

Psychosocial Dimensions of Adjustments: Life Satisfaction and Growth in Individuals with Acquired Disabilities

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A traumatic event is usually considered negative, especially if it results in a disability. Disability has been associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for eternity, however, a shift to post-traumatic growth (PTG) has been observed. The central focus of this research is to analyze the interconnections among life satisfaction, resilience, meaning in life, and posttraumatic growth. We also investigated the mediating effects of resilience (RS) on life satisfaction (LS) and the search for meaning (MLQ-S) and the moderating effect of PTG on resilience and the search for meaning (MLQ-S). A total of 212 persons with acquired disabilities completed four questionnaires: Satisfaction with Life Scale, Brief Resilience Scale, Meaning in Life Questionnaire, and Post-traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI). Path analysis (Hayes' process) revealed full mediation between life satisfaction and MLQ-S. PTG moderated the relationship between resilience and MLQ-S. The results suggest that despite acquiring a disability, individuals experience growth and make meaning in their lives.

Keywords: posttraumatic growth, meaning in life, resilience, life satisfaction, acquired disability

Posttraumatic Growth

Acquiring a disability during one's lifespan results in a myriad of psychological distress, bodily discomfort, and sociopsychological challenges. The traumatic event poses a threat to one's life, consequently leaving them to question the purpose of their survival. These events tend to shake the core beliefs, causing extreme emotional distress and shattered assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1989). These events cause transformative changes in some individuals and tend to ignite growth.

The metamorphic change has been termed Posttraumatic growth- "adaptive psychological shifts that emerge in response to enduring and managing intense adversity or traumatic circumstances" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The instant reaction to a traumatic event is that of survival. These changes do not occur immediately after the

event; rather it is a time-driven process that occurs after much reflection. The growth experience after trauma does not result from an individual returning to the pre-trauma level but includes transformative change (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

The experience of PTG is very subjective, as is the construal of any traumatic event. The experience and impact of a traumatic event are guided by individual differences (Hammen, 2005; Rakhshani & Furr, 2021). The evolution of the PTGI scale has led to a detailed study of five major dimensions of PTG. These domains are appreciation of life (cherishing small moments), personal strength (increased self-reliance and confidence to face challenges), new possibilities (grabbing opportunities and following new paths), relating with others (strengthening positive relationships), and spiritual change (engaging in spiritual activities) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996).

Posttraumatic Growth and Life Satisfaction

The evaluation of one's life context, considering both their feelings aspect and their cognitive assessments, is commonly referred to as subjective well-being (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002). The affective factor includes high positive and low negative moods, whereas the cognitive factor includes satisfaction with life. Satisfaction with life is considered an important construct as it determines the level of contentment an individual experiences. Contentment is necessary for a person to live a healthy and positive life. Without satisfaction, a person always feels deprived of certain things in life. Satisfaction with life lies within the scope of the overarching term of well-being.

Satisfaction with life is considered almost stable, temporarily it may be disrupted by traumatic life events but is not influenced in the long term. This concept is supported by hedonic adaptation which states an individual's tendency to baseline after the experience of extremely negative and positive events in life (Bottan & Perez-Truglia, 2011). According to Triplett et al. (2012), the MLQ-P serves as an intermediary bridge between LS & PTG among students with experience of a traumatic event.

Posttraumatic Growth and Resilience

When confronted with a traumatic event, resilient individuals can face hardships, bounce back to normalcy, and restore psychological functioning. It is an individual's protective attribute or adaptive functioning that helps them deal with life-threatening situations. Moreover, it is multidimensional and includes the potential to encounter stressful events; emerge, and grow from threatening situations; recover from misfortune; beat the odds, bounce back, and retain healthy functioning (Meichenbaum, 2012).

Resilience is a dynamic trait influenced by personal life events and contextual and situational factors (Southwick. et.al, 2014). The outcome of resilience may not necessarily be posttraumatic growth (Westphal & Bonanno, 2007). There exists a conceptual difference between PTG and resilience as the latter includes "bouncing back" following trauma without encountering prolonged stressful events (Rutter, 1985), and the former includes transformative changes following the struggle. Highly resilient individuals do not experience transformative changes as they don't indulge in cognitive restructuring or extreme struggle.

A few studies note a negative relationship exists between them (Zerach et al., 2013; Hamama-Raz & Solomon, 2009). The reason is that highly resilient individuals withhold their growth following trauma. They do not feel the need to over-stress about the situation but rather follow a stable trajectory to healthy functioning. Yet other studies have noted that greater resilience tends to experience pronounced PTG (Ogińska-Bulik, 2015; Yu et al., 2014) implying that the more growth experienced after trauma, the more likely they are to be resilient in their approach.

