

Finding Growth in Later Life: Post-Traumatic Growth, Meaning in Life and Self-Esteem Among Older Adults

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Abstract

With a focus on self-esteem as a mediator, the article investigated the connections between post-traumatic growth, purpose in life, and self-esteem. This study used a quantitative approach and relied on standardized self-report data collected from 120 participants. The data was initially determined to fulfill the requirements of parametric testing. Findings from correlation studies revealed robust positive associations between a sense of meaning in one's life, self-esteem, and recovery from traumatic experiences. In the aftermath of traumatic experiences, those who claimed to have found greater purpose in life showed considerable improvements in their psychological well-being and self-esteem. Although meaning directly affected growth through the positive improvement in self-esteem, the mediation study's results demonstrated that self-esteem mediated the association between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth. The study's most critical variables did not differ significantly based on gender. In light of these findings, it seems clear that having a purpose in life is a crucial psychological resource for overcoming hardship and moving on with optimism. The results also demonstrate the importance of the self-esteem in facilitating adaptive mechanisms of growth. The consequences of the intervention regarding mental health and future research projects are discussed.

Keywords: Meaning in Life, Self-Worth, Post-Traumatic Growth, Positive Psychology, Resilience, Psychological Wellbeing

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Meaning in life, self-worth, and post-traumatic growth (PTG) among older adults is a significant field of interest, particularly in the context of aging population in developing nations such as India. Aging is a complex phenomenon, which entails physical, emotional, and psychological changes. In the case of older adults, the process of meaning in life and self-worth is especially important since the latter is struggling with multiple problems, including health, the loss of loved ones, and marginalization in society. The capacity of older adults to overcome the current adversity is usually defined by psychological

resilience, which allows them to cope with these challenges and emerge stronger, which can be summarized in the term of post-traumatic growth.

It is even more crucial that in society where people grow older fast, the complex interrelationship between these psychological constructs should be understood. The elderly which have undergone a great deal of adversity, be it the loss of a loved one, health crisis, or the demands of old age, may undergo a radical change of perspective on their lives and emerge strengthened and renewed by their hardships (Fayaz, 2025). Nevertheless, the aspects that shape this process of growth, including meaning in life and self-worth, are not studied in the Indian cultural context in detail. This dissertation aims to address this gap by studying the relationship between meaning in life, self-worth, and PTG among older adults but specifically on geriatric population in India.

The purpose of the study is to draw attention to how perceptions of meaning and self-worth among older adults as determined by their cultural and societal environment determine their ability to grow post-traumatic. This study does not only hold the critical role in comprehending the psychological mechanisms involved in PTG in elderly adults but also in formulating culturally applicable psychological interventions that would help improve the lives of the older population.

Cultural Situation: Importance of Indian Environment

The cultural context is also central in influencing the life experiences of the aged and this is so much the case in India. In contrast to most Western nations, where aging is linked to independence and self-reliance, the Indian culture greatly values family relationships and community assistance during the elderly years. In India, elders are regarded as very wise and are admired because of their experience. Nevertheless, it is also a socially constructed expectation that may impose pressure since older adults might feel like their worth depends on their place in the family and society in large.

The notions of dignity in aging are associated with family and societal identification in India. The sense of self-worth becomes a complex issue in the case of many older adults, which is closely related to the interactions with their children, grandchildren, and social networks (Galia, Karole, Kavishwar, Kumta, & Vyas, 2022). The degradation of such support structures, however, through migration, breakdown of family, or a shift in social norms can result in feelings of alienation, which in turn can cause a significant impact on their psychological health. With increasing urbanization and modernization, older adults in India have been facing new challenges, as several of them find themselves lonely and isolated due to the migration of the younger generations to seek work or to pursue an education.

Additionally, the cultural values including respect towards the elders, spirituality, and significance of religious practices provide people with special avenues through which the older adults seek meaning in life. Spirituality in India is a highly common aspect of the lives of the older generations where religion offers a sense of identity and reciprocation. The intersections spirituality, self-worth, and post-traumatic development is a fascinating research field of study because it can act as a shield against misfortune (Hossen & Salleh, 2025). The Indian context offers a dense background to the analysis of the psychological strength of older adults because it is a complex mixture of traditional values and modern influences. Through examining the ways in which older adults in India derive meaning in their lives, self-worth, and post-traumatic growth, it is hoped that this research would cast into the limelight the culturally distinct aspects of ageing in India.

Theory Conceptualization of the Key Variables

Meaning in Life

Life meaning is a highly individual experience that is subjective, and its significance is accentuated even more clearly in old age. Meaning seeking is a natural human activity, yet it is more urgent in later stages of life when people look back on their past, attempt to come into terms with their decisions, and think about their legacy. The significance of meaning is frequently increased in older adults since they realize death and time.

The existential theory of meaning, created by Viktor Frankl, can give a lot of insights into this concept. Frankl suggested that meaning seeking is the central driving force in human life, especially in the case of people who experience suffering and adversity. In the case of older adults, such a search can be expressed through spiritual exploration, the role within the family, or giving back to the community (Chen, Byrne, & Vélez, 2022). According to the ideas of Frankl, meaning is not something that can be discovered passively, but it is created during experience, the nature of relations and interactions with the environment. In such a way, meaning in life can be used as a protective measure, enabling older adults to overcome the challenges of aging and cope with the circumstances.

In Indian context, meaning is mostly elicited through experiences of individual and group values of a culture. Family values, social norms, religious beliefs, or all of these can play a role in the way older adults in India can understand what their life means. Indicatively, numerous seniors derive meaning in discharging traditional roles as caregivers or spiritual guides. Such interrelationship between meaning in life and fulfilment in role is especially critical in explaining the fact that older adults in India deal well with aging and adversities.

Self-Worth

The self-worth or self-esteem is an essential part of the psychological health of a person. Other external factors that tend to question self-worth in geriatric population include health complications, loss of independence and marginalization by the society. To most older adults, worthiness is closely associated with being able to contribute to family and society and these roles tend to decline with age (Hossen & Salleh, 2025). Self-worth in geriatric psychology is not only regarded as a personal perception but as a social construct, which is shaped by the relationships of the person with the rest of the society and the social surroundings. In India whereby respect to the elders and social strata are deeply embedded, the self-esteem of the aged is highly influenced by their status within the family and society. Loss of family support, declining health, or economic hardship may cause a serious impact on self-worth and result in depression, anxiety, or poor quality of life when this standing is threatened.

Post-Traumatic Growth

Post-traumatic growth can be defined as positive psychological transformation that people can undergo due to grappling with very difficult events in life. Within the framework of the elderly, PTG may present itself as a greater value of life, increased self-strength, new life opportunities, and spiritual development. Although the process of aging usually implies the pertinence of loss, such as health decline, loss of close ones, or loss of meaning, PTG implies that old people can gain much out of this loss, regarding personal development (Chan, Lo, & Yan, 2022). Religious beliefs and practices may have a source of influence in PTG in the Indian setting. An example is of older adults which can be reassured by believing

that the suffering they are experiencing has a greater spiritual purpose or they can grow by the way they are involving themselves within the community and family support systems. The idea of PTG is relevant especially in comprehending trauma and loss among the older adults in India since the culture may strongly have an influence on defining the resilience and coping strategies of people.

