

RESILIENCE MODERATING THE EFFECT OF GASLIGHTING EXPERIENCES ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN PAKISTANI SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

Madiha Akram, Lecturer Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan (madiha.akram@iub.edu.pk)

Dr. Areeha Khan Durrani, Lecturer Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan (areehakhan.durrani@iub.edu.pk)

Abstract

Gaslighting is an adverse form of emotional and psychological abuse that is very common in Asian patriarchal families where there is power imbalance and the perpetrator wants to get control over their victim. Gaslighting plays a significant role in diminishing the subjective well-being by distorting the sense of life satisfaction of either spouse. In the current study, the researcher used the quantitative research methodology to provide a deeper understanding of experience of gaslighting among spousal relationships in Pakistan. The data was collected using convenience sampling (N=124) to collect potential data to seek the individuals' personal experiences of gaslighting. The findings indicated that as the sole factors of resilience, the social support and spirituality, make a great contribution to deal with gaslighting experiences by boosting sense of subjective well-being. Positive adaption of resilience plays a significant role in mitigating the gaslighting experience. In the spousal relationships, resilience works as a protective factor and moderates the experience of gaslighting by generating coping strategies and positive outcomes through external sources. Moreover, the moderating side of resilience is essential to maintain improved sense of life satisfaction to deal with vulnerable experiences of gaslighting as the absence of resilience causes great damage to mental and physical health of the victim.

Keywords:

Resilience, Gaslighting, Subjective well-being, Spousal relationships.

Introduction

Gaslighting is most commonly experienced phenomena within social setting, especially in patriarchal family system. In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, gaslighting is a widespread form of emotional abuse, yet it remains under-researched in the context of spousal dynamics. Nall (2020) stated that use of manipulative techniques to confuse and undermine a persons' thought, understanding and emotions is known as "gaslighting". Researches proposed that the only way to stop being a victim of gaslighting is to quit the relationship but many other researches also focus on resilience as a protecting factor against gaslighting (Abbas, 2023; Sanghai, 2023; Akdeniz & Cihan, 2023; Shousha, 2023). Stern (2018) suggests that gaslighting starts with subtle twisting of the facts, and slowly progresses until the survivors are helplessly trapped in a cycle of several interacting forms of abuse by questioning their own ultimate beliefs. Thus, gaslighter significantly undermines the subjective well-being of the victim by distorting the emotional and cognitive evaluation of the individual by diminishing their sense of life satisfaction (Khan & Batool, 2020; Khan & Husain, 2006).



Method

Gaslighting is most commonly experienced phenomena within social setting, especially in patriarchal family system. In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, gaslighting is a widespread form of emotional abuse, yet it remains under-researched in the context of spousal dynamics. Nall (2020) stated that use of manipulative techniques to confuse and undermine a persons' thought, understanding and emotions is known as "gaslighting". Researches proposed that the only way to stop being a victim of gaslighting is to quit the relationship but many other researches also focus on resilience as a protecting factor against gaslighting (Abbas, 2023; Sanghai, 2023; Akdeniz & Cihan, 2023; Shousha, 2023). Stern (2018) suggests that gaslighting starts with subtle twisting of the facts, and slowly progresses until the survivors are helplessly trapped in a cycle of several interacting forms of abuse by questioning their own ultimate beliefs. Thus, gaslighter significantly undermines the subjective well-being of the victim by distorting the emotional and cognitive evaluation of the individual by diminishing their sense of life satisfaction (Khan & Batool, 2020; Khan & Husain, 2006).

Gaslighting:

Gaslighting was measured using Gaslighting Questionnaire developed by Stern (2007). This is a self-report scale comprises 20 item with 9 point likert type scale ($\alpha = 0.87$). The current study use Urdu version ($\alpha = .93$) with a minimum score of 0 and maximum 180 (Hassan et al., 2022).

Resilience:

The Brief Resilience Scale (BSR) was developed by Smith et al. (2008) that consists of six items with five point likert response. The reliability range from .80 to .91. Present study use Urdu version of Brief Resilience Scale ($\alpha=.60$) which is suitable for using with Pakistani adult population (Khan & Batool, 2020).

