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Research Paper

The Relationship Between Gaslighting Experiences and Psychological Well-Being in Intimate Relationships: The Moderating Role of Gender

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ABSTRACT

Gaslighting refers to manipulative behavior which occurs repeatedly and in which one partner denies, distorts or rejects another partner's memories, feelings and/or interpretation of activities. As the gaslighted persists, the galeae will come to distrust his or her own sense of reality, increasingly rely on the partner's version of reality, develop reduced self-esteem, autonomy, and emotional stability. This paper explores the link between the perceptions of being "gaslighted" and psychological well-being in intimate relationships, with a specific focus on gender as a moderator. It summarizes the research on gaslighting, emotional abuse, coercive control and positive psychological functioning. The paper employs four well-known psychological perspectives, viz. Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, Bowlby's attachment theory, Seligman's model of learned helplessness and Ryff's psychological well-being model. The theories come together and draw on the repeated contradiction, dependency, loss and distrust by self and others – dysfunction that has a deleterious impact on well-being. The central weakness is that many studies talk about gaslighting as a form of abuse, but few studies have looked directly at the relationship between the use of gaslighting and positive psychological wellbeing and few studies have tested to see if this relationship is different for genders. Hence the simple Quantitative Survey Design approach is proposed. The gaslighting exposures would be assessed using a validated relationship gaslighting scale and the psychological well-being would be assessed using the dimensions of self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relations, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and personal growth from the Ryff scale. Interaction analysis would serve as the moderator for the factor gender in the examination. Based on the arguments of the paper, it is expected that there is a negative relationship between gaslighting and psychological well-being, but the extent and the type of harm may vary by gender due to the social power, economic dependence, gender norms and shifts in help-seeking within the family. The study can be translated into counselling practice,

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within the framework of raising public awareness and for further research into psychologically safe intimate relationships.

Keywords: *Rights & Categories, gaslighting, intimate relationships, psychological well-being, gender, emotional abuse, coercive control, self-trust*

Emotional support, trust, respect and companionship are typical expectations in an intimate relationship. But they can just as easily be an environment where one partner exerts psychological control over the other as well. One of these is ‘gaslighting'. Not necessarily synonymous with threats or violence. Rather, it is done by repeated denying, contradicting, blaming, ridiculing, and manipulating of the other person's perception of the world around him. The remarks you might hear, like "that never happened" or "you're too much of a hypocrite" or "you're making a lot out of it guys" or "you're the problem," can be things you might get individually but sound disturbing together.

However, if repeated as part of a pattern, they can slowly undermine his self-confidence and the target may come to rely more heavily on the manipulator's partner. Gaslighting was popularized by the narrative of a man who slowly changed his wife's surroundings to lead her to lost her mind by denying the changes he made. The term is more widely used today in the field of psychology and sociology to refer to a pattern of progressive distortion of a person's perception, emotions, memories and credibility.

In Sweet's perspective (2019), gaslighting can be particularly potent as it is using larger social problems such as gendered stereotypes, economic status, and social position. Similarly, Klein, Li, and Wood (2023) find that individuals who have been gaslighted tend to feel confused, doubts about themselves, isolation, and struggle with belief. Psychological well-being is a suitable outcome for gas-lighting studies because wellbeing is not synonymous with absence of depression or anxiety. Ryff (1989) has used a positive perspective on functioning to define psychological wellbeing, encompassing self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. All these can be impacted by gas light. Repeated disclosures of false memories may cause a person to lose autonomy. When individuals feel like they are responsible for all conflicts, it can be difficult for them to accept themselves. Social isolation can lead to the loss of effective social networks and deplete one of confidence in living their everyday life. Gender is considered as a possible moderator in this paper.

Modifiers change the intensity or trend of a correlation between two variables. Gender can affect the social definition of gaslighting; the support network and abilities of the person being "gaslighted" and their readiness to come forward and report or seek assistance. Gendered stereotypes may be perpetuated through representation of women as having a temper tantrum or being irrational. Men cannot get into the habit of taking on the role of the victim in a way that is acceptable to society and may be less ready to be a victim. Transgender and gender diverse people can also suffer more often from reality denial related to them being trans or gender-diverse, discrimination and/or social recognition. Thus, gender cannot be merely explained as a natural one. It would be important to understand in conjunction with power, social expectations, dependency and level of support.

