

## Relationship between post-traumatic growth and gaudibility

## Relación entre Crecimiento Postraumático y Gaudibilidad

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### Abstract:

Worldwide, it is estimated that 70% of the population will be exposed to a potentially traumatic event. Sometimes, after exposure to these events, post-traumatic growth occurs, which involves a profound psychological change in a positive sense. Gaudibility is a set of modulators that exists between the stimulus and the enjoyment, regulating the subjective sensations of living. The aim of the research was to study the relationship between post-traumatic growth and enjoyability in women from the state of Coahuila who had experienced at least one potentially traumatic event. The research design was quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive, and correlational. The participants were adult women aged 18 to 68, residents of the state of Coahuila. The instruments used were the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory and the Gaudibility Scale. The results showed that some participants had experienced more than one potentially traumatic event, with situations most commonly related to violence and the death of a relative. A moderate and positive correlation was found between the post-traumatic growth inventory and the gaudibility scale. Additionally, moderate and positive correlations were found between post-traumatic growth and the factors of interest and sense of humor, as well as a low and positive correlation with imagination. The study concluded that post-traumatic growth may increase some of the modulators of enjoyment, and that modulators such as interest, humor, and imagination could be part of post-traumatic growth.

### Keywords:

Potentially traumatic experience, Enjoyment, Post-traumatic growth, Psychological resources

### Resumen:

A nivel mundial, se estima que un 70% de la población estará expuesto a un evento potencialmente traumático, en ocasiones después de la exposición a estos eventos, se experimenta el crecimiento postraumático, que implica un profundo cambio psicológico en sentido positivo. La gaudibilidad es un conjunto de moduladores que se encuentran entre el estímulo y el disfrute, regulando las sensaciones subjetivas de vivir. El objetivo de la investigación fue estudiar la relación entre el crecimiento postraumático y la gaudibilidad en mujeres del Estado de Coahuila que presentaron por lo menos una experiencia potencialmente traumática. El diseño de la investigación fue cuantitativo, transversal, descriptivo y correlacional. Las participantes fueron mujeres mayores de edad con un rango de los 18 a los 68 años residentes del Estado de Coahuila. Los instrumentos utilizados fueron el Inventario de Crecimiento Postraumático (ICPT) y la Escala de Gaudibilidad en Adultos de Morelia (EGAM 24). Los resultados mostraron que algunas participantes presentaron más de una experiencia potencialmente traumática, las situaciones que se presentan mayormente son las relacionadas con la violencia y con la muerte de un familiar. Se destacó la correlación positiva y moderada entre el ICPT y la EGAM 24, además, correlaciones positivas y moderadas entre el crecimiento postraumático y los factores: interés y sentido del humor, y una correlación baja y positiva con la imaginación. Concluyendo que el crecimiento postraumático puede incrementar algunos de los moduladores del disfrute, además los moduladores como el interés, el humor y la imaginación podrían formar parte del crecimiento postraumático.

### Palabras Clave:

Experiencia potencialmente traumática, Disfrute, Crecimiento postraumático, Recursos psicológicos.

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## INTRODUCTION

Globally, it is estimated that 70% of the population will be exposed to a potentially traumatic event throughout their life (Kessler et al., 2017), of which 5.6% will present post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Koenen et al., 2017), which mainly affects women (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). However, rates of PTSD vary depending on the traumatic event experienced; for example, they are three times higher among those who were exposed to war or violent conflict (Charlson et al., 2019) or in cases of sexual violence where particularly high rates are reported (Kessler et al., 2017). In 2021, in Mexico, of the total number of women over 15 years of age, at least 70.1% had experienced a situation of economic, patrimonial, psychological, discrimination, physical or sexual violence. Regarding prevalence, psychological violence is reported at 51.6%, followed by sexual violence at 49.7% and physical violence at 34.7%. In Coahuila, during the year 2021, the prevalence of violence against women over 15 years of age was 72.3%, one of the states with the highest prevalence in the Mexican Republic (INEGI, 2021).

