

## The Relationships Between Posttraumatic Growth and Psychological Resilience in Individuals with Chronic Disease

Kronik Hastalığı Olan Bireylerde Posttravmatik Büyüme ile Psikolojik Sağlık Arasındaki İlişki

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationships between posttraumatic growth and psychological resilience in individuals with a chronic disease. This study is of descriptive-relational type. The study was carried out in a training and research hospital between October and December 2022. In total, 875 people, 490 of whom were women (56.0%) and 385 of whom were men (44.0%), older than 18 years old, participated in the study. Descriptive Features Form (DSF), Post-trauma Growth Scale (PTGS) and Brief Psychological Resilience Scale (BPRS) were used in the study. According to correlation analyses, a statistically weak positive significant relation was found between total PTGS score and total BPRS scores ( $r=0.124^{**}$ ,  $p<0.005$ ). A statistically significant and positive correlation was found between the participants' PTGS sub-dimensions of positive change in self-perception, recognizing new possibilities and valuing life scales and BPRS total score (respectively;  $r=0.157^{**}$ ,  $r=0.169^{**}$ ,  $r=0.110^{**}$ ;  $p<0.005$ ). In the study, it was determined that there is a positive relationship between post-traumatic growth and resilience. It can be said that resilience is an important parameter in post-traumatic growth. It is predicted that the results of the research conducted with such a large sample will be a source for new researches on the importance of psychological resilience in the lives of individuals.

**Keywords:** Chronic disease, Posttraumatic growth, Psychological resilience

### ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, kronik hastalığı olan bireylerde travma sonrası büyüme ile psikolojik sağlık arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktır. Bu çalışma betimsel-ilişkisel tiptedir. Çalışma Ekim-Aralık 2022 tarihleri arasında bir eğitim ve araştırma hastanesinde gerçekleştirildi. Çalışmaya 18 yaşından büyük 490 kadın (%56,0) ve 385 erkek olmak üzere (%44,0) toplam 875 kişi katıldı. Araştırmada Tanıtıcı Özellikler Formu (TÖF), Travma Sonrası Büyüme Ölçeği (TSBÖ) ve Kısa Psikolojik Sağlık Ölçeği (KPSÖ) kullanıldı. Korelasyon analizinin sonuçlarına göre, TSBÖ toplam puanı ile KPSÖ toplam puanı arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı pozitif yönlü zayıf bir ilişki olduğu saptandı ( $r=0,124^{**}$ ,  $p<0,005$ ). Katılımcıların TSBÖ alt boyutlarından kendilik algısında olumlu değişim, yeni olanakların fark edilmesi ve hayata değer verme ölçekleri ile KPSÖ toplam puanı arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı pozitif yönlü zayıf bir ilişki saptandı (sırasıyla;  $r=0,157^{**}$ ,  $r=0,169^{**}$ ,  $r=0,110^{**}$ ;  $p<0,005$ ). Sonuç olarak, araştırmada travma sonrası büyüme ile psikolojik sağlık arasında pozitif bir ilişki olduğu tespit edildi. Psikolojik sağlamlığın, travma sonrası büyümede önemli bir parametre olduğu söylenebilir. Geniş bir örneklem ile yapılan araştırma sonuçlarının, psikolojik sağlamlığın bireylerin hayatındaki önemine ilişkin yeni araştırmalara kaynaklık edeceği öngörülmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Psikolojik sağlık, Kronik hastalık, Travma sonrası büyüme

Before starting the research, approval from the Ethics Committee of Health Sciences Non-Interventional Clinical Research of (2022/08-05) and permission from the related institution, where the research was conducted, (E-47960527-771) were obtained.

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Geliş Tarihi / Received: 04.07.2023  
Kabul Tarihi/Accepted: 09.11.2023

## INTRODUCTION

Chronic diseases consist of the diseases that threaten the lives of individuals, and generally necessitate more than one-year treatment, and cause the individual to lose great deal of work force, and lead to many complications and affect almost individuals of all age groups.<sup>1,2</sup> For many individuals, it is perceived that suffering from a chronic disease is a threatening situation and these changes can cause individuals to experience adaptation problems, traumatic and psychological problems.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Many drugs and treatment methods used in the treatment of chronic diseases significantly affect the quality of life of patients, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. The drugs taken for the treatment of chronic diseases such as kidney failure, cancer and diabetics, and treatment applications create significant changes in the lives of the patients, so the patients may become addicted to machines, family, institutions or health staff.<sup>3</sup> Patients who are subjected to heavy medication use and treatment practices that are difficult to cope with, cause great pain, are exposed to changes that may cause physical and mental diseases in addition to the benefits of medications and practices. However, it has been shown that traumatic situations that occur due to stress do not always have negative effects on people's mental health; on the contrary, sometimes traumatic experiences can even lead to positive emotional states and post-traumatic growth.<sup>4,5</sup> Therefore, traumas do not always have negative consequences; they can also have positive consequences, such as what does not kill me makes me stronger.