Understanding Gaslighting in Intimate Relationships

Gaslighting is a pattern of behavior in a relationship, not necessarily one argument. One partner might not remember something happening as the other partner does, and neither may be abusive. When someone continually denies and/or invalidates their partner, they are more likely to use a denial/invalidation approach to control the other partner, to distract themselves from taking responsibility, or to make their partner doubt themselves. Typically, the behavior is cumulative. The target may initially attempt to defend personal memory and/or feelings. If it continues to be contradicted, the target might start wondering if a personal answer is sensible. This can lead to becoming dependent upon the partner causing the confusion.

Common Gaslighting Behaviour	Typical Message	Possible Psychological Effect
Denial of events	"That never happened."	Confusion and doubt about memory
Emotional invalidation	"You are overreacting."	Shame and reduced emotional confidence
Reversal of blame	"You caused me to behave this way."	Self-blame and guilt
Discrediting the target	"No one else believes you."	Isolation and loss of credibility
Changing the story	"You misunderstood what I meant."	Difficulty identifying patterns of harm
Control through dependency	"You cannot manage without me."	Reduced autonomy and self-efficacy

Figure 1. The relational cycle through which gaslighting may undermine psychological well-being



Source: Author-developed conceptual illustration.

Gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse, psychological maltreatment, coercive control, manipulation and invalidation. It does have its own knowledge and self-trust focus, however. The aim is to assure the target that he or she should not rely on one's own

perception. Gas-lighting can be particularly harmful in an intimate relationship as the partners depend on each other to sort out what is going on, to validate memories, and to offer emotional support. If this normal process gets intentionally abused, the person or target might not just lose trust in the relationship, but also in self.

Psychological Well-being as the Main Outcome

When talking about psychological abuse, most people speak about depression, anxiety, fear or post-traumatic stress. These outcomes matter and systematic reviews have revealed that psychological IPV has been associated with severe mental-health problems (Dokkedahl et al., 2022). But one might start to see a decrease in positive functioning before symptom criteria are met. Psychological well-being, then, provides a wider scope of the damage wrought by the gaslighting.

When working with well-being, it is helpful to use Ryff's paradigm as it contains six separate but comprehensible dimensions. Self-acceptance is a positive attitude towards oneself. Gaslighting can reduce self-acceptance by a constant barrage of states: "this is the irrational thing you do," "it's only you, you're selfish," "you're unstable," "you're incompetent. Autonomy is simply one's own judgement in making decisions. Direct attacks on autonomy include those made by gaslighting which make the person feel that they need to rely on the other person for their reality. Alternate relationships with peers could get worse if the target is isolated and/or harmed relationships exist outside are weakened. Living demands Mastery of the environment is related to the management of the routine environment. It can be hard to make normal decisions when you're constantly questioning yourself and criticizing yourself. People's sense of purpose in life can weaken when their goals are put aside or managed.

Emotional energy directed towards conflict and doubt about self can hinder personal growth. From this, it would be hypothesized that the link between gaslight exposure and psychological functioning would be a negative one: Higher exposure to gaslighting should be correlated with poorer psychological functioning. The link can go in numerous directions. Gaslighting can leave them became more unclear, not to speak, giving remorse, fear of conflict, and relying. It can also lessen self-trust and self-confidence in problem-solving. These transformations can over time impact the person's capacity to make decisions, keep up with supporting relationships, and go for significant objectives.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Research on gaslighting has grown in recent years, although the field is still developing. Sweet (2019) presented gaslighting as a social and relational process that becomes effective when the perpetrator uses existing inequalities and cultural stereotypes. Her work is important because it shows that gaslighting is not merely a private communication problem. It can be strengthened by gender expectations, financial dependence, institutional disbelief, and social isolation.

Klein et al. (2023) examined accounts of gaslighting in romantic relationships and identified recurring experiences such as denial, blame shifting, emotional invalidation, isolation, and loss of self. Participants often described a gradual process rather than one dramatic event. Their findings support the view that gaslighting harms self-concept and makes it difficult for people to judge whether a relationship is unhealthy. Later theoretical work by Klein, Wood, and Bartz (2025) placed gaslighting within the normal "epistemic" functions of close

relationships. Partners usually help one another understand reality; gaslighting reverses that supportive function and turns it into a source of control.

