



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

Impact of Gaslighting on Depression, Stress and Anxiety Among Married Individuals in Pakistan

Rehmat Nayab (Corresponding Author)

BS Applied Psychology Department of Applied
Psychology National University of
Modern Languages Islamabad
Email: rehmatnayab.1@gmail.com

Asad Nauman

Master in Clinical Psychology, Department of
Psychology Lahore Garrison University
Email: asadnauman33@gmail.com

Mahnour Khalid

Master in Clinical Psychology, Department of
Psychology Lahore Garrison University
Email: khalidmahnour567@gmail.com

Nashila Mukhtar

Master in Clinical Psychology Department of
Psychology Lahore Garrison University
Email: nashilamukhtar5@gamil.com

ABSTRACT

Gaslighting is a Psychological manipulation and form of emotional abuse, that seeks to make an individual doubt their perception and reality. It is subtle, damaging, and can have serious effects on mental health such as Depression, Stress, and Anxiety. However, the problem is being studied in Western culture in different setting, but little is known about its effects on mental health in the Pakistani culture, particularly among married individuals. The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between Gaslighting, Depression, Stress, and Anxiety among married individuals in Pakistan. Additionally, It also explores the gender differences in whether men or women who experiencing more gaslighting. A random sampling method was used to choose 200 married individuals consisting 74 males and 126 females. Data were gathered through questionnaires which include the Gaslighting scale and DASS21 scale. Statistical analysis including correlation and mean comparisons were used to see the relationship between variables and gender differences. The results revealed a significant correlation between the variables Gaslighting, Depression, Stress, and Anxiety. Additionally, in terms of gender differences, the results shows women experiencing it much more frequently than males did. Finally, the study emphasizes how critical it is to acknowledge gaslighting as a severe type of emotional abuse that disproportionately targets women. To address, gaslighting and its effect on mental health and to promote well-being and good relationships for couples in Pakistan, culturally tailored treatments are required.

Keywords: Gaslighting, Depression, Stress, Anxiety, Mental Health, Emotional abuse, Manipulation, Pakistani married individuals.



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

INTRODUCTION

Gaslighting a subtle form of manipulation done by close people in interpersonal relationships which in start does not seem harmful but has the potential to be significantly detrimental, because the insidious form of abuse can lead to the development of mental health issues such as Stress, Anxiety and Depression (Santiago, 2023; Stern, 2007). The origin of the term *Gaslighting* comes from the famous play of Patrick Hamilton with the same name *Gaslight*, which became a popular movie in 1944 (Hightower & Lmhc, 2003). In the Psychological thriller, the protagonist (husband) constantly manipulates his wife by isolating her and causing her to think she is insane. His aim was to confuse and distort her reality and undermine her sense of self so that she would accept his imposed reality on her ownself (Sweet, 2019). However, the phenomenon was initially identified and named in 1940 (Dickinson).

Gaslighting in the field of Psychology is a specific kind of emotional abuse and psychological manipulation that induce the individual to doubt themselves by challenging their own sense of reality, memory and rationality. The gaslighter use some of the strategies such as persistent denial, misdirection, contradiction, and lying to undermine and delegitimize the victim's belief (Dorpat, 1994; Petric, 2018; Welch, 2008). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary define it in this way gaslighting is a psychological abuse that takes place over a long period of time and makes the victim doubt the veracity of their own beliefs, sense of reality, or memories. It usually results in confusion, a decline in self-worth and confidence, doubts about one's emotional or mental stability, and dependency on the abuser. Similarly, Carlin (2019) considered gaslighting a well-organized plan on the perception of a person, by frequent lies, suspecting, and delegitimizing. In a larger sense, Gavin (2011) defines abuse as the behavior of preserving power and influence over another person through covert or overt tactics. The empirical evidence by Grave and Samps (2021) on association between power and gaslighting suggested that, those who are high and in low in interpersonal power mostly prone in gaslighting.

Now a day, gaslighting is a common word which is used to characterize for abusive people for their mind-controlling method in both politics and interpersonal relationship (Sweet, 2019). In the domain of politics the term Gaslighting became a popular and important cultural focal point when it was used as a political metaphor in 2010. Particularly, in the 2016 presidential election of the United States it represented a range of deceptive behavior of politicians mostly associated with Donald Trump, because of his post-truth political strategies are often compared with an abusive partner (Shane et al., 2022). Similarly, in 2017 an article was published in Guardian written by Ariel Ieve with the title that "Trump is Gaslighting America" which represent the similar theme (Sweet, 2019).