Statement of the problem

Although the meaning in life, self-worth, and post-traumatic growth are examined separately, the interaction between these concepts has been poorly examined, especially among older adults. In addition to that, the interaction between these factors and the impact on psychological resilience among the Indian geriatric population has not yet been fully explored. The available literature has been more biased towards the Western population where cultural and societal norms are not like those of India. The need to learn more about the interactions between these variables, which are the meaning in life, self-worth, and PTG, and their role in the mental health of older adults in India, is increasing (Thakur, Sharma, Mishra, & Singh, 2022). The ways in which a cultural phenomenon, including family life, religion, social support systems, and others, contribute to the psychological life of older adults in the Indian society are very specific to the proposed research will fill the gap in the existing body of literature by examining the roles of meaning in life and self-worth in enhancing post-traumatic growth and whether such correlations are mediated by India-specific cultural contexts.

Learning the way older people in India find meaning, self-worth, and development following adversity may offer significant information regarding how they manage their aging issues. Moreover, this study can be used to develop culturally sensitive interventions, which can be used to enhance mental well-being and improve the quality of life among older adults.

The interdependence of the life meaning, self-worth, and post-traumatic growth (PTG) among the elderly implies a lot in terms of psychological well-being of the elderly. When adversity is experienced, especially by the older adults, they tend to think of the meaning of their lives in an existential manner. It is a critical junction between psychological strength and health, as this is a stage in life that involves physical deterioration, loss and possibly isolation (Shin & Park, 2022). The relationship between meaning in life, self-worth and PTG is quite important in enhancing the emotional well-being of older adults because these factors are collectively used to establish how well older adults can deal with challenges brought about by the aging process. Investigating these interrelationships can be seen as adding new knowledge to the academic field, as well as making the practice of geriatric mental health interventions more practical.

This is because with rising life expectancy all over the world, the aged population is rising at an unprecedented pace especially in the developing nations such as India. The geriatric population is set to keep growing, and the accompanying demographic changes is the imminent necessity to deal with the mental health issue of older adults. These are woes such as the death of their loved ones, their poor health and donning a mode of social roles. However, it is quite essential to mention that older adult individuals are not only victims of an aging process, but they too can develop and become tough and when this possibility is fulfilled and properly developed, it can make their life much easier. Investigating the connections between the meaning and self-worth and PTG, the study under consideration is likely to highlight the factors that precondition the positive psychological results despite adversity.

The Indian culture of aging is usually contrary to the Western model. Whereas Western cultures can focus on independence and self-reliance during older age, Indian culture generally focuses on family-based care and interdependence. The contribution of the family to the life of an older adult is entrenched in the social structure, and it is urgent to think about how the societal and familial organization affects their psychological state (Vasconcelos, Paúl, Serruya, Ponce de León, & Nobre, 2023). Moreover, urbanization, population outflow, and the emergence of nuclear families pose special difficulties that can influence the personal self-esteem and mental development of older people. Thus, the complexity of these cultural mechanisms in relation to psychological variables including meaning in life and PTG is critical to the creation of culturally sensitive mental health interventions to address the needs of older adults in India. Although the role of aging-related psychological research has gained recognition, an immense gap in the comprehension of the intersection of the concept of meaning in life, self-worth, and PTG has been identified in the Indian context. Absence of the current studies on these issues has been in the West where the cultural and social experiences of old age are quite different. In India, where ageing tends to be determined by family and community roles, the determinants of the sense of meaning and self-worth of older adults may differ greatly (Thakur, Sharma, Mishra, & Singh, 2022). Hence, the functioning of these constructs within the Indian cultural setting is critical to evaluate the psychological needs of the aged population properly and develop valuable interventions.

Through the investigation of the interactions between meaning in life, self-worth and PTG in the specific cultural and societal context of India, this study will offer certain valuable insights into how Indian older adults deal with adversity. It will also aid in the provision of culturally tailored mental health resources designed to support the meanings, self-esteem, and personal growth in this population of individuals to enhance their general health.

Relation to Indian Cultural Situation

The Indian cultural setting provides a special perspective on how aging is experienced and what kind of psychological processes underlie it. Whereas in the western societies people are individualistic, the Indian culture is more focused on the family and community. In the case of older adults, the family is usually the major provider of emotional support, respect and social role fulfilment. Elderly are commonly considered to be the head of the family, who deserves care, respect and guidance. This attitude may significantly affect the way older adults also perceive their self-worth and, consequently, the process of post-traumatic development.

In Indian culture of traditional times, old age is considered a sign of wisdom, experience and power. The old are regarded as the depositories of information and they should be actively involved in keeping the family alive and stable. But still, in the contemporary setting, particularly due to urbanization and transforming family structure, the elderly are being pushed to the periphery (Sanallah, 2025). The breakdown of the joint families into nuclear families coupled with the fact that young people in the society are moving to urban locations to work has resulted in many older people being isolated both physically and emotionally. To such people, the loss of family support systems might diminish their self-esteem and the meaning of their existence, since their roles in the family might no longer be as important as they were. This cultural change is especially applicable in the context of the effects of the trauma or other negative influences on the lives of the older generation. The traditional Indian society places a lot of meaning in the roles of the old members of the family taking care of their children, grandchildren, taking part in the life of the community, and performing their religious or spiritual responsibilities. Nevertheless, in cases

where their roles are at risk due to loss of health or separation with their families, their meaning and self-worth may be crippled. Therefore, to determine the relationship between the experience of adversity and PTG among Indian older adults, one is bound to comprehend the cultural and familial aspects that will impact their mental condition.

Psychological Theories supporting the variable in study

The meaning in life as envisaged by Viktor Frankl in his logotherapy has long been regarded as one of the fundamental components of human motivation and resilience, especially during the suffering period. According to Frankl, meaning is not a passive condition but an active process of establishing purpose particularly in the face of adversity. Nevertheless, the Western concept of individualism and self-sufficiency is heavily present in the theory provided by Frankl. However, on the other hand, the Indian cultural background is rather collectivistic, family-oriented, and spiritual. The study will therefore expand the mindset of Frankl in the meaning that the elderly in India have with regard to the lives and personal achievements but in the context of family duties, social obligation and religious ideologies. Such cultural dimensions in the research will elaborate the explanation of the development of the meaning in different sociocultural contexts.

Similarly, on the same note, self-worth in geriatric psychology has come to realize that it is a personal value, internal sense. Western conceptions of self-esteem are more inclined to emphasize on personal accomplishments, independence and autonomy as the main elements of self-worth. The Indian culture, which is dependent and social in nature, might offer a different perspective, on the contrary. The study will be in a position to establish the influence of the role of older adults in their families, their social respect and the degree to which the older adult's religious participation will influence their self-worth. By exploring these culturally specific variations, the research will find a place in a better understanding of self-worth that is more global as it will focus on how social constructs and cultural norms influence an individual perception of value.

Another concept that has gained a lot of attention in Western psychology is PSTG, the positive change that a certain number of individuals undergoes following trauma. But the bulk of the current research of PTG has focused on victims of extreme events, war, natural disasters or severe illness. The application of PTG to aging and the issues that arise with later life, including loss of spouse, physical deterioration, and social loneliness, are under researched. This study will address this gap, as it will explore how elderly people in India perceive PTG following a traumatic or adverse event by considering both the personal and social dynamics leading to individual development. Moreover, the paper will also point out the ways that spiritual beliefs and cultural practices can support PTG in culturally specific ways to India, including religious ceremonies, social support, and the idea of karma and reincarnation.