Measurement has also improved. Tager-Shafrir and colleagues (2024) developed the Gaslighting Relationship Exposure Inventory to measure exposure to gaslighting behaviours in relationships. Hailes and Goodman (2025) used qualitative research to show that gaslighting in intimate partner violence can make survivors feel as though their sanity is being taken away. Hailes and colleagues (2025) also developed a relationship gaslighting scale. These developments are important because a clear measure is necessary before researchers can test links with well-being, gender, coping, or relationship outcomes.

The broader literature on emotional abuse provides further support. Emotional abuse is associated with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, fear, and lower self-worth. Karakurt and Silver (2013) found that emotional abuse occurs across genders, although its forms and consequences may vary with age and gender. Tolman's (1989) work on psychological maltreatment showed that isolation, domination, and verbal attacks can be measured as serious forms of partner abuse. Dokkedahl et al. (2022) concluded that psychological intimate partner violence has substantial effects on mental health. Gaslighting can be viewed as a specific pattern within this wider field, distinguished by its attack on perception, memory, and credibility.

Despite these advances, direct research connecting gaslighting to positive psychological well-being remains limited. Many studies examine distress, abuse experiences, or relationship satisfaction. Fewer studies ask how gaslighting affects autonomy, purpose, personal growth, and environmental mastery. Similarly, gender is often reported as a demographic characteristic rather than tested as a moderator. This makes the present topic both relevant and necessary.

Gender as a Moderating Variable

Studies of the phenomenon have expanded in recent years albeit been limited. Themes of gaslighting have been offered as a social/relational, with emphasis on how existing inequalities and cultural stereotypes are used by the gaslighted to make the process work (Sweet 2019). It is important to her work because it demonstrates the gaslighting may not just be a problem in the private sphere of communication. It can be reinforced by gender norms and financial reliance, institutional distrust, and social marginalization and isolation. Klein et al., (2023) explored verbal incidents of gaslighting in romantic relationships and found that some common encounters required attention were also denial, blaming, emotional invalidation, isolation, and loss of self. People commonly reported that it had occurred slowly not quickly.

Their work backs up the idea that people who are gassed are making it more challenging to have an accurate idea of whether a relationship is unhealthy or not and whether a person's self-concept is hurt from being gassed. Klein, Wood, and Bartz (2025) extended these theoretical efforts later that re-positioned Klein et al.'s (2022) conception of gaslighting into the common "epistemic" role of close relationships. Usually, the role partners play in each other's lives is to help illuminate reality, but gaslighting inverts that role, and uses it as a way to gain control. Improvements have also been made in measurement. Tager-Shafir, et al. (2024) designed and created the Gaslighting Relationship Exposure Inventory to identify gaslighting behaviors within relationships. Using qualitative research, Hailes & Goodman

(2025) demonstrated that gaslighting in IPPV can leave victims feeling that their sanity is being slowly, subtly taken from them. The following scale was inspired by the work by Hailes and colleagues (2025). The implications are significant as there is a dearth of sleep stating measures that allow the researchers to test their hypotheses with regards to well-being, gender, coping and/or relationship outcomes.

The overall literature on emotional abuse will support this as well. Emotional abuse is linked to depression, anxiety, post traumatic disturbing conditions, fear and decreased self-esteem. Emotional abuse is found regardless of gender, although it might take different forms and may cause different effects depending on age and gender, according to Karakurt and Silver (2013). The study by Tolman (1989) on psychological maltreatment has demonstrated that experiences of isolation, domination and verbal attacks can be quantified as forms of partner maltreatment. According to Dokkedahl et al. (2022), the detrimental effect of psychological intimate partner violence (IPV) on mental health is substantial. Gaslighting is a form of subtle social control this includes, focusing on perceptions, memories and believability.

Psychological Theories Explaining the Relationship

While there have been some improvements in the research on gaslighting and positive mental health, the connection between the two has been explored only a few times directly. Numerous studies look at distress; abuse they have endured or at satisfaction with the relationship. There are fewer studies asking about an impact on autonomy, purpose, personal growth, environmental mastery due to gaslighting. In the same way, gender is rarely specified as a demographic variable and is not typically tested as a moderator. This is why it is relevant and necessary to address the subject at hand.

