



The Relationship Between Gratitude And Meaning Of Life With Post-Traumatic Growth In Teenagers From Broken Homes

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the relationship between gratitude and meaning in life with post-traumatic growth (PTG) in adolescents from broken homes. Broken home is a family condition that has the potential to cause traumatic experiences for teenagers, but it does not always result in negative psychological impacts. This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The research subjects consisted of 302 teenagers from broken homes who were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory Scale, Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6), and Meaning in Life. They were then analyzed using multiple linear regression. The analysis results show that gratitude and meaning in life simultaneously contribute significantly to predicting PTG. Partially, gratitude and meaning in life also have a positive and significant relationship with PTG. This study concludes that PTG in adolescents from broken homes is influenced by positive psychological resources, particularly gratitude and the ability to find meaning in life, which help adolescents interpret traumatic experiences adaptively and encourage post-traumatic growth.

Keywords: Gratitude, Meaning Of Life, Post-Traumatic Growth, Broken Home, Teenager

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INTRODUCTION

The divorce trend in Indonesia over the past seven years has shown a quite significant increase. Referring to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) presented by Rainer (2025), the national divorce rate in 2018 was recorded at 408,202 cases, rising to 439,002 in 2019. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for 2024 shows that East Java Province has reached 76,248 divorce cases. The phenomenon of divorce in Pasuruan Regency and City shows a pattern in line with the national trend. According to the East Java Statistics Agency (2022), throughout 2022, there were 2,481 recorded divorce cases in Pasuruan Regency, while Pasuruan City had 2,090 cases. The increase in divorce rates not only affects married couples but also has serious consequences for the children involved. The high rate of divorce cases has the potential to increase the number of children and adolescents living in broken homes, making them a group vulnerable to various psychological and social problems. Research conducted by Anarta et al. (2023) reveals that teenagers from broken homes face significant psychological and social challenges, particularly in the form of stress, trauma, and tendencies toward deviant behavior. This ongoing stress, as discussed by Rahayu & Astuti (2022), heightens the risk of psychological disorders, such as loss of motivation to study and low self-esteem.

The phenomenon of deviant behavior among broken home teenagers in Indonesia is also described in Herliani's (2025) research, which found forms of deviant behavior such as skipping school, drug abuse, theft, and aggressive behavior in social environments. According to Muttaqin & Sulisty (2019), the main factors of this behavior are the lack of family communication, supervision, attention, economic issues, busyness, and interference from third parties. Additionally, the research by Rofiqah & Sitepu (2019) found that broken home teenagers tend to exhibit higher levels of shame and lower self-confidence compared to teenagers from harmonious families, which affects their social interactions both at school and in the community.

According to Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006), it is a positive psychological change experienced by individuals as a result of their struggle in facing highly challenging or traumatic life events. PTG is not merely recovery or the return of an individual to their pre-trauma condition, but rather a psychological transformation that enables individuals to achieve a higher level of functioning and meaning in life compared to before the trauma occurred (Purwanto & Hendriyani, 2021). Post-traumatic growth has become a highly relevant concept because adolescence is a developmental phase characterized by the search for identity, the formation of life values, and the enhancement of cognitive capacity for self-reflection.

Intan et al. (2022) explain that children from broken homes whose parents are divorced will experience stress that results in trauma and other negative impacts, but not all trauma has bad and negative consequences. As stated by Landi et al. (2022) and Maulia Mahlela (2012), PTG in broken home teenagers can lead to wise attitudes, increased maturity, spirituality, and the ability to face problems constructively.



According to Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006), there are six factors that contribute to the success of the PTG process, namely personal or individual characteristics, managing dangerous or negative emotions, support and openness, cognitive and developmental processes, reflection or cognitive processes, and wisdom and life stories. One important factor in the Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006) concept is personal or individual characteristics, which according to Lei et al. (2025) includes gratitude, a sense of thankfulness that individuals possess, helping them maintain a more adaptive and balanced outlook on life, even in difficult situations.

The ability of individuals to manage harmful or negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, disappointment, and anxiety that arise after traumatic events, according to Yuni & Widyastuti (2023), makes gratitude play a role as an emotional regulation mechanism that helps individuals reduce the dominance of negative emotions and foster more constructive positive emotions. Gratitude serves as a positive psychological resource integrated into the personal characteristics of individuals, which can help individuals adaptively manage negative emotions (Lei et al., 2025). Subandi et al. (2014) explained that individuals who are able to develop gratitude tend to manage negative emotions more easily, build new hopes, and maintain psychological well-being after experiencing trauma.

