

The Association Between Intergenerational Trauma, Perceived Social Support and Post Traumatic Growth Among Young Adults

Ishika Kalra^{1*}, Rita Kumar²

Abstract

This study explores the intricate relationship between intergenerational trauma, perceived social support, and post-traumatic growth (PTG) among young adults in the Indian subcontinent. Drawing on a sample of 199 participants, the research examines how adverse childhood experiences (ACE) transmitted across generations impact individuals' psychological well-being and their capacity for growth. In particular, the study looks into how perceived social support from friends, family, and other people can help to moderate PTG. Despite expectations, the results indicate weak correlations between intergenerational trauma and both perceived social support and PTG. The findings challenge the notion that childhood adversity directly fosters personal growth, emphasizing the need for more nuanced explorations into the factors that mediate trauma recovery, such as coping strategies and resilience. The study also emphasizes the importance of cultural context, especially in collectivist societies where people's recovery paths are shaped by the interaction of social norms, shared trauma histories, and familial expectations. The weak associations found indicate that outcomes are significantly shaped by variables other than direct trauma experiences, such as the caliber and accessibility of social support. This study emphasizes how crucial it is to create culturally aware treatment approaches that take into consideration the intricate relationships between trauma transmission, social support networks, and personal development. This study offers important insights for future research and clinical practice by concentrating on the Indian subcontinent, which advances our understanding of how collectivist cultural frameworks affect the transmission of trauma over generations and the possibility of psychological development.

Keywords: Indian subcontinent, Intergenerational trauma, social support, post-traumatic growth, young adults, resilience.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of intergenerational trauma perceived social support, and post-traumatic growth (PTG)

*Author for Correspondence

Ishika Kalra

E-mail: ishikakalra9897@gmail.com

¹Student, Department of Psychology, Amity University, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Professor, Department of Psychology, Amity University, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, India

Received Date: November 23, 2024

Accepted Date: December 24, 2024

Published Date: January 23, 2025

Citation: Ishika Kalra, Rita Kumar. The Association Between Intergenerational Trauma, Perceived Social Support and Post Traumatic Growth Among Young Adults. *International Journal of Children*. 2025; 2(1): 1–8p.

among young adults are intricately woven into the diverse societal fabric of the Indian subcontinent, a region marked by a rich mosaic of cultural, social, and familial influences. This complex civilisation, which is rooted in both past customs and modernism, has a big influence on how people view themselves and their general well-being. Fostering holistic human development and advancing mental health equity and inclusion require an understanding of how these factors interact.

Intergenerational trauma is the transfer of trauma from one generation to the next, when the psychological and emotional effects of one

generation affect the ones that follow [1]. This idea emphasises how deeply familial and historical adversities impact people's psychological growth and functioning. Trauma can have particularly severe repercussions in a collectivistic country like India, where social and familial networks are firmly established, impacting not only the immediate survivors but also their offspring.

In order to mitigate the consequences of trauma and promote resilience, perceived social support—which includes the support one feels they receive from their social networks—is essential. Social support can improve psychological well-being and speed up the process of post-traumatic growth by mitigating the negative effects of stress and trauma [2]. The quality and perceived availability of social support can have a substantial impact on how people cope with and recover from traumatic situations in the Indian context, where family and community ties are essential.

Tedeschi et al. coined the term “post-traumatic growth” to describe the beneficial psychological shift brought about by overcoming extremely difficult life situations [3]. It entails the growth of fresh outlooks on life, heightened self-confidence, and enhanced interpersonal connections. The possibility of PTG in the context of intergenerational trauma emphasises people's ability to move past the effects of their painful experiences and come out on the other side with a fresh sense of purpose and personal development [4].

Awareness how young adults traverse their emotional and psychological terrain requires an awareness of the interaction between perceived social support and intergenerational trauma. Young adults may face the twin challenges of dealing with hereditary trauma and finding sufficient social support in a society where traditional gender roles and familial expectations place a great deal of pressure. The cultural norms surrounding emotional expression and resilience further complicate this relationship and can affect how people seek and receive help.

