

A Study of Positive Outlook In Relation To Post Traumatic Growth After Beating Life Threatening Illness.

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Abstract

Present paper gives a bird's eye view about the importance of positive lining in the personal growth of individuals with life threatening illness. The study attempted to chart the role of these two factors of people suffering from life threatening illness. The aim of the present study is to find out the relationship of positive outlook with personal growth among individuals with life threatening illness. The sample of the study consisted of 20 males and 20 females with age group of 30 years to 40 years were drawn from different private hospitals (after recovery) in Kolkata. The scales used were Personal Growth Initiative Scale (Christine Robitschek , 1998) and The Silver Lining Questionnaire (Samantha C.Sodergren and Michael E.Hyland ,1997) which identifies positive outlook to gather information. A correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between the positive outlook and personal growth among male and female individuals separately. The results of the study clearly indicate a strong positive relationship of positive outlook of the male individuals with post traumatic personal growth, it also indicate moderately positive and significant relationship of positive outlook of female individuals with posttraumatic personal growth that have been taken into consideration in the present study for the analysis.

Key words: Positive outlook, life threatening illness, personal growth, silver lining.

Introduction:

A positive attitude is mental perspectives of optimism and of expecting good things to happen in everyone's life. People with a positive outlook, view life, challenges, and the situations they go through, with confidence and are sure they can deal with them. As in the present study individuals with life threatening illness had undergone active and continually threaten life events, for which there may be considerable and effective treatment that they had gone through , yet cure is either unlikely or not necessarily guaranteed . This means diseases or conditions where the likelihood of death was high. Individuals when faced with life threatening illnesses, positive feelings and thoughts can greatly improve one's quality of life, mental wellness and personal growth of the individuals. A serious health problem can disrupt all aspects of a persons life, whether it's a chronic or life-threatening illness, such as cancer, or a major health event such as a stroke, heart attack, or debilitating injury.

Many serious health issues seem to develop unexpectedly, upset an individual's life out of the blue. Individuals with life-threatening illness overwhelmed by waves of difficult emotions—from fear and worry to profound sadness, despair, and grief—or just numb, frozen by shock or the feeling that you'll never be able to cope.

The emotional upheaval can make it difficult to function or think straight, and even lead to mood disorders such as anxiety, depression and even trauma after the illness.

Whenever an individual diagnosed with some serious illness that can be life-threatening, personal growth might not get much attention. The individual might not show enhanced life appreciation, improved social relationships or might not have a deeper sense of self and meaning. Despite of these responses the person can take steps to better cope with the new situation, can sometimes ease the stress and mental anguish and find a way to navigate this challenging new journey. Here the individuals with such challenges might not feel powerless as because of their age they have to fight back the illness and think in a positive way to increase their life span. Individuals of this age might show a lower rates of depression and distress.

A positive attitude of such individuals may allow a person to feel more energetic, get fewer colds, flu, and other diseases, and recover more quickly from illness or injury. People should think in an optimistic way so that they can even live longer than pessimistic people. Besides that, people with a positive and optimistic attitude are usually more enjoyable to be with to overcome their illness and lead a healthy life there-after. Individuals with life-threatening illness often report an experience of increased positive psychological, social, and/or spiritual change during diagnosis and/or treatment of their illness, even in the face of unfavorable prognosis and poor physical outcomes. After this life-transforming changes individuals encompasses the ability to endure and reach a mental homeostasis in the midst of unfavorable circumstances.

Objectives:

The focus of the present study is to find out the relationship between positive outlook and post-traumatic personal growth among individuals who had defeated life-threatening illness few months ago.

Method:

Sample: The sample of the study consisted of 20 male and 20 female individuals who are undergoing effective treatment and had defeated the illness (cardiac and renal diseases) few months ago in Kolkata. The age range of the sample was 30-40 years. The sex of the present study was considered 20 male and 20 female. 4 private nursing homes in Kolkata has been visited to collect the sample. Consent from the management as well as from the family members and the patients were taken into consideration to collect the responses.

Tools.

Silver Lining Questionnaire: This questionnaire is developed by Samantha C.Sodergren and Michael E.Hyland (1997) This is an uni-dimensional scale and only one score is produced from an aggregate of all the items . This scale has been used for positive outlook in the present study. There are 38 statements about the experiences of being ill which are answered by circling a number between 5”strongly agree” and 1 “strongly disagree”. There is no right or wrong answers. The total score, which is 38, is the SLQ score. This questionnaire is based on the positive side of the illness. This questionnaire measures the extent to which people believe their illness has had a positive benefit despite the negative consequences of being ill. Inter-item correlations were performed in order to detect redundant items, that is those, which are highly correlated (a coefficient of $r > .80$) and replicate the content of other items. The test-retest reliability are cited as 0.75 to 0.80 (for example, Coolican, 1990).