After the trauma, the positive developments occurring in individuals are defined as perceived benefit, stress and post trauma connected growth. Post-trauma generally shows itself as a permanent positive psychological change occurring in an individual as a result of stress, trauma or challenging living conditions.<sup>6</sup> Traumatic events affect many individuals; nevertheless,

only some individuals experience the positive effects of trauma. It is determined that individuals who are positively affected by trauma have effective coping strategies, social support and spiritual perception.<sup>1</sup> For this, we can contribute to posttraumatic growth with the right supporting methods.

Psychological resilience state is the ability of individuals to successfully cope with and adapt to the difficulties. It has been determined that the level of resilience of an individual has a certain effect on the positive psychological state of the individual.<sup>7-9</sup> If a person is strong in terms of psychological resilience, this increases the personal power of the individual to cope with chronic diseases, and helps them to understand the value of their lives and find new meanings, contribute them to be spiritually well, and enable them to re-evaluate their priorities in life.<sup>10</sup> Within this context, it can be said that psychological resilience is effective for individuals in combating with the chronic diseases.

In a study conducted on different people, it was determined that there was a positive relationship between post-traumatic growth and psychological resilience.<sup>4</sup> Thanks to the experiences of psychological resilience, it was determined that individuals with chronic diseases give a new meaning to life, improve their interpersonal interactions by supporting posttraumatic growth, increase their levels of coping with stress, and deepen their spiritual experiences.<sup>4,5</sup> It can be said that there is an intertwined and complementary relationship between posttraumatic growth and psychological resilience, since individuals, who have gone through a severe process such as chronic disease, become stronger and recover from the disease faster, by increasing their psychological resilience.<sup>9,10</sup> Gao et al. found that psychological resilience could reduce the psychological distress and stress of individuals with chronic diseases, and provide posttraumatic growth for individuals with chronic diseases.<sup>11</sup>

Patients may be affected by the changes in their lives with the traumas they have experienced, and by many psychological and physical factors while trying to learn to live with these traumas. Nurses are important health professionals who interact directly with patients and provide care for patients with a holistic approach during the traumatic process, support patients' strengths and help them grow after trauma, and support them to cope with difficult life events they may encounter. Traumas experienced by individuals with chronic diseases can negatively affect their life quality. However, with the support of nurses, patients can overcome the physical and psychological problems associated with the new lifestyle. Therefore, nursing care focuses on attitudes and reactions that will positively affect patients' quality of life.<sup>12</sup>

In the literature, no study examining the relationship between posttraumatic growth

and psychological resilience in individuals with chronic disease was found by the researcher. It is thought that determining the relationship between posttraumatic growth and psychological resilience of individuals with chronic diseases and making interventions for this will positively contribute to increasing the compliance with treatment of individuals having chronic diseases. In this context, this study will seek answers to the following questions:

- What is the posttraumatic growth level of individuals with chronic diseases?
- What is the psychological resilience of individuals with chronic diseases?
- Is there a relationship between post-traumatic growth and psychological resilience of individuals with chronic diseases?

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

### Type of Study

This study was conducted as a descriptive-relational study to determine the relationship between posttraumatic growth and resilience in individuals with chronic diseases.

### Sampling Procedure

Those who wanted to participate, were over the age of 18, were able to communicate, and were diagnosed with chronic diseases were included in the study. All patients diagnosed with any psychiatric disorder such as dementia, organic mental disorder, neurological disease, or mental disability were excluded from the study.

The population of the research consists of patients hospitalized in the clinics of a training and research hospital between October and December 2022 and individuals with any chronic disease who applied to the outpatient clinics. With the power analysis performed, the sample size was determined as 327 people, with a 95% confidence interval, an effect size of 0.06, and a power of 0.95 to represent the universe. However, in order to strengthen the study further and

increase its specificity, all patients who accepted to participate in the study and who met the research criteria were tried to be reached. As a result of these efforts, the study was completed with 875 patients with chronic diseases.

### Data Collection Tools

**Descriptive Features Form (DSF):** This form, prepared by the researcher, consists of 9 questions: age, gender, marital status, educational status, income level, employment status, family history of chronic disease, smoking and duration of chronic disease.

