

# FROM TRAUMA TO TRANSFORMATION: EXPLORING POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS THROUGH A SCOPING REVIEW

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**Abstract:** The incidence of sexual violence is increasing globally. In Indonesia, data from the National Commission on Violence against Women reveals that psychological and sexual violence are the two most prevalent forms of abuse, accounting for 37% and 28% of cases, respectively. These incidents have significant physical and psychological impacts on individuals. Despite this, survivors of sexual violence have the potential to experience positive transformation after trauma, known as posttraumatic growth (PTG). While research on PTG has progressed, a comprehensive mapping of trends and gaps in this area remains lacking. This study aims to map the literature on PTG among survivors of sexual violence, exploring research trends and methodologies employed. Utilizing a scoping review approach, a systematic literature search was conducted in September 2024 across major databases such as Scopus, PubMed, and ScienceDirect. Inclusion criteria required studies in which posttraumatic growth is the primary focus of measurement, specifically examine survivors of sexual violence. Utilize primary data, and explore posttraumatic growth beyond general discussions on growth-related topics. Articles were systematically screened based on relevance to the research question. The results identified 19 relevant studies on PTG among survivors of sexual violence, focusing on psychological themes and employing diverse methodologies: 10 quantitative, 5 qualitative, and 3 mixed-methods studies. However, a significant gap exists in understanding how survivors translate their PTG experiences into concrete actions, such as self-empowerment, advocacy, or changes in interpersonal relationships. This study highlights the need for interventions based on PTG understanding, including advocacy programs and empowerment initiatives, to support the recovery and transformation of sexual violence survivors.

**Keywords:** posttraumatic growth, sexual violence, survivors, scoping review

## Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a global pandemic that continues to persist. This is supported by the fact that one in three women and girls (35 percent) worldwide, aged between 15 and 49, have experienced various forms of violence, including physical violence, sexual violence, or both. In a more concrete manifestation of gender-based violence related to sexuality, at least 200 million girls and women have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM). Moreover, in at least 11 countries, more than half of women aged 15–49 have undergone FGM (World Bank, 2021). These statistics provide substantial evidence that violence against women, particularly sexual violence, remains a pervasive issue across many countries.

Violence against women is a prevalent phenomenon in Indonesia. The annual report from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan, 2024), compiled from various complaints submitted to Komnas Perempuan, the Religious Courts Agency (BADILAG), and other

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service institutions, highlights alarming statistics. In 2023 alone, there were 401,975 cases of violence against women reported in Indonesia. Among these, psychological violence was the most frequent form of violence, accounting for 37% of cases, followed by sexual violence at 28%, physical violence at 26%, and economic violence at 9%. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (SIMFONI PPA, 2024) since Januari – September 2024 further indicates that 26,041 cases of violence against women and children were reported, with 22,555 of the victims being women. The three most prevalent forms of sexual violence included 11,856 cases of sexual violence, 9,205 cases of physical violence, and 7,896 cases of psychological violence.

Sexual violence refers to any sexual act imposed on an individual without their consent (Vallières et al., 2022). This issue poses significant public health concerns (Ward & Stewart, 2003) and can lead to both immediate and long-term consequences, including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, trauma, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and dependence (Dworkin et al., 2017). Among these, sexual violence is a major risk factor for PTSD, particularly in women (Klump, 2006).

Sexual violence can be an intensely traumatic experience for women, often leaving deep emotional and psychological scars. This condition undoubtedly has an impact on mental health, both in the short and long term. However, despite these challenges, survivors of sexual violence have found ways to recover and rebuild their lives, which were initially shaped by traumatic experiences. As noted by Linley and Joseph (2004), approximately 30% to 70% of individuals who experienced traumatic events reported undergoing posttraumatic growth (PTG)—a positive psychological transformation following trauma. Similarly, Lahav (2020) found that some survivors of sexual violence experienced positive changes rooted in their past traumatic experiences, a process referred to as PTG. These findings indicate that although trauma can be profoundly damaging, it also holds the potential to foster deep personal growth in three main areas: changes in interpersonal relationships, life philosophy, and perceptions of the self (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995).