Personal Growth Initiative: Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) as defined by Robitschek (1998) is the ability of an individual to work towards self-improvement and it entails both cognitive as well as behavioural components. The cognitive components comprise of self efficacy, including beliefs, attitudes and values that support personal growth. The behavioural component refers to implementing these cognitions and going about making the change in different growth domains. To understand the post traumatic growth of the individuals suffering from some life threatening illness personal growth initiative scale have been used those who had overcome their illness and are able to facilitate personal growth.

To assess PGI, the original measure of PGIS (Robitschek 1998; 1999) was developed from outcome evaluation protocol of midlife adults participating in a wilderness experience program focusing on personal growth (Robitschek, 1997). The PGIS is a uni-dimensional instrument, comprising 9 items utilizing a 6 point Likert scale ranging from 0 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree). All items are worded in the positive direction (for e.g. ‘I know what my unique contribution to the world might be’). Scores range from 0 – 45; higher scores indicate a higher level of personal growth initiative. The brevity of this instrument makes it quite useful. In large scale studies, internal consistency estimates have ranged from 0 .78 to 0.90, with the majority being above 0 .85, in college student, midlife, and elderly adult samples (Spering & Robitschek, 2007).

Results and Discussion

Mean Score and standard deviation was calculated and a statistical tool of correlation was applied to analyze the result.

Table 1: Table : Showing Mean(M) and standard deviation (SD) values between male and female individuals based on positive outlook (by Silver Lining Questionnaire) and post traumatic personal growth (by Personal Growth Initiative)scores.

Participants	N	Mean		Standard Deviation	
		SLQ	PGI	SLQ	PGI
Male	20	30.05	37.8	6.25	13.582
Female	20	25.05	33.55	6.5	10.174

Table 1: showed that the mean value and standard deviation value of male individuals on positive outlook is 30.05 and 6.25 and on personal growth is 37.80 and 13.582 respectively and in case of female individual positive outlook showed a mean score and standard deviation of 25.05 and 6.5 and on personal growth 33.55 and 10.174 respectively after defeating life threatening illnesses in their lives. So, from the above table 1 it showed that in case of male individuals the positive attitudes towards life seemed to be more than female individuals. In the present study such results might indicate that male persons after overcoming such difficult times can buffer themselves from life’s inevitable tragedies from spoiling the good elements in their life. These individuals want to keep themselves healthier both mentally and physically than those of female individuals. For female individuals the lower mean score might indicate pessimisms may stress them out, in fact they have to take up all household chores after a certain period of time even after their recovery and they might not boost themselves from the distressing feeling in their life.

Table 2: Correlation of the two variables of positive outlook measured by silver lining questionnaire (SLQ) with post traumatic personal growth by personal growth initiative scale(PGI) of male and female individuals those who have overcome life threatening illness.

Correlations			
		SLQ	PGI
SLQ (Male)	Pearson Correlation	1	.800**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	20	20
PGI (Male)	Pearson Correlation	.800**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	20	20
SLQ (Female)	Pearson Correlation	1	.623**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	20	20
PGI (Female)	Pearson Correlation	.623**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	20	20

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

From the above Table 2 : Responses were given by 20 male and 20 female individuals who have defeated some life threatening illness .The above respondents provided both silver lining questionnaire and personal growth initiative details. The probability of this relation in case of female individuals seemed to be moderately high and for male individuals the relation seemed to be very high with the two variables taken into consideration. As we believe that the relationship exists the value of correlation always varies from 1 and -1, 1 positive correlation and -1 negative correlation .In the present study we have a significant positive correlation that exists between the two variables taken into consideration (i.e , positive outlook and personal growth)

Here , it reveals that as the positive outlook increases personal growth initiatives of both the sexes who had overcome this illnesses also increases. The value of correlation for male individuals was 0.800 from the above table which can be stated that there exists a positive, significant and strong relationship between these two variables of the male individuals. Again the value of correlation for female individuals was 0.623 from the above table which can be stated that there exists a positive, significant and a moderate relationship between these two variables of the male individuals. The study reveals that female individuals might take challenges in less positive way then male individuals. Results indicated that male individuals might have an optimist spirit in living a potential and healthy life after this distressing event than female individuals, Though the results in both the sexes showed a positive and significant relationship between positive outlook and post traumatic personal growth. Both the group of individuals after these traumatic events tries to avoid negative worries and negative thinking. They might bring some constructive changes that they might not have achieved till date. Now, positive outlook towards simple things in everyone life can help to grow emotionally and psychologically healthier individuals.

Here the situation was such that those individuals after their sufferance need to get motivated as well as have the desire to improve if necessary and might have an attitudinal act as a self-fulfilling prophecy: meaning, if they think they can win, these individuals will raise chances that they can win. In order to win, in reality, these individuals must first be able to win, mentally, in their imagination. At times successful and confident people have positive self-images in order to elevate personal growth after the post traumatic event. Positive outlook after

this distressing illness might help them to see the bright side of life and anticipate more happiness, health and satisfaction in future.

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