**Post Trauma Growth Scale (PTGS):** The Cronbach alpha value of this scale, which was developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun,<sup>13</sup> was found to be 0.90. Kağan et al.<sup>14</sup> performed the Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale, and Cronbach's alpha value was found to be 0.83. PTGS consists of 21 items and is 6-point Likert 0 (I did not experience this change) and 5 (I experienced this change extensively). For example; I am more compassionate towards other people. The score that can be obtained from the scale

is between 0-105. High scores obtained from the scale indicate that the person shows a high level of posttraumatic growth and development after a traumatic experience.<sup>14</sup> Sub-dimensions of the scale: "positive change in self-perception (4, 10, 12, 19.), positive change in relationships with others (6, 8, 9, 15, 16, 20, 21.), realization of new possibilities (3, 7, 11, 14, 17.), change in belief system (5, 18.), and valuing life (1, 2, 3.). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value of PTGS was found to be 0.92.

**Brief Resilience Scale (BPRS):** This scale, which was adapted to Turkish by Doğan,<sup>15</sup> was developed by Smith et al.<sup>16</sup> This scale is a 5-point Likert-type measurement tool, consisting of three positive and three negative items, in the form of "Not at all appropriate" (1) and "Completely appropriate" (5). For example; It takes me a long time to get rid of the effects of negativity in my life. The internal consistency coefficient calculated for the reliability of BPRS was found to be 0.83. High scores obtained from the scale indicate a high level of psychological resilience of individuals. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value of BPRS was found to be 0.62. It is thought that the low alpha value of the study is due to the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in the region where the data were collected.

### Data Collection

Data were collected from patients, who came to a training and research hospital, by the researcher between October and December 2022. The researcher applied data collection forms according to the appropriate conditions of the patients. Filling in the data tools took an average of 5-10 minutes. The researcher explained the unclear questions to the patients without commenting.

### Analysis of Data

In the analysis of the data,  $p < 0.05$  was considered to be significant for the research. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was used in the internal consistency analysis of the scales. F= One Way ANOVA, t: independent sample test, Tukey test (Post Hoc Analysis) and Pearson correlation analysis for the relationship between the scales were used to determine the descriptive features, percentile distribution, determination of the total mean score of the scales, arithmetic mean, comparison of the scales. All analyses were performed using Windows SPSS version 26 statistical software.

### Ethical Aspect of Study

Before starting the research, approval from the Ethics Committee of Health Sciences Non-Interventional Clinical Research of (2022/08-05) and permission from the related institution, where the research was conducted, (E-47960527-771) were obtained. The purpose of the study was explained to the patients and they were informed about the fact that their information would be kept confidential and they could leave the study at any time. The research was conducted in accordance with Helsinki Declaration Principles. In addition, verbal and written consents were obtained from the patients using the 'Informed Voluntary Consent Form'.

### Limitations of the Research

This study has some limitations. First, the participants are limited to patients with any kinds of chronic diseases who apply to a training and research hospital in a city in eastern Turkey. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited. The sample size should be increased and expanded with more individuals with chronic diseases. Second, since this study used relational data, the results cannot be used to understand causal relationships.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Sociodemographic Properties of Participants

	Number	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Woman	490	56.0
Man	385	44.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-28 years old	310	35.4
29-39 years old	152	17.4
40-50 years old	236	27.0
51 years old and over	177	20.2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	486	55.5
Divorced or alone	389	44.5
<b>Education Status</b>		
Literate	157	17.9
Primary	150	17.1
Secondary	110	12.6
High School	150	17.1
University and higher	308	35.2
<b>Income Status</b>		
Low	173	19.8
Medium	602	68.8
High	100	11.4
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed	305	34.9
Unemployed	570	65.1
<b>Presence of a chronic disease in the family</b>		
Yes	623	71.2
No	252	28.8
<b>Smoking Status</b>		
Yes	287	32.8
No	486	55.5
Quitted	102	11.7
<b>Duration of chronic disease</b>		
1-3 years	293	33.5
4-6 years	278	31.8
7 years and older	304	34.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In Table 1, when the sociodemographic properties of the participants are examined, it is seen that 56.0% of participants were women, 35.4% of participants were between the ages of 18-28, 55.5% of participants were married, 35.2% of participants were

university or higher institution graduates, 68.8% of participants had medium income, 65.1% of participants were unemployed, 71.2% of participants had chronic disease in the family, 55.5% of participants were non-

smoker and 34.7% of participants had for 7 | years and more chronic disease.

