

One factor predicting posttraumatic growth (PTG) is Social Support. The purpose of this study is to examine the factor structure of the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale (MSPSS) and assess who is offering support that facilitates adolescent PTG. It is hypothesized that social support predicts PTG in adolescents, but types of support will have different effects on PTG. Data was collected from American high school students who experienced a stressful life event and completed the measures. Results indicate social support from a special person is the only type of support significantly predicting PTG. Understanding what types of social support predicts PTG in adolescents is beneficial for future interventions after stressful events. Future research should examine the adolescents' special person.

# Introduction

- **Social Support** has been found to be a factor predicting **Posttraumatic Growth** (PTG; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), the positive psychological changes after stressful life events.
- Cognitive theories suggest social support facilitates cognitive processes necessary for perceiving positive changes (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996).
- Conceptually, high levels of social support should facilitate PTG in adolescents, yet there are still mixed results.
  - *American Adult Veterans*: Sources of social support had varying levels of influence on PTSD symptoms (Wilcox, 2010).
  - *Social Support*: Emotional support was the only significant relation to PTG (Schroevens et al., 2010).

**Significance:** Few studies relate the types of sources of social support and PTG in adolescents.

**Purpose:** Examine the factor structure of the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale (MSPSS) and assess who is offering support that facilitates adolescent PTG. **Hypotheses:** (1) Social Support predicts PTG in adolescents. (2) Different sources of social support will have different effects on PTG.

# Method

## Table 1: Participant Demographic Characteristics (N=208)

	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	82	39.40
Female	126	60.60
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Caucasian	126	60.60
African American	25	12.00
Middle Eastern Heritage	22	10.60
Mixed	16	7.70
Asian	13	6.30
Other	22	10.60
<b>Average Age (SD)</b>	16.76(.91)	

## Procedures and Measures:

- Paper and pencil survey.
- PTGI-SF: 10-item scale ( $0 = \text{not at all}$  to  $5 = \text{very great degree}$ ; cronbach's alpha = .89)
- Multidimensional Survey of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): 12-item scale ( $1 = \text{very strongly disagree}$  to  $7 = \text{very strongly agree}$ )
  - 4-items special person (cronbach's alpha = .88), “There is a special person who is around when I am in need.”
  - 4-items family (cronbach's alpha = .89), “I get the emotional help & support I need from my family.”
  - 4-items friends (cronbach's alpha = .76), “My friends really try to help me.”

# Social Support as a Predictor of Posttraumatic Growth in Adolescents

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Results

Special Person

Friends

Family

PTGI - SF  
Total Score

( $\beta=.26, p=<.01$ )

( $\beta=.01, p=.88$ )

( $\beta= -.08, p=.31$ )

This diagram illustrates a path model. At the center is a grey circle labeled "PTGI - SF Total Score". Four arrows point towards this central circle from surrounding text labels: "Special Person" (top-left, light blue arrow,  $\beta=.26, p=<.01$ ), "Friends" (top, white arrow,  $\beta=.01, p=.88$ ), "Family" (top-right, white arrow,  $\beta= -.08, p=.31$ ), and an unlabeled arrow from the bottom-right (white arrow).

*R*<sup>2</sup> = .06, *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .05, *F*(3,187) = 4.15, *p* < .01

Multiple regression analysis predicting the PTGI total score ( $M=23.51$ ,  $SD=12.35$ ) showed significant results overall.

Tests to see if the data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (Friends, Tolerance = .79, VIF = 1.27; Special Person, Tolerance = .76, VIF = 1.32; Family, Tolerance = .86, VIF = 1.17 ).

# Emerging Factors

Table 2  
*MSPSS Exploratory Factor Analysis*

	Rotated Factor Loadings		
	1	2	3
Factor 1: Friends			
I can count on my friends when things go wrong	.91		
My friends really try to help me	.89		
I can talk about my problems with my friends	.80		
I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows	.76		
Factor 2: Special Person			
There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows		.85	
There is a special person who is around when I am in need		.82	
There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings		.81	
I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me		.82	
Factor 3: Family			
My family really tries to help me			.89
I get emotional help and support I need from my family			.85
My family is willing to help me make decisions			.78
I can talk about my problems with my family			.74
Eigenvalues after rotation	5.26	2.22	1.73
Percent of Variance	43.87	18.53	14.42
Cumulative Percentage	43.87	62.40	76.82

*Note.* Factor loading greater than .40 or less than -.40 are shown.

# Discussion

- The Results indicated that the MSPSS factor structure is the same as previously found in adult samples.
- **The first hypothesis was supported** and demonstrated that overall social support was a predictor of posttraumatic growth.
- **The second hypothesis was also supported.**
  - Results demonstrated social support from a **special person** is the only type of support significantly predicting PTG.
  - Although the family and friends may make themselves available for social support, a special person who adolescents confide in and trust can facilitate cognitive processes essential for PTG
- **Limitations:** The current study only examined high school students in the Midwest, and mostly made up of seniors.
- **Future Directions:** Understanding what types of social support predicts PTG in adolescents is beneficial for future interventions after stressful events. Future research can use the different types of social support for further research on adolescents. Future studies should examine the adolescents' special person.
- **Clinical Significance:** Clinicians should consider the use of a “special person” in an adolescents life post stressful life experiences to experience potential positive changes.

## References

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