The journey from being a victim to becoming a survivor is a long and challenging process. Survivors of sexual violence undergo a transition from a survival state—where their lives are controlled by others—to reclaiming autonomy and reconstructing their lives (Sinko et al., 2021). This highlights the need for more in-depth research on PTG, as it reveals the potential for survivors to experience positive growth after trauma. Although numerous studies have explored the impacts of sexual violence on individuals, research on posttraumatic growth among survivors remains relatively scarce. While prior studies have emphasized the potential for positive psychological transformation following trauma, there is a lack of comprehensive exploration into how survivors of sexual violence undergo the process of PTG.

This study aims to map existing research trends on PTG among survivors of sexual violence, with a specific focus on how survivors translate their experiences of growth into concrete actions such as self-empowerment, advocacy, and fostering more positive relationships. This research offers valuable insights for a deeper understanding of PTG and supports the development of survivor-centered interventions, including tailored mental health programs, community-based support initiatives, and

policies that empower survivors to become agents of change. By addressing these gaps, this study seeks to contribute to a more holistic perspective on trauma recovery, emphasizing not only the challenges faced by survivors but also their capacity for transformation and empowerment.

### **Posttraumatic Growth and Sexual Violence Survivors**

Bryngeirsdottir and Halldorsdottir (2022) state that posttraumatic growth (PTG) refers to the condition of positive psychological changes experienced by individuals after enduring[g periods of severe hardship and trauma. This aligns with Tedeschi and Calhoun's (2003) assertion that PTG emerges following highly distressing life events. From these two definitions, it can be concluded that PTG is a process of positive psychological transformation that occurs after individuals experience significantly stressful events and are able to adapt to the resulting adversity and trauma.

According to Blevins and Tedeschi (2022), individuals must undergo three key processes to achieve PTG: First, experiencing a traumatic event, referred to as a "seismic event"; second, engaging in cognitive and emotional processing; and third, being open to social context and reconstructing their life narrative. Therefore, PTG is not merely about recovering from trauma, but also reflects the personal growth that encompasses changes in how individuals interpret their life experiences, process them cognitively and emotionally, and reconstruct a new life narrative within a social framework.

Generally, there are five domains of change associated with PTG as proposed by Tedeschi et al. (2018): First, appreciation of life, which reflects an enhanced sense of valuing life, both in its small and significant aspects; second, personal strength, which is observed through increased self-confidence, a sense of empowerment, and viewing oneself as a survivor rather than a victim; third, the emergence of new possibilities, in which individuals perceive new opportunities in life; fourth, relating to others, which refers to positive transformations in interpersonal relationships; and fifth, spiritual and existential change, seen in shifts in spiritual beliefs or existential understanding, applicable to individuals across the spectrum of belief, including religious, agnostic, and atheist individuals.

O'Shea et al. (2024) define sexual violence as any form of sexual act committed against a person without their consent. This includes acts of physical coercion, pressure, or manipulation, encompassing behaviors such as sexual harassment, rape, and non-physical forms of coercion. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) defines sexual violence as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, as well as trafficking or other acts directed at a person's sexuality using coercion. This definition applies regardless of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and may occur in any setting, including but not limited to the home or the workplace.

### **Materials and Methods**

#### **Methods**

This study was conducted using a scoping review method based on the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). This framework consists of five key stages in the scoping review process: (1) identifying the research question prior to identifying relevant literature; (2) identifying relevant

studies; (3) selecting studies; (4) charting the data; and (5) analyzing, summarizing, and reporting the research findings. The results of this study adhere to the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) developed by Tricco et al. (2018). PRISMA-ScR is designed to guide the reporting of scoping reviews by emphasizing the relevance, credibility, and contribution of evidence. The flow diagram illustrating the article screening process based on the predetermined criteria is presented in Figure 2.

## Search Strategy

In the process of literature collection for the research using the scoping review method, the researcher began by adopting a search strategy following the PRISMA guidelines. The search process was conducted using the Scopus and PubMed databases with the following keywords:

(survivor OR “resilient individual” OR “tough individual” OR fighter OR perseverer) AND (“post traumatic growth” OR “post-traumatic growth” OR PTG OR “post-traumatic”) AND (“sexual violence” OR “sexual offense” OR “sexual assault” OR “sexual abuse” OR “sexual coercion” OR “sexual harassment” OR “sexual exploitation” OR “sexual aggression” OR “sexual victimization” OR “sexual misconduct” OR Rape).

Meanwhile, for the ScienceDirect database, the keywords used were:

(survivor) AND (“post traumatic growth” OR “post-traumatic growth”) AND (“sexual violence”).

