Post-Traumatic Growth Among Suicide Survivors: A Qualitative Exploration of Grief and Psychological Adjustment

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Introduction

Background: Suicide bereavement entails acute loss, disrupted meaning, and relational strain. Suicide bereavement often entails acute loss, moral pain, and strained relationships. While the PTG literature specifies five outcome domains and core mechanisms such as deliberate rumination, disclosure, and meaning-making, less is known about the stepwise process connecting regulation attempts to growth in Chinese family and faith contexts. This study explores one survivor's pathway from grief to PTG and specifies manipulable micro-processes.**Objective:** To understand how a suicide survivor moves from acute grief toward Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) and to identify process-level mechanisms and enabling conditions.

Research Questions (RQs):

- RQ1: Which socio-demographic/contextual factors relate to PTG?
- RQ2–RQ3: What are the loss/grief contents and other emotions?
- RQ4: What cognitive/emotion-regulation attempts were enacted?
- RQ5: Is resilience/social support experienced?
- RQ6: How do those attempts relate to PTG?

Methods

Design: Constructivist in-depth case study; abductive reasoning.
Participant & Data: One suicide survivor (sibling of decedent), two semi-structured interviews (~6 months post-loss).
Analysis: Naeem et al. (2023) Systematic Thematic Analysis (6 steps):
1. Familiarization & quotation selection
2. Keyword selection (6Rs)
3. Coding (6Rs)
4. Theme development (4Rs)
5. Conceptualization
6. Concept model

Framework: PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun)—five domains.
Mechanisms: deliberate rumination, disclosure, meaning-making.
Trustworthiness: reflexive memos, peer discussion, negative-case checks, audit trail.

Results

Step1: Quotation Selection

Theme	Illustrative Quotes	Analytical Notes
Grief and Regret	"It was only one week that I had not contacted her, and then the incident happened."	Expresses unresolved grief and a sense of self-blame related to the sister's death.
Spiritual and Social Support	"In the past two years, ever since my younger sister passed away, I have sought out friends to talk with, and the small group leader would provide me with what felt like a spiritual 'SPA.'"	Highlights the role of peer and faith-based support in emotional recovery.
Past Risk Indicators	"Over a decade ago, she had already attempted suicide once by burning charcoal in a car… colleagues said she might have used KCL."	Reflects awareness of the sister's prior self-harm behaviors and latent risk factors.
Family as Emotional Buffer	"Since childhood, my grandmother, aunt, and father have been very important to me; they filled the gap I had in terms of maternal love."	Demonstrates the compensatory role of extended family in addressing maternal absence.
Marital Strain and Confiding	"When I was beaten by my husband, I would confide in my older sister… also when conflicts arose with my in-laws."	Reveals the participant's reliance on her sister as a confidante during marital and family conflicts.
Sister's Social Sensitivity and Vulnerability	"Since childhood, my younger sister was very adept at managing interpersonal relationships and was always considerate, but she was bullied after transferring schools in junior high."	Illustrates the duality of the sister's social skills and susceptibility to peer victimization.
Resilience and Coping through Faith	"With my nursing background, the hymns at church bring me calm."	Suggests the integration of professional knowledge and religious practices as resilience resources.

Step 2 keywords

6R Dimension	Keyword Findings
Realness (Authenticity)	Shock, loss, pain; suicidal threats after conflict; regret over one-week lapse; prior charcoal-burning attempt; knowledge of suicide methods.
Richness (Depth)	Church small-group "spiritual SPA"; hymns bringing calm; nursing background; history of family caregiving.
Repetition (Recurrence)	Repeated emphasis on church/community support, sibling interactions, and caregiving/financial burdens.
Rationale (Theoretical Grounding)	Social support, deliberate reflection, and meaning-making—aligned with posttraumatic growth (PTG) mechanisms.
Repartee (Warning Signs)	*"Don't touch me again—if you do, I'll kill myself."* → acute emotionality and suicide risk signal.
Regal (Core Elements)	Central role of church support; caregiving load; prior self-harm history; regret over missed contact; nursing identity; sisterly bonds.