**Table 2. Comparison of The Sociodemographic Characteristics of The Participants and Their Total Scores From The Posttraumatic Growth Scale and Psychological Resilience Scales**

	<b>PTGS</b>	<b>BPRS</b>
	<b>X± SS</b>	<b>X± SS</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Woman	51.94±20.53	17.71±3.91
Man	49.06±19.74	18.53±3.79
	t=2.090	t=-3.117
	<b>p= 0.037</b>	<b>p= 0.002</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18-28 years	50.71±21.69	17.85±3.96
29-39 years	49.36±19.34	18.30±3.75
40-50 years	51.33±19.09	18.32±3.83
51 years and older	50.86±19.90	17.92±3.93
	F=0.303	F=0.925
	p= 0.823	p= 0.428
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	51.58±19.83	18.25±3.73
Divorced or Alone	49.55±20.67	17.84±4.05
	t=1.475	t=1.554
	p= 0.140	p= 0.121
<b>Education Status</b>		
Literate	47.61±19.37	17.57±4.01
Primary	51.38±18.05	18.11±3.50
Secondary	50.20±17.17	18.05±3.18
High School	53.43±19.48	18.23±3.52
University and higher	50.72±22.76	18.23±4.35
	F=1.665	F=0.846
	p= 0.156	p= 0.496
<b>Chronic Disease Duration</b>		
1-3 years	49.23±21.97	18.15±3.77
4-6 years	50.14±18.57	18.28±3.64
7 years and more	52.56±19.84	17.80±4.19
	F=2.169	F=1.194
	p= 0.115	p= 0.303
<b>Smoking Status</b>		
Yes	48.79±20.86	18.16±3.93
No	51.98±20.00	18.02±3.90
Quitted	49.75±19.17	18.09±3.65
	F=2.361	F=0.119
	p= 0.095	p= 0.888
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed	52.78±21.71	18.67±3.72
Unemployed	49.55±19.31	17.75±3.93
	t=2.180	t=3.336
	<b>p= 0.030</b>	<b>p= 0.001</b>



**Table 2. (Continued)**

**Presence of Chronic Disease in Family**

Yes	51.38±19.89	17.88±3.89
No	48.92±20.96	18.54±3.82
	t=1.629	t=-2.298
	p= 0.104	<b>p= 0.022</b>

F= One Way ANOVA analysis., t: independent sample test, p<0.05, \*Tukey Test (Post Hoc Analysis)

In Table 2, a statistically significant difference was found between PTGS and BPRS and participants' gender, employment status, and presence of chronic disease in the family (p<0.05). According to the results of Tukey test statistics, which was carried out to determine the source of the difference, the mean scores of women obtained from PTGS are higher than that of men, while the mean

scores of men from BPRS are higher than that of women. The mean scores of the employed participants obtained from PTGS and BPRS are higher than the unemployed participants. The mean scores of those who do not have a family history of chronic disease in BPRS are higher than those with a family history of chronic disease.

**Table 3. The Relationship Between the Participants' Posttraumatic Growth Scale Score and The Short Psychological Resilience Scale Score**

Scales and sub-dimensions	X± SS						
<b>PTGS Total Score</b>	50.67 ±20.22						
<b>Positive Change in Self-Perception</b>	10.41 ±4.62	<b>856**</b>					
<b>Positive Change in Relationships with Others</b>	15.54 ±7.33	<b>848**</b>	<b>590**</b>				
<b>Recognizing New Possibilities</b>	11.51 ±5.55	<b>893**</b>	<b>746**</b>	<b>668**</b>			
<b>Change in Belief System</b>	5.92± 2.67	<b>710**</b>	<b>633**</b>	<b>515**</b>	<b>562**</b>		
<b>Valuing Life</b>	7.03± 3.48	<b>726**</b>	<b>588**</b>	<b>500**</b>	<b>704**</b>	<b>459**</b>	
<b>Psychological Resilience Total Score</b>	18.07 ±3.88	<b>124**</b>	<b>157**</b>	034	<b>169**</b>	018	<b>110**</b>

Pearson correlation analysis, \*\*p<0.005. \*p<0.05

Participants' PTGS total score was 50.67±20.22, Positive Change in Self-Perception subscale total score was 10.41±4.62, Positive Change in Relationships with Others total score was 15.54±7.33, Recognizing New Opportunities subscale total score was 11.51±5.55, Change in Belief System subscale total score was 5.92±2.67, and the total score of the Valuing Life subscale was 7.03±3.48. The participants' total BPRS score was 18.07±3.88 (Table 3).