Despite, using of the term by current media as a Trump political approach it is typically seen as interpersonal psychological dynamics, and it became famous after using by Robin Stern in her self-help book regarding gaslighting in 2007 (Sweet, 2019). According to Stern it is an interaction between two individuals the gaslighter and gaslightee in which the gaslighter have all the power and sense of always being right with the effect is known as gaslight (2007). There are many types of gaslighting behavior but Stern particularly categories three types of behavior which a gaslighter show during gaslighting relationship. The first one is the glamour gaslighter who feel their partner special with flattery and gratifications. The second kind is the good-guy gaslighter, who acts in a way that satisfies his or her own narcissistic demands by upholding a favourable self-image. The last type is intimidator gaslighter who directly express aggressiveness with harsh criticism which leave the partner feeling depressed and powerless (Stern, 2007).

Stern also explain the three stages which a gaslightees go during a gaslighting relationship,



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

which are disbelief, defence and depression. At the starting the victim cannot trust what his/her partner is saying but their sense of reality is remain intact. In the second stage which is defence the gaslighter tries to maintain their own point of view. The third stage stage is depression in which the victim feel depressive thoughts and oftenly overwhelmed by their partner manipulation (Stern, 2007). According to Simon (2011) Gaslighting can be committed by a peer, family members, spouse and coworker and it can be immensely harmful when the gaslighter in position of power. It can occur in the different context of life such as, in school in the form of bullying, at work places in form of mobbing, but mostly studies conducted shows that it is more prevelant in the marital relationship particularly, in those relationship which are abusive like intimate partner violence (Stark, 2019). Therefore, some of the countries such as in Australia as well as in United Kingdom it is incorporated in the domestic law of violence and in UK up till now more than 300 offender have been charged (Mikhailova, 2018; Carlin, 2019).

Several studies have been conducted to see the relation between gaslighting and psychological traits of the both abuser and the victim, some of the traits which make the victim vulnerable for a covert emotional abuse are low self-confidence, neuroticism, emotional dependency, over-conscientiousness, inexperience and over intellectualization (Ehrensaft et al., 2006; Ornduff et al., 2001; Simon, 2010). Similarly, a study was also conducted by (Miano et al., 2021) on adults in which the findings revealed that disinhibition, antagonism and psychoticism were significantly associated with gaslighting behavior from partner for the survivors, and detachment, disinhibition, and psychoticism were positively linked with gaslighting behavior for the abusers. Stout (2006) called it a strategy used by socio path and narcissists to transgress the social mores, breaking of law and exploit others. They are persuasive liar often charming one and continuously deny of wrong doing.

The findings of many studies suggested that the ultimate goal of gaslighting is to get power and supremacy by using covertly tactics by the perpetrator, which mostly leads to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-loathing, uncertainty, and many psychotic spectrum disorders in the victim (Dorpat, 1996; Stern, 2007). Pakistan a patriarchal society characterize by male domination in various aspect of life which can often leads to psychological, physical and emotional abuse, as reported by the findings of many studies. Moreover, some of the cultural norms such as grant decision making authority enhanced some of invisible elements of psychological abuse among one of them is gaslighting (Ali et al., 2015; Bhattacharya, 2014; Khurram, 2017).

Sweet (2019) considered it a social phenomenon rather than psychological in terms of gender and sexuality, the unequalities with in power laden intimate relationship laid the foundation for gaslighting. According to Sweet when the offender who is in intimate relationship with the victim when uses gender-based stereotype, such as using of irrationality mostly associated with women and insitutional vulnerabilities, then the effect of gaslighting will become more damaging (Sweet, 2019).

According to the knot theory of mind, Gaslighting is a powerful tool of abusers and can be dangerous for the victim if it long lasted, which leads to anxiety, depression and even psychosis. The constant mental and emotional abuse by the gaslighter leads to the formation of numerous negative knots with bad ideas and feelings resulting in with both emotional and cognitive damage (Petric, 2018). According to the Cognitive Dissonance theory of Festinger when an individual experience a discrepancy between their belief and reality, the individual will experience psychological discomfort (festinger, 1978). Similarly Gaslighting is the altering of someone perception of reality that can lead to cognitive dissonance, and resulting in stress, depression, sadness and lose of sense of self-worth (Ahern, 2018).



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

According to Sarkis (2018), the love-bombing phase, which is marked by an excess of affection, attentions, presents, and attractive behaviour, is when partnerships where gaslighting occurs. From the victim's viewpoint, this experience is both delightful and perplexing. Similarly, Stern (2006) propose that gaslighting begin with the subtle twisting of facts and gradually advance until the victims are helplessly locked in a various forms of abuse, which results in depression, loss of self- esteem and sensation of being crazy.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) literature addresses gaslighting, which is acknowledged as a kind of abuse specifically in the coercive controlling violence (Klein et al., 2022). The occurrence and intensity of the psychological intimate partner violence is significantly differed based on country, culture and religion (Fernandez et al., 2019). Some of the findings of studies show IPV consequences of the mental health victims are. Additionally, the center for disease control and prevention intimate partner surveillance uniform definitions and recommended data elements have been modified with the addition of the term gaslighting and labelling it a type of mental aggression (Brieding et al., 2015). Anderson (2019) and Myhill (2015) find out that the prevalence of becoming the victim of gaslighting is more in women instead of men.