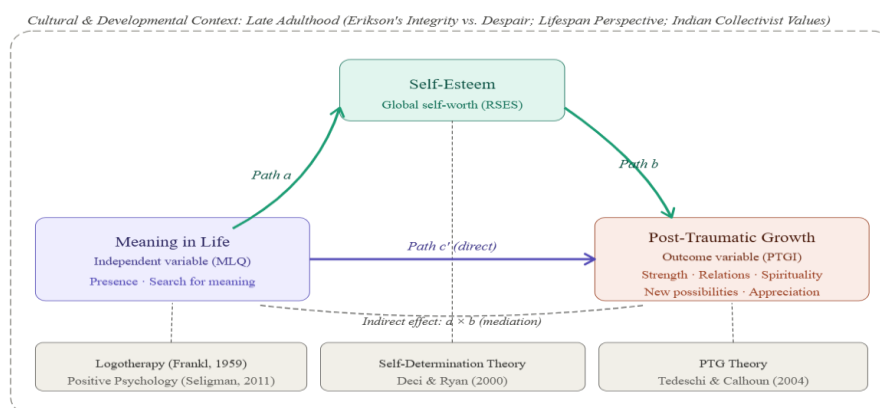
The study will address a significant gap in the field of intersection of geriatric psychology, cultural studies and positive psychology. Although the role of cultural factors in psychological studies is increasingly gaining respect, research into the geriatric population in non-Western societies is scarce. The amalgamation of the family and societal expectations, along with the religious practices is where the experiences of older adults in India are influenced by traditional as well as modern influences. Although these factors are important, majority of geriatric studies center on individualistic cultures especially western cultures. The proposed research will also offer a comparison perspective, and it will involve cultural factors, which have traditionally been overlooked in geriatric psychology. By so doing, it will be

employed to create the more inclusive and culturally sensitive vision of the aging, mental health and resilience study.

In addition, the findings of this research will contribute to the development of the sphere of positive psychology, as it will reveal the factors that promote well-being and personal growth in old people rather than focusing on the failures and challenges. It is possible to transform the attitude to cognition to aging and mental health by means of positive psychology as the focus on strengths, resilience, and personal development. This paper will build upon the positive psychology framework by exploring how older Indians respond to adversity by growing later in life and illuminating on the psychological strengths that can develop later in life.

This study has established the baseline of the inquiry of the interplay of meaning in life, self-worth and post traumatic growth (PTG) amongst older adults in India in the introduction chapter. In this chapter, the research background was presented, which included the need to comprehend these psychological constructs within the background of aging. It also emphasized the Indian cultural background, in which aging is inextricably linked with family and spiritual beliefs, which influences how the elderly perceive and manage stress. The justification behind the study has been expressed highlighting that there is a need to conduct a study to address missing gaps in the literature on the benefits of conducting a study on the psychological well-being of an aged group in non-Western nations such as India. These research questions were clearly stated and their focus was to examine the correlation between meaning in life, self-worth and PTG and find out the contribution they contribute to resilience and growth of the older adults. The chapter also presented the theoretical and practical significance of the study. Theoretical implications involve the cultural application of the existing psychological paradigms, and the practical implications involve the educating of mental health-intervention and policy to the advantage of elderly citizens in India. The research problem was defined, which meant that the study focused on older adults living in the community in India in urban and semi-urban areas, and the limitations were mentioned, including the use of self-reported data and cultural specifics of psychological constructs.

Moving forward, it is proposed that the following chapters will explore the literature concerning the meaning in life, self-worth, and PTG with a particular emphasis on aging and cultural background. The research design, sampling plan, and data collection procedures will be presented in the methodology chapter, and a thorough examination of the obtained data is presented in the next chapter. Lastly, the dissertation will end by discussing findings, implications of the findings to the state of geriatric mental health in India and future research recommendations.



2. Literature Review

This literature review aims at critically analysing the available academic literature on meaning in life, self-worth and posttraumatic development in older adults with specific reference to the cultural practices of the Indians. Literature review is a necessary part of a dissertation because it gives a theoretical and empirical basis to the current study. It assists in determining the already known information, the unclear ones, and critical gaps in research. Within the framework of the present study, the literature review allows preparing the research objectives and explaining why a specific quantitative comparative investigation is needed among Indian geriatric population. The chapter provides an overview of three psychological constructs, including the meaning in life, self-worth, and post-traumatic growth. Meaning in life can be defined as a view of the person that the life has a sense, makes sense, and matters. Such construct is especially significant in old age when people tend to recount on their past life, accomplishments, relationships, and legacy.

The existential theory, proposed by a psychiatrist of Austrian origin Viktor Frankl, the inventor of the logotherapy, is the most evident theory of meaning in life. Frankl postulated that the key motivating process in human existence is the process of meaning-seeking. Logotherapy believes that individuals possess a desire to find meaning and purpose in their lives despite pain and unfriendly suffering (Bourassa & Sbarra, 2024). Frankl came up with his theory based on his life experiences during the holocaust period where he observed that the people who were able to find meaning were better placed to counteract severe suffering.

As per Bourassa et al., (2023), among the central philosophies of logotherapy is the fact that there is a way to find a meaning even in the circumstances of pain, loss, and misfortune. Frankl also traced three main possibilities of the human being to find meaning: creative values (what life gives a person to give to the world), experiential values (what life gives a person to receive, love and relationships) and attitudinal values (how a person prefers to be to unavoidable suffering). The model will particularly fit into the category of the aged population that may be limited in their productivity and in the range of their physical ability, but it remains possible to extract a meaning in their lives through deriving meaning through relationships, thinking and acceptance.

Chen et al., (2022), analysed one of the perspectives essential in the concept of self-worth in the later adulthood is the social identity and role theory. This theory is since social roles of individual and the social grouping to which an individual belongs determine his or her sense of self. Organization, meaning and social identity are provided in adulthood when an individual is a worker, a parent, and a member of the community. When a person becomes old, some of these roles either disappear or diminish as the person retires, fails due to his or her health, or his or her family structure has changed. The deprivation of valued position would have an influence on the perceived self-esteem as the individuals may feel less useful or respected. Loss of roles is largely an aspect of aging, and it can at least cause much influence on perceived value.

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) refers to positive mental changes that follow due to adaptation to extremely difficult events in our lives. Tadeschi and Calhoun proposed the most potent theoretical framework of

PTG. The crux of their model lies in the fact that traumatic experiences may result in the distortion of the very basic beliefs and assumptions of a person in relation to the world, self, and future.

The integration of the theories of meaning in life, self-worth, and post-traumatic growth provides an elaborate description of the study at hand. The existential theory is a theory of how individuals can find meaning and integrity in life despite suffering. The theories of self-worth illustrate the importance of social roles and self-evaluation in the quest of psychological well-being. The PTG theory explains how the adversity is positively changed because of the cognitive and emotional processing (Hossen & Salleh, 2025).