Sometimes, after being exposed to a potentially traumatic experience, what has been called post-traumatic growth (PTG) is experienced, which implies a profound psychological change in a positive sense (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). PTG is defined as a series of positive changes that occur in the face of or after having experienced a potentially traumatic situation (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006), and its components are changes in the areas of: appreciation of life, relationships with others, spirituality, perception of oneself and the idea of new possibilities (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

PTG results from coping with traumatic events that affect the subject (Sierra-Murguía, 2021). This involves transforming schemas, which allows a different vision of the world, others, and oneself (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Therefore, it positively affects mental health in variables such as optimism, psychological well-being, and quality of life (Altinsoy & Aypay, 2021).

On the other hand, gaudibility is the set of modulators found between the stimulus and the enjoyment that people experience in such a way that it regulates the subjective sensations of living rewarding experiences (Padrós & Fernández-Castro, 2008). It is a construct that refers to the presence of different modulators such as abilities (the capacity to be interested in things, imagination, sense of humor, and concentration), irrational beliefs in a specific and general way, and, finally, lifestyle, and that favors or hinders the complex enjoyment experienced. People with high levels of gaudibility tend to enjoy it with higher intensity, more frequently, and in a greater variety of circumstances (Padrós-Blázquez et al., 2012).

According to Fredrickson (2001), positive emotions are indicators of well-being and a means by which psychological growth can be achieved and well-being improved for longer. The theory of expansion and construction of positive emotions indicates that emotions such as satisfaction, joy, enthusiasm, and pride (positive emotions) expand a repertoire of actions and extend thinking, which causes the storage of intellectual, social, physical, and psychological resources that will benefit a moment of crisis.

It is important to note that the factors present in the PTG include a greater appreciation for life and a change in the sense of priorities, in addition to closer relationships with others; it is found that the greater the feeling of personal strength there will be a recognition of new paths or possibilities in life and finally development at a spiritual level (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). It can be theoretically inferred that some of the components of the CPT have some relationship with gaudibility and its components.

Taking into consideration that the theory of expansion and construction of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) indicates that positive emotions (which can include complex enjoyment) increase intellectual, social, physical, and psychological resources, it can be inferred that within these resources, some contemplated by gaudibility are included and at the same time favor or are related to PTG. The study by Marcovich (2022) reported that positive coping skills increase by increasing a person's imaginative capacity.

It should be noted that gaudibility is negatively associated with alcohol consumption (Acosta-Madueño & Padrós-Blázquez, 2022; Padrós-Blázquez & Martínez-Medina, 2020), the consumption of psychotropic substances (Padrós-Blázquez et al., 2011) with different mental disorders such as depression (González-Cantero et al., 2018; Valdés-García et al., 2023), schizophrenia (Padrós-Blázquez et al., 2011), antisocial personality disorder (Magallón-Gómez et al., 2018) and other psychopathological symptoms such as interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, phobic anxiety, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, among others (González-Cantero et al., 2018).

On the other hand, people with high levels of gaudibility experience complex enjoyment in more circumstances (Padrós & Fernández-Castro, 2008), so they can develop a greater positive appreciation of life. Likewise, the CPT contemplates improving relationships with the closest people (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996); an indication of an intimate relationship is the use of humor, a modulator contemplated in gaudibility.

A higher level of gaudibility has been reported in a sample of patients with tetraplegia or paraplegia compared to a sample taken from the general population (Padrós Blázquez et al., 2013); said the increase in gaudibility levels could be triggered by CPT experimentation. As mentioned, PTG develops after exposure to adverse situations (Chun & Lee, 2008; Quale & Schanke, 2010).

No studies have been conducted that directly relate CPT and gaudibility. Therefore, the objective of the present research was to study the relationship between post-traumatic growth and gaudibility in women from the State of Coahuila who presented at least one potentially traumatic experience.

## METHOD

### Research design

The design of this research was quantitative, transversal, descriptive, and correlational.

### Participants

As Table 1 shows, the participants were 135 adult women, ages 18 to 68 ( $M = 34.67$ ;  $SD = 12.29$ ), residents of the State of Coahuila. The inclusion criteria included being of legal age and having experienced at least one

potentially traumatic experience. Seventeen participants who did not complete the form were excluded.