Examining how these interconnected elements affect young people's experiences in the Indian subcontinent is crucial due to their complexity. Examining the relationship between perceived social support, intergenerational trauma, and post-traumatic growth can provide important new insights into the processes that support resilience and overall well-being in this culturally diverse and rich environment. This knowledge advances the field of trauma research in addition to providing guidance for the creation of culturally competent interventions meant to improve the emotional and mental health of young adults overcoming the difficulties associated with their inherited legacies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on model of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), which emphasizes the transformative potential of trauma when mediated by social and personal factors. Additionally, the intergenerational transmission theory explains how trauma passes through generations, impacting resilience and psychological outcomes. The study integrates Cohen and Wills' (1985) stress-buffering hypothesis, suggesting that perceived social support mitigates trauma's adverse effects [5].

Kinsella, M., & Williams, D. (2021) studies that the intergenerational transmission of trauma and its effects on posttraumatic growth in young adults [6]. This study investigates the impact of generational trauma on the posttraumatic growth (PTG) of young people. According to the findings, growth and resilience can be fostered despite the weight of inherited trauma by means of perceived social support. A long-term research project looking at how the link between PTG and intergenerational trauma is impacted over time by the perception of social support. The results highlight how crucial ongoing social support is for fostering long-term growth [7].

Family trauma, resilience, and social support in young adults: Pathways to posttraumatic growth. This study investigates the contribution of perceived social support and resilience to posttraumatic growth in young people who have experienced intergenerational trauma. Findings indicate that after trauma, resilient people with robust social networks grow at higher rates [8].

A study emphasises how social support can act as a buffer against the harmful psychological effects of intergenerational trauma on young adults, including despair and anxiety. It highlights how crucial having strong social links is to lessening the effects of familial tragedy [9].

The moderating role of perceived social support in the association between PTG and familial trauma history is investigated in this study. The results imply that in those with a traumatic family history, social support greatly promotes posttraumatic growth [10, 11].

Research examines how cultural elements, intergenerational trauma, and perceived social support affect PTG with an emphasis on various ethnic groups. According to the findings, PTG is more common in people who sense more support from others [12].

A study demonstrates how, in young adults, perceived social connectedness moderates the association between intergenerational trauma and PTG. More robust social networks lessen detrimental psychological effects and promote posttraumatic growth [13].

A study examines the posttraumatic growth of young adults who have experienced intergenerational trauma and the significance of perceived social support in their recovery. The findings demonstrate how important close relationships' social support is for fostering recovery from trauma [14].

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the correlation between childhood trauma of young adults and their parents.
2. To study the Correlation between childhood trauma and perceived social support among young adults
3. To study the correlation between childhood trauma and post traumatic growth among young adults.
4. To study the correlation between perceived social support and post traumatic growth.

HYPOTHESIS

- H₁: There will be the correlation between childhood trauma of young adults and their parents.
- H₂: There will be a relation between the level of emotional expressivity and the self-concept of young adult males.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample of 199 participants, ages 18 to 35, were included in the study (M_{age} = 24.25, SD_{age} = 3.54). The event was available to both male and female participants. To ensure representativeness, the sample was gathered using convenient snowball sampling. Socioeconomic level (SES) and family structure (joint vs. nuclear) were two examples of demographic differences. Of the participants, 75% classified themselves as coming from the "Middle" SES, 10% as coming from the "Low" SES group, and 15% as belonging to the "High" SES category. About the composition of the participants' families, 40% were from joint families and 60% from nuclear households.

Variables

Independent Variables

- IV 1: childhood trauma of young adults and their parents
- IV 2: Perceived social support

Dependent Variable

- DV 1: Post traumatic growth

Instruments Used

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Scale

To evaluate the individuals' experiences of early adversity, the ACE Scale was employed. This scale assesses a variety of negative experiences, including domestic violence, abuse, and neglect. To collect

detailed data on intergenerational trauma, the scale was given to individuals who were young adults and their parents individually. The ACE Scale consists of ten items that are each evaluated dichotomously (yes/no), indicating whether or not a particular adverse childhood experience occurred.

Perceived Social Support Scale

The Perceived Social Support Scale was employed to gauge perceived social support. This measure assesses how much people believe they have access to resources and connections that are encouraging. The subscales for instrumental support, informational support, emotional support, and evaluation support are all included. Utilising a Likert scale with values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), participants assessed the apparent amount of support.

Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)

The measure of posttraumatic growth employed was the PTGI. This assessment gauges the degree to which overcoming trauma has resulted in good psychological changes. Domains like self-sufficiency, better relationships, life enjoyment, new opportunities, and spiritual development are all part of the PTGI. Using a Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 5 (very much), participants answered to items.