A statistically significant positive and weak correlation was found between the

participants' PTGS total score and BPRS total score (r=0.124\*\*, p<0.005). A statistically significant and weak correlation was found between the participants' PTGS sub-dimensions, Positive Change in Self-Perception, Recognizing New Opportunities and Valuing Life, and the BPRS total score (r=0.157\*\*, r=0.169\*\*, r=0.110\*\*; p<0.005, respectively) (Table 3).

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between posttraumatic growth and psychological resilience among individuals with several chronic diseases. At

the end of the research, it was seen that the research results generally supported the study questions.

In the result analyses performed to compare the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants with their total scores to PTG and BPR scales, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' gender, employment status, presence of chronic disease in the family, and the total scores they got from PTG and BPR scales. According to the statistical results conducted to determine the source of this difference, which was carried out to determine the source of this difference, it was determined that while the mean scores of women in PTGS were higher than that of men, the mean scores of men from BPRS were higher than those of women. When we look at the literature, we can see similar studies that support the results of our study that the average score of women in PTGS is higher than that of men. In a study conducted on university students who experienced the earthquake in Van, it was determined that posttraumatic growth and gender variables were significant predictors, and posttraumatic growth scores of mothers were higher than fathers.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in other studies conducted on adults, posttraumatic growth scores of female participants were found to be significantly higher than the scores of male participants.<sup>18,19</sup> In a study conducted on people who have experienced traumatic events, it was stated that women showed more post-traumatic growth than men.<sup>13</sup> However, there are also studies in the literature with different results. Within this context, a study concluded that gender is not in a significant relationship with posttraumatic growth.<sup>20</sup> It is thought that the reason for encountering such different results in the findings in the literature may be due to the socio-demographic characteristics of the region where the study was conducted. In the current study, it was determined that the mean scores of men from BPRS were higher than that of women. When the literature is examined, studies supporting the results of the current study can be encountered. For

example, in a study conducted on teacher candidates,<sup>21</sup> in an examination of the responses of individuals to the Covid -19 epidemic in terms of psychological resilience,<sup>22</sup> in a study that examined the relationship between gender and psychological resilience in individuals,<sup>23</sup> and in a study performed on patients with burns, similar results were obtained. In the study carried out by Masood et al. it was determined that the psychological resilience levels of male participants were significantly higher than female participants.<sup>24</sup> However, there are also studies in the literature that found different results. In a study conducted on university students, it was stated that the psychological resilience levels of the participants did not differ according to gender.<sup>25</sup> The reason for this different result is thought to be due to the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. For example, it is thought that the average age of the participants, the fact that most of them are not married, and their high level of education may be effective in post-traumatic growth, while the high spirituality and religious values of the region where the study is conducted affect psychological resilience.

Results of the correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the study variables, PTGS total score and BPRS total score. Consistent with these data, studies have reported that there is a positive correlation between posttraumatic growth and resilience.<sup>26-28</sup> In one of the studies, it was found that breast cancer patients showed moderate posttraumatic growth and that there was a positive relationship between psychological resilience and posttraumatic growth, and that psychological resilience mediated the positive effect of breast cancer patients on post-traumatic growth.<sup>29</sup> In a study on emergency room nurses, it is stated that resilience is the most effective predictor of posttraumatic growth.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, in studies conducted on hemodialysis and cancer patients, it has been stated that individuals with a high level of psychological resilience are stronger against diseases.<sup>31,32</sup>



These results show that resilience supports posttraumatic growth. In this context, life-threatening conditions such as chronic diseases, despite their negative and undesirable effects, can improve psychological recovery without leaving a traumatic effect, with appropriate treatment and appropriate support, and can contribute

positively to people's lives by improving post-traumatic growth. The obtained results reveal the importance of psychological resilience; and it is thought that these results will be illuminating in understanding the mental health of individuals with chronic diseases.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the study, a statistically significant difference was found between PTGS and BPRS and participants' gender, employment status, and presence of chronic disease in the family.

A statistically significant positive and weak correlation was found between the participants' PTGS total score and BPRS total score. A statistically significant and weak correlation was found between the participants' PTGS sub-dimensions, Positive Change in Self-Perception, Recognizing New Opportunities and Valuing Life, and the BPRS total score.

It can be evaluated that psychological resilience plays an important role in overcoming the psychological problems that individuals have experienced due to their diseases by providing post-traumatic growth in individuals with chronic diseases. Increasing psychological resilience against trauma may be beneficial for the improvement of psychological disorders of individuals with chronic diseases. It is thought that the findings of the present study will be productive and provide contributing evidence for the development of interventions that increase the post-traumatic growth levels of individuals with chronic diseases by promoting increased resilience.

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