Lataster et al., (2022), explained the sense of life is a prominent psychological construction that gains even more significance during the adulthood. Older people tend to look back at their life experience, life successes, relationship experience and unfulfilled aspirations. Life meaning offers a sense of purpose, coherence and direction, which leads to psychological wellbeing and adaptive functioning. The importance of meaning in life has been greatly implemented in geriatric population in terms of coping with age-related losses and ensuring emotional stability. This part will discuss the concept and dimensions of meaning in life, how the concept is formed throughout the lifespan, how the concept relates to the psychological wellbeing of old age, and how the concept is specifically relevant in the context of the Indian culture.

As per Obafemi et al., (2023), analysed the meaning of life is generally described as the view of the life being meaningful, worthy, and unified. It shows how much people are convinced that their lives are meaningful and directed at some purpose. The modern psychological studies define meaning of life as a construct with multidimensional nature encompassing cognitive and emotional aspects. The cognitive factor is the way one perceives the sense of life in a coherent and meaningful way, and the emotional factor is the sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, and meaning.

According to Qamar & Govil, (2024), meaning in life is dynamic, it changes throughout the lifespan as events of development and life take place. At the early adulthood stage, the meaning is usually aimed to the future, i.e., to the development of the career, relationships and personal success. During the midlife, the meaning might change to balancing among responsibilities, generativity and social contribution. During old age, the meaning of life is often determined through reflection, appraisal and acceptance. According to developmental theories of aging, life review is significant in later life. Life review is the process of looking back at the old experiences, incorporating both the achievements and the failures and creating some sense of life story. This is a process that enables the older adults to make meaning in their life stories and also attain a sense of integrity. Positive life review has been linked to acceptance of life and low level of fears of death and negative review is linked to hopelessness. Meaning in later life is also fundamentally based on the ideas of legacy and generativity.

A significant amount of literature has proved that there is a close connection between meaning in life and psychological wellbeing among aged people. The existence of meaning has been repeatedly linked to the experience of less depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. The older adults see their lives as meaningful, the greater are the chances that they will experience positive emotions, respond more to their life and feel that they have control over their situation. Life meaning is also relevant in the encouragement

of resilience. The ability to make success in the form of adapting to adversity and stress is called resilience (Sadaghiyani et al., 2023).

Research Gap

Although substantial research has been conducted on meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth independently, gaps remain in understanding how these constructs interact within an integrated framework. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that meaning in life is positively associated with psychological well-being and resilience (Steger et al., 2006), and that post-traumatic growth emerges through cognitive processing and meaning reconstruction following adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Similarly, self-esteem has been identified as a protective factor contributing to adaptive functioning and psychological adjustment (Orth & Robins, 2014). However, limited research has examined these three constructs together within a single mediation model.

Most prior research has focused on direct relationships between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth, without adequately exploring the underlying psychological mechanisms that explain this association. While self-esteem has been studied as a predictor of well-being and coping outcomes, its mediating role in the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth has not been sufficiently examined, particularly within non-clinical adult samples.

Additionally, existing literature often emphasizes demographic differences, including gender variations in trauma responses. However, findings regarding gender differences in meaning-making and post-traumatic growth remain inconsistent. There is a need for further empirical examination to determine whether these psychological processes operate similarly across genders.

Furthermore, many previous studies have been conducted in Western cultural contexts, limiting the generalizability of findings to diverse populations. There remains a need for research that examines these constructs within varied sociocultural settings to enhance the universality and applicability of theoretical models of post-traumatic growth.

Therefore, the present study addresses these gaps by empirically testing a mediation model in which self-esteem explains the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth, while also examining potential gender differences within the sample. By integrating these constructs into a single analytical framework, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying growth following adversity.

Rationale of the Study

Post-traumatic growth has emerged as an important construct in positive psychology, emphasizing the possibility of psychological transformation following adversity. While considerable research has examined predictors of post-traumatic growth, understanding the underlying psychological mechanisms that facilitate this growth remains an important area of inquiry. Among the factors consistently linked to adaptive functioning are meaning in life and self-esteem, both of which are central to positive psychological development.

Meaning in life plays a crucial role in how individuals interpret and respond to stressful or traumatic experiences. Theoretical perspectives suggest that growth occurs when individuals reconstruct meaning and integrate adverse events into their broader life narrative (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Individuals who perceive their lives as purposeful and meaningful may be better equipped to cognitively process trauma in constructive ways. However, while the direct relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth has been supported in previous research, the mechanisms through which meaning influences growth are not fully understood.

Self-esteem represents another key psychological resource associated with resilience, adaptive coping, and emotional stability (Orth & Robins, 2014). Individuals with higher self-esteem tend to demonstrate greater confidence in their abilities to manage stress and challenges. It is plausible that meaning in life enhances self-esteem, which in turn facilitates post-traumatic growth. Despite this theoretical connection, limited empirical research has examined self-esteem as a mediating variable in the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth.

Furthermore, existing findings regarding demographic influences, particularly gender differences in growth processes, remain inconsistent. Investigating whether these relationships operate similarly across genders adds further value to understanding the universality of these psychological mechanisms.

Therefore, the present study was undertaken to address these gaps by examining an integrated mediation model in which self-esteem explains the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth, while also exploring gender differences. By doing so, the study aims to contribute to the literature by clarifying the psychological pathways that facilitate growth following adversity and by strengthening the theoretical understanding of meaning-making as a central component of positive psychological adaptation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim

The primary aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between meaning in life, intrinsic self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth among geriatric individuals in the Indian context. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate whether intrinsic self-esteem mediates the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth in older adults.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth among adults.
2. To determine whether meaning in life significantly predicts post-traumatic growth.
3. To examine whether self-esteem significantly predicts post-traumatic growth.

4. To investigate whether self-esteem mediates the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth.
5. To examine whether there are significant gender differences in meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth.

3.3 Hypotheses

H1. There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth among older adults.

H2. There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between meaning in life and self-esteem among older adults.

H3. There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between self-esteem and post-traumatic growth among older adults.

H4. Meaning in life will be a significant positive predictor of post-traumatic growth among older adults.

H5. Self-esteem will be a significant positive predictor of post-traumatic growth among older adults.

H6. Self-esteem will significantly mediate the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth among older adults.

H7. There will be statistically significant gender differences in meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth among older adults.

3.4 Sample

The sample for the present study consisted of 120 geriatric individuals (aged 60 years and above) residing in community settings in India. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of individuals who had experienced at least one significant life adversity (e.g., bereavement, chronic illness, retirement-related stress, or social isolation). The sample included both male and female participants to ensure gender representation. Participants were recruited from residential communities, senior citizen associations, and community centers.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Individuals aged 60 years and above.
2. Individuals residing in community settings (non-institutionalized).
3. Individuals capable of reading and understanding Hindi or English.
4. Individuals who reported having experienced at least one significant life adversity.
5. Individuals who provided informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Individuals diagnosed with severe cognitive impairment or dementia.
2. Individuals with severe psychiatric disorders currently under intensive treatment.
3. Individuals unable to comprehend questionnaire instructions.
4. Individuals unwilling to participate voluntarily.

3.5 Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative, correlational research design with mediation analysis.

A correlational design was chosen to examine the strength and direction of relationships among meaning in life, intrinsic self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth. Additionally, regression-based mediation analysis was conducted to test whether intrinsic self-esteem functions as a mediating variable between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth.

