

A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND SOCIAL ANXIETY IN MARRIED WOMEN (2-7 yrs of marriage).

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety in married women. Data was collected from 200 samples of married women within 2-7 years of marriage. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling method. Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ) developed by Vahid Momtaz (2022) was used to assess psychological abuse, Social Phobia Scale developed by Mattick, Richard P., & Clarke, J. Christopher (1988) was used to assess social anxiety. A quantitative research design is used

in this research, the data was statistically analyzed with Pearson correlation coefficient through SPSS. The analysis of the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety has a strong positive correlation. This research emphasizes the complex nature of these variables and stresses the requirement for further exploration into the interaction between psychological abuse and social anxiety and other mental health, cultural and lifestyle factors. However, it is important to note that while the correlation is strong, it does not imply causation. Other factors may influence social anxiety beyond psychological abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is often seen as a union of love, respect, and support for one another. But for many women around the world, marriage does not tend to be a nice experience, because it brings about psychological hardships because of abuse towards both the partners but especially women. Psychological abuse is a form of intimate partner violence that is often overlooked. It includes manipulation, humiliation, and constrain control like other forms of abuse. Physical abuse is often identified and dealt with because substantial evidence such as scars are left behind. But psychological abuse is different, unlike physical

abuse psychological abuse does not leave behind any physical scars, which makes it extremely difficult to deal with. It is often unrecognized and is considered by many a silent suffering. This research focuses on how psychological abuse affects the social anxiety of married women especially during the early years of marriage, as they tend to be more susceptible to the changes in the environment and have yet to develop a stable relationship within the marriage. The 2-7-year period of marriage, also referred to as the early years of marriage, especially the initial few years, tends to be full of expectations and excitement. But it can also harbour a lot of problems and expose women to

abuse. During this timeframe, social constructs such as gender stereotypes, social norms deemed appropriate or desirable for individuals from gender and power imbalance can lead to problems which are difficult for women to cope with (Lloyd, 2019). These issues are frequently found in the setting such as doing household tasks, dependency, emotions, and some other issues. Women, particularly those who quits or takes a step back from their careers to focus on the family, tend to experience financial dependence. The result of this dependence can be damaging – leading to lack of interests, lack of self-sufficiency, and leaving women susceptible to manipulation and abuse and to gain authority and power over their lives (Postmus et al., 2020). Financial abuse is often seen as the restriction of access to money or withholding essential financial information and as a result, reducing a woman's ability to leave abusive relationships (Adams et al., 2008), even if they struggle in the relationship, they can't be able to leave the relationship because they will not be able to make a living on their own. Emotional labour is also worth mentioning, as it becomes a burden during a woman's phase if they end up spending it all, as well. Women tend to take the front seat and focus on the conflicts and the social connections from starts and even provide emotional support to their partners and children (Erickson, 2005). This is often referred to as the invisible workload, which leads to feeling exhausted and unsupported during a marriage (Daminger, 2020).

This phase for some women could also include different forms of self-inflicted abuse, such as emotional and psychological abuse, or even physical and sexual abuse. Activities such as manipulating or delivering constant insults that serve in the form of emotional abuse are quite prominent, along with such activities crush a given person's self-confidence as well as modify a person's viewpoint with respect to the world (Stark, 2007). Psychological abuse is frequently expressed through controlling and manipulating people. Psychological abuse frequently involves controlling behaviours, clear threats, or total isolation. The woman is left feeling completely trapped (Walker, 1979). Although physical violence is easier to spot, it

frequently comes with a cycle of pressure and remorse, making it hard for women to get away (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Sexual abuse in marriages is a serious problem often downplayed because of common social actions and incorrect beliefs, but it greatly causes hurt and anguish (Bergen, 1996).