Eligibility Criteria	Description
On Posttraumatic Growth Experienced by Survivors of Sexual Violence	This study examines research articles that have undergone peer review concerning posttraumatic growth (PTG) in the context of survivors of sexual violence. The articles selected by the researchers are those that have been published and indexed internationally. The purpose of this study is to map the research trends related to posttraumatic growth experienced by survivors of sexual violence. Furthermore, this study aims to further explore the practical actions that emerge from these survivors after experiencing PTG.
Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods	This study includes various research articles utilizing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. The term mixed methods refers to articles that combine both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Studies utilizing review methods (e.g., literature reviews,

scoping reviews, and systematic literature reviews) were excluded from the criteria.		
Empirical Research Using Primary Data		This research is based on primary data collected by the researcher, followed by synthesis and discussion of the findings from empirical studies.
No Year or Country Limitations		The researcher did not impose any limitations regarding publication year or country for the literature search, as the goal of this study is to map trends related to posttraumatic growth in survivors of sexual violence and to investigate whether these trends reveal practical actions stemming from their PTG experiences.
In English		English was chosen as the language of inclusion because it is the most widely used language in international academic publications. This enables the researcher to access a broader range of literature and provides a global perspective on the issue under investigation.

Figure 1. Eligibility Criteria

**Results and Discussion**

**Literature Search Strategy**

The literature search was conducted across three databases during September 2024. Using Scopus, PubMed, and ScienceDirect, the researchers identified 2,222 articles related to the topic. A duplicate review was performed in Zotero, which resulted in 1,413 articles. The researchers then conducted a title and topic screening, reducing the selection to 44 articles that met the inclusion criteria (journal articles, in English, primarily discussing PTG, and focusing on PTG in survivors of sexual violence).

Following this, a full-text screening was conducted, and several articles were excluded from further consideration based on the following reasons: posttraumatic growth was not the primary focus of the study (n=3); the context was not related to survivors of sexual violence (n=12); primary data was not used (n=5); and the articles only discussed topics related to growth without a direct focus on PTG (n=5). As a result, 18 articles remained, which were deemed eligible for review. The systematic review process was conducted from September 1 to December 14, 2024.