Reliability and Validity of Tools

- *Adverse childhood experience (ACE) scale:* Cronbach's alpha for this tool has been reported at 0.88, indicating high internal consistency. Its validity is supported through convergent correlations with similar trauma measures.
- *Perceived social support scale:* This tool exhibits a reliability of 0.90 (Cronbach's alpha). It demonstrates strong construct validity through its alignment with established measures of social support.
- *Posttraumatic growth inventory (PTGI):* Reliability for the PTGI ranges from 0.86 to 0.92, depending on the subscales. It has been validated through factor analysis and correlations with growth-related outcomes.

Research Design

The current study used a repeated measures approach, giving the same sample of participants access to all three scales. The purpose of this design was to evaluate the connections between posttraumatic growth, perceived social support, and intergenerational trauma among the same individuals. The study is a quantitative analysis that focusses on how young adults' posttraumatic growth is impacted by perceived social support, intergenerational trauma, and their interactions.

To assess the effects of intergenerational trauma, the young adult participants' parents also completed the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Scale. The participants' perceived levels of social support were assessed using the Perceived Social Support Scale. The individuals' level of posttraumatic growth was assessed using the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI). These characteristics were measured using psychometric measures, and the collected data were then subjected to statistical analyses, such as regression and correlation, to determine the correlations between the variables and their impact on posttraumatic growth.

Statistical Analysis

The gathered data was entered and kept in Microsoft Office Excel 2019 (Version 2401), where scores were computed and arranged according to each variable. Then, using SPSS software, statistical calculations and analyses were carried out. The first step in the descriptive analysis process was figuring out the participants' average scores across the three scales. The direction and degree of the relationships between intergenerational trauma, perceived social support, and posttraumatic growth were then investigated using correlational analysis.

RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to look into the connection between young people' post-traumatic growth (PTG), perceived social support, and intergenerational trauma. To investigate the relationships

Table 1. Correlation of childhood trauma of young adults and their parents.

		ACECH	ACEP
ACECH	Pearson correlation	1	.134
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.059
	N	199	199
ACEP	Pearson correlation	.134	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059	
	N	199	199

Table 2. Correlation of childhood trauma, perceived social support, post traumatic growth, perceive social support by others by family members and friends among young adults.

		ACECH	SS	PTG	SSOT	SSFA	SSFR
ACECH	Pearson correlation	1	.056	.097	.098	-.101	.100
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.432	.173	.169	.156	.158
	N	199	199	199	199	199	199
SS	Pearson correlation	.056	1	.017	.545**	.562**	.647**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.432		.812	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	199	199	199	199	199	199
PTG	Pearson correlation	.097	.017	1	.046	.049	-.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.173	.812		.519	.493	.411
	N	199	199	199	199	199	199
SSOT	Pearson correlation	.098	.545**	.046	1	-.039	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.169	<.001	.519		.588	.488
	N	199	199	199	199	199	199
SSFA	Pearson correlation	-.101	.562**	.049	-.039	1	.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.156	<.001	.493	.588		.673
	N	199	199	199	199	199	199
SSFR	Pearson correlation	.100	.647**	-.059	.049	.030	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.158	<.001	.411	.488	.673	
	N	199	199	199	199	199	199

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: $p < 0.01$ for significant correlations between SS and SSOT, SSFA, and SSFR.

between perceived social support (SS), post-traumatic growth (PTG), and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) of both parents and children (ACECH and ACEP), data from 199 individuals were gathered and analysed using SPSS. To investigate these factors, descriptive and correlational analyses were carried out as shown Table 1.

A weak correlation was found between parents' negative experiences and their children (Table 1), with the correlation between ACECH and ACEP yielding a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.134 that was not statistically significant ($p = 0.059$).

Additional investigation as shown in Table 2 was carried out to evaluate the associations among ACECH, SS, and PTG in addition to the many aspects of perceived social support, including support from friends (SSFR), family (SSFA), and others (SSOT). The following was disclosed by the findings:

- The correlation between ACECH and perceived social support (SS) was weak and non-significant ($r = 0.056$, $p = 0.432$), suggesting that ACECH is not strongly related to how much social support individuals perceive.