Social expectations, prejudice, and accepted traditions frequently prevent women from talking freely about these problems or ending violent partnerships completely. Since anxiety over judgment, lack of support, and dependence for money make the issue even more difficult, communities need to offer easily available resources like therapy, legal help, and housing (Anderson & Saunders, 2003). These all require freedom of speech, fair interactions, as well as a strong support structure to give added power to women to make certain they are safe and secure. Abuse toward women is another severe challenge the world faces. It appears in many forms such as physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological abuse. Although physical abuse is more noticeable and easily seen, psychological abuse is a common type of harm that greatly affects a woman's mental and emotional well-being. Psychological abuse, at times referred to as emotional or mental abuse, involves actions that dominate, degrade, frighten, or isolate women. This often leads to a woman's loss of identity and freedom from him, and her becoming the abuser's prisoner, which carries on a harmful pattern of reliance on him (Walker, 1979). Psychological abuse mainly uses tactics such as trying to completely control as well as dominate the victim through constant criticism, threatening, gaslighting, along with intentionally cutting off the relationship with the victim's friends or family. Gaslighting can be especially harmful since the manipulator makes the victim doubt some of her views or reality, thereby confusing the victim of her views and making the victim powerless (Stark, 2007). Other frequent behaviors include shaming the person, watching the person too closely, or managing the person's interactions with others. Unlike physical abuse, psychological abuse does not leave any visible scars, making it harder to identify and address. However, its effects are no less damaging, often leading to long-term emotional

trauma, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Anderson & Saunders, 2003).

The effect on women from mental mistreatment is quite common. People who are victimized in many instances will experience a definite loss of both self-worth and assurance, making it more difficult for them to end the relationship. The active absence of self-regard might cause intense feelings of shame and culpability, trapping the abused person in the harmful relationship even more (Stark, 2007). Additionally, those few who are psychologically abused will be socially isolated by the abuser, who would control or limit their interactions with many others, as well as this makes it difficult for the victim to reach out for support or some escape.

Social isolation further supports the dependency relationship between the abuser as well as the victim, plus it considerably deepens the psychological implications of the abuse. Psychological abuse has consequences within the family level and within the community level. Kids with exposure to psychological abuse at home often show psychosomatic distress, development that is delayed, and behavioural or other problems. Abuse from generation to generation is continued (Walker, 1979), even for kids. Often, norms and traditions keep women from reporting mental abuse. Humiliation, impoverishment, reliance, and inaccessibility of guidance or judicial aid also add to obstructions within their process of obtaining support (Anderson & Saunders, 2003). It is important to deal with mental abuse from multiple different angles.

Social anxiety among married women is a complex issue that can significantly impact their personal relationships, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. Married women with social anxiety often experience heightened fears of judgment or rejection not only in social settings but also within their marital relationships. This fear can present in different ways, such as problems with communication, avoidance of social events with their spouse, and increased sensitivity to perceived criticism or disapproval (Porter & Chambless, 2015). For married women, social anxiety can result in conflicts between family and

societal expectations, often compounded by cultural expectations that are very heavy on their responsibilities as caregivers, partners, and contributors to social harmony (Dalrymple & Herbert, 2007). Sometimes, the peculiar dynamics of marriage intensify the effects of social anxiety. The female patient might be unable to voice her needs or express her feelings in a relationship, due to the fear of adverse reactions or conflict. Such an approach often creates a vicious circle of avoidance and submissiveness, which can eventually result in the distortion of marital relationships (Erikson et al., 2005). In addition, social anxiety will strain the emotional bond between two partners because an anxious person finds it difficult to share activities with his or her partner or express his or her problems. This can create a cycle of misunderstanding and unmet expectations, which fuels feelings of isolation and inadequacy. The promotion of mental health awareness and reducing stigma in the community will motivate married women to seek help in social anxiety. Creating supportive environments where women feel safe discussing their struggles without judgment can empower them to access treatment and strengthen relationships. More can be achieved through inclusion of mental health resources within services offered through family or couple-based counselling in regard to dealing with the peculiar pressures that a social anxiety suffers with married women. Through facilitating greater communication and greater understanding in marriage settings and wider society, social anxiety can be derailed, and these women are empowered towards improvement in the quality of life. Psychological abuse in marriage can have a profound impact on the mental health of women, often leading to social anxiety.