Step 3 Coding and 6Rs Framework

- **Robust**：Acute loss, shock, and pre-existing self-harm risk.
- **Reflective**：Social support and caregiving role as meaning-making.
- **Resplendent**：Faith-based calm ("spiritual SPA") and relational stressors.
- **Relevant**：Shame, privacy, and history of interpersonal tensions.
- **Radical**：Conflict between professional identity and emotional burden.
- **Righteous**：Deliberate reflection, meaning-making through faith and family.

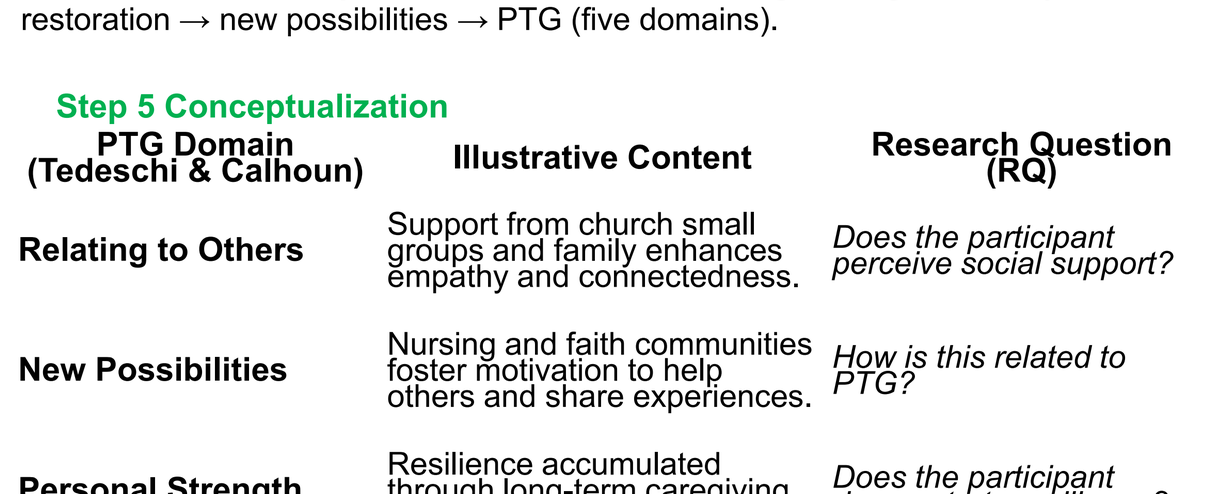
Step 4 Themes Development

- **T1 Shock–risk tension:** acute shocked loss; risk memory; guilt–rumination; shame/withdrawal.
- **T2 Regulatory system:** spiritual regulation; narrative talk therapy; rhythmic self-regulation.
- **T3 Support ecology:** faith/professional/family capital; family-structure strain; midlife context.
- **T4 Transformation path:** re-connection → meaning-making → efficacy restoration → new possibilities → PTG (five domains).

Step 5 Conceptualization

PTG Domain (Tedeschi & Calhoun)	Illustrative Content	Research Question (RQ)
Relating to Others	Support from church small groups and family enhances empathy and connectedness.	*Does the participant perceive social support?*
New Possibilities	Nursing and faith communities foster motivation to help others and share experiences.	*How is this related to PTG?*
Personal Strength	Resilience accumulated through long-term caregiving and adversity is re-recognized.	*Does the participant demonstrate resilience?*
Spiritual Change	Hymns, worship, and "spiritual SPA" deepen transcendent meaning.	*How do these practices contribute to emotional regulation and cognitive coping?*
Appreciation of Life	Loss and reflection restructure priorities in family and self-care.	*How are grief and loss experiences transformed?*

Step 6 Conceptual Framework Bereavement Adjustment and Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) in a Suicide- Loss Survivor



Conclusions

- **Triple-track intervention:** faith-sensitive emotion regulation + guided narrative/dialogue + rhythm rebuilding.
- **Critical mediators:** relational re-connection and efficacy restoration bridge regulation and PTG.
- **Capital mobilisation:** map faith/family/professional capital to build a localised support net.
- **Monitoring:** rhythm stability, talk frequency, re-connection events, perceived efficacy, PTG short scales.