

Posttraumatic growth and cognitive and emotional processing from disclosure in the aftermath of a traumatic event

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Introduction:

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) corresponds to positive changes after experiencing traumatic, disturbing or stressful events [1]. Restructuring on a cognitive level and emotion regulation allow the individual to produce schemes that integrate trauma by giving them abilities and making them more resistant when confronting a future adverse event [1, 2].

The main objective of the current study was to analyze PTG and cognitive and emotional processing from disclosure that occurred as a result of a traumatic event.

Materials and Method:

The sample is composed by 465 Portuguese ($M = 31.02$ years, $SD = 13.87$), divided into two groups according to whether participants had experienced a traumatic event (G1: $n = 438$, 94.2%) or not (G2: $n = 27$, 5.8%), for trauma variable.

The majority of participants are female ($n = 310$, 70.8%) and their ages range between 18 and 21 years ($n = 191$, $M = 31.02$, $SD = 13.871$). When it comes to education, more than half of the sample finished high school ($n = 262$, 59.8%).

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki.

Participants responded online to the:

- Sociodemographic questionnaire
- Cognitive and Emotional Processing from Disclosure (CEPD) [3]
- Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) [4].

Results:

Comparison of PTG between G1 and G2

Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
PTG	1,463	10.25	.001**
Relating to Others	1,463	7.26	.007**
Personal Strength	1,463	12.04	.001**
Spiritual Change	1,463	11.93	.001**
Appreciation of Life	1,463	14.66	<.001***

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Comparison of PTG between education groups

Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
PTG	8,429	2.45	.013*
Relating to Others	8,429	2.33	.018*
New Possibilities	8,429	2.54	.010*

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Comparison of PTG between age groups

Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
PTG	1,436	6.11	.014*
New Possibilities	1,436	4.86	.028*
Personal Strength	1,436	8.65	.003**
Spiritual Change	1,436	4.64	.032*
Appreciation of Life	1,436	8.29	.004**
CEPD	1,436	.028	.866
Emotional Processing	1,436	4.45	.035*

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusion and Discussion:

There were significant statistical differences between G1 and G2 on PTG, in total scale [$F(1.463) = 10.25$, $p = .001$], and also in subscales Relating to Others, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change and Appreciation of Life. Regarding education, there were significant statistical differences between groups in the total scale [$F(8.429) = 2.45$, $p = .013$], and in the subscales Relating to Others and New Possibilities. Depending on age, significant statistical differences existed on PTG, in total score [$F(1.436) = 6.11$, $p = .014$], and in subscales New Possibilities, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change and Appreciation of Life. Regarding the subscale Cognitive Processing there were also significant statistical differences between age groups [$F(1.436) = 4.45$, $p = .035$]. These results showed that there were significant statistical differences in the variables trauma, education and age in PTG and in cognitive and emotional processing from disclosure. In light of this, we could verify, like other researches, that an active management of emotion and stress promotes PTGI [5]. Further studies with a larger and similar sample on both groups are recommended.

References

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