Posttraumatic Growth and Meaning in Life

Victor Frankl (2006) stated, "When we don't have control over the situation, we are challenged to control ourselves". We are intrinsically driven in the active pursuit of a meaningful existence which is appraised as a primary motive. Meaning can only be conceived through a bunch of values (experiential, attitudinal, creative) and not invented. Finding meaning after acquiring a disability allows one to accept and adjust to the new reality (Amaral, 2009).

According to Steger (2009) meaning in life can be defined in terms of purpose and comprehension. While purpose can be defined as the long-term commitment of an individual, comprehension can be stated as an individual's discernment to envision life. Steger (2006) noted two important components of meaning in life: MLQ-S and MLQ-P. The understanding that life has coherence and worth represents a being's subjective interpretation of where they consider their life meaningful. Whereas the pursuit of purposeful existence represents an individual's ardent desire to establish a personal understanding and make sense of life. There is a positive linkage between the MPLQ-P and psychological well-being. Even though MLQ-S is independent of positive emotions, it might lead to growth outcomes (Linley & Joseph, 2011).

Previous studies have shown that meaningfulness predicts posttraumatic growth in individuals with a history of traumatic experiences (Ghannad, Fateminik, & Allipour, 2017). PTG and the MLQ-P are positively linked with each other (Triplett et al., 2012; Linley & Joseph, 2011). Also, few researchers noted a negative relationship

between LS and MLQ-S (Park, Chmielewski, et al., 2010; Park, 2010; Dezutter et al., 2013).

Objectives

The present study aims to find the linkage between LS, resilience, meaning in life, and PTG among individuals with acquired disabilities. We postulated that life satisfaction and the MLQ-P would be positively correlated with PTG. However, resilience will be negatively correlated with PTG. Also, MLQ-P will be linked positively with LS and MLQ-S will be inverse connection with resilience. The study also assessed the mediating role of resilience among life satisfaction and MLQ-S and the moderating role of PTG.

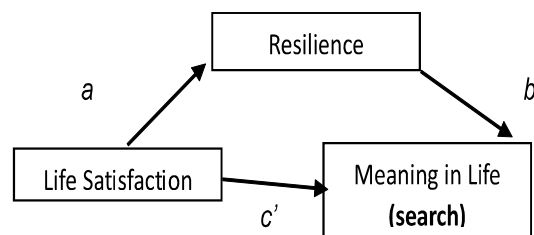


Figure 1. The Hypothetical Model

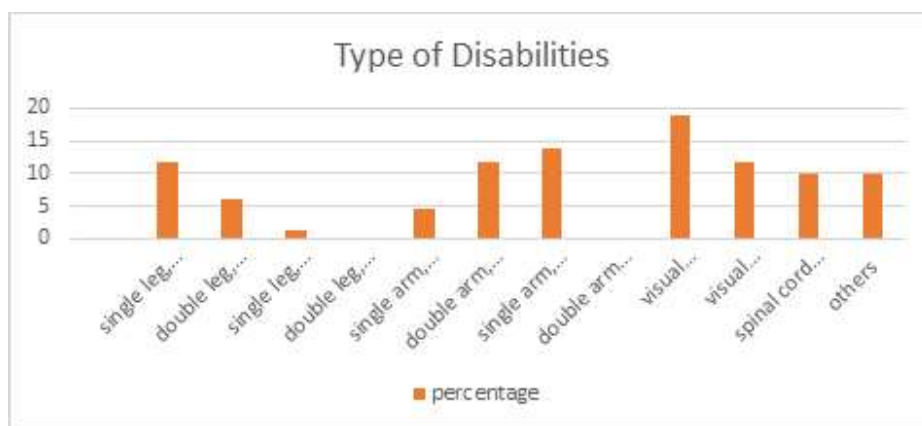


Figure 2 Demographic detail of the type of Disabilities for the sample N=212

Method

Design

This investigation was based on a design that examined existing data from a specific point in time (cross-sectional) to examine stages of development simultaneously across different groups. This study quantitatively assesses life satisfaction, resilience, meaning, and posttraumatic growth among individuals with acquired disabilities. The quantitative data on different scales were collected on a one-to-one basis.