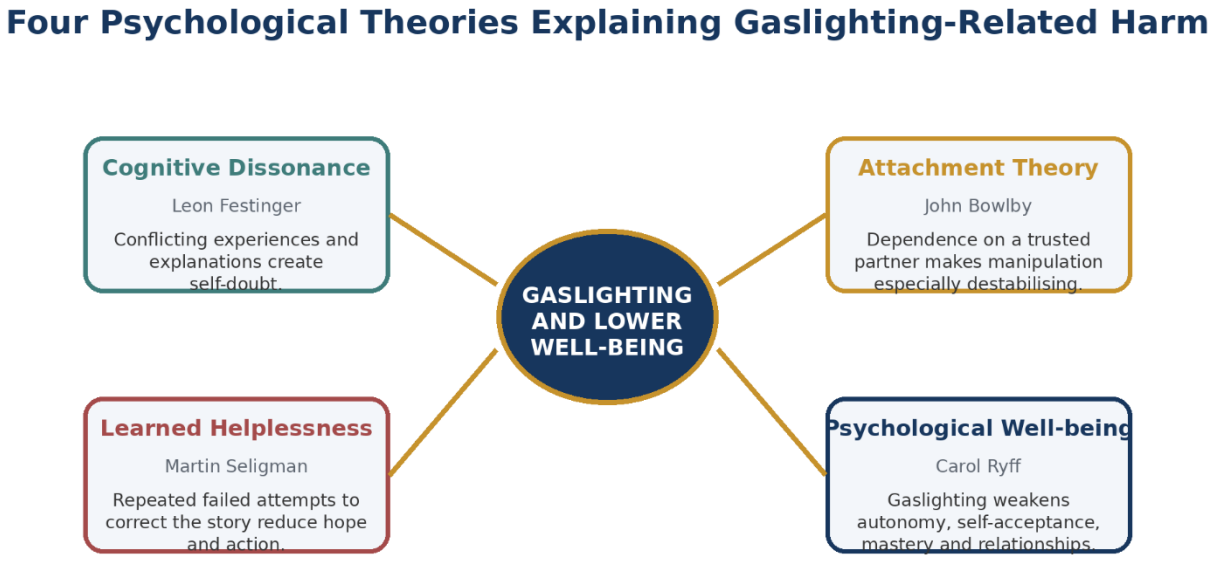

Figure 2. Four major psychological perspectives used in the present paper. Source: Author-developed synthesis.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory – Leon Festinger

Festinger (1957) theorized that when there is an important conflict between beliefs and experiences discomfort is experienced. A person can think "My partner loves me", while at

the same time getting repeated denials from their person, repeated humiliations, or being manipulated. This pain can be diminished or mitigated by this person's own acceptance of the partner's falsehoods, accepting personal responsibility, or misinterpreting the abuse. It is in this way that gas-lighting contributes to the tug of war: By continually questioning how the target is looking at things. The target over time may give in to lessening the tension, losing personal judgement. This can decrease self-acceptance and autonomy.

Attachment Theory – John Bowlby

Bowlby (1969) stated that good relationships give security and emotional regulation. An intimate's partner can serve as an attachment figure, provide comfort and reassurance during stress. What creates the pain of gas light is that the person you think you are being "protected" by is the one who is causing the confusion. An individual may rationalize caution and/or rely even more on the individual as a way to sustain the relationship because of fear of losing it. Attachment theory is then explained as why it is that gaslighting by someone we love and trust, can be more destabilizing than manipulation by a stranger.

Learned Helplessness Theory – Martin Seligman

According to Seligman's theory (1975), repeated negative events that people cannot control may cause them to come to believe that their behavior will make no difference in the outcome. In a gaslighting relationship, the partner may make explanations, provide evidence, or try to communicate, and it doesn't stick or goes back and forth. Eventually, the target may stop challenging the behavior, stop asking for support and/or think nothing can change. This learned helplessness can lead to a decrease of motivation, environmental mastery, and hope for the future.

Psychological Well-being Theory – Carol Ryff

The main outcome framework is provided by Ryff's (1989) theory. It demonstrates that having good mental health requires self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships, mastery, purpose and growth. All these can be affected by gaslighting. The theory of Ryff is particularly apt since researchers can determine which portion of wellbeing is most impacted, as opposed to being limited to a general distress score.