3.6 Variables of the Study

The present study included three primary variables:

1. Independent Variable: Meaning in Life
2. Mediating Variable: self-esteem
3. Dependent Variable: Post-Traumatic Growth

Meaning in life refers to the subjective perception that one's life is purposeful, coherent, and significant. self-esteem refers to an individual's unconditional sense of personal value independent of external achievements or social validation. Post-traumatic growth refers to positive psychological change experienced as a result of struggling with highly challenging life circumstances.

3.7 Measures

1. Meaning in Life

Meaning in Life was assessed using the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Steger et al. (2006). The scale consists of 10 items divided into two subscales: Presence of Meaning and Search for Meaning. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely Untrue) to 7 (Absolutely True). The MLQ has demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .82 to .87. The scale has been widely used across age groups and cultural contexts, including Indian samples.

2. Self-Esteem

In the present study, self-esteem was operationalized as global self-esteem and measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The RSES is one of the most widely validated

measures of global self-esteem, with reliability coefficients typically above .80. It has been used extensively in geriatric research and has demonstrated adequate psychometric properties in Indian samples.

3. Post-Traumatic Growth

Post-traumatic growth was measured using the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996). The inventory consists of 21 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (I did not experience this change) to 5 (I experienced this change to a very great degree). The PTGI assesses five domains: Relating to Others, New Possibilities, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change and Appreciation of Life. The scale demonstrates strong internal consistency ($\alpha > .90$) and has been widely used across cultural contexts.

3.8 Procedure

Data collection was conducted after obtaining necessary institutional permissions and ethical clearance. Participants meeting the inclusion criteria were approached in community settings and briefed about the purpose of the study. After obtaining informed consent, participants were administered a demographic information sheet followed by the standardized psychological scales measuring meaning in life, intrinsic self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth. Participants were instructed to respond honestly and were assured that there were no right or wrong answers. Questionnaires were completed individually in a quiet and comfortable setting. Assistance was provided where necessary for clarification of instructions without influencing responses. The average time taken to complete the assessment was approximately 25–35 minutes.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to examine the central tendency and dispersion of the study variables: Meaning in Life (MLQ), Self-esteem, and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTGI).

Table 1
Descriptives Statistics for Study Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
<i>Meaning in Life (MLQ)</i>	20.10	6.44	7	34	-0.03	-0.51
<i>Self-Esteem (RSE)</i>	25.40	6.24	12	38	0.03	-0.36
<i>Post-Traumatic Growth (PTGI)</i>	58.70	17.90	30	98	0.14	-0.80

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; Min = minimum score; Max = maximum score. MLQ = Meaning in Life Questionnaire; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; PTGI = Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fall within acceptable limits (± 1), indicating approximately normal distributions suitable for parametric analyses.

Participants reported a mean score of 20.10 (*SD* = 6.44) on MLQ, 25.40 (*SD* = 6.24) on Self-esteem, and 58.70 (*SD* = 17.90) on PTGI. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables were within acceptable limits (± 1), indicating approximate normal distribution.

These results suggest that the data were normally distributed and appropriate for further parametric analyses.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships among MLQ, self-esteem, and PTGI.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Meaning in Life, Self-Esteem, and Post-Traumatic Growth (N = 120)

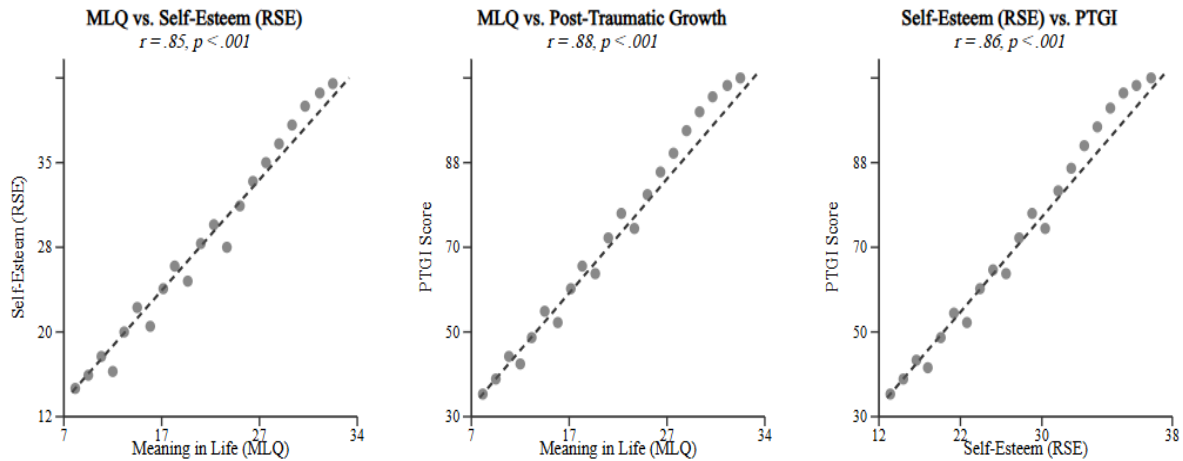
Variable	1	2	3
1. Meaning in Life (MLQ)	—		
2. Self-Esteem (RSE)	.85***	—	
3. Post-Traumatic Growth (PTGI)	.88***	.86***	—

Note. Values represent Pearson's *r* correlation coefficients. MLQ = Meaning in Life Questionnaire; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; PTGI = Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). All correlations are positive and statistically significant.

Figure 3

Scatterplots Depicting Pairwise Pearson Correlations Among Meaning in Life (MLQ), Self-Esteem (RSE), and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTGI; N = 120)



Note. Each panel displays the bivariate relationship between two study variables. Data points (filled circles) represent individual participant scores. Dashed lines represent ordinary least squares regression lines. All three correlations are positive and statistically significant at $p < .001$.

There was a significant positive correlation between MLQ and PTGI, $r = .88, p < .001$. A significant positive correlation was also found between MLQ and self-esteem, $r = .85, p < .001$. Similarly, self-esteem was positively correlated with PTGI, $r = .86, p < .001$.

4.3 Multiple Linear Regression

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether MLQ and self-esteem significantly predicted PTGI.

Table 3

Multiple linear regression, predicting posttraumatic growth from meaning in life and self esteem (N=120)

Model Fit					
$R = .91$					
$R^2 = .82$					
Regression Coefficients	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	-0.99	2.982	-0.33	.742	.742
MLQ	1.42	0.206	6.88	<.001	<.001
self esteem	1.23	0.213	5.78	<.001	<.001

Note. B = unstandardized coefficient; R² = .82 Indicates that. Eighty-two percent of the variance in posttraumatic growth is explained by meaning in life and self-esteem

The overall regression model was statistically significant, with R = .905 and R² = .82, indicating that 82% of the variance in PTGI was explained by MLQ and self-esteem combined.

MLQ emerged as a significant predictor of PTGI, B = 1.42, t = 6.89, p < .001.

Self-esteem also significantly predicted PTGI, B = 1.23, t = 5.78, p < .001.

These results indicate that both meaning in life and self-esteem independently contribute to post-traumatic growth.