Beside gratitude, the meaning of life also plays a central role in the PTG process, which is the core of cognitive processes, reflection, and wisdom in life stories that mark an individual's success in integrating traumatic experiences into their personal development (Yuni & Widyastuti, 2023). Bastaman (2007) emphasizes that an individual's ability to find meaning in suffering is the key to transforming negative experiences into sources of psychological growth.

The meaning of life has a positive relationship with psychological well-being and the ability of adolescents to cope with emotional stress. The stronger the teenagers find meaning in their lives, the higher the level of subjective well-being they experience (Pramisya & Hermaleni, 2021). The meaning is that teenagers who have clear goals and values tend to have stronger psychological conditions in facing stress and various life challenges, including the emotional impact of a broken home. The ability to find meaning in life helps adolescents see traumatic experiences not only as a source of suffering but also as an opportunity to grow, adapt, and discover new meaning within themselves (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006).

The study of post-traumatic growth in teenagers from broken homes is important to conduct in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of divorce. This research not only positions adolescents as victims of an incomplete family condition but also as individuals with the capacity to grow and develop positively through certain psychological processes. This approach aligns with the perspective of positive psychology, which emphasizes the potential, internal strengths, and adaptive abilities of individuals in facing life experiences filled with pressure. Therefore, studying PTG and the factors that influence it, such as gratitude and meaning in life, becomes a strategic step in understanding and strengthening the psychological resilience of broken home teenagers.

Therefore, the main direction of this research is formulated into three main scopes, namely:

- 1) The relationship between gratitude and meaning in life with post-traumatic growth in adolescents from broken homes.
- 2) The relationship between gratitude and post-traumatic growth in adolescents from broken homes.
- 3) The relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic growth in adolescents from broken homes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006), post-traumatic growth is an experience of positive change that a person undergoes as a result of a struggle when facing critical situations and conditions in their life. According to Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006), post-traumatic growth (PTG) has two definitions: the first describes PTG as occurring when a person experiences an unpleasant and undesired event, and the second describes PTG as a positive change that occurs in a person after undergoing a struggle and critical phase in their life.

According to Emmons et al. (2004), gratitude is defined as an emotional change caused by moral behavior. According to this definition, gratitude is considered a moral emotion similar to empathy, sympathy, feelings of shame, and feelings of guilt. When someone has the opportunity to respond to the misfortune of others, empathy and sympathy arise, while guilt and shame arise when someone does not fulfill their obligations according to standards, and gratitude arises when someone receives kindness.

According to Bastaman (2007) in his book, he writes that the meaning of life is something that is felt to be important, true, valuable, and desired, and it provides special value to someone and is worthy of being made a life goal. The meaning of life has different meanings for each individual depending on the perspective



from which they view and interpret it. Many experts have researched the existence of life and provided an understanding of the meaning of life.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between gratitude and meaning in life on post-traumatic growth (PTG). The research subjects consisted of 302 students from SMK X in Pasuruan City, categorized as adolescents from broken home families. The sample was selected using purposive sampling techniques with the criteria of adolescents aged 16-18 years, experiencing a broken home condition for at least one year, and willing to be research respondents.

Data were collected using three instruments based on a 5-point Likert scale. Post-traumatic growth was measured using the 21-item version of the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) that has been adapted into Indonesian, with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.870. Gratitude was measured using the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-5) with a reliability of 0.811. Meanwhile, meaning in life was measured using a scale based on Bastaman's theory, which consists of 35 valid items with a reliability of 0.948. All instruments have met the criteria for validity and reliability based on the corrected item-total correlation and Cronbach's Alpha tests.

Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to examine the influence of gratitude and meaning in life on post-traumatic growth. Before hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were conducted, including normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. Data analysis was conducted with the help of SPSS software version 27.

RESULT

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis show that gratitude and meaning in life simultaneously have a significant effect on post-traumatic growth (PTG) in adolescents from broken homes ($R = 0.581$; $R^2 = 0.337$; $F = 76.027$; $p < 0.001$). This indicates that both variables are able to explain 33.7% of the variation in post-traumatic growth (PTG).