Participants

The current research collected data from 212 individuals with acquired disabilities aged 18-45 years (\bar{X} =29.58) of which 48.1% (n=102) were male and 51.9% (n=110) were female. The participant population was delimited broadly to include individuals who had acquired a disability. Figure 1.1 includes the details of the type of disabilities incurred by the participants

Instruments

Satisfaction with Life Scale- The Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is a tool including 5 questions aimed at capturing general cognitive perceptions. The scale is a 7-point Likert-type (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) where high scores indicate higher life satisfaction and low scores indicate lower life satisfaction. The internal consistency (α) for this study was 0.70.

Brief Resilience Scale- The Brief Resilience Scale (Smith & Colleagues, 2008) measures the being's capacity to recover from a stressful situation and return to the pre-trauma level. It is a 6-item scale ranging from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items 1,3,5 are phrased positively and items 2,4,6 are phrased negatively and thus reverse-scored. The internal consistency (α) for this study was 0.90

Meaning in Life Questionnaire- (Steger et al., 2006) participants rated each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 indicates "Absolutely True" and 7 indicates "Absolutely Untrue". The scale comprises 10 items designed to measure two dimensions of meaning in life- (a) the Presence of Meaning (b) Search for Meaning. Scores for each factor are calculated separately with a high score denoting a high presence/search for meaning in life.

Posttraumatic Growth Inventory- The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) is a 21-item self-report inventory designed to measure positive changes following an encounter with a traumatic event. The frequency of a given change was rated by participants on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5. The scale yielded a total score from 0-105 with greater scores representing a more pronounced experience of the construct in question.

Results

All data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 24. Correlation, as well as descriptive statistics used in the study, are displayed in Table 1. Results indicate that the acquisition of a disability led participants to experience a "greater" degree of MLQ-P and a "moderate" degree of MLQ-S. Even the mean scores of PTGI indicate a greater degree of growth experienced by people.

Simple Mediation Analysis

Life satisfaction influenced resilience ($a = .975, p < .01$). Resilience was associated with MLQ-S when controlling for life satisfaction ($b = -.542, p < .01$). The indirect effect of life satisfaction on meaning in life (search) through resilience ($ab = -.528$) was significant. However ($c' = -.271, p = .37$) was insignificant. This implies that a full mediation model was observed. The overall regression model accounted for 8.44% of the variation in meaning in life (search) ($R^2 = .0844, F(2,209) = 9.63, p < .01$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Life satisfaction	212	34.73	0.75	—				
Resilience	212	29.55	1.28	0.573**	—			
Meaning in life- Presence	212	34.67	1.06	0.194**	0.055	—		
Meaning in life- Search	212	28.49	2.85	-0.211**	-0.285**	-0.110	—	
PTGI	212	104.46	1.01	0.016	-0.022	0.113	0.020	—

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Table 2. Regression Analysis on MLQ-P

Variables	B	SE	95% CI		β	p
			LL	UL		
Life Satisfaction	.325	.116	.096	.554	.230	.006
Resilience	-.083	.070	-.221	.054	-.101	.232
MLQ-S	-.034	.026	-.086	.017	-.092	.192
PTGI	.114	.071	-.025	.254	.109	.107

**p < .01

A Linear Regression was carried out on meaning in life (presence). A significant regression equation was obtained $F(4, 207) = 3.39, p < 0.01$ with adjusted $R^2 = .043$. This indicates that other variables explain 4.3% of the variance in Meaning in Life (Presence).

Moderation Analysis

Table 4 illustrates the output derived from a simple moderation analysis. The total model demonstrated explanatory power by capturing 11.25% of the variance in meaning

in life (search). Results indicate that resilience ($b = -.6250, p = .0000$) significantly predicts meaning in life (search). It also indicates a positive and significant moderating impact of PTG on the linkage between RS and MLQ-S ($b = .4574, t = 2.711, p = .0073$).

Simple slope analysis (Figure 1) visually represents the comparative analysis of resilience and MLQ-S. The slopes indicate that PTG dampens the negative relationship between RS and MLQ-S.

Table 3. Regression Analysis on MLQ-S

Variables	B	SE	95% CI		β	p
			LL	UL		
Life Satisfaction	-.194	.312	-.810	.422	-.051	.535
Resilience	-.556	.181	-.912	-.200	-.250	.002
MLQ-P	-.239	.183	-.600	.121	-.089	.192
PTGI	.070	.188	-.300	.440	.025	.708

**p < .01

Another regression analysis was carried out on the (MLQ-S). A significant regression equation was obtained $F(4, 207) = 5.25, p < 0.01$ with adjusted $R^2 = .075$. This indicates that 7.5% of the variance in MLQ-S is explained by other variables.