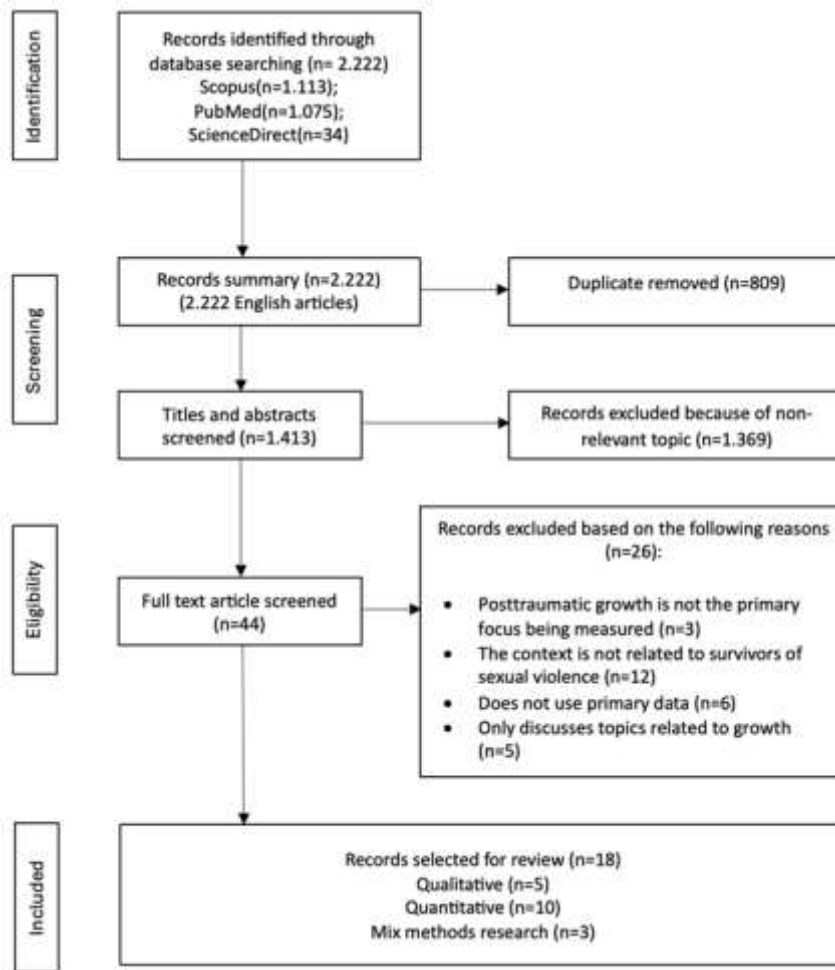


Figure 2. The flow diagram of screening of articles based on identified criteria

Title & Author's Name	Methods	Purpose & Research Participants	Research Findings
Sexual Assault Survivors' Posttraumatic Growth: Individual and Community-Level Differences (Kirkner & Ullman, 2020)	A mixed-methods approach	It explores posttraumatic growth (PTG) experienced by sexual assault survivors, both at the individual and community levels in a segregated urban area (N=1863).	Disrupted core beliefs, greater control over recovery, fewer PTSD symptoms, religious coping, and positive social coping were identified as factors contributing to higher levels of PTG among individuals.
Posttraumatic Growth, Sexual Revictimization in Female Childhood Sexual Abuse Survivors (Lahav et al., 2020)	A quantitative approach	This six-month longitudinal study explores the relationship between PTG and sexual revictimization, as well as the moderating role of dissociation in this relationship. The study involved 111 adult female survivors of childhood sexual abuse.	PTG had no significant effect on revictimization in participants with low dissociation, suggesting that increased revictimization is more likely to occur in individuals with higher levels of dissociation.
Trauma appraisals and posttraumatic growth among survivors of sexual assault (Rosenthal et al., 2024).	A quantitative approach	The study aimed to explore the relationship between trauma appraisals and PTG among survivors of interpersonal violence. The findings will reveal whether appraisals directed at oneself, the world, or relationships are most conducive to growth. The sample consisted of 216 adult women aged 18-64.	When individuals experience interpersonal disruptions, such as feelings of betrayal or alienation after trauma, these experiences may significantly contribute to the PTG process.

Posttraumatic Growth in Complex PTSD (Dagan & Yager, 2019)	A qualitative approach	The research aimed to discuss PTG in relation to complex PTSD, particularly as it relates to experiences of childhood sexual abuse.	Individuals can still achieve PTG despite enduring broad trauma, including ongoing childhood sexual abuse. Factors supporting PTG include temperamental resilience and other personality traits, as well as the presence of safe, supportive, and enduring therapeutic and extra-therapeutic relationships.
The Spanish Posttraumatic Growth Inventory - Short Form in Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (Sicilia et al., 2022)	A quantitative approach, using confirmatory Factor Analysis	The aim of the study was to evaluate the dimensions, reliability, and validity of the Spanish version of the PTGI-SF (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) in a sample of 104 adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.	The original five-factor model provided the best fit. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between the total PTGI-SF score and psychosocial and mental health issues, as well as gender differences, with women reporting more PTG compared to men.
Trauma History as a Significant Predictor of Posttraumatic Growth Beyond Mental Health Symptoms in Women-Identifying Survivors of Undergraduate Non-Consensual Sexual Experiences (Sinko, dkk., 2022)	A quantitative approach	The study aimed to better understand PTG among female survivors of non-consensual sexual contact (NCSC) at the undergraduate level, with two main focuses: 1) evaluating the mediating role of shame related to NCSC in the relationship between peer rape myth acceptance and PTG (n=174); and 2) assessing the contribution of mental health symptoms and trauma history clusters to PTG (n=151).	Shame related to NCSC did not mediate the relationship between peer rape myth acceptance and PTG. Additionally, mental health symptoms and trauma history significantly contributed 35.27% to the variance in PTG, with trauma history clusters significantly influencing PTG scores beyond mental health symptoms.