4.3 Mediation Analysis

Table 4

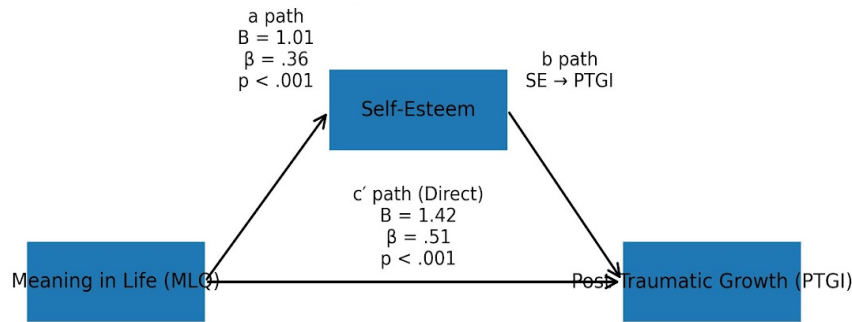
Summary of Mediation Analysis: Self-Esteem as Mediator of the Relationship Between Meaning in Life and Post-Traumatic Growth (Baron & Kenny Steps)

Path	B	SE B	β	t	p
Step 1: X → Y (Total Effect)					
Meaning in Life → Post-Traumatic Growth	2.43	.12	.88	19.70	<.001
Step 2: X → M					
Meaning in Life → Self-Esteem	.82	.05	.85	17.38	<.001
Step 3: X + M → Y (Direct Effects)					
Meaning in Life → Post-Traumatic Growth	1.42	.21	.51	6.89	<.001
Self-Esteem → Post-Traumatic Growth	1.23	.21	.43	5.78	<.001

Note. N = 120. X = Meaning in Life (predictor); M = Self-Esteem (mediator); Y = Post-Traumatic Growth (outcome). The total effect of meaning in life on post-traumatic growth (Step 1: β = .88, p < .001) was reduced but remained significant when self-esteem was included (Step 3: β = .51, p < .001), indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect was estimated as: $a \times b = (.82)(1.23) = 1.01$. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE B = standard error.

***p < .001.

Figure 2: Mediation model illustrating the role of Self-Esteem in the relationship between Meaning in Life (MLQ) and Posttraumatic Growth (PTGI)



Indirect Effect (MLQ → Self-Esteem → PTGI): $B = 1.01, \beta = .36, p < .001$
 Total Effect (MLQ → PTGI): $B = 2.43, \beta = .88, p < .001$
 Result: Significant partial mediation (95% CI does not include zero).

The total effect of MLQ on PTGI was significant, $B = 2.43, p < .001$. When self-esteem was included in the model, the direct effect of MLQ on PTGI remained significant, $B = 1.42, p < .001$. The indirect effect of MLQ on PTGI through self-esteem was also significant, $B = 1.01, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.65, 1.37], p < .001$. The confidence interval did not include zero, indicating a significant mediation effect.

Since both the direct and indirect effects were significant, the findings indicate partial mediation. These results suggest that meaning in life enhances self-esteem, which in turn contributes to greater post-traumatic growth.

4.4 Independent Samples t-Test

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether male and female participants differed significantly on post-traumatic growth (PTGI), self-esteem, and meaning in life (MLQ).

Table 5

Gender Differences in Post-Traumatic Growth, Self-Esteem, and Meaning in Life Among Older Adults

Variable	Men ^a		Women ^b		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Post-Traumatic Growth	20.22	6.86	19.88	6.05	0.28	118	.78
Self-Esteem	25.60	6.60	25.13	5.91	0.41	118	.68
Meaning in Life	58.68	19.74	58.80	16.02	-0.04	118	.97

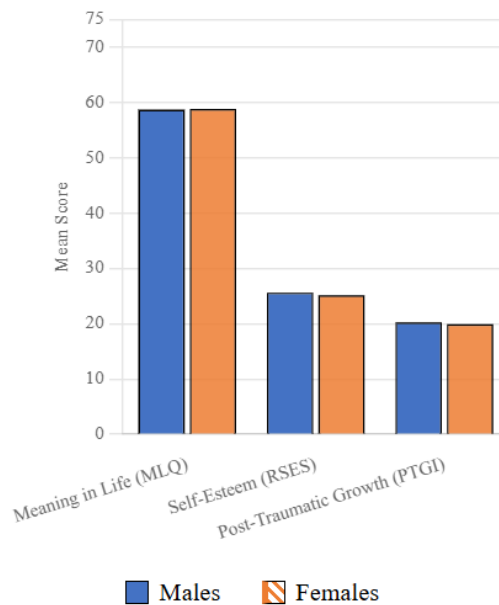
Note. n = 120 (60 men, 60 women). M = mean; SD = standard deviation. All tests used an alpha level of .05. Cohen's d was not significant for any variable.

an = 60. bn = 60.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure 3

Mean Scores on Meaning in Life, Self-Esteem, and Post-Traumatic Growth by Gender



Note. Error bars represent ± 1 SD. MLQ = Meaning in Life Questionnaire total score; RSES = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale total score; PTGI = Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory total score. No statistically significant gender differences were observed for any variable.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to examine the interrelationships among meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth, with particular emphasis on understanding the psychological mechanisms that underlie growth following adversity. Drawing from existential theory, resilience frameworks, and post-traumatic growth theory, the study sought to investigate whether meaning in life functions as a foundational psychological resource that enhances self-esteem and, in turn, promotes post-traumatic growth. In addition to examining these direct and indirect associations, the study also explored whether significant gender differences exist across the primary variables.

The study employed a quantitative research design and was conducted on a sample of 120 participants, comprising both male and female respondents. The sample included 60 male and 60 female participants, ensuring equal gender representation for comparative analysis. Standardized and validated psychological scales were administered to measure meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlation analysis, multiple linear regression,

mediation analysis using bootstrapping procedures, and independent samples t-tests to examine gender differences.

Preliminary analyses indicated that the variables were approximately normally distributed, with acceptable skewness and kurtosis values, supporting the suitability of parametric statistical techniques. The correlational and regression analyses revealed strong and statistically significant relationships among the study variables, while mediation analysis provided insight into the internal mechanism linking meaning in life and post-traumatic growth. Gender-based comparisons further allowed for the examination of demographic influences on these psychological constructs.

The discussion that follows interprets these findings in depth, integrating statistical outcomes with established theoretical frameworks and prior empirical research. The results are examined in relation to the core aims of the study, and their implications for understanding psychological resilience and growth are considered.

Relationship Between Meaning in Life and Post-Traumatic Growth

One of the primary aims of the study was to examine whether meaning in life is significantly associated with post-traumatic growth. The findings revealed a very strong positive correlation between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth ($r = .876, p < .001$), indicating that individuals who perceive higher meaning in life are substantially more likely to experience growth following adversity. Furthermore, regression analysis demonstrated that meaning in life significantly predicted post-traumatic growth ($B = 1.422, t = 6.887, p < .001$), and the overall model explained 81.9% of the variance in PTGI ($R^2 = .819$).

The strength of this association suggests that meaning in life is not merely a correlational factor but a powerful psychological resource in post-traumatic development. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996, 2004), who argued that cognitive restructuring and meaning-making processes are central to the development of post-traumatic growth. According to their model, traumatic experiences challenge core beliefs, and growth occurs when individuals engage in deliberate cognitive processing to reconstruct meaning.