Partially, gratitude has a positive and significant effect on PTG ($\beta = 0.161$; $t = 3.169$; $p = 0.002$), while the meaning of life also has a positive and significant effect on PTG ($\beta = 0.500$; $t = 9.848$; $p < 0.001$). Based on the beta coefficient values, the meaning of life has a more dominant contribution compared to gratitude in predicting PTG.

The analysis of effective contributions shows that gratitude contributes 5.62%, while the meaning of life contributes 28.08% to PTG. Overall, both variables contribute 33.7% to post-traumatic growth. The results of the descriptive analysis indicate that the levels of gratitude and post-traumatic growth are in the high category, while the meaning of life is in the medium to high category. This indicates that teenagers from broken homes still have a positive tendency in developing post-traumatic psychological growth.

DISCUSSION

Based on the hypothesis testing results in this study, it was found that all three hypotheses were accepted. The first hypothesis states that gratitude and meaning in life simultaneously play a role in predicting post-traumatic growth (PTG). Gratitude and meaning in life together significantly contribute to predicting PTG. Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006) assert that PTG does not merely arise from exposure to traumatic events, but rather thru cognitive processes involving emotion regulation, self-reflection, and the individual's ability to construct new meaning from the traumatic experiences they have undergone. From a positive psychology perspective, the impact of a broken home experienced by adolescents can significantly serve as a trigger for positive psychological changes. Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006) state that PTG is more likely to occur in individuals who are able to cognitively restructure traumatic experiences. The condition of a broken home is not only understood as a source of stress for adolescents but can also serve as a context that allows for psychological growth, especially when individuals possess adequate psychological resources, such as gratitude and the ability to find meaning in life. These two factors play an important role in helping adolescents understand difficult experiences more positively, thereby encouraging the emergence of adaptive psychological changes after traumatic events.

The second hypothesis regarding the relationship between gratitude and PTG shows a positive and significant relationship. These findings indicate that the higher the level of gratitude an individual possesses, the greater the tendency for that individual to experience PTG. Statistically, this relationship suggests that gratitude serves as an important predictor of variations in PTG. Conceptually, gratitude acts as a positive emotion that helps individuals shift their focus from loss and suffering to aspects of life that still hold value. One of the factors that can enhance PTG is gratitude (Iqbal & Latif, 2023), such as intensity, which refers to how strong the emotion



of gratitude felt by an individual is when experiencing or recalling positive events, including after a traumatic experience. High intensity of gratitude allows individuals to experience deeper positive emotions, thereby balancing the negative emotions resulting from trauma. Individuals with high levels of gratitude are able to intensely appreciate, which will help them reinterpret traumatic events as meaningful experiences, rather than mere suffering. This process aligns with the cognitive reappraisal mechanism that is central to PTG, where individuals construct new meanings and find positive value in difficult events. Research shows that intense positive emotions, including gratitude, play a crucial role in expanding mindsets and strengthening the psychological resources of individuals post-trauma.

The third hypothesis is that there is a positive and significant relationship between the meaning of life and post-traumatic growth in teenagers from broken homes. Theoretically, Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006) explain that PTG is a gradual process that requires time, reflection, and ongoing cognitive struggle. These results are in line with Septiawadi's (2017) research in a systematic review, which revealed that the meaning of life is an important part of the process influencing post-traumatic growth. It also found that the meaning of life is not merely an adaptation to suffering, but an important indicator that individuals experience positive changes in their outlook on life after trauma.

Theoretically, Tedeschi & Calhoun (2006) explain that PTG emerges thru the process of meaning-making, which is the active effort of individuals to build a new understanding of themselves, the world, and the future after trauma. Teenagers from broken homes, trauma often shakes the fundamental assumptions about family stability and emotional attachment. However, when teenagers are able to reflect on those experiences and find meaning, such as lessons about independence, resilience, or empathy. Where the traumatic experience can transform into a source of psychological growth.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that gratitude and meaning in life play a significant role in predicting post-traumatic growth (PTG) in adolescents from broken homes. Simultaneously, both variables contribute 33.7% to PTG, indicating that positive psychological factors are important in the post-trauma growth process. Partially, gratitude and meaning in life both have a positive and significant impact on PTG, with meaning in life being the most dominant variable. This indicates that an individual's ability to find meaning in life experiences, particularly traumatic ones, is a key factor in fostering psychological growth. Overall, the results of this study affirm that broken home experiences do not always have a negative impact, but can be a source of psychological growth if individuals possess adequate internal resources, such as gratitude and the ability to interpret life positively.

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