**Table 1.**

Descriptive statistics based on the education level and marital status of the participants.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education Level		
Secondary school	5	(3.70%)
High school	28	(20.74%)
Bachelor's degree	81	(60.00%)
Graduate degree	21	(15.56%)
Marital Status		
Single	63	(46.67%)
Married	44	(32.59%)
Divorced	11	(8.15%)
Widowed	3	(2.22%)
Free Union	14	(10.37%)

Note. Own elaboration.

### Instruments

Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTCI) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). The ICPT is a self-report format made up of 21 items on a three-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = Much more than before, 2 = Same as before, and 3 = Less than before. In a recent study carried out with Mexican cancer patients (Sierra-Murguía et al., in press), it was observed that the Weiss and Berger (2006) model was the one that obtained the best fit. Which consists of 13 items and three factors: 1. Positive attitude towards oneself (4-10-3-7-1-14), 2. Philosophy of life (19-16-11-13-18) and 3. Relationships with others (6-9). The internal consistency of the total scale was ( $\omega = .88$ ), and the factors were as follows: Positive attitude towards oneself ( $\omega = .76$ ), Philosophy of life ( $\omega = .82$ ), and Relationships with others ( $\omega = .52$ ) did not reach satisfactory values, which is attributed to its composition by only two items.

The Gaudibility Scale in Adults of Morelia (EGAM 24) (Padrós-Blázquez et al., 2021) was developed and validated in Mexico. It measures different modulators responsible for regulating the enjoyment experienced. It comprises 24 items on a Likert-type scale with five response options ranging from completely agree to completely disagree. It generates scores between 0 to 96, which means that the higher the score, the greater the participant's gaudibility. It reports a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .858$  and is divided into six subscales, which are imagination ( $\alpha = .794$ ); irrational beliefs ( $\alpha = .741$ ); enjoyment in solitude ( $\alpha = .738$ ); interest ( $\alpha = .733$ ); concentration ( $\alpha = .728$ ); and sense of humor ( $\alpha = .710$ ) (Padrós-Blázquez et al., 2021). The scores are interpreted as follows: the higher the score of the EGAM total and the factors, the greater the gaudibility.

### Procedure

Through intentional non-probabilistic sampling, the participants agreed to voluntarily respond to the instruments, which were distributed electronically via Google Forms. Once the participants accessed the instrument, they were provided with information about the research project, and their informed consent was requested. The instruments were applied in November and December 2024.

### Data analysis

After processing responses, the post-traumatic growth and gaudibility variables were analyzed in the sample through Pearson correlations executed by the JASP 19.01 statistical software.

## RESULTS

A descriptive analysis is presented regarding the type of traumatic experience experienced by the women who make up the sample. Some of the participants report more than one experience where the situations that occur with the highest incidence are experiences related to violence and related to the death of a family member (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

Frequency table of potentially traumatic experiences.

Potentially traumatic experiences	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family crisis	9	6.67
Severe illness	3	2.22
Death of a close family member or friend	43	31.85
Violence	60	44.44
Accident	20	14.82
Financial difficulties	1	0.74
Other situation	8	5.93

Note. Own elaboration

The results of the main objective highlight the positive and moderate correlation between the post-traumatic growth scale score and the total score of the EGAM-24. Likewise, the positive and moderate correlations between the CPT and the interest and sense of humor factors of the EGAM also stand out, and it was low and positive with the imagination factor.

**Table 3.**
*Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations between gaudibility and its modulators with posttraumatic growth*

Variables	Mean	DE	Value		r
			Minimum	Maximum	
Interest	10.36	4.50	0.00	16.00	0.535**
Concentration	8.44	4.70	0.00	16.00	0.013
Imagination	10.30	3.41	3.00	16.00	0.377**
Enjoy in solitude	10.80	4.22	0.00	16.00	0.193
Irrational beliefs	11.53	3.52	0.00	16.00	-0.076
Sense of humor	9.92	4.13	0.00	16.00	0.450**
Total gaudibility	60.65	14.46	31.00	93.00	0.468**

Note. Own elaboration. \*\* $p < .001$

### DISCUSSION

The present research focused on studying the relationship between post-traumatic growth and gaudibility in older women from the state of Coahuila.