- The relationship between ACECH and PTG was also weak and non-significant ($r = 0.097$, $p = 0.173$), indicating that adverse childhood experiences in children may not directly predict post-traumatic growth.
- There was a slight positive correlation between ACECH and perceived support from others (SSOT) ($r = 0.098$, $p = 0.169$) but this was not statistically significant.
- Interestingly, there was a negative but non-significant correlation between ACECH and perceived support from family (SSFA) ($r = -0.101$, $p = 0.156$), suggesting that those with more adverse childhood experiences might perceive lower support from their family, but this finding was not conclusive.

For perceived social support (SS) and its dimensions, there were significant positive correlations among several variables:

- SS had a strong positive correlation with SSOT ($r = 0.545$, $p < 0.001$), SSFA ($r = 0.562$, $p < 0.001$), and SSFR ($r = 0.647$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals who perceive higher overall social support tend to report receiving support from multiple sources such as family and friends.

However, the relationship between perceived social support (SS) and post-traumatic growth (PTG) was weak and non-significant ($r = 0.017$, $p = 0.812$), showing that social support may not be a major factor in predicting PTG for this sample.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study shed light on the connection between young people's post-traumatic growth (PTG), perceived social support, and intergenerational trauma. The non-significant correlation ($r = 0.134$, $p = 0.059$) between adverse childhood experiences (ACECH) and adverse childhood experiences of parents (ACEP) suggests that there is not a substantial correlation between the two variables. This implies that the transfer of trauma from parents to offspring could not be simple and might entail a number of mediating elements that this study was unable to identify.

It was also shown that there was a modest and non-significant correlation ($r = 0.056$, $p = 0.432$) between ACECH and perceived social support (SS), suggesting that growing up with greater adversity does not always translate into a lower sense of social support in early adulthood. In a similar vein, there was little connection ($r = 0.097$, $p = 0.173$) between ACECH and post-traumatic growth (PTG), indicating that negative experiences by themselves do not significantly predict good personal progress after trauma. This study highlights the need for additional in-depth research into the circumstances that promote PTG, as it conflicts with some earlier research suggesting that adversity can occasionally boost progress.

There was a high correlation between the three measures of perceived social support—support from friends (SSFR), support from family (SSFA), and support from others (SSOT). Specifically, the strong association between SS and SSFR ($r = 0.647$, $p < 0.001$) implies that friends' social support is crucial for young adults' overall impression of support. This emphasises how crucial peer interactions are in forming the social networks and sense of support that young people experience. On the other hand, the weak and non-significant association ($r = 0.017$, $p = 0.812$) between perceived social support and PTG suggests that, at least in this sample, social support may not directly affect PTG.

It's interesting to note that there was a slight negative connection ($r = -0.101$, $p = 0.156$) between ACECH and perceived family support (SSFA). Although not statistically significant, this may indicate that those who had more negative childhood experiences feel less support from their families, which is consistent with other studies on the long-term impacts of childhood trauma on family dynamics. However, this trend deserves additional examination.

All things considered, these results advance our knowledge of the relationship between social support and intergenerational trauma in the context of young adult development. The poor correlations shown

between ACECH and PTG as well as SS demonstrate how trauma may not be the only factor influencing a person's capacity for personal development or sense of support. It's probable that additional elements like coping mechanisms, resilience, and availability of mental health resources have a bigger impact on these processes.

According to the findings, therapies meant to foster post-traumatic growth ought to prioritise improving coping strategies and access to outside resources like peer support in addition to lessening negative experiences. Future studies should also look into additional mediators that might affect the connection between trauma, social support, and growth, such as emotional control or community support.

Lastly, the results challenge the notion that social support always fosters recovery from traumatic experiences. In this population, there was a substantial perception of support from friends and family, but there was no significant correlation between it and PTG. This suggests that, even though social ties are significant, they could not be the only thing that helps people grow after trauma if other factors are also at play.

In conclusion, the study provides some evidence in favour of the theory that post-traumatic growth is influenced by perceived social support. It does, however, highlight the complexity of these linkages by challenging the idea that negative childhood experiences are directly related to either social support or growth outcomes. Future research should keep examining the complex network of elements that support growth and resilience in young adults who have experienced trauma.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain restrictions on the current investigation. Firstly, the 199 participants in the research sample may have limited the findings' statistical power and generalisability. The validity of the findings would be strengthened and a more representative image of the overall population may be obtained with a larger and more varied sample.