Studies have pointed out that women who are psychologically abused in marriages may easily develop social phobias, which are exaggerated anxiety and fear of places or activities caused by constant belittling and stripping away of one's self-esteem through the spouse (Yick, 2001). This anxiety can be intensified with feelings of shame and low self-esteem, as the abusive partner typically makes the victim feel unworthy of social relations, which heightens her fear of rejection and judgment

during social encounters (Smith et al., 2018). Gradually, the internalization of such beliefs forms a self-fulfilling process where the female tends to give up most of the social activities and situations in which feelings of insecurity could surface. In addition, a lack of emotional support in the abusive relationship creates a feeling of insecurity and fear in women about their interaction with others, thereby increasing social anxiety (Tolin & Foa, 2006). The experience of psychological abuse could also further damage a woman's ability to place trust in other people and cause her generally to distrust the social world as this could also enforce her fear of ridicule or misunderstanding (Koss et al., 2003). Such a dynamic has far-reaching consequences because the woman will not only be suffering from increased social anxiety but also other mental health issues, such as depression, trauma, and a decreased quality of life. The psychological impact of marital abuse, therefore, extends well beyond the confines of the home and can significantly hinder a woman's ability to engage in the broader social environment. It is important to identify and address the connection between psychological abuse and social anxiety in order to provide holistic support to those affected, ensuring that the cycle of abuse and isolation can be broken through therapy, counselling, and societal support structures (Briere & Jordan, 2004).

The purpose of the study is to investigate how psychological abuse creates an impact on social anxiety of an individual among married women, who encounters various difficulties, societal and family constraints and a shift in their social and personal roles as well as responsibilities. By analyzing how psychological abuse related to social anxiety and its relation, this study aims to enliven existing knowledge on this problem and concerns under study; it provides some insight into encouraging a healthy environment for marriage amongst women and hence their well-being. By understanding that relationship, interventions by professionals would be more specially designed to deal both with the case of abuse itself and its psychic effects. The results of this research will ensure that practitioners are better able to identify social anxiety in the

context of marital abuse, hence targeted therapeutic approaches that both create emotional healing and rebuild social confidence will help improve mental health and well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Problem statement

A study on the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety in married women (2-7 yrs of marriage).

Aim

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety in married women (2-7 years of marriage).

Objective of the study

- To assess the degree of psychological abuse and emotional abuse women undergoes in a marital relationship.
- To assess the pattern of psychological abuse experienced in 2-7 years of marital relationship.
- To investigate level of social anxiety in married women.
- To investigate the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety in married women.
- To explore if experiencing psychological abuse in marital relationship can develop social anxiety in married women.

Hypothesis

H1 – There is no significant relationship in the level of psychological abuse and social anxiety in married women.

Research design

It is a quantitative study examining the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety among married women,

a cross-sectional correlational research design is suitable, this cross-sectional design collects data at one point in time to assess the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety without manipulation and intervention, and correlational study examines the degree to which psychological abuse and social anxiety is related.

Sampling technique

The sampling technique of the study is purposive sampling, in this technique participants are selected based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the study. This method is used to focus on individuals who have experiences, traits, or characteristics that align with the study. The sample size of the study is 200 participants which are collected from married women within 2 to 7 years of their marriage.

Inclusion criteria

- Participants must be currently married
- Participant should be married and within 2-7 years of marriage

Exclusion criteria

- Individuals who have been married for less than 2 years or more than 7 years are excluded.
- Individuals who are unmarried, widowed are excluded.
- Individuals who are separated, and divorced are excluded.
- Married males are excluded from the study.