Pakistan is profoundly a patriarchal culture and country in which gendered power dynamics favour males, such as cultural norms that limits women mobility, emphasize gender isolation, association of family honor with female virtue, prioritize men as a decision makers in all areas of life (Moghadam, 1992). This is underscored by Pakistan low ranking in many gender parity metric such as in United Nations Development Programs (UNDP, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2014) and the alarming high rate of intimate partner violence (IPV) which can vary from 18% to as high as 93% (Andersson et al., 2009). The present investigation is conducted to see the effect of gaslighting on depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Klein, li & wood (2022) conducted a study to see the effect of gaslighting on the mental health of individual, for this they recruited 65 participants who themselves identified experience of gaslighting in romantic relationship. They have found that gaslighting happens in relationships that are characterized by a dynamic blend of loving and abusive actions that are sustained over time. The psychological consequences on mental health of the victims of gaslighting are they have diminished sense of self, mistrusts of others and post-traumatic growth.

Graves & Samp (2022) led out a quantitative study to investigate the correlation between the power of commitment to a romantic partner and instances of gaslighting. They have took sample of 298 in which 72.5% were females and 27.5% were males. The study result of the study shows that the individuals with low and high power experienced more gaslighting than those individual those who are with moderate power.

Ali et al., (1999) led out a study, that emotional abuse is a provoking factors for depression in females, 40 women took part in the study. The findings of the study indicated that the individuals who experienced emotional abuse in the year, were more likely to currently have a major depression.

Shousha (2023), conducted a study by using semi structured interviews method with 27 women who were living with a narcissistic partner. The average duration of these relationships was found to be 6.44 years. The interviews each lasting between 40 to 60 minutes. The findings of the study revealed that the women who claim to be the victim of their narcissists are subjected to gaslighting.

Qasim & muzaffar (2021) conducted a study for predicting the role of emotional abuse of developing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, emotional/behavioral



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

control and positive effect and their quality of life among married individuals. Total 230 participants between the age 18-40 participated in the study. The results of the study shows that a significant strong negative correlation of emotional abuse with mental health ($r = -0.82$) and with quality of life ($r = -0.89$).

Adikwu et al., (2021) led a study to examine the impact of emotional abuse on the mental health of women in abusive marriages. 600 married women above 18 years old participated in the study. The results of the study shows that 95.2% of the participant once in their in life and in their marriage have suffered from one form of emotional abuse, other findings in the study also shows that 93.8% of the participants suffered psychologically because of emotional abuse 18 from their life partner. The correlation between the variables also revealed a strong significant relationship between emotional abuse and mental health issues among the married women.

Rationale of the study

This research “Impact of gaslighting on depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals of Pakistan” was carried out among the married individuals from different cities of Pakistan through survey by questionnaires. Gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse and manipulation that has gained recognition as a detrimental force within intimate relationship internationally, but there is a scarcity of research addressing its impact on mental health in the context of Pakistani culture and marriages.

The prevalence and nature of gaslighting within in the marital relationships in Pakistan is poorly understood and there is a dearth of academic literature. Therefore this research tries to fill the knowledge gap by conducting survey and laid the foundation for further future exploration of the concept and its impact on individual mental health issues resulting in by stress, anxiety and depression in the culture of Pakistan.

Objectives of the study

The current study aim is to achieve the following objectives

To determine the relationship between gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals.

To find out gender differences in gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals.

To study the frequency and severity of gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals.

To study the role of age in determining gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals.

To study the role of family system in gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals.

Hypotheses of the study

There is a significant relationship between gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety.

There is a difference in gaslighting with the reference to gender.

There is a difference in gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety with the context of family system.

There is a significant difference in the level of gaslighting, depression, stress, anxiety based on the number of years married.

There is a significant difference based on age groups in relation to gaslighting, stress, depression and anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

Sample



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

Two hundred married individuals, ages between 18-50 were taken in the study. The sample consisted of 200 individuals those who are married and living together. The participant whose age are below 18 and 50 were excluded from the study.

Research Design

The study was quantitative in nature and included a survey with cross-sectional questions.

Instrumentation

Gaslighting questionnaire (GQ)

To measure gaslighting in the married individuals gaslighting translated Urdu version questionnaire is used, which consists of 18 items. The original GQ was developed by Stern in 2007. It is a Likert type self-report measuring of gaslighting phenomenon with in the married individuals. The maximum score on this scale is 180 and minimum 0. The higher score indicate the individual is more effected by gaslighting.

The internal consistency reliability for gaslighting questionnaire in this study is presented by Cronbach's Alpha realibility, which in this study is found .871 which is greater than 0.7 the minimum criteria for alpha realibility.