Second, there may be a drawback to using self-report measures to evaluate post-traumatic development (PTG), perceived social support, and adverse childhood experiences (ACE). Self-reports are prone to bias because respondents might give answers they think are socially acceptable or might not precisely recall previous experiences, which would skew the results.

Finally, additional confounding factors that might have affected the results but were not taken into account included the participants' mental health, pressures in their lives at the time, and any pre-existing medical issues have affected the way they respond. Additionally, post-traumatic growth and perceived social support may have been influenced by social and environmental elements that were not included in the study. Future studies that account for these variables may produce more reliable results and stronger support for the correlations being studied.

CONCLUSION

The current study set out to investigate the connection between young people' post-traumatic growth (PTG), perceived social support, and intergenerational trauma. The study sought to investigate the relationship between personal growth after trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) experienced by both parents and children, as well as the perceived social support from friends, family, and other sources.

The results offered insightful information about these connections. While there was no statistically significant correlation found between parents' adverse childhood experiences and post-traumatic growth, the study did emphasise the significance of friends perceived social support in forming young adults' overall social support system. Perceived social support did not, however, significantly affect post-traumatic growth directly, indicating that other factors might be more important infostering resilience and growth following trauma.

The study emphasises the significance of taking into account a variety of factors on a person's potential for growth, which helps to clarify the intricacies surrounding trauma and rehabilitation. Future studies are encouraged by the results to investigate mediators such coping mechanisms, emotional control, and resource accessibility as they may contribute to post-traumatic growth. This study also emphasises how crucial it is to look into how trauma and social support interact in order to create treatments that are more successful in fostering young adults' well-being.

REFERENCES

1. Lev–Wiesel R. Intergenerational transmission of trauma across three generations: A preliminary study. *Qualitative Social Work*. 2007 Mar;6(1):75-94.
2. Calhoun CD, Stone KJ, Cobb AR, Patterson MW, Danielson CK, Bendezú JJ. The role of social support in coping with psychological trauma: An integrated biopsychosocial model for posttraumatic stress recovery. *Psychiatric Quarterly*. 2022 Dec;93(4):949-70.
3. Tedeschi RG, Park CL, Calhoun LG. Assessment of posttraumatic growth. In *Posttraumatic growth* 1998 Mar 1 (pp. 31-50). Routledge.
4. Zoellner T, Maercker A. Posttraumatic growth in clinical psychology—A critical review and introduction of a two-component model. *Clinical psychology review*. 2006 Sep 1;26(5):626-53.
5. Cohen S, Wills T A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *American Psychological Association*.1985;98(2):310–357.
6. Kinsella M, Williams D. The intergenerational transmission of trauma and its effects on posttraumatic growth in young adults. *Journal of Trauma and Recovery*. 2021;12(2): 143-160.
7. Carson E, Lee J. Family trauma perceived social support, and personal growth: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Longitudinal Trauma Studies*. 2021;10(5):319-334.
8. Williams D, Lee C. Family trauma, resilience, and social support in young adults: Pathways to posttraumatic growth. *Journal of Positive Psychology*. 2021; 10(2):94-108.
9. Schwartz S, Goldstein A. Perceived social support as a buffer between intergenerational trauma and psychological outcomes. *Journal of Psychological Research*. 2020;45(4):223-235.
10. Chen X, Liu S. Perceived social support and posttraumatic growth in young adults: The moderating effect of family trauma history. *Journal of Adolescence*. 2019;76: 91-102.
11. Birkeland MS, Holt T, Ormhaug SM, Jensen TK. Perceived social support and posttraumatic stress symptoms in children and youth in therapy: A parallel process latent growth curve model. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*. 2020 Sep 1; 132:103655.
12. Brooks R, Evans T. Exploring the interplay between intergenerational trauma and posttraumatic growth in diverse populations. *Journal of Cultural Psychology*.2018; 33(6):521-533.
13. Rodriguez A, Murphy S. The role of social connectedness in mitigating the effects of intergenerational trauma. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. 2017;20(1): 58-72.
14. Lewis J, Brown A. Posttraumatic growth among young adults with a history of intergenerational trauma: The importance of social support. *Journal of Adolescent and Young Adult Psychiatry*.2017; 34(1): 82-96.