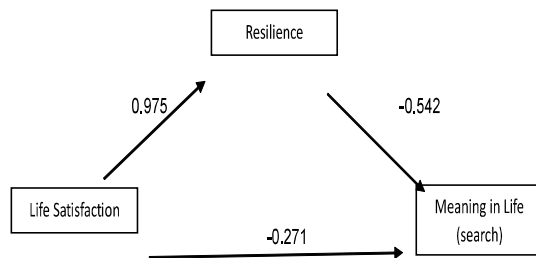


Figure 3 A conceptual diagram of a simple mediation model through resilience.

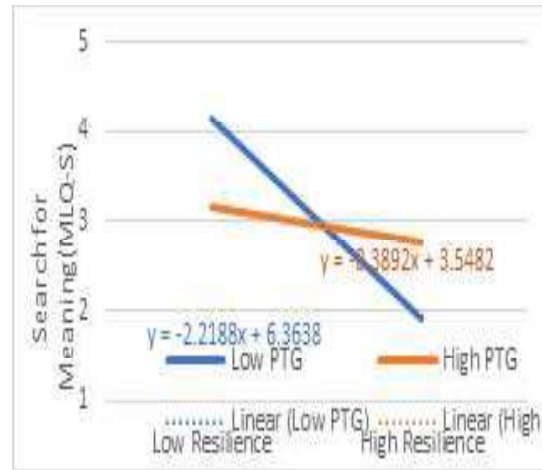


Figure 4 Plots and simple slopes for the significant moderation effect of PTG

Table 4. The Moderating Effects of Posttraumatic Growth on the association between Resilience and Meaning in Life (search)

Variables	Coeff	S.E	t	95% CI		p
				LL	UL	
RS	-.6250	.1456	-4.476	-.9391	-.3648	.0000
PTG	-.0356	.1858	-.1913	-.4019	.3308	.8485
Interaction	.4574	.1687	2.711	.1248	.7900	.0073

**p<.01

Discussion

The central focus of this investigation was to gain a deeper comprehension of how LS, resilience, and meaning in life interact to facilitate PTG in individuals with acquired disabilities. Also, to determine whether the relationship between life satisfaction and MLQ-S is explained by resilience. The high mean value of PTG denotes that most of the individuals experienced growth following their disability.

The study revealed that life satisfaction ($r = .016$) is directly related to posttraumatic growth, though the relationship is insignificant. Individuals who have undergone a traumatic incident and tend to report PTG also report greater life satisfaction. The

outcome aligns with Triplett et al., (2012). Various studies have found PTG to significantly predict life satisfaction (Chandiramani & Khan, 2018). Thus, after being exposed to a stressful event, people have reported positive changes, developed great strength to deal with these events, and led a satisfied life.

Life satisfaction was significantly related to MLQ-P. In our study, the correlation coefficient derived was ($r=0.19$), indicating that 3.6% of the variability in LS is attributable to MLQ-P. Other studies have observed that meaning in life functions as an intermediary factor linking life satisfaction and PTG, making it even stronger. Prior academic work aligns with the present findings concerning

the linkage between life satisfaction and meaning in life (MLQ-P) among those who have encountered a stressful event (Jafari et al., 2010; Triplett et al., 2012). This finding is also consistent with the general population (Park et al., 2010; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Steger et al., 2006, 2011). It can be inferred that recognizing a purpose-driven life makes the person more content and satisfied. Together, both components strive towards better well-being.

Resilience was directly linked with LS. The dynamic between the two was significant ($r=0.57$), indicating that 32.49% of the variability in life satisfaction is attributed to resilience. This finding is consistent with Beutel et al. (2010), Lysne PE et al. (2021). Life satisfaction increases in resilient individuals as they develop resources to deal with the crisis. Resilient individuals can better adapt to changing environmental demands, experience fewer negative emotions, and tend to enjoy a positive state of mind, embark on great energy, and live contented lives (Gardiner, 2006).

Resilience exhibited a direct link with MLQ-P, though the relationship was insignificant. Thus, resilient individuals engage in meaning-making as a result of encountering traumatic events. Being able to find meaning in stressful situations is considered effective in enhancing resilience (Schnell, 2021; Park & Baumeister, 2017). Also, a meaningful lifestyle gives them a sense of appreciation toward self (Steger et al., 2006) and social relationships (Yu & Chang, 2018).