DASS-21

To measure depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals DASS-21 Urdu-translated version was used in the study. The depression, stress, anxiety scale (DASS-21) is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure the level of depression, stress and anxiety in individual. The scale was originally developed by lovibond and lovibond in 1995. Its original version consist of 42 items and it's a brief version, 21 items (DASS-21) that are divided into three correlated dimension (Gomez, 2013 ; Osman et al., 2012)

The internal consistency reliability for DASS-21 in this study is presented by Cronbach's alpha realibility, which in this study is found .895 which is greater than the minimum criteria 0.7 of Cronbach's alpha realibility.

Procedure

The study was conducted on the married individuals from different cities of Pakistan through the application of random sampling method. The survey include demographic information, Gaslighting and DASS-21 scales. Inform consent was taken from all participants. The demographic sheet created for information contains age, gender, family system, number of years of marriage, Educational level, and monthly income. Before filling forms instructions were verbally presented to participants and ensured all of them that their information must be confidential and only use for research purpose.

Analysis

The provided data underwent analysis through the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 20. Correlation of the variables gaslighting, stress, anxiety and depression was performed and found a significant relationship among all the variables. Two independent t-tests were performed to check the gender and family system difference. Two test of analysis of variance were also performed the check the mean difference on based of aged groups and number of years of marriage.

RESULTS

The present study is done to see the relationship between gaslighting, anxiety, stress and depression among the married individuals of Pakistan. The information was gathered from 200 married individuals which include 37% males and 63% females. Data was collected



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

by survey through questionnaires and is analyzed in SPSS by running various statistical techniques and summarized results in various tabulation forms as follow.

Table no 1

Demographic profile of the sample (N=200).

<i>Sample characteristics</i>	<i>categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Genders	Males	74	37%
	Females	126	63%
Family systems	Joint family	103	51.5%
	Nuclear family	97	48.5%
Age	18-25 years	49	24.5%
	26-40 years	98	49%
	41-50 years	53	26.5%
Education level	Matric	32	16%
	Fsc	46	23%
	Bachelor	107	53.5%
	Mphil	15	7.5%
Monthly Income	Unemployed	39	19.5%
	Rs 20,000-50,0000	76	38%
	Rs 51,000-100,000	48	24%
	Rs 100,00-150,000	18	9
	Above 150,000	19	9.5%
Years of marriage	0-5 years	61	30.5%
	6-10 years	39	19.5%
	11-15 years	33	16.5%
	More than 15 years	67	33.5%

Table 1 shows that 200 individual participated in the study which include 74 males and 126 females. It also include their family system (joint family 51% and nuclear family 48.5%), age range from 18 to 25years (24.5%), 26-40 (49%) and from 41-50(26.5%). As well it also shows their monthly income, level of education and years of marriage (total duration of marriage) along with different categories and percentage.

Table 2

Alpha Reliability of Gaslighting and DASS-21.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>α</i>
Gaslighting	18	.871
DASS-21	21	.895



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

Table 2 shows that Cronbach’s Alpha reliability of both gaslighting .871 and DASS-21 .895 which is higher than 0.7. This indicates that both scales are appropriate for use in social science research (the Cronbach's alpha score should be better than 0.7).

Table 3

Item total correlation and corrected item correlation for Gaslighting Scale

<i>ItemNo</i>	<i>Item total r</i>	<i>Corrected r</i>
1	.56**	.400
2	.62**	.542
3	.59**	.513
4	.48**	.404
5	.65**	.584
6	.60**	.546
7	.55**	.487
8	.62**	.545
9	.30**	.236
10	.64**	.582
11	.55**	.466
12	.55**	.483
13	.54**	.449
14	.39**	.349
15	.58**	.526
16	.57**	.515
17	.54**	.473
18	.64**	.584

Note. *p<.5, **p<0.1, ***p<000

In table 3, the item correlations and corrected item correlation for Gaslighting Scale consisting of 18 items denoted from 1 to 18 are presented. Examining the item total correlations, item 5 and 10 emerge with the highest correlation coefficients at .65** and .64** respectively. These values indicate a substantial positive relationship between respondent responses to these items and overall with the Gaslighting scale. Additionally, item 2 and 18 also exhibit a notable item correlation at .62** and .64** emphasizing their positive association with gaslighting construct. The remaining items also demonstrate a moderate correlation with the construct by falling into the range of .60** to .39*.

Table 4

Item total correlation and corrected item correlation for Depression Sub Scale

<i>ItemNo</i>	<i>Item total r</i>	<i>Corrected r</i>
1	.55**	.37
2	.65**	.43
3	.67**	.48
4	.60**	.45
5	.65**	.48
6	.68**	.54
7	.55**	.55

Note. *p<.5, **p<0.1, ***p<000



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

In the table 4, the item correlations and corrected item-total correlation for the Depression-sub scale, consisting of 7 items denoted from 1 to 7 are presented. By examining the item-correlations item 3 and 6 emerge with highest correlation coefficient at .67** and .68**. Additionally, item 2 and 5 shows same significant correlation coefficient at .65*. The remaining items also revealed a significant correlation.