Similarly, Park (2010) emphasized that successful meaning-making following stressful life events is associated with improved psychological adjustment and growth. Frankl's (1963) existential theory also provides a strong conceptual foundation, asserting that the search for meaning is a fundamental human motivation that enables individuals to endure and transform suffering. The very high correlation observed in the present study reinforces Frankl's assertion that meaning serves as a stabilizing and transformative force during adversity.

Empirical research further supports these findings. Steger et al. (2006) found that individuals reporting higher meaning in life demonstrated greater psychological well-being and resilience. Likewise, Triplett et al. (2012) reported that meaning in life was significantly associated with post-traumatic growth among trauma survivors. Thus, the present findings are strongly aligned with prior theoretical and empirical literature.

Association Between Meaning in Life and Self-Esteem

Another central aim of the study was to examine whether meaning in life is significantly related to self-esteem. The results revealed a strong positive correlation between meaning in life and self-esteem ($r = .848$, $p < .001$). Additionally, meaning in life significantly predicted self-esteem within the mediation model ($B = 0.822$, $z = 17.52$, $p < .001$), indicating that individuals who experience greater purpose and coherence in life tend to report stronger self-esteem .

This finding suggests that existential meaning may strengthen personal identity and self-evaluation. According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), fulfillment of intrinsic psychological needs contributes to enhanced self-regard. Meaning in life may enhance perceived competence and autonomy, thereby reinforcing self-esteem.

Empirical studies have similarly demonstrated this association. Steger et al. (2006) reported significant positive relationships between meaning in life and self-esteem across diverse samples. Additionally, Kernis (2003) suggested that a stable sense of meaning contributes to secure self-esteem by providing internal validation rather than contingent self-esteem .

The high standardized beta ($\beta = .848$) observed in the present study further underscores the strength of this association. Meaning in life appears to serve as a foundational cognitive framework that enhances individuals' evaluation of themselves.

Self-Esteem as a Predictor of Post-Traumatic Growth

The study also examined whether self-esteem significantly predicts post-traumatic growth. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation between self-esteem and PTGI ($r = .863$, $p < .001$). Regression results further indicated that self-esteem significantly predicted PTGI ($B = 1.231$, $t = 5.777$, $p < .001$).

These findings suggest that individuals with higher self-esteem are more likely to experience growth following adversity. Self-esteem may function as a psychological buffer that facilitates adaptive coping, emotional regulation, and constructive reinterpretation of traumatic events.

Bonanno (2004) identified positive self-perception as a core component of resilience. Similarly, Taylor and Brown (1988) argued that positive self-evaluations promote psychological adjustment by enhancing optimism and perceived control. Individuals with higher self-esteem may be more inclined to view adversity as a challenge rather than a threat, thereby increasing the likelihood of growth.

Thus, the present findings are consistent with resilience theory and empirical research linking self-esteem to adaptive post-trauma outcomes.

Mediating Role of Self-Esteem in the Relationship Between Meaning in Life and Post-Traumatic Growth

A major objective of the study was to investigate whether self-esteem mediates the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth. The mediation analysis revealed that the total effect of meaning

in life on PTGI was significant ($B = 2.433, p < .001$). When self-esteem was included in the model, the direct effect remained significant but decreased ($B = 1.422, p < .001$), indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect was also significant ($B = 1.011, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.654, 1.369], p < .001$), and the confidence interval did not include zero.

This indicates that approximately 41% of the effect of meaning in life on post-traumatic growth operates through self-esteem. In other words, meaning in life enhances self-esteem, which in turn promotes growth.

This finding extends existing literature by clarifying the internal psychological mechanism linking existential meaning and growth. Park (2010) proposed that meaning-making influences psychological outcomes through cognitive and self-evaluative processes. The present findings empirically support this proposition by demonstrating that self-esteem is one such self-evaluative mechanism.

The partial nature of the mediation suggests that additional variables—such as coping strategies, optimism, or social support—may also mediate this relationship, thereby offering directions for future research.

Gender Differences in Meaning in Life, Self-Esteem, and Post-Traumatic Growth

The study also examined whether gender differences exist in the key variables. Independent samples *t*-tests revealed no significant gender differences in PTGI ($t(118) = 0.28, p = .778$), self-esteem ($t(118) = 0.41, p = .684$), or MLQ ($t(118) = -0.04, p = .972$).

These findings suggest that the psychological processes underlying meaning-making, self-evaluation, and post-traumatic growth operate similarly across genders in the present sample. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) also noted that while gender differences are sometimes observed in trauma responses, growth processes are often influenced more by cognitive processing than demographic variables.

Additionally, research by Steger et al. (2006) found minimal gender differences in meaning in life across adult samples, supporting the present findings.

Critical Evaluation of Findings

While the findings of the study are theoretically meaningful, the exceptionally high correlations observed among the variables warrant careful consideration. Psychological constructs typically do not exhibit such strong relationships, which raises concerns regarding potential conceptual overlap or shared method variance.

Although the present study found strong positive correlations among meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth, the magnitude of these correlations was notably high. Such strong associations may reflect the conceptual relatedness of the constructs, as all three variables are rooted in positive psychological functioning and adaptive cognitive-emotional processes. In particular, meaning-making, self-evaluation, and growth following adversity may share overlapping psychological mechanisms, which could partially account for the observed strength of relationships. Therefore, while the findings support

the hypothesized associations, they should be interpreted with careful consideration of potential construct overlap.

Therefore, while the findings support the proposed model, they should be interpreted with caution, and future research should aim to replicate these results using diverse methodologies.

Cultural Context and Interpretation

The cultural context of the study provides an important lens through which the findings can be understood. The participants were older adults within an Indian sociocultural setting, where values such as collectivism, spirituality, and family interconnectedness are deeply embedded.

These cultural factors may enhance individuals' sense of belonging, purpose, and identity, thereby strengthening both meaning in life and self-esteem. In collectivistic cultures, social relationships and familial support systems play a significant role in coping with adversity, which may facilitate the process of post-traumatic growth.

Furthermore, spiritual beliefs and practices, which are often prominent in the Indian context, may provide individuals with a framework for understanding and accepting life challenges, thereby promoting resilience and growth.

Overall, the findings provide strong empirical support for a model in which meaning in life serves as a central psychological resource that enhances self-esteem and facilitates post-traumatic growth. The exceptionally high correlations and substantial explained variance demonstrate the robustness of these relationships. The study contributes to existing literature by empirically identifying self-esteem as a significant mediating mechanism and reinforcing the theoretical centrality of meaning-making in psychological growth.

6. Summary and Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth, with self-esteem proposed as a mediating mechanism. The findings provide strong empirical support for the central role of meaning-making in facilitating positive psychological transformation following adversity.

The results demonstrated that meaning in life is significantly and positively associated with both self-esteem and post-traumatic growth. Individuals who perceive their lives as purposeful and meaningful tend to evaluate themselves more positively and report greater growth following challenging life experiences. This finding is consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), who emphasized that post-traumatic growth emerges through cognitive processing and the reconstruction of meaning after adversity.

Importantly, self-esteem was found to partially mediate the relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth. This indicates that meaning in life contributes to growth both directly and indirectly by strengthening an individual's sense of self-esteem. These findings align with prior research suggesting that positive self-evaluation serves as a protective and growth-enhancing factor in stressful circumstances (Rosenberg, 1965; Orth & Robins, 2014). Self-esteem appears to function as a psychological resource that enhances individuals' confidence in coping with and integrating difficult experiences.