Subjective Well-being:

Subjective well-being was measure to evaluate participants' overall happiness and life satisfaction by focusing on emotional and cognitive aspects. Subjective well-being was measure using 8-item of The Flourishing Scale (Choudhry et al., 2018). The Urdu version of the Flourishing Scale showed a high reliability ($\alpha = 0.914$).

Objective:

To investigate the moderating role of resilience between gaslighting experiences and subjective well-being in Pakistani spousal relationships.

Hypothesis:

Resilience will moderate the negative relationship between gaslighting experiences and subjective well-being in Pakistani spousal relationships.

Analysis

Data were analyzed using statistical software SPSS (27.0). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participants' demographic information and scores on the scales. Inferential statistics were also conducted to examine the relationships between gaslighting experiences, resilience, and subjective well-being to contribute to the understanding of interpersonal dynamics in marital relationships and inform future interventions.



Results & Discussion

The findings of the study aimed to examine the moderating role of resilience in the relationship between gaslighting experiences and well-being among Pakistani spousal relationships.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis suggest that gaslighting experiences are negatively associated with resilience and subjective well-being, while resilience positively correlates with subjective well-being. These findings are also in line with Güleç and Özbay (2024) that states that resilience had moderating effect in the relationship between gaslighting and sense of life satisfaction.

Variable	1	2	3
1. Gaslighting	1		
2. Resilience	-0.45**	1	
3. Subjective Well-Being	-0.60**	0.50**	1

p > 0.01

Table displays Pearson correlation coefficients (r) between Gaslighting, Resilience, and Subjective Well-Being. Significant correlations are flagged at $p < .01$.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the direct effect of gaslighting experiences and resilience on subjective well-being.

Linear Regression Analysis (N=124)

Predictor	B	SE	β	T	p
Variable (Constant)	3.25	0.12	-	2.7.08	<.001
Gaslighting	-0.45	0.08	-0.50	-5.63.	<.001

DV-Subjective Well-being

Table presents regression coefficients (B, SE, β) for Gaslighting and Resilience predictin\g Subjective Well-Being. Model fit is evaluated using R^2 and F-statistics, with significant predictors flagged at $p < .001$.

Model Summary:

- $R^2 = 0.55$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.54$
- $F(2, 197) = 121.30, p < .001$

The calculated result showed that gaslighting experiences negatively predicted subjective well-being, while resilience positively predicted well-being and these results are in line with Klein et al. (2023).

Moderation Analysis

The moderating effect of resilience was calculated using hierarchical regression analysis.

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	T	P
(Constant)	3.10	0.10	-	31.00	<.001
Gaslighting	-0.40	0.07	-0.45	-5.71	<.001
Resilience	0.35	0.08	0.38	4.38	<.001
Gaslighting × Resilience	0.20	0.05	0.25	4.00.	<.001

DV= Subjective Well-being

Table shows regression results for the interaction effect of Gaslighting × Resilience on Subjective Well-Being. Significant interaction ($p < .05$) suggests moderation, with model fit assessed by R^2 and F-statistics.

Model Summary:

- $R^2 = 0.60$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$
- $F(3, 196) = 97.82, p < .001$

The results indicates that resilience moderates the relationship between gaslighting experiences and subjective well-being and these results are also supported by Abbas et al. (2023).

Conclusions

The findings are insightful and stated that gaslighting experiences negatively impact subjective well-being. Moreover, resilience is positively associated with subjective well-being and shields against the effects of gaslighting. The moderating role of resilience was also statistically significant, demonstrating its importance in mitigating the adverse effects of gaslighting on subjective well-being in Pakistani spousal relationships. These findings support the hypothesis and emphasize the protective role of resilience in challenging interpersonal dynamics.

Limitations and suggestions

The current study was conducted using sample taken from Punjab only, further studies may include participants from all over the Pakistan to increase the generalizability of the research.