Observing the descriptive data, it stands out that most participating women experienced potentially traumatic experiences related to violence 44.44%, followed by experiences related to the death of a family member or loved one 31.85%. It is important to note that the present sample not only includes the PTG of people who have suffered violence, which, according to INEGI (2021), is greater than 70% but also includes the PTG derived from other potentially traumatic events.

Regarding the main objective of the present study, a moderate and positive relationship was observed between CPT and gaudibility. These results support Fredrickson's (2001) theory of expansion and construction of positive emotions, which indicates that the experience of positive emotions increases psychological resources, among which we could include interest, sense of humor, and imagination (modulators of enjoyment), which can favor the appearance of psychological growth in the face of a potentially traumatic experience. The results also support the idea that high gaudibility, which is related to a greater number of circumstances that can be enjoyed, favors a positive assessment of life.

The moderate positive correlation found between ICPT and EGAM-24 is consistent with the higher levels of gaudibility found in patients with spinal cord injuries by Padrós Blázquez et al. (2013), where it can be inferred that the increase in gaudibility levels could be experienced at the same time as the CPT so that the positive changes in some of the modulators of gaudibility could be part of the CPT. It is important to note that in the study by Padrós et al. (2013), the gaudibility scale was used in its previous version (Padrós-Blázquez & Fernández-Castro, 2008); it would be interesting in future research to evaluate gaudibility with the EGAM (2021).

The relationship between Gaudibility modulators and CPT stands out, as do the moderate and positive correlations with interest and sense of humor. Regarding the sense of humor, it should be mentioned that it has been reported that it provides positive moods in potentially traumatic situations and can function as a buffer, reducing the physiological effects (Pérez-Alvarado, 2023) and stress levels (Bellido-Bellé, 2016). To a lesser extent, the low and positive relationship between imagination and the ICPT score stands out, consistent with the increase in positive coping skills using imagination described by Marcovich (2022). Likewise, Altinson and Aypay (2021) mention that people who manage to interpret a traumatic situation positively can experience positive consequences in the future, such as increasing quality of life, psychological well-being, and optimism. According to the results obtained in this research, the ability to be interested, a sense of humor, and imagination could be part of this positive impact generated by CPT; however, because the present study is cross-sectional, it cannot be discerned if CPT promotes said modulators of enjoyment or if these components of gaudibility favor the appearance of CPT after experiencing a potentially traumatic event.

It is important to mention that the present study has different limitations. Probably the most important is the absence of control over the presence of possible mental disorders in the participants. As noted above, several disorders are related to low levels of gaudibility, such as depression (González-Cantero et al., 2018; Valdés-García et al., 2023), schizophrenia (Padrós-Blázquez et al., 2011), antisocial personality disorder (Magallón-Gómez et al., 2018) among others (González-Cantero et al., 2018). As well as substance consumption, there is also evidence of a negative relationship with gaudibility (Acosta-Madueño & Padrós-Blázquez, 2022; Padrós-Blázquez & Martínez-Medina, 2020; Padrós-Blázquez et al., 2011). Likewise, in the present work, characteristics of the traumatic event were not controlled; note that it is different to experience a specific accident than to be exposed to continued abuse. Data related to the age at

which the event was experienced were also not controlled, factors that may affect the results obtained. It would be desirable in future research to control the presence of mental disorders, substance use, as well as characteristics of the potentially traumatic event. On the other hand, this study was conducted only with women from Coahuila because they are mostly exposed to adverse experiences. In addition, this phenomenon was addressed with a gender perspective. Future research could be carried out in different states of the country and include male participants to have more representative data. Furthermore, a previously mentioned limitation is the transversality of the study, so it is proposed that a longitudinal study be carried out in the future better to understand the impact of one variable on the other. Likewise, it is important to know if the participants have psychopathologies, receive any pharmacological treatment, or currently use substances, as well as control the type of traumatic event to which they were exposed. At the same time, know the developmental age at which the event was experienced.

### CONCLUSION

Therefore, the conclusion is reached that CPT can increase some of the modulators of enjoyment. Another option is that some gaudibility modulators, such as the ability to be interested in things, humor, and imagination, could be part of traumatic growth because they are tools used to enjoy life better.

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