The Nature of Posttraumatic Growth in Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (Hartley et al., 2016)	A qualitative approach	This study aimed to explore posttraumatic growth in adult female survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In-depth interviews were conducted with six participants who believed they had experienced growth through their coping with the abuse.	The results revealed three superordinate themes: understanding and making meaning of the abuse, relating to oneself in a new way, and experiencing growth through relationships with others. Several participants reported experiencing both growth and suffering simultaneously.
Posttraumatic growth among women survivors of childhood sexual abuse: Its relation to cognitive strategies, posttraumatic symptoms, and resilience (Kaye-Tzadok & Davidson-Arad, 2016)	A quantitative approach	This study aimed to investigate PTG and its relationship with cognitive strategies (such as self-blame, self-forgiveness, control perceptions, and hope), resilience, and posttraumatic symptoms (PTS). The study included 100 female survivors of CSA.	The contributors to PTG were demographic-family variables (birth order and number of siblings) and cognitive strategies (self-blame and hope).
Posttraumatic growth, spiritual damage, and psychosocial and mental health problems in survivors of clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse: A mixed methods approach (Sicilia et al., 2024)	A mixed methods approach	The study aimed to analyze PTG and explore the experiences of PTG among survivors of childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy in Spain, as well as its relationship with psychosocial, mental, and spiritual suffering. The study included 31 survivors in the quantitative phase and 7 survivors in the qualitative phase.	The results showed a positive relationship between PTG and psychosocial and mental health issues, as well as damage to trust in God and the Church. This study indicates that survivors may develop posttraumatic growth (PTG) through a process of psychological suffering, spiritual transformation, and meaning making derived from their traumatic experiences.
Predictors of posttraumatic growth among conflict-related sexual violence survivors from	A quantitative approach	The study aimed to examine the relationship between PTG, PTSD symptoms, and dispositional factors such as coping and	Higher levels of PTG are associated with greater optimism, the use of more approach-oriented coping strategies, positive

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Anderson et al., 2019).		optimism. The study included 104 women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) during the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.	reinterpretation, and planning, as well as lower levels of avoidance strategies such as withdrawal and substance use. These findings underscore the crucial role of coping strategies in the development of PTG.
Associations among posttraumatic growth, demographic characteristics, posttraumatic stress symptoms, and trauma type, with a focus on sexual violence (Jónsdóttir et al., 2023)	A quantitative approach	The study aimed to assess PTG across various trauma types and demographic characteristics, such as: gender, age, and education. It sought to explore the relationship between PTG and PTSD symptoms, as well as the characteristics and predictors of PTG following sexual violence. The study sample consisted of a nationally representative group of 1,766 adults from Iceland.	Interpersonal trauma—such as experiences of sexual violence, emotional abuse, and domestic violence—has been linked to the highest levels of PTG. Furthermore, the study suggests that moderate levels of PTSD symptoms are associated with the highest PTG, while both high and low levels of PTSD symptoms are linked to lower PTG. Women experienced significantly more PTG than men, and sexual violence survivors reported significantly higher PTG compared to individuals with other forms of trauma. Among sexual violence survivors, no demographic factors were associated with PTG; however, cumulative trauma and positive social reactions were significantly related to higher PTG levels.
Posstraumatic Growth, Resilience and Social-Ecological Synergies: Some Reflections from a Study on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (Clark, 2024)	A qualitative approach	The study aimed to understand resilience and its transition from an individual-focused approach to a more relational one, where resilience is viewed as the result of the interaction between individuals and their social environment. Participants were survivors of	The study found social-ecological synergies between resilience and PTG, which significantly influenced how we think about and study growth. This article empirically develops this argument using a larger study involving conflict-related sexual violence

		sexual violence during conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, and Uganda.	(CRSV) survivors from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, and Uganda.
Mindfulness and posttraumatic growth in childhood sexual abuse and psychological maltreatment survivors (Dussault et al., 2024)	A mixed-methods approach.	The aim of the research was to explore childhood psychological abuse and childhood sexual abuse (CSA), mindfulness, sexuality, and intimate relationships among adult survivors. The study included 19 individuals who had experienced CSA and psychological maltreatment.	Mindfulness, sexuality, and intimate relationships were often impaired in survivors of psychological abuse and CSA. However, developing a mindfulness disposition was likely to enhance PTG in survivors' intimate relationships, significantly contributing to their healing process.
Men's health across the lifespan: Post traumatic growth and gender role in male survivors of child sexual abuse (Lewis et al., 2022)	A qualitative approach	The study aimed to explore the PTG process involved in the development of positive gender roles and sexuality in male survivors of CSA. Participants were recruited through male survivor support organizations and social media, resulting in a sample of 12 participants from the United Kingdom, the European Union, and the United States.	A parallel process of "struggling and changing" as well as "growing and thriving" was evident in participants' PTG journeys. Eight subthemes were developed related to the redefinition of gender roles, depicting the positive changes experienced: "Turning points," "Redefining masculinity and sexuality," "Reconnecting," "Determination," "Appreciating life," "Living according to masculine values," "Fit," and "Stronger individuals," with the central theme being the "environment."
Sex-Trafficked Survivors: The Relation Between Posttraumatic Growth and Quality of Life (Perry & Pecanha, 2017)	A quantitative approach	The research aimed to explore the relationship between psychological growth and quality of life satisfaction among adult women who had been sex trafficked in the United States. The study sample consisted of 109 women aged 18–	The study found a weak but positive correlation between PTG and quality of life, concluding that, amid the difficulties faced by individuals, positive behavioral changes through psychological growth can lead to a satisfying