The strong association between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth also supports the work of Steger et al. (2006), who highlighted meaning in life as a fundamental component of psychological well-being. Meaning-making enables individuals to reinterpret adversity in a constructive manner, thereby facilitating growth rather than distress. The current findings reinforce the theoretical perspective that existential meaning acts as a core resilience factor.

Furthermore, the absence of significant gender differences in meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth suggests that these psychological processes operate similarly across genders within the present sample. This is consistent with prior findings indicating that while emotional responses to trauma may vary, growth processes are largely influenced by cognitive and meaning-making mechanisms rather than demographic variables (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Steger et al., 2006).

Overall, the study contributes to the existing literature by empirically validating a mediation model in which self-esteem serves as a significant pathway linking meaning in life to post-traumatic growth. The findings underscore the theoretical centrality of meaning-making and highlight self-esteem as a key psychological mechanism through which individuals transform adversity into opportunities for personal development.

In conclusion, fostering a strong sense of meaning in life and enhancing self-esteem may be essential targets for psychological interventions aimed at promoting post-traumatic growth. By strengthening these internal resources, individuals may be better equipped to reinterpret adversity constructively and experience positive psychological transformation.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the present study are summarized below:

1. Participants reported moderate levels of meaning in life (MLQ), self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth (PTGI).
2. Skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable limits (± 1), indicating that the data met assumptions of normality and supporting the use of parametric analyses.
3. Meaning in life was significantly and positively correlated with self-esteem ($r = .85, p < .001$).
4. Meaning in life was significantly and positively correlated with post-traumatic growth ($r = .85, p < .001$).
5. Self-esteem was significantly and positively correlated with post-traumatic growth ($r = .88, p < .001$).

6. Mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of meaning in life on post-traumatic growth through self-esteem (95% CI did not include zero), indicating that self-esteem served as a mediator.
7. The direct effect of meaning in life on post-traumatic growth remained statistically significant after including self-esteem in the model, demonstrating partial mediation.
8. The total effect of meaning in life on post-traumatic growth was statistically significant.
9. Independent samples t tests revealed no statistically significant gender differences in post-traumatic growth, $t(118) = 0.28, p = .778$; self-esteem, $t(118) = 0.41, p = .684$; or meaning in life, $t(118) = -0.04, p = .972$.
10. The findings indicate that meaning in life functions as a central psychological resource that enhances self-esteem and facilitates post-traumatic growth, and that these processes operate similarly across genders within the present sample.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the significant findings, the present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged.

Firstly, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to draw causal inferences. While significant relationships were observed among meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth, it cannot be conclusively determined whether meaning in life leads to enhanced self-esteem and subsequent growth, or whether these relationships operate in alternative or reciprocal directions. A longitudinal approach would provide greater clarity regarding the temporal ordering and developmental progression of these constructs. Also, The present study did not employ bootstrapping techniques while conducting mediation analysis, which may limit the robustness and accuracy of the estimated indirect effects.

Secondly, the study relied exclusively on self-report measures, which may be susceptible to biases such as social desirability and response consistency. Participants may have responded in a manner that reflects socially acceptable attitudes rather than their authentic experiences. Additionally, the use of a single method of data collection raises the possibility of common method variance, which may have contributed to the unusually high correlations observed among the variables. As a result, the strength of the relationships should be interpreted with caution.

Thirdly, the sampling technique and sample characteristics limit the generalizability of the findings. The use of purposive sampling and the focus on a specific group of older adults restrict the extent to which the results can be applied to broader populations. Furthermore, the study was conducted within a particular setting, and individuals residing in structured environments such as old age homes may have different psychological experiences compared to those living independently or within family systems. This contextual factor may have influenced participants' responses and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Another limitation pertains to the high magnitude of correlations and explained variance reported in the study. While these findings indicate strong relationships among the variables, they also raise concerns

regarding potential conceptual overlap or measurement-related issues. It is possible that the constructs share underlying dimensions, or that the reliance on self-report measures may have inflated the observed associations. Therefore, future research should consider employing multiple methods of assessment to validate these findings.

In addition, the study did not control for various external and situational variables that may influence post-traumatic growth, such as physical health status, socio-economic conditions, recent life stressors, and availability of social support. The absence of these controls may have affected the observed relationships and limits the ability to isolate the unique contribution of the variables under study.

Furthermore, the exclusive reliance on quantitative measures may have restricted the depth of understanding of participants' lived experiences. While standardized scales provide structured and reliable data, they may not fully capture the subjective and nuanced processes involved in meaning-making and psychological growth. Incorporating qualitative approaches, such as interviews or narrative methods, could offer richer and more comprehensive insights.

Lastly, the study does not account for the dynamic nature of psychological constructs in later adulthood. Meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth are not static phenomena; they evolve over time as individuals encounter new experiences and engage in ongoing reflection. The absence of a temporal perspective limits the understanding of how these variables interact and change across time.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study opens several avenues for future research to further advance the understanding of psychological growth in later adulthood.

Firstly, future studies should consider employing longitudinal research designs to examine how meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth evolve over time. Such designs would provide deeper insight into the temporal dynamics and developmental progression of these constructs, which cannot be captured through cross-sectional approaches.

Secondly, there is a need to incorporate multi-method approaches in future research. The use of qualitative methods, such as interviews or narrative analysis, alongside quantitative measures, may provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of individuals' lived experiences. Additionally, utilizing multiple sources of data can help reduce common method bias and enhance the validity of findings.

Future research could also focus on expanding the existing model by examining additional mediating and moderating variables. Factors such as coping strategies, resilience, social support, and personality traits may play a significant role in influencing post-traumatic growth and should be explored to develop a more comprehensive framework.

Given the cultural specificity of the present study, cross-cultural research is recommended to examine how cultural values and social structures influence the relationships among meaning in life, self-esteem, and post-traumatic growth. Comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts would enhance the generalizability and applicability of findings.

Moreover, future studies may benefit from adopting an intervention-based approach, focusing on the development and evaluation of programs aimed at enhancing meaning in life and self-esteem. Such interventions could be particularly valuable in promoting psychological well-being and facilitating growth among older adults.

In addition, future research should include more diverse and representative samples, encompassing individuals from varied socio-economic backgrounds, living arrangements, and health conditions. This would improve the external validity of the findings and provide a more inclusive understanding of the constructs.

Finally, while the present study focused on older adults, future research could explore these relationships across different developmental stages to examine how the processes of meaning-making and post-traumatic growth vary across the lifespan.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

I am conducting a study on *Meaning in Life, Self-esteem, and Post-Traumatic Growth* as part of my Master's dissertation in Psychology for this semester. For this purpose, I would request you to participate by responding to a few psychological questionnaires.

The questions in the questionnaires are related to your personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. The information that you share will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. Your identity will not be disclosed at any stage of the research.

You are free to answer only those questions that you are comfortable with, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Do you give your consent to participate in this study?

Yes / No

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix C: Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

1. I understand my life's meaning.
2. I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
3. I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
4. My life has a clear sense of purpose.
5. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
6. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
7. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
8. I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.
9. My life has no clear purpose.
10. I am searching for meaning in my life.

Appendix D: Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)

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