All these theories highlight a straightforward process: gaslighting sets up conflict between the person and what they experienced and between what they experienced and the explanation from the partner, the attachment needs and the difficulty of disengaging from that frustration, can cause subsequent feelings of helplessness and finally lower functioning in each of the dimensions of well-being.

Research Gap

What is found in the literature confirms that gaslighting is indeed a significant type of psychological abuse; however, there are a number of gaps. The first is the concept is sometimes used too generally. There's a difference between disagreement, lying, invalidation and gaslighting. Research should concentrate on repeated patterns that jeopardize the perception and self-trust. Second, many of the studies available are qualitative and/or cross sectional. While rich description from qualitative studies cannot be used to estimate the strength of associations with various dimensions of well-being, they do provide valuable data with regard to gaslighting. Associations can be detected in cross sectional surveys, though these studies are not able to determine cause/effect.

Third, and third (dual-d Brigade, dual-d Brigade again – sorry), many studies are on the signs of distress, anxiety, or depression. While all these outcomes are important, they are not the measure of the loss in positive functioning. There is little direct research that examines whether gaslighting is associated with decreases in autonomy, purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance and having positive relationships with others and in their environment, and with GI master. A limited amount of direct research exists to determine the link between gaslighting and decreased autonomy, purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance, others' relationships, and environmentally helpless. Fourth, the minor importance given to gender is simply explained as a control variable. There are few studies directly examining the inverse relationship between the gaslighting–well-being relationship by gender.

Fifth, any samples that are collected often come from convenient online demographics or young adult or existing survivor populations. This may restrict generalizability. A greater number of culturally diverse samples is required. Lastly, there have been limited studies that study protective factors including social support, financial independence, counselling, legal awareness and self-compassion. The current paper aims to bridge this midway by introducing a simple model relating gaslighting exposure to psychological life and assessing the moderating role of gender.

Aim

To explore the association of experiences with gaslighting and psychological functioning in a romantic relationship and to investigate gender as a moderator.

Objectives

1. To assess gaslighting experienced by adults in their intimate relationships.
2. To take an objective measure of psychological well-being in terms of self-acceptance, autonomy, good relationships, competence in the environment, meaning of life and growth in the person.
3. To investigate the relationship between increased gaslighting exposure and decreased psychological well-being.
4. To determine if there is a difference in the correlation between gaslighting and the psychological well-being between females and males.
5. To establish implications for counselling, and relationship education in practice.

Research Questions

- What are relationships between the gaslighting experiences and psychological wellbeing in intimate relationships?
- Which psychological well-being factors were most strongly connected to the exposure to gaslighting?
- Is there a moderation effect between gender and gaslighting in relation to psychological well-being? List some practical steps that can help to maintain or promote wellness in individuals who are experiencing gaslighting.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** The experiences of gaslighting will have a negative relationship with overall psychological wellness.

- **H2:** The gaslighting experiences will be inversely related to autonomy, self-acceptance, and environmental mastery.
- **H3:** Gender will significantly moderate the relationship between the experiences of gaslighting and psychological well-being. Moderation effect is greater when the moderation is explained by the norms of power, dependency and help-seeking, as opposed to gender.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of the proposed framework is deliberately simple. Independent variable = exposure to gaslighting. Psychological wellness is measured as the dependent variable. The moderating variable is gender. The model also acknowledges that age, amount of years within relationship, economic dependence, social support, and history of mental-health problems may affect the outcome and should, if possible, be included as control variables.

Gap in Existing Research	Why It Matters	Contribution of the Proposed Study
Unclear boundaries of gaslighting	Broad definitions may confuse gaslighting with ordinary conflict	Uses a repeated-pattern definition focused on reality manipulation
Focus on distress rather than positive functioning	Symptom scores do not show loss of autonomy or purpose	Uses Ryff's psychological well-being model
Gender mainly treated as a demographic control	Possible differences in power and help-seeking remain untested	Tests a gaslighting × gender interaction
Heavy reliance on convenience samples	Findings may not apply across cultures and age groups	Recommends diverse adult sampling and transparent reporting
Limited attention to practical protection	Research identifies harm but not ways to reduce it	Links findings to counselling, awareness, and social support