Table 5

Item total correlation and corrected item correlation for Stress Sub Scale

ItemNo	Item total r	Corrected r
1	.65**	.50
2	.58**	.44
3	.56**	.37
4	.68**	.53
5	.69**	.55
6	.56**	.33
7	.73**	.59

Note. *p<.5, **p<0.1, ***p<000

In the table 5, the item correlations and corrected item-total correlation for the stress-sub scale, consisting of 7 items denoted from 1 to 7 are presented. By examining the item-correlations item 5 and 7 emerge with highest correlation coefficient at .69** and .73**. Additionally, item 1 and 4 shows significant correlation coefficient at .65* and .68**. The remaining items also revealed a significant correlation.

Table 6

Item total correlation and corrected item correlation for Anxiety Sub Scale

ItemNo	Item total r	Corrected r
1	.59**	.42
2	.63**	.48
3	.68**	.55
4	.60**	.39
5	.59**	.46
6	.74**	.60
7	.68**	.52

Note. *p<.5, **p<0.1, ***p<000

In the table 6, the item correlations and corrected item-total correlation for the Anxiety-sub scale, consisting of 7 items denoted from 1 to 7 are presented. By examining the item-correlations item 6 and 7 emerge with highest correlation coefficient at .74** and .68**. Additionally, item 2 and 3 shows significant correlation coefficient at .63* and .68**. The remaining items also revealed a significant correlation.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for Study Variables

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1 Gaslighting	200	35.48	27.17	-	.63**	.48**	.60**



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

2 Stress	200	6.46	3.74	-	.70**	.69**
3 Anxiety	200	3.89	3.46	-	-	.63**
4 Depression	200	3.93	3.28	-	-	-

Note. *p<.5, **p<0.1, ***p<000

In the Table 7, the findings of the study demonstrate that gaslighting is statistically positively associated with depression, stress and anxiety. However depression is not significantly is associated with gaslighting.

Table 8

Mean differences on gaslighting, stress, anxiety and depression between male and female (N=200)

variable	Females(n=126)				t(200)	P	95%CL		Cohen's d
	Males(n=74))				LL	UL	
s	M	SD	M	SD)	LL	UL	d	
G	28.26	23.44	39.71	28.38	-2.93	.004	-19.16	3.76	.41
S	5.47	3.81	7.04	3.60	-2.91	.004	-2.63	-.50	.42
A	3.08	2.64	4.36	3.80	-2.80	.006	-2.18	-.38	.40
D	3.47	3.07	4.20	3.37	-1.52	.131	-1.67	.22	.23

Note. A= Anxiety, G= Gaslighting, S=Stress, D= Depression, M= mean, SD= standard deviation, df= degree of freedom, CL= confidence interval

In Table 8, findings of independent sample t-test demonstrated that there is a significant difference found on gaslighting (t=-2.93, p>.004), stress (t=-2.91, p>.004), anxiety (t=-2.80, p>.006) between male and females.

The results also revealed that females are experiencing more gaslighting than males in the present study. Regarding hypotheses number 2 which stated “there is significant difference in gaslighting with reference to gender” was supported in the present study.

Table 9

Mean differences on gaslighting, stress, anxiety and depression between joint family and nuclear family (N=200)

variables	Jointfamily(n=103)		Nuclear family(n=97)		t(200)	P	95%CL		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
G	33.95	26.22	37.09	28.18	-.82	.415	-10.73	4.44	0.11
S	6.73	3.90	6.18	3.57	1.04	.298	-.49	1.60	0.14
A	4.32	3.82	3.42	2.98	1.86	.075	-.06	1.85	0.07
D	4.04	3.23	3.81	3.34	.48	.630	-.69	1.14	0.26



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

Note. A= Anxiety, G= Gaslighting, S=Stress, D= Depression, M= mean, SD= standard deviation, df= degree of freedom, CL= confidence interval

In Table 9, findings of the independent sample t-test demonstrated that there is non-significant difference found on gaslighting ($t=-.82, p<.415$), stress ($t=1.04, p<.298$), anxiety ($t=1.86, p<.075$), depression ($t=.48, p<.630$) between joint and nuclear families. Regarding the hypotheses number 3 which stated “there is difference in gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety with the context of family system is not supporting in the present study.

Table 10

Mean, standard deviation and one way analysis of variance in Gaslighting, stress, depression and anxiety across age groups

variables	18-25 years (n=49)		26-40years (n=98)		41-50years (n=53)		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
G	33.35	31.68	35.57	25.13	37.26	26.70	.264	.768
S	6.22	4.35	6.20	3.37	7.15	3.80	1.229	.295
D	4.29	3.72	3.66	3.24	3.92	3.65	.530	.590
A	4.41	3.43	3.76	3.11	3.81	3.45	.693	.501

*** $p<.001$.

Table 10 findings of one way analysis variance (ANOVA) revealed that there is non-significant difference exists among three age groups of married individuals (on gaslighting, stress, depression and anxiety) gaslighting ($f=.264, p<.768$), stress ($f= 1.229, p<.295$), depression ($f=.530, p<.590$) and on anxiety($f=.693, p<.501$).