Tools used

- Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ) developed by Vahid Momtaz², * (2022)
- Social Phobia Scale developed by Mattick, Richard P., & Clarke, J. Christopher (1988)

Tool description

Emotional Abuse Questionnaire:

Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ) is a self-report instrument that consist of 30 items designed to assess the extent and types of emotional abuse experienced by individuals, often within the intimate relationships or family settings. Respondents rate each item on a 5point Likert scale, ranging from 0(Never) to 4(Always), reflecting on their own experience. The EAQ scale was developed by Vahid Momtaz (2022). The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated by Cronbach's alpha, and it was 0.93 for the total scale indicating excellent internal consistency of the tool. The scale has strong content validity as it comprehensively measures the broad spectrum of emotional abuse behaviors experienced in interpersonal relationships.

Social Phobia Scale:

Social phobia scale (SPS) is a 20 item self-report questionnaire designed to measure anticipatory anxiety associated with being observed by others, anxiety when being observed, and anxiety felt when engaging in activities in the presence of others. Respondents rate each item on a 5point Likert scale, ranging from 0(not at all characteristics of mine) to 4(extremely characteristics of mine) reflecting their own experience. The social phobia scale was developed by Mattick and Clak in 1988. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha and the value is typically between 0.85-0.94 which implies excellent internal consistency. The tool has shown excellent content and concurrent validity, and the scale has shown excellent discriminate validity across various studies.

Statistics used

The data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data included frequencies, means and standard deviations. Correlational analysis was employed to examine the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety by calculating the correlational coefficient between two variables.

Procedure

The participants were met individually. They were given a brief explanation of the study’s objectives before being asked for their participation. The emotional abuse questionnaire was administered to participants along with the necessary instructions following the administration of social phobia social. As soon as the survey was finished, it was collected, and everyone was thanked for taking the time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE POPULATION

Table 1: Distribution of sample based on age groups

| AGE GROUP | POPULATION |
|-----------|------------|
| 20-23 | 44 |
| 24-27 | 79 |
| 28-31 | 55 |
| 32-35 | 22 |
| TOTAL | 200 |

Figure 1: Pictorial representation of sample based on age group

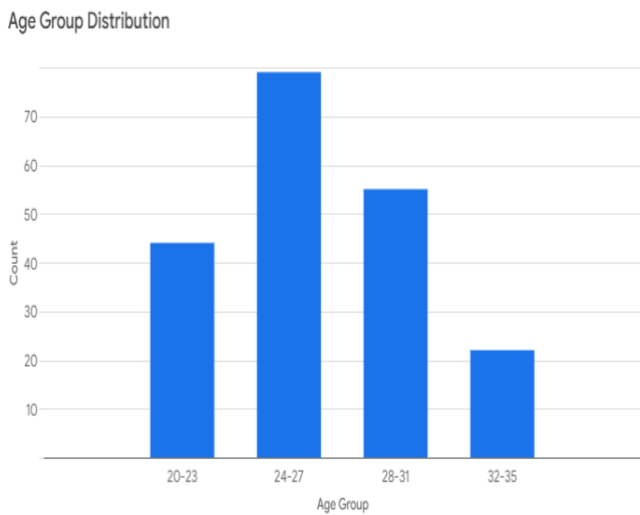


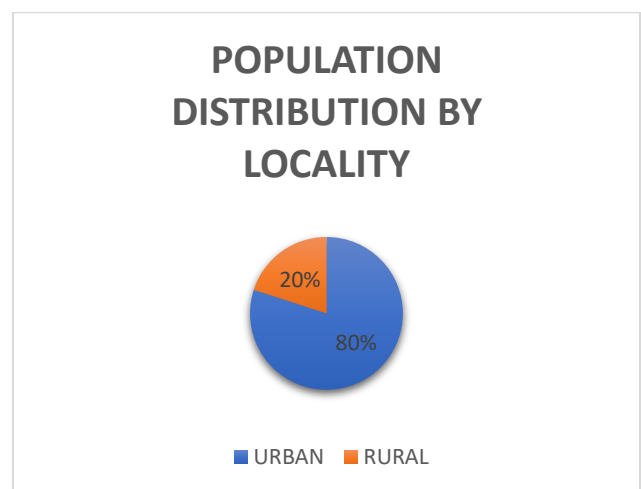
FIGURE 1 The “Pictorial representation based on age group” bar chart offers a comprehensive analysis of the age demographics within the population. The x-axis represents age group from approximately 20 to 35 years, while the y-axis