		62 years who were trafficked for sex during adolescence or adulthood.	quality of life following experiences of human trafficking.
Mediators of posttraumatic mental health in sexual assault survivors (Stermac et al., 2014)	A quantitative approach	The aim of the research was to examine various factors associated with post-trauma mental health in survivors of sexual assault. The study sample consisted of 73 participants who had experienced sexual violence (N=73).	Significant post-trauma symptoms and low levels of posttraumatic growth (PTG) were reported three years after experiencing sexual assault. There was a weak relationship between distress symptoms and growth. Only assessments of hope and negative rumination acted as mediators in the relationship between post-trauma symptoms and PTG.
Adjustment of Sexual Assault Survivors: Hardiness and Acceptance Coping in Posttraumatic Growth (Cole & Lynn, 2010)	A quantitative approach	The aim of the research was to analyze factors that could predict positive and negative outcomes in a group of individuals who had experienced sexual assault, with a total sample of 105 participants (N=105).	Seventy-four percent of the survivors reported experiencing growth. PTG did not predict post-assault symptoms, although it was negatively correlated with PTSD symptoms.
Posttraumatic distress, hope, and growth in survivors of commercial sexual exploitation in Nepal (Volgin et al., 2019)	A qualitative approach	The narratives of 26 girls and women (13-18 years) were taken at two time points during participation in a 6-week group psychoeducation and art therapy program.	Themes emerging from Time Point 1 were psychological distress in the form of anxiety and grief over loss of family, psychosomatic symptoms, empathy and compassion, and posttraumatic growth (PTG; new possibilities, relating to others, and personal strength). The themes emerging from Time Point 2, were empathy and compassion and PTG (cognitive restructuring, new possibilities, relating to others, and personal strength).

This study aims to map the literature on posttraumatic growth (PTG) in survivors of sexual violence. The main findings indicate that 18 relevant research articles discuss PTG within the context of sexual violence survivors. These articles encompass various research methods, populations, and themes, such as factors contributing to PTG; factors associated with PTG; the effects of PTG; the five-factor model of PTG using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); the PTG process; the relationship between PTG and other mental health issues; the connection between PTG and other psychological conditions such as resilience, mindfulness, and quality of life; the association between PTG and gender roles; and the relationship between PTG and psychological distress or PTSD.

Several key factors that support the development of Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) include core beliefs, social support from both close and broader networks, optimism, and effective coping abilities (Anderson et al., 2019; Kirkner & Ullman, 2020). Furthermore, Kirkner and Ullman (2020) highlight that PTG can occur at both individual and group levels. This suggests that the posttraumatic growth process is not solely personal in nature, but also has the potential to develop within a broader social context. A longitudinal study conducted by Dagan and Yager (2019) and Lahav et al. (2020) further indicates that although survivors are at risk of experiencing repeated trauma, the potential for PTG remains—particularly when protective factors such as individual resilience and supportive therapeutic relationships are present.

Based on a review of several scholarly articles, the concept of Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) has been extensively explored in relation to experiences of childhood sexual violence (Dagan & Yager, 2019; Dussault et al., 2024; Hartley et al., 2016; Kaye-Tzadok & Davidson-Arad, 2016; Sicilia et al., 2022; Sicilia et al., 2024). These studies illustrate how PTG can develop in children who have experienced past sexual abuse, as well as the various factors that may influence this process. Although most of the existing research focuses on female survivors—both individually and in group contexts—a study conducted by Lewis et al. (2022) specifically examined the PTG process in male survivors of childhood sexual abuse. PTG in children is a particularly compelling concept, as it involves a prolonged and highly dynamic developmental process.