Regarding the hypotheses number 5 which stated “There is significant differences based on age groups in relation to gaslighting, stress, depression and anxiety” is not supporting in the current study.

Table 11: Mean wise differences, Standard deviation and one way analysis of variance in Gaslighting, Stress, Depression and Anxiety on number of years of marriage

variables	0-5 years (n=61)		6-10 years (n=39)		11-15years (n=33)		above 15 years (n=67)		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
G	33.41	29.05	36.33	31.12	34.52	23.00	37.33	25.22	.245	.865
S	6.10	3.96	5.95	4.14	6.88	3.75	6.88	3.29	.848	.469
A	3.74	2.96	3.74	4.00	4.27	3.79	3.91	3.44	.195	.900
D	4.20	3.37	3.95	3.46	4.09	3.05	3.60	3.23	.388	.762

*** $p<.001$.



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

Table 11 findings of one way analysis demonstrated that there is non-significant difference exist among the four categories on number of years marriage on gaslighting, depression, anxiety and stress. On gaslighting ($f=.245$, $p<.865$), stress ($f=.848$, $p<.469$), anxiety ($f=.195$, $p<.900$) and on depression ($f=.388$, $p<.762$).

DISCUSSION

Pakistan is a patriarchal country where males dominate females in most aspect of life from minor to major decisions taking authority regarding different domain of life. Additionally, a patriarchal culture and sociocultural norms encourage a several forms of psychological abuse that are hidden from view, but that one stick out, among one of them is gaslighting, which is a psychological manipulation that develop a doubt in the target individual by questioning their own memory, rationality and perception.

Additionally, issues like gaslighting requires special attention, because it is kind of psychological abuse which is covert in nature and the findings of many studies shows that abuse like this can damage the victim emotional and psychological health by leaving long lasting effect in the form of Depression and Stress (Ali et al., 1999 ; Hayes & Jeffries, 2015).

200 number of individuals were taken into the study, which consists of 74 males (37%) and 126 females (63%). These individuals were also categories based on their age, from 18-25 years there are 49 individuals which became 24.5% of total sample, from 26-40 years there are 98 individuals which became 49% of the total sample and from 41-50 years there are 53 individuals which became 26.5% of the total sample. Additionally, the individuals were also placed in two categories based on their family system. In joint family there were 103 individuals which became 51.5% of total sample and in nuclear family there were 97 individuals represents 48.5% of the total sample.

Higher reliability were observed in this research for the scales gaslighting ($\alpha=.871$) and for DASS-21 ($\alpha=.895$).

Pearson product correlation test was done to analyze the association between the variables and in this study statistically a positive correlation was found between the variables gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety (Stern, 2009) and independent t-test was also run to analyze the gender differences in experiencing gaslighting in both genders and there was a significant difference found with reference to gender (Sweet, 2018). The current study was also determine the relationship between gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals of Pakistan, and a significant difference also found with reference to gender, which also favour the study conducted by (Sweet, 2019). The first two hypotheses was supported in the current study.

The first hypotheses of the study was that there is a significant relationship between gaslighting, stress, anxiety and depression. In stress which was 0.63^{**} , in anxiety 0.48^{**} and in depression it was 0.60^* , which was supporting the first hypothesis of the current study.

There are many studies which highlight the gender differences in experiencing of gaslighting, and the results of most study demonstrate that females are experiencing or became the victim of gaslighting more than males (Abramson, 2014 ; Stark, 2019, Sweet, 2019).

The study's second hypothesis was that there are gender-related differences in gaslighting. The independent sample t-test was done for examining gender differences in experiencing gaslighting. The results of the test shows p value for gaslighting was 0.004 shows a significant difference, between the gender groups (males and females), so it leads to the accepting of the second hypotheses. When further analysis was done the higher the mean value for females shows that females are experiencing gaslighting more than males.



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

The third hypotheses of the study was that there is a difference in gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety with the context of family system. An independent sample t-test was analyzed for nuclear and joint family in term of gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety. So according to the results the value of p was non-significant in all the four variables. Further analysis also shows that there was a slight difference in mean wise, which was higher in nuclear families than joint families. So according to the results there was a non-significant difference gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety within the context of family system, so the third hypotheses was not supporting in the current study.

The fourth hypotheses of the study was that there is a significant difference in the level of gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety based on the number of years of marriage. For analysis ANOVA test was used, the results of the test shows a non-significant difference, because the value of p was greater than 0.5 in all four variables. Therefore the hypotheses was not supporting in the study.

