

Post-Traumatic Growth with Police Officer: System Review (Focused on Korean and Foreign Studies)

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to analyze literature related to post-traumatic growth with police officer. **Method:** Systematic review of studies published were conducted through a variety of databases such as Ovid-Embase, Ovid-Medline, The cochrane library, Pubmed, RISS. The research terms included Police officers, Police, Trauma, Posttraumatic growth, Growth. **Results:** All studies were correlation analysis. In the Korean researches, PTG was positively correlated with self-esteem, problem focused coping, emotion focused coping, social support, self-disclosure and deliberate rumination. In the foreign researches, PTG was correlated with thriving, resilience, events involving threat, personal relationship stress, trauma severity, life stress, and gratitude. Demographic variables such as Female, White were also associated with PTG. **Conclusion:** To improve post-traumatic growth of police officers, strategies to increase stress coping, social support, are needed. Strategies to decrease stress, trauma and PTSD symptoms should be developed.

Keywords: Police officers, Police, Post-traumatic, Growth, Review literature as topic.

Introduction

The increases in crime and violence in Korea may have a great impact on the life and safety of police officers, and according to the statistics of the National Police Agency, of 9,552 on-duty-injured people for the last five years, the assaulted injuries, traffic accidents, and negligent accidents accounted for 97% of the total number of on-duty-injured people.¹ Particularly, these traumatic events will be directly linked not only to the police officers' lives but also to the protection for the lives of the people. In DSM-IV (1994) of the American Psychiatric Association, the trauma cases were extended to direct or indirect experiences that may threaten physical well-being, including life threats, serious injuries, striking events and so on.² The experiences of various traumatic events, such as witnessing of the murder scene, usage of guns, and violence during the suppression process, which should be undergone on duty, cause the anxiety, pain, and trauma to the relevant event. These various traumatic experiences lead to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Accordingly, in the meantime, the studies on post-traumatic stress have been actively conducted, which have focused on negative physical and psychological experiences and symptoms, accompanied

by traumatic events, such as depression, anxiety.³ However, not all people will be led to the post-traumatic stress after experiencing traumatic events, and even if they experience the same trauma, most people will overcome it well, sometimes experiencing physical and mental growth.⁴ In other words, they may experience positive psychological changes that would be perceived after the traumatic event or crisis, and such changes are called as the posttraumatic growth (PTG).⁵ The positive psychological change, mentioned here, may mean a genuine positive change that transcends the psychological functioning level and the self-awareness level of life – simply beyond physical and psychological functioning levels prior to trauma.⁶ Further, rather than the focus on the physical and pathological symptoms which have been induced by the event itself, mentioned in PTSD, the posttraumatic growth implies a more comprehensive concept focusing on the psychological and subjective response, the individual internal-strengths and adaptive aspects, which would be experienced in the event experiences.⁷

These positive changes had been diversely interpreted by each scholar, which had been used in various terms, such as discovery of benefits, stress-related growth, etc., by the 1990s, but Calhoun and Tedeschi suggested the

terminology of 'Posttraumatic Growth', different from their concept.^{8,9} Examining the research trend on the posttraumatic growth in the meantime, the initial studies on posttraumatic growth have been performed in the field of psychology, but in recent years, the research has been actively conducted in nursing, medicine, etc., as the interest in prevention of diseases and health promotion increases.³ In most precedent studies, the studies concentrating on the posttraumatic growth for specific disease subjects including cancer patients, women experiencing physical violence, the subjects who have experienced war have been conducted. However, the posttraumatic growth studies for high-risk occupational groups experiencing various traumatic events, like police officers, fire-fighting officers, and prison officers, are in very short.

Thus, this study is going to search for and then, systemically investigate various variables related to the posttraumatic growth of police officers.

Study Method

Selection of Searching Database: In terms of searching, the literature search started from 1996, when the posttraumatic growth was developed and the term of the original author began to be used, and all the literature associated with the related keywords and the like were searched by January 2018 based on the search date. In order to conduct the systematic literature review of this study, researcher collected studies focusing on the posttraumatic growth aimed at police officers. In this study, Pubmed, Ovid-medline, Ovid-Embase and The cochrane library were used as the overseas database and RISS (Korean/English) as the Korean one. The research objects included Police officers, Police, Trauma, Posttraumatic growth, and Growth. In addition, the literature search was limited to articles providing abstract and full text.

Literature Screening and Quality Assessment: Based on the literature search strategy, all literature retrieved by each database was merged and then, the duplicate literature was removed. After the elimination of duplicate literature, the studies that did not satisfy the core questions of this study were excluded through the titles and abstracts of the primary study. The primary study, which was unclear to judge whether it might be selected or excluded or which fully met the selection criteria, based on the title and abstract, was judged by securing the full text.

