



Psychological growth in relation to intimate partner violence: A review



Emilio C. Ulloa^{a,*}, Julia F. Hammett^a, Monica L. Guzman^a, Audrey Hokoda^b

^a Department of Psychology, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182, United States

^b Department of Child and Family Development, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 April 2014

Received in revised form 9 July 2015

Accepted 15 July 2015

Available online 23 July 2015

Keywords:

Intimate partner violence

Psychological growth

Posttraumatic growth

Positive adjustment

Resilience

ABSTRACT

Although negative consequences resulting from the experience of traumatic events have been widely studied in the academic literature, only recently have researchers begun to examine positive outcomes associated with trauma. Psychological growth, including posttraumatic growth (PTG), resilience, and positive adjustment, has been found to occur in the aftermath of a variety of stressful circumstances. However, it is unclear how psychological growth specifically relates to intimate partner violence (IPV). The current study provides an empirical review of the literature on psychological growth that is associated with IPV victimization. Results indicate that psychological growth is consistently found among victims of IPV. However, researchers suggest that it may be difficult to determine the exact timing of psychological growth in the aftermath of IPV. Relevant predictors and outcomes of psychological growth are discussed. In addition, limitations of the studies reviewed are summarized and future directions for research and practice are suggested. This review renders a thorough assessment of the relationship between psychological growth and interpersonal violence that may add a new perspective to trauma therapy.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Definitions of psychological growth	89
2. Psychological growth in the aftermath of intimate partner violence	89
3. The present review	89
4. Method	89
4.1. Search strategy	89
4.2. Study design	89
4.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria	89
5. Results and discussion	91
5.1. Prevalence of psychological growth in victims of IPV	91
5.2. Timing of occurrence of psychological growth	91
5.3. Predictors of psychological growth	91
5.4. Outcomes of psychological growth	92
5.5. Limitations of the studies reviewed	93
5.5.1. Practical implications	93
5.6. Summary and conclusions	93
References	94

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 619 594 3110; fax: +1 619 594 1332.

E-mail addresses: emilio.ulloa@mail.sdsu.edu (E.C. Ulloa), juliabussberg@aol.com (J.F. Hammett), mlguzman88@gmail.com (M.L. Guzman), audrey.hokoda@mail.sdsu.edu (A. Hokoda).

Experiencing a traumatic event, such as recurring abuse, can be detrimental to an individual's well-being and can result in long-lasting consequences. Researchers have extensively studied the negative consequences people may experience in the aftermath of traumatic events, but have not examined closely the prospect of beneficial outcomes.

Recent studies have found that traumatic experiences and challenging life circumstances can not only cause prolonged distress but can also provide people with opportunities for personal growth (Cobb, Tedeschi, Calhoun, & Cann, 2006).

1. Definitions of psychological growth

In 1991, Tedeschi and Calhoun began to document the feelings of growth or changes in emotions that followed highly stressful or traumatic events individuals experienced. To describe this positive growth that occurred in the aftermath of having struggled a highly stressful and challenging life circumstance, the authors coined the term posttraumatic growth (PTG) (Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2003) further described the phenomenon of PTG as “a significant beneficial change in cognitive and emotional life beyond previous levels of adaptation, psychological functioning, or life awareness” (p. 12), which may vary in degree from person to person. Researchers have developed different theories about the reasons for these individual differences (Tedeschi, 1999).

For the purpose of this study, we define psychological growth as not only encompassing posttraumatic growth, but also resilience (as defined below) and positive adjustment. Various definitions of resilience exist in the academic literature. Some researchers define resilience as individuals' superior functioning and performance, as compared to baseline levels, after the experience of stress or trauma. Others define resilience as individuals' capacity for adapting successfully and for functioning competently despite experiencing chronic adversity or following exposure to trauma (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Articles defining resilience based on the former definition were included in the present review. The term “positive adjustment” is often used interchangeably with the term “resilience” (e.g., Bonanno & Diminich, 2013). In this study, positive adjustment will refer to people's adaptive functioning following the experience of trauma.