According to the fifth hypotheses of the study was, there is a significant difference based on age groups in relation to gaslighting, stress, depression and anxiety. ANOVA test was used for analysis, the results of the test revealed show a non-significant difference because of the value of p, which was greater than 0.5 in all the variables, therefore the fifth hypotheses was also not supported in the current study.

The fundamental purpose that lie at the background of this current study was to understand the concept of gaslighting and its association with stress, anxiety and depression among the married individuals. In order to exploring the concept further the individuals completed the survey questionnaire of gaslighting and DASS-21. After obtaining the informations, analysis were done throught SPSS and results of different tests are aforementioned.

SUMMARY

The basic purpose of the research was to discover the existing association between gaslighting, stress, anxiety and depression among the married individuals of Pakistan. The design of the study was cross-sectional surveys using questionnaire of gaslighting (Stern, 2007) and DASS-21 (Lovibond and lovibond, 1995). To analyze the data Pearson,s coefficient correlation, independent sample t-test and Anova were calculated.

From the analysis following findings were obtained.

The estimation for reliability were observed in the current study which was for gaslighting ($\alpha=.871$) and for DASS-21 ($\alpha=.895$).

By using Pearson coefficient correlation, a significant positive correlation was found between gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiet, which shows association between these variables.

A significant difference was found in experiencing of gaslighting with reference to gender, which was significant in females than males.

A non-significant difference was found on gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety in the context of family system.

Statistically a non-significant difference was found in gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety across the various categories of age and number of year of marriage.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

Even if every precaution was made to reduce the study's limitations, some nonetheless remain and must be taken into consideration.

The foremost limitation of the present study was that there was a time restriction and sample size of married individuals was small therefore it cannot be generalized over all the married population of Pakistan.

The second limitation of the study was that no moderating effect is seen in relation with the



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

variables, in further studies moderating effect can be seen in relation with the variables.

Additionally, the whole sample consists of educated people, in further studies it can be conducted on uneducated people with different methods.

Strengths

The study explored Gaslighting in the Pakistani context and culture particularly, among the married individuals. Moreover, it also identifies the subtle nature of the construct and its significant correlation with different mental disorders such as Anxiety, Stress and Depression. Lastly, its practical implementation in clinic setting is really helpful for those who are mainly dealing with resolving relationship issues.

Conclusion

The present study explored impact of gaslighting on depression, stress and anxiety among the married individuals. Gaslighting is a variable that can significantly correlate with depression, stress and anxiety. Moreover, the present investigation provides emphasis to the role of specific demographics variables such as gender, age, family system and number of years of marriage with respect to gaslighting, depression, stress and anxiety. On analyzing the data in terms of differences in experiencing gaslighting, a significant difference was found between them which was higher in females. It was expected according to the results of different studies and literature which shows a significant difference between genders, as females became the victim of gaslighting more than males. After analyzing the age, family system and number of years of marriage there was non-significant difference found out between the variables.

REFERENCES

- Adams, N. A., Delaney, M., Goldsberry, T., & Bell, R. L. (2023). Gaslighting Female Leadership all gas, no brakes, *Journal of Business Diversity*, 23(3). <https://doi.org/10.33423/jbd.v23i3.6418>
- Ahern, K. (2018). Institutional betrayal and gaslighting: Why whistle-blowers are so traumatized. *Journal of Perinatal and Neonatal Nursing*, 32(1), 59–65. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JPN.0000000000000306>
- Akdeniz, B., & Cihan, H. (2023). Gaslighting and Interpersonal Relationships, systematic review. *Psikiyatride Güncel Yaklaşımlar*, 16(1), 146-158.
- Andersson, N., Cockcroft, A., Ansari, N., Omer, K., Chaudhry, U. U., Khan, A., & Pearson, L. (2009). Collecting reliable information about violence against women safely in household interviews, experience from a large-scale national survey in South Asia. *Violence Against Women*, 15(4), 482-496.
- Bhattacharya, S. (2014). "Status of women in Pakistan", *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 179-211.
- Dickson, P., Ireland, J. L., & Birch, P. (2023). Gaslighting and its application to interpersonal violence. *Journal of criminological research, policy and practice*, 9(1), 31-46.
- Ehrensaft, M. K., Cohen, P., & Johnson, J. G. (2006). Development of personality disorder symptoms and the risk for partner violence. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 115(3), 474–483.
- Fink, G. (2010). Stress: Definition and history. *Stress science: neuroendocrinology*, 3(9), 3-14.
- Heim, C., Newport, D. J., Mletzko, T., Miller, A. H., & Nemeroff, C. B. (2008). The link between childhood trauma and depression: insights from HPA axis studies in humans. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 33(6), 693-710.