Resilience seems to be negatively correlated with MLQ-S, and this relationship is statistically significant ($r=-0.285$, $p<0.01$). This implies that people who are more resilient appear less inclined to actively seek out meaning in their lives while experiencing a traumatic event. This finding is consistent with (Bonanno, Wortman, & Nesse, 2004), indicating that resilient individuals do not

experience an extreme degree of loss following a traumatic event and thus are less likely to explore personal significance. Contrary to this, researchers have shown a positive relationship between the quest for life's purpose and well-being, indicating the use of both efforts to uncover prior life's meaning and subsequent quest for existential purpose when confronted with exorbitant, resilient demands to ensure greater well-being (Lin & Chan, 2020; To, 2016).

Posttraumatic growth is negatively related to resilience ($r=-0.022$) indicating that individuals who experience growth subsequent to adverse event are less likely to exhibit resilience. This finding is consistent with Levine et al., (2009) & Zerach et al., (2013). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) stated that PTG involves transformative changes following trauma implying that the individual moves beyond the pre-trauma level of adjustment, whereas resilience is adapting to the new demands of the situation created during the crisis. The intensity of the struggle experienced by them differs. Unlike resilient individuals, posttraumatic growth experiences are far more intense and shake the core of the person. Whereas emotional and functional challenges may be observed in individuals exhibiting resilience during early recovery years (Ong, Bisconti, Bergman, & Wallace, 2006).

A total effect ($\hat{\alpha}=-0.80$, $p=0.002$) was observed through mediation analysis between life satisfaction and MLQ-S. This indicates that life satisfaction is negatively associated with the MLQ-S. Thus, individuals with acquired disabilities who experience greater life satisfaction are less involved in the quest for purpose in life. Former empirical studies have shown similar results for the aforementioned constructs (Degges-White & Stoltz, 2015; Nell, 2014; Park, Chmielewski, et al., 2010). Also, a significant indirect effect through resilience was observed between life

satisfaction and MLQ-S, indicating a full mediation, as the direct effect was not significant. It means that the effect of life satisfaction on MLQ-S is completely transmitted with the help of resilience. Similarly, resilience has been found to serve as a pathway connecting COVID-19 worries and stress, and anxiety (Tamarit et al., 2023). Contrary to our findings, other studies also show that individuals who indulge in the search for meaning with high levels of mastery tend to experience greater satisfaction with life (Lau, Feher, Wilson & Saklofske, 2018).

A significantly negative linkage between resilience and the MLQ-S in life was observed. This shows that resilient individuals do not engage in the pursuit of life's quest as they do not experience a pronounced degree of dysfunction post any traumatic event (Bonanno, Wortman, & Nesse, 2004). Further, the significance of moderating effects was analyzed, and the findings unveiled a substantial and favorable moderating influence of PTG on the linkage between resilience and MLQ-S. The moderation analysis shows that the acquired disabled's posttraumatic growth experiences affected the strength of the intermediary connection between resilience and MLQ-S. Taken together, the outcome points to the conclusion that posttraumatic growth could buffer the impact of resilience on the individual's search for meaning. Contrary to the general notion, PTG positively correlated with the search for meaning. In another study, the quest for life's purpose acted as a mediator for an indirect effect of PTG on life satisfaction (Mostarac and Brajkovic, 2022). Thus, in extreme stress and trauma, individuals are left with a sense of meaninglessness which forces them to struggle and find new sources of meaning to adjust to the new reality and promote change (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006).

Results from slope analysis reveal that the line is much steeper for low PTG, this shows

that at a low level of PTG, the impact of resilience on MLQ-S is much stronger in comparison to the high PTG. However, at higher PTG, the line tends to straighten. This shows that at a higher PTG, the increase in resilience does not lead to similar changes in the MLQ-S. This indicates that PTG dampens the relationship between resilience and MLQ-S, making this relationship less negative. Following a trauma, posttraumatic growth enables one to experience meaningful growth which creates new possibilities, improves relationships, and guides toward spiritual development. (Jin, Xu & Liu; 2014). Pursuing meaning can help individuals alleviate psychological distress such as depression (Yang et al., 2012) and anxiety (Steger, 2013) when confronted with a traumatic event.

Conclusion

The current research focuses on the linkage between LS, resilience, meaning in life, and PTG among individuals with acquired disabilities. Individuals with acquired disabilities reported greater life satisfaction, meaning, and post-traumatic growth, as hypothesized. Furthermore, PTG was positively correlated with life satisfaction and meaning in life and negatively correlated with resilience. Although these relationships were not statistically significant. The results also show that resilience significantly serves as an intermediary between MLQ-S and LS, indicating full mediation. Moreover, future psychological research should focus on the development of interventions and rehabilitation techniques to enhance growth experiences and foster them to look into the bright side of traumatic events.

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