2. Psychological growth in the aftermath of intimate partner violence

Psychological growth has been documented across multiple traumas and populations, such as cancer and HIV patients (Sherr et al., 2011; Yi, 2011), individuals affected by terrorist attacks (Milam, Ritt-Olson, Tan, Unger, & Nezami, 2005) as well as after the experience of natural disasters (Hafstad, Gil-Rivas, Kilmer, & Raeder, 2010), and combat veterans (Tedeschi, 2011). However, only recently has the experience of psychological growth been studied among victims of dating and domestic violence (intimate partner violence).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2013) defines intimate partner violence (IPV) as “physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse.” A variety of negative consequences associated with IPV are well documented, including mild to severe physical injuries as well as detrimental psychological outcomes, such as lowered self-esteem, increased levels of anxiety, eating disorders, sexual dysfunctions, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Cobb et al., 2006). In spite of these negative ramifications of IPV, new research has focused on the positive outcomes associated with trauma. These studies suggest that many victims of IPV may experience some form of psychological growth in the aftermath of their struggle with abuse (e.g., Anderson, Renner, & Danis, 2012). However, findings about the mechanisms underlying the experience of growth vary.

Intimate partner violence is distinct from other traumas in that IPV is an ongoing event that may occur over an extended period of time (Lawrence & Bradbury, 2007) as opposed to a one-time occurrence, such as the experience of a natural disaster (Hafstad et al., 2010). In addition, victims of IPV may be entangled in a social relationship that involves love, marriage, financial dependency, as well as the presence of children (Smith, 2003). These factors may complicate the study of

growth in the aftermath of IPV and may make it difficult for an individual affected by IPV to leave the abusive relationship and to resolve the trauma in which he or she is involved. Compared to other traumas (e.g., natural disasters, cancer), victims of IPV face a complicated decision-making process for leaving or staying with an abusive partner (Amanor-Boadu et al., 2012; Choice & Lamke, 1997, 1999; Hamby & Gray-Little, 2007). Thus, intimate partner violence represents a special case of a trauma, and as a result, the association between IPV and psychological growth may be more complex than the association between other types of traumas and psychological growth.

3. The present review

It was not until the early 2000s that researchers began to look at the possibility of trauma leading to something other than distress. While the body of literature on psychological growth in the aftermath of other traumas continues to expand, research on growth among victims of IPV remains limited. Thus, the aim of the current review was to summarize the results of previous studies examining the occurrence of psychological growth in individuals who have been the victims of intimate partner violence. The current work contributes to the body of research by providing a summary of the published empirical data, allowing researchers to compare findings across different studies. In addition to summarizing the results of previous research, we consider the potential implications of our findings and suggest how future research might best proceed to promote our understanding of the structure, process, and potential clinical applications of psychological growth. This is one of only a few reviews of psychological growth among victims of IPV.

4. Method

To conduct the present review, the authors compiled all primary sources from psychological journal articles on the topic of psychological growth with analyses specific to relationship abuse, IPV, and intimate-partner victimization.

4.1. Search strategy

Key terms for psychological growth, including posttraumatic growth, PTG, personal growth, growth, positive adjustment, differential adjustment, adjustment, change, positive change, and resilience were paired with key terms for IPV, including inter-partner violence, intimate-partner violence, intimate-partner abuse, and inter-partner abuse. The search engines used were PsycINFO, PubMed, PsycARTICLES, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Searches were conducted as far back as 1887 until the present. Approximately 50 articles were initially identified and evaluated in the preliminary search using the identified keywords. Additionally, the reference pages of the primary sources were searched for relevant articles and cited reference searches were conducted to yield additional sources. Of those retrieved 17 met criteria and were included in the present study (see Table 1).

4.2. Study design

The primary purpose of the current review was to summarize the current standing of the literature on IPV and subsequent trauma as it relates to psychological growth. A secondary aim of the current review was to increase the knowledge base of psychological growth in IPV victims for use by practitioners.

4.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Only articles located in peer-reviewed journals (qualitative or quantitative in nature), books, and dissertations were selected. Sources that were conference proceedings, non-individual, non-empirical book chapters, and/or editorial in nature were excluded from this review.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/94549>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/94549>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)