

Gaslighting no local de trabalho: Conceitualização, desenvolvimento e validação de uma escala

O mundo corporativo testemunhou uma narrativa crescente sobre o gaslighting no trabalho. Gaslighting é uma forma de abuso que transgrediu os domínios do romance...

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1. Introdução

A conversa em torno do gaslighting tornou-se cada vez mais popular e normalizada nos últimos anos. Gaslighting é uma forma de abuso psicológico infligido a um indivíduo, fazendo com que a vítima duvide de suas percepções ou capacidades ([Gass e Nichols, 1988](#)). O gaslighting foi até incluído no âmbito da lei criminal sobre violência doméstica do Reino Unido em 2015 ([Francis Hanna & Cia, 2022](#)). Mais de 300 pessoas desde então foram acusadas e indiciadas pelo mesmo ([Mikhailova, 2018](#)). No entanto, até agora, a literatura acadêmica ignorou amplamente este tópico. Embora uma pesquisa por #gaslighting no Instagram retorne mais de 600.000 resultados, existem menos de 150 artigos acadêmicos relevantes em bancos de dados acadêmicos quando uma pesquisa acadêmica do Google é realizada usando a mesma frase. Além disso, a maioria desses artigos acadêmicos se concentra no gaslighting em casamentos ([Gass e Nichols, 1988](#)), amizades muito próximas e relacionamentos íntimos ([Miano e outros, 2021](#)). Alguns artigos também investigaram o gaslighting de crianças por seus pais ([Riggs e Bartolomeu, 2018](#)). Deve-se notar que o gaslighting pode ser perpetrado por qualquer colega, família, cônjuge ou colega de trabalho e pode ser extremamente prejudicial quando o infrator tem uma posição de autoridade ([Simão, 2011](#)). Devido à crescente difusão do termo nas relações laborais, torna-se da maior importância notar que até agora não foi dada atenção suficiente à iluminação a gás em ambientes de trabalho, onde um supervisor actua como figura de autoridade sobre o subordinado. O que é mais

impressionante é que a literatura existente sobre o tema é de natureza mais qualitativa e carece de investigação quantitativa.

Apesar dos esforços de pesquisa anteriores, há falta de consenso sobre as características caracterizadoras da iluminação a gás e sua posterior definição. Serve como um grande obstáculo para a realização de estudos empíricos. Por exemplo, o gaslighting foi definido como um comportamento “no qual um indivíduo tenta influenciar o julgamento de um segundo indivíduo, fazendo com que este duvide da validade do seu julgamento” ([Calef e Weinschel, 1981](#), p. 52), no entanto, falta-lhe a especificidade para permitir que o gaslighting seja distinguido de outras construções no mesmo espaço nomológico, como manipulação, lavagem cerebral e bullying.

Além disso, para impulsionar a investigação nesta área, é necessária uma medida fiável e válida de iluminação a gás. A primeira tentativa de medir a iluminação a gás foi feita pela Dra. Robin Stern em seu livro, *The Gaslight Effect*, que exhibe uma lista de 20 afirmações em uma escala dicotômica ([Stern, 2007](#)). No entanto, falta rigor metodológico, como testes de validade, confiabilidade e estrutura fatorial, para citar algumas das questões. Desde então, não houve nenhuma medida focada na iluminação a gás que ocorre em ambientes de trabalho envolvendo a dinâmica supervisor-subordinado. Entretanto, não é possível validar uma medida de gaslighting sem uma definição clara. Portanto, o objetivo do artigo é conceituar o gaslighting no trabalho para apoiar o desenvolvimento de sua medida e, ainda, criar uma ferramenta psicometricamente válida e confiável para medir comportamentos de gaslighting na relação carregada de poder entre supervisor e subordinado.

Gaslighting: O termo ‘gaslighting’ foi usado pela primeira vez em uma peça teatral de 1938 chamada *Gaslight*, que mais tarde foi adaptada para um filme de 1944 estrelado por Ingrid Bergman e Charles Boyer. Era uma história de como um marido enganou sua esposa fazendo-a acreditar que ela era louca ([Johnson e outros, 2021](#)). Ele fez com que as luzes movidas a gás da casa piscassem e negou repetidamente quando sua esposa reclamou. Ela suportou

um tormento emocional insondável. Ela acabou deixando seu casamento abusivo por um homem que a ajudou a recuperar seu senso de autoestima, convencendo-a de que o que ela acreditava ser verdade não era apenas sua imaginação.

Gaslighting é um processo contínuo de semear