As all the primary studies included in the literature review of this study are the study analyzing correlations, the quality evaluation on the literature was conducted by utilizing the 'Quality Assessment and Validity Tool for Correlational Studies' which was used in the existing study of Wong and Cummings.¹⁰

Results

Based on the literature search criteria of this study, the total number of retrieved literature was 2683 units, and of these, 420 duplicate literature units were excluded. Among 2263 theses by excluding 420 theses, 351 theses related to PTSD and 407 literature units were left by excluding 505 literature units which were not related to the subject, after reviewing abstract, titles and contents. Of them, in the posttraumatic growth, by excluding 322 theses which were studied on the samples not related to police officers of the subject of this study, 8 review theses, 18 qualitative research theses, 23 experimental theses, 4 non-English theses, and lastly, 11 literature units which were retrieved as the poster-presented literature, the final 24 theses were selected. 24 literature units were systematically analyzed by 2 researchers, and if the exclusion was not identical, they discussed it until they reached the agreement.

Discussion

In this study, with respect to the correlations between variables related to posttraumatic growth of police officers, it was found in Korean studies that self-esteem, problem-centered coping, emotion-centered coping, self-exposure, social support, and intentional rumination had a significant correlation with posttraumatic growth. These results are in agreement with the study²¹ that the higher self-esteem becomes, the higher posttraumatic growth is, and since self-esteem correlates with positive cognition control strategies, it is considered that it has the significant correlation with posttraumatic growth, as a factor of protection and internal growth to control negative emotions in the process of accepting events after experiencing traumatic events. In other correlation studies, problem-centered coping and emotional-centered coping also showed a significant correlation with posttraumatic growth of police officers. This suggests that the adaptive mechanisms and responses will vary depending on the stress coping strategies used by individuals, even if they may experience the same trauma. In the precedent study²², they stated that if the negative emotions, such as trauma and stress, was controlled

well, and the emotion-centered coping was well exerted after the traumatic experience, so that problem-centered coping, one of the active coping strategies, was utilized more, it would be in charge of the responses for well-understanding of their own psychological emotions and expression of their emotions. Therefore, the stress coping strategies, such as problem-centered coping and emotional-centered coping, after traumatic events, will be served as important variables to induce the posttraumatic growth. Self-exposures were also established to have a significant correlation with posttraumatic growth, and in the precedent study¹⁵, it was said that those who actively engaged in self-disclosure were more likely to participate in cognitive processes related to growth than those who did not. It was confirmed that self-exposure was statistically related to posttraumatic growth as an important factor of psychological recovery in the growth of trauma experience. In the precedent studies^{15,16,17}, social support and intentional relativity also showed a significant correlation with posttraumatic emotions. In precedent research²³, when social support was well supported after experiencing the traumatic event, it was considered to be an important factor in well coping with stress situations and functioning for the psychological adjustment in adverse situations, which was regarded as an important parameter to induce posttraumatic growth after experiencing the traumatic event. Finally, intentional rumination was found to have a significant correlation with posttraumatic growth, which was considered as an important parameter to promote posttraumatic growth to bythinking carefully about the cast through that event and discovering the positive meanings or benefits from that case, rather than that the trauma experience was not just regarded as a negative event²³. As a result of precedent studies of such Korean studies, the valuables significantly correlated with posttraumatic growth was found to be self-esteem, problem-centered coping, emotion-centered coping, self-exposure, social support, and intentional rumination. By getting out of these phases to explore the relations with valuables, the future research will provide the baseline data for developing programs to promote a positive and healthy direction and posttraumatic growth of police officers, and be helpful as an important factor in conducting a more realistic and multifaceted research. In overseas theses, as the posttraumatic growth-related variables, prosperity and resilience, appreciation, traumatic event threatening the personal life, stress induced from human relations, severity of trauma, PTSD symptoms, relationship stress, working stress, and depression were identified.

It suggested that in overseas studies, Positive variables, such as prosperity and resilience, and negative variables, like stress and trauma, were found to be more variously related to posttraumatic growth than in domestic ones, as a variable related to posttraumatic growth of police officers. Prosperity and resilience were found to be significantly correlated with posttraumatic growth in the precedent theses. In the positive psychology, the constructively adaptive ability, well-being, and individual strengths focused on the prosperity of humans, and in the self-formation and prosperity theory, Frederikson²⁴ argued that the positive emotions, such as prosperity, would undergo a process to promote posttraumatic growth. In addition, referring to resilience as one of coping abilities when confronting a crisis after generally experiencing a traumatic event, he stated that this had a static correlation with posttraumatic growth causing less psychological trauma in crisis. Finally, the appreciation, as a positive variable, corresponded to the study results²⁵ suggesting that the higher the appreciation tendency, the higher the posttraumatic growth.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the precedent literature on posttraumatic growth aimed at police officers, to establish the variables related to the posttraumatic growth of Korean and abroad police officers, and at the same time, to provide baseline data for the development of programs that can promote posttraumatic growth. In the present study, as a result of investigating the literature that have been created since 1996 when the term of posttraumatic growth was firstly used, in the Korean theses, self-esteem, problem-centered coping, emotion-centered coping, self-exposure, social support, and intentional rumination were identified and in overseas theses, prosperity and resilience, appreciation, stress caused by traumatic events threatening the individual live and human relationships, severity of trauma and PTSD symptoms, relation stress, work stress, and depression were confirmed.

Conflict of Interest: The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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