Furthermore, this body of research demonstrates that PTG can emerge following complex and multifaceted trauma, as shown in the studies by Sinko et al. (2022) and Jónsdóttir et al. (2023). Individuals who experience PTG undergo a lengthy and intricate journey that encompasses cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Blevins and Tedeschi (2022) assert that there are at least three essential stages involved in the PTG process: first, the occurrence of a traumatic event, referred to as a seismic event; second, the individual's cognitive and emotional processing of the trauma; and third, the development of openness, engagement with the social context, and the reconstruction of one's life narrative. Therefore, PTG should not be viewed merely as a recovery process from trauma; rather, it represents a comprehensive form of personal growth—one that includes a transformation in how individuals interpret their life experiences, process them cognitively and emotionally, and reconstruct their life narratives within a broader social context.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this review indicate that posttraumatic growth (PTG) among survivors of sexual violence is a highly complex and dynamic phenomenon. The development of PTG is influenced by a range of factors, including psychological, social, and environmental components. Based on a review of 18 relevant articles, the researcher identified considerable variation in research methods, population samples, and thematic focuses across PTG-related studies. More specifically, these studies explored a wide range of aspects related to PTG, including contributing factors; correlates of PTG; outcomes following PTG experiences at both individual and group levels; examinations of the five-factor model of PTG through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); comprehensive explanations of the PTG process; associations between PTG and other mental health issues; connections between PTG and psychological constructs such as resilience, mindfulness, and quality of life; the relationship between PTG and gender roles; as well as the associations among PTG, psychological distress, and PTSD.

Furthermore, research on PTG within the context of sexual violence can be categorized into three main thematic areas. The first category focuses on PTG in general among survivors of sexual violence (Jónsdóttir et al., 2023; Kirkner & Ullman, 2020; Sinko et al., 2021). The second category examines how PTG is associated with various psychological constructs (Anderson et al., 2019; Clark, 2024; Cole & Lynn, 2010; Lahav et al., 2020; Perry & Pecanha, 2017; Rosenthal et al., 2024; Stermac et al., 2014; Volgin et al., 2019). The third category explores PTG in the context of childhood sexual abuse (Dagan & Yager, 2019; Dussault et al., 2024; Hartley et al., 2016; Kaye-Tzadok & Davidson-Arad, 2016; Lewis et al., 2022; Sicilia et al., 2022; Sicilia et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the findings from previous studies support the PTG model developed by Tedeschi & Calhoun, which emphasizes that PTG involves changes in core belief systems, cognitive processing, and the reconstruction of life narratives. Additionally, the three-stage PTG model proposed by Blevins & Tedeschi (2022) appears relevant in understanding the PTG process, particularly within the context of survivors of sexual violence. However, this review also highlights a gap in the existing literature, specifically the limited exploration of how PTG experiences translate into tangible actions, such as self-advocacy and social empowerment.

From a practical perspective, these findings underscore the need for PTG-based interventions that not only focus on trauma recovery but also emphasize individual empowerment in broader aspects of life. For example, programs integrating psychosocial approaches with life skills training could help survivors internalize their PTG experiences in daily life. Such interventions could enable survivors to rebuild their lives with greater agency and, in turn, serve as sources of inspiration for others. Furthermore, policies supporting survivor recovery and empowerment—such as access to community-based psychological services—should be prioritized by policymakers and organizations working in the field of sexual violence victim protection.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. Most of the reviewed research focuses on female survivors, leaving PTG experiences among male survivors relatively underexplored. Additionally,

structural factors, such as public policies and access to mental health services, remain insufficiently addressed in the existing literature. Future research should therefore examine how PTG develops in more diverse survivor populations, including male survivors. Understanding these variations would offer deeper insights into how individuals interpret their growth experiences, particularly when considering gender differences in the PTG process.

## **Conclusion**

This study maps the literature on posttraumatic growth (PTG) among survivors of sexual violence through a scoping review method, with the main finding identifying 18 relevant articles encompassing diverse populations, methods, and research themes. The findings indicate that PTG experienced by survivors of sexual violence is supported by various factors, such as core beliefs, social support, optimism, and effective coping strategies. However, there is a gap in understanding how PTG experiences are translated into concrete actions, such as when survivors choose to engage in self-empowerment or advocacy. This study provides valuable insights that can be used to develop intervention programs, policies, and future research to support the recovery and empowerment of survivors of sexual violence.

However, this study has several limitations, including a limited focus on populations beyond women, such as men who are survivors of sexual violence. Additionally, this study has not explored in greater depth how survivors of sexual violence ultimately translate their PTG experiences into tangible changes in their daily lives.

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