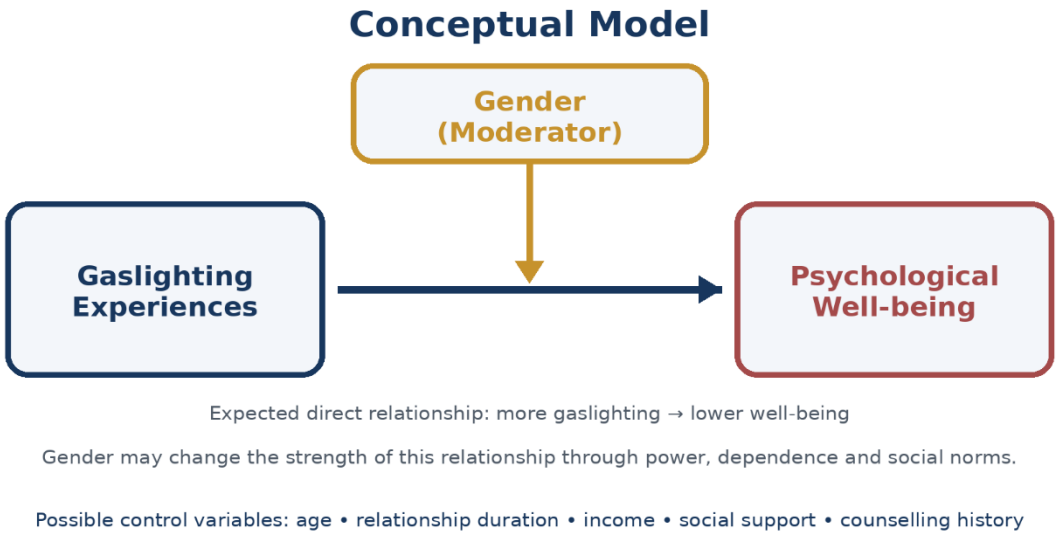

Figure 3. Proposed relationship between gaslighting, gender and psychological well-being. Source: Author-developed conceptual model.

Based on the salient findings, a negative direct effect is hypothesized, that is, increasing gaslighting exposure will be associated with decreasing psychological well-being. Moderation is indicated where this slope varies by gender category. But a significant interaction doesn't necessarily mean that the one into which it connects is always being done to them and the other one is never being done to them. It would demonstrate that the average strength of the relationship may vary, perhaps due to varying degrees of power and dependency, stigma, social support and desire for help, etc.

Proposed Research Methodology

Research Design

The following is a proposal for a quantitatively designed survey with a cross-sectional approach. This design is adequate to gauge ranges of gaslighting experiences, psychological health, and gender concurrently. It enables the researcher to assess for correlation measures and to inquire if correlates are different for women and men. Since the design is a cross-sectional design, the results will only indicate association, not cause and effect.

Participants and Sampling

The approximate sample size would be 300 adults (those aged 18 or older in January 2012) who are currently in an intimate relationship, or have been in one in the past 12 months. Recruitment of participants can occur through Universities, Workplaces, Educational/community organizations, Counselling centers and Web based sites. It is possible to use either purposive sampling or convenience sampling, but the researcher should ensure that various ages, occupations, relationship types and gender identities are included/disclosed, depending on the needs of the children.

Measures

Variable	Suggested Measure	Scoring	Purpose
Gaslighting exposure	Gaslighting Relationship Exposure Inventory or Gaslighting in Relationships Scale	Higher score = greater exposure	Independent variable
Psychological well-being	Ryff Psychological Well-being Scales	Higher score = better well-being	Dependent variable
Gender	Inclusive self-identification item	Categorical variable	Moderator
Background factors	Age, income, relationship duration, social support, counselling history	As appropriate	Control variables

The questionnaire should start with an informed consent and a safety warning. Questions must be neutral and must not call upon individuals to identify a partner or to give any identifying information. There should be a short list of counselling and domestic violence support services that helps to direct children at the end.

Data Collection Procedure

Once ethical approval is given participants will be given an information sheet outlining the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time. The survey may be completed on paper or online, anonymously. There should be no direct

responses taken with an intimate partner. Information must be kept carefully, and removed from contact data.