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

- Hightower, H. (2017). *An exploratory study of personality factors related to psychological abuse and gaslighting (publication no. 10642512)* (Doctoral dissertation, doctoral dissertation, William James College]. ProQuest dissertations publishing).
- Kim, J (2021). Gaslighting what is it and why do people do it, retrieved from <https://www.psychom.net/gaslighting-what-is-it>.
- Klein, W., Li, S., & Wood, S. (2023). A Qualitative Analysis of Gaslighting in Romantic Relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 30(4), 1316-1340.
- Li, Y & Chen, H. (2021). Gender convergence or divergence in the relationship between late-life depression and multiple stressors: evidence from a national survey in China. *Journal of Women & Aging*, 34(2), 196-209.
- LÓPEZ-SANTIAGO, J. U. L. I. S. S. A. (2023). Gaslighting the emotional abuse that destroys self-confidence. *The Household as a Human Capital Incubator*, 1.
- Maree, J. (2021). The psychosocial development theory of Erik Erikson: a critical overview. *Early Child Development and Care*, 191(7-8), 1107-1121.
- Martín-Fernández, M., Gracia, E., & Lila, M. (2019). Psychological intimate partner violence against women in the European Union: a cross-national invariance study. *BMC Public Health*, 19(1), 1-11.
- McEwen, B. S. (2007). Physiology and neurobiology of stress and adaptation: central role of the brain. *Physiological reviews*, 87(3), 873-904.
- Miano, P., Bellomare, M., & Genova, V. G. (2021). Personality correlates of gaslighting behaviours in young adults. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 27(3), 285–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2020.1850893>
- Mikhailova, A. (2018). *Theresa May Pledges to Tighten the law on ‘Gaslighting Abuse’*. The telegraph.
- Moghadam, V. M. (1992). Patriarchy and the politics of gender in modernising societies: Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. *International Sociology*, 7, 35-53.
- Negele, A., Kaufhold, J., Kallenbach, L., & Leuzinger-Bohleber, M. (2015). Childhood trauma and its relation to chronic depression in adulthood. *Depression research and treatment*, 2015
- Nevid, J. S., Rathus, S. A., & Greene, B. A. (2013). *Abnormal psychology in a changing world*. Pearson.
- Newport Institute, (2022). *How to know if you are in an abusive relationship*, Available at: <https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/co-occurring-disorders/how-to-know-abusive-relationship>.
- Ornduff, S. R., Kelsey, R. M., & O’Leary, K. D. (2001). Childhood physical abuse, personality, and adult relationship violence: A model of vulnerability to victimization. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 7(13), 322–331.
- Park, L. T., & Zarate Jr, C. A. (2019). Depression in the primary care setting. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 380(6), 559-568.
- Petric, D. (2018). Gaslighting and the knot theory of mind. *Medicine: Medicine, psychology, philosophy and theology website*. URL: <https://medicine436>.
- Roberts, A. D., & Coid, J. W. (2010). Personality disorder and offending behavior: Findings from the national survey of male prisoners in England and Wales. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 21(2), 221-237.
- Shane, T., Willaert, T., & Tutters, M. (2022). The rise of “gaslighting”: debates about disinformation on Twitter and 4chan, and the possibility of a “good echo chamber”. *Popular communication*, 20(3), 178-192.
- Sharma, R., & Sharma, P. (2015). A correlational study to assess the relation of anxiety and social phobia with academic performance of students in a selected nursing college, Ludhiana, Punjab. *International journal of nursing education*, 7(2), 26-30.



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

- Simon, G. (2011). Gaslighting as a manipulation tactic: What it is, who does it, and why. *Counselling Resource. Psychology, Philosophy and Real Life (blog)*.
- Stark, C. A. (2019). Gaslighting, misogyny, and psychological oppression. *The monist*, 102(2), 221-235.
- Stern, R (2023). *The Interplay of Burnout, Gaslighting and Emotional intelligence in the workplaces*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@robin.stern/the-interplay-of-burnout-gaslighting-and-emotional-intelligence-in-the-workplace-8cbdb22db398>
- Stern, R. & Brackett, M., (2023). *Gaslighting is an emotional abuse and how to recognize it*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2023/06/02/gaslighting-signs-strategies>.
- Stern, R. (2007). *The gaslight effect: how to spot and survive the hidden manipulations other people use to control your life*. Morgan Road Books.
- Stout, M. (2006). *The sociopath next door*. Harmony.
- Stuart, G. W., & Sundeen, S. J (2002). *Principles and Practices of Psychiatric Nursing*. (8th ed.). Harcoat Pvt. Ltd.
- Sweet, P. L. (2019). The Sociology of Gaslighting. *American Sociological Review*, 84(5), 851–875. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419874843>.
- Welch, B. (2008). State of confusion: Assault on the American mind. *Psychologist Psychoanalyst*. pp. 6-10. doi:10.1037/e518312009-002
- Yaman, E. (2015). Mobbing and stress. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 11(2), 6-13.
- Yang, Z. (2022). The Link Between Abuse and Depression. In *2022 5th International Conference on Humanities Education and Social Sciences (ICHESS 2022)* 3133–3141. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-89-3_361