear as they should have been, as feedback suggests. The results also might be different based on the degree of trauma endured by the individual. Some participants may not have gone through a very stressful or traumatic situation.

Future Directions

Future studies should select or divide people in groups if they have encountered some sort of trauma before (and not only a highly stressful situation). Since the the degree of well-being could not be inferred from the results, I would encourage future researchers investigate the same.

A future study could also study whether Post traumatic growth is a process or an outcome. They should consider cognitive processing and how it can be associated with posttraumatic growth.

Social support should also be given for those who have been through trauma and help them in growth.

IV. CONCLUSION

There is still much to be learned about how people ‘bounce’ back from trauma and how perhaps it can be used as a springboard to dive into individual development and growth. Traumatic events that initiate PTG have the quality of seismic events on a psychological level (Calhoun, 1996). A sense of vulnerability that stems from trauma prompts positive changes in interpersonal relationships, appreciation of life, personal strength and more. For most trauma survivors, post-traumatic growth and struggling with coexist, and growth will emerge with coping. We can also conclude that trauma does not necessarily result in growth. Individuals can mature and develop in meaningful ways without experiencing a tragedy or trauma, consequently Post-Traumatic growth is neither universal nor inevitable. Results prove that those who rise from trauma experience growth in many aspects including personal strength, new possibilities, improved relationships, and appreciation of life.

VIII REFERENCES

- [1]. Cho, D., & Park, C. L. (2013). Growth following trauma: Overview and current status. *Terapia Psicológica*, 31(1), 69–79. <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-48082013000100007> explored the growth following stressful life events helping us understand the range of responses to stressful life events. Results of this study showed the research demonstrating actual growth and research findings that allow us to develop a deeper understanding of this phenomenon are frustratingly slim.
- [2]. Stallard, Paul, et al. “Post-traumatic Growth During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Carers of Children in Portugal and the UK: Cross-sectional Online Survey.” *BJPsych Open*, vol. 7, no. 1, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Jan. 2021. Crossref, <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2021.1>. Focussed on the positive effects and possible post-traumatic growth during covid 19. Results proved a positive correlation between trauma during covid 19 and post-traumatic growth. In total 341 caregivers identified positives arising from COVID-19, most commonly related to the post-traumatic growth domains of improved relationships, a greater appreciation for life etc.
- [3]. Devine, K. A., Reed-Knight, B., Loiselle, K. A., Fenton, N., & Blount, R. L. (2010). Posttraumatic growth in young adults who experienced serious childhood illness: a mixed-methods approach. *Journal of clinical psychology in medical settings*, 17(4), 340–348. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10880-010-9210-7>. This study sought to identify specific factors that are associated with posttraumatic growth during young adulthood based on the current literature and Tedeschi and Calhoun’s (2004) model of PTG. Results indicated that several disease and ongoing distress factors were correlated with posttraumatic growth, including perceived severity of the illness, perceived disruptiveness, and posttraumatic stress symptoms.
- [4]. Tedeschi, Richard G., and Lawrence G. Calhoun. “TARGET ARTICLE: ‘Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence.’” *Psychological Inquiry*, vol. 15, no. 1, Informa UK Limited, Jan. 2004, pp. 1–18. Crossref, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1501_01. This article describes the concept of posttraumatic growth as well as the creation of this model its conceptual foundations and supporting empirical evidence. It displays the positive correlation between trauma, and growth that is observed soon after.