Data Analysis

Would start with descriptive, reliability and correlation analyses. Finally, a multiple regression test would test to see if gaslighting is a predictor of psychological well-being, while controlling for background factors. To assess moderation, an interaction term will be combined to account for the multiplicative effect of the interaction between Gaslighting Exposure and Gender Coding. If there is a significant interaction term, it would suggest that the association varies by gender group. If the number of samples is large enough, slides and confidence intervals should be provided separately. The researcher should not portray any differences between men and women as a stereotypical or as a ruling biological difference.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Expected. From the literature and psychological theories reviewed, gaslighting was hypothesized as having a negative association with psychological well-being. Frequent denial, blame reversal, invalidation, and reality manipulation among participants is likely to be followed by low self-acceptance, low autonomy and low environment mastery. Positive relationships may also be compromised as with gaslighting, people are often being isolated, trusting is broken and disclosure is feared. Diminished life purpose and personal development goals could occur when the target is constantly criticized or managed for goals, skills, and objectives they wish to pursue in the future. It is conceivable that there is a gender moderation effect, but one only needs to assume so if they are convinced that this is the case.

In contexts where economic dependency or pressure on women to care for others, and/or stereotypes of being emotional are high, the negative association may be more pronounced among women. In men, the same or significant harm can occur but not be detected through so obvious methods due to social conditioning and/or underreporting. Residents of the gender-diverse community can also be a victim of gaslighting based on their gender identity. Thus, the best educated guess is that, although gender may be a factor in the nature and place of harm, individual experiences are still diverse. Theories mentioned above provide a coherent explanation. Cognitive dissonance helps suggests that targets may alter their perceptions of themselves to retain the relationship. Manipulation of a trusted partner is extremely destabilizing, as explained by attachment theory. Repeatedly attempts to correct the partner's story can decrease action and hope, and this is so because of learned helplessness. This model by Ryff illustrates how these processes can degrade positive functioning.

Practical Implications

In the case of counsellors and psychologists, the results would help them to take a look at repeated reality manipulation without concentrating on blatant insults or physical violence. There may be a need to develop self-trust, decision-making, emotional confidence and safe relationships in a therapy. Experts need to verify with the client without giving labels and should not push the client to take immediate decisions about the relationship. Education and public awareness should differentiate ordinarily disagreeing from obsessive gaslighting, in the context of relationship programmers. Some examples are denial, blaming, estrangement, and credibility attacks. Avoid being exclusive when designing and developing awareness materials and ensure that they reflect the fact that men and women can be victims of

psychological abuse. The study would prove the worth of positive well-being measurement, beyond symptoms, for researchers. Future research should include longitudinal designs, couple data, where safe, culturally diverse samples, and protective variables like social support and independence, would be used.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to the proposed study. A cross-sectional study cannot establish that gaslighting leads to decreased wellbeing. Memory, mood, and the tendency to report could all have an impact on self-report measures. Caution may need to be taken regarding the generalizability of convenience sampling. Comparisons can be difficult as there may be variations in the size of gender groups. Gaslighting is also emotional abuse, and it can be a part of coercive control, which means measurement needs to employ a clear definition. Lastly, high score on the gaslighting does not mean the person has a diagnosis or legal determination, it simply reflects the respondents' report.

Future directions for research are outlined.

Future research should include longitudinal research to see if gaslighting helps to predict future changes in well-being. The researchers noted that they need to investigate if self-trust, self-silencing, social isolation or helplessness is a mediator to the relationship. Other protective factors such as counselling, relationships and support, income security and self-compassion warrant investigation. Cross-cultural studies are required because there are different gender roles and expectations of relationships in different societies. Qualitative interviews may be used alongside surveys to provide insights into participants' experiences and knowledge of gaslighting and how they manage to transcend it.

CONCLUSION

Gaslighting is a serious form of psychological manipulation as it undermines the person's own sense of self-confidence, their own emotions, their judgment, and their memory. This attack is particularly damaging in close relationships, since the trust and safety needed in the relationship is from someone who is also the manipulator. Three patterns emerge from the evidence and psychological theories reviewed: repeated instances of gaslighting appear to be related to decreased psychological functioning in the areas of autonomy and self-acceptance, positive relationships, and environmental mastery. This relationship could be moderated by gender norms of help seeking, stereotypes, dependency and social power. Gender should not be used as a vehicle to reduce anything or anyone. The planned survey will give a precise and easy-to-implement way of testing the relationship. Future research will help to answer this question, as it can incorporate the psychological well-being framework suggested by Ryff and complement the gaslighting measures to enhance the evidence base for counselling, prevention and healthy relationship education.

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