denotes the count, indicating the number of women in each age group. The total number of participants is 200, categorized into four specific age groups 20-23, 24-27, 28-31 and 32-35. The predominant age group is 24-27, containing 79 individuals, constituting 39.5% of the overall sample. This finding suggests that most participants fall within this age range. The next largest next largest group, 28-31 comprises 55 individuals accounting 27.5%. The next largest group, 20-23 comprises of 44 individuals accounting about 22% of the total population. The least represented age group 32-35 consists of only 22 individuals, which corresponds to 11% of the total population. In summary, the chart reveals a clear preference for younger age groups particularly in the 24-27. This demographic is the smallest within the study. This distribution offers important insights into the age demographics examined in the study and underscores age-related trends or preferences.

Table 2: Distribution of samples based on location

| LOCALITY | POPULATION |
|----------|------------|
| URBAN | 160 |
| RURAL | 40 |
| TOTAL | 200 |

Figure 2: Pictorial representation of sample based on location



The pie chart offers a comprehensive visual representation of sample population categorised by locality, illustrating the proportions of individuals from urban and rural settings. Among the 200 individuals, a notable majority of 160 individuals, constituting 80% are from urban areas, while 40 individuals, or 20% are from rural area. The urban population slightly dominates the sample, reflecting a higher representation of women from city environments. This distribution provides insight into the socio-cultural context of these participants, which may influence their experience of psychological abuse and social anxiety. The visual representation effectively highlights the difference in locality-based participation, aiding in better understanding of the demographics.

The examination of the relationship between Psychological Abuse and Social Anxiety indicates strong to moderate positive correlation. The average score of psychological abuse is 54.90 and a standard deviation of 19.204, while the average score of social anxiety of 35.37 and standard deviation of 12.809. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicates that as the level of psychological abuse increases, level of social anxiety also increases, this relationship tends to be strong to moderate. The outcome suggests meaningful relationship between the two variables.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY:

This study examined the relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety in married women (2-7 years of marriage). A correlational study was used with a target sample of 200 married women. Participants completed the Emotional Abuse Questionnaire (EAQ) and the Social Phobia Scale (SPS). Most of the participants were from urban areas and were aged between 24 and 27 years. The findings indicate a strong to moderate positive relationship between psychological abuse and social anxiety, which was statistically significant. This indicated that individuals who have experienced psychological abuse are likely to experience social anxiety, the results are consistent with existing studies. However, it is important to note that while the correlation is strong, it does not imply causation. Other factors may influence social anxiety beyond psychological abuse.

CONCLUSION:

1. Psychological abuse and social anxiety:

- The research revealed a statistically positive correlation between psychological abuse and social anxiety.
- Individuals experiencing higher levels of psychological abuse are more likely to experience social anxiety.

Table 3: Psychological Abuse and Social Anxiety

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

| VARIABLE | MEAN | STANDARD DEVIATION | N |
|---------------------|--------|--------------------|-----|
| Psychological abuse | 54.905 | 19.20417 | 200 |
| Social anxiety | 35.375 | 12.80956 | 200 |

CORRELATION

| | Psychological abuse | Social anxiety |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Psychological abuse Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N | 1 200 | .661 .000 200 |
| Social anxiety Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N | .661 .000 200 | 1 200 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

- However, it is important to note that while the relationship is strong, it does not imply that it is the only causal factor.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

- The study does not consider or was unable to determine the causal relationship of the variables.
- The sample may not accurately reflect the larger population, which could impact the applicability of the findings
- The dependence on self-reported data may lead to biases, including to recall bias or social desirability bias.

FUTURE SCOPE:

- Employ larger and more varied samples to improve applicability of findings across diverse populations.
- Implement longitudinal research to investigate causal relationships over extended period.
- Apply more thorough and objective assessment of psychological abuse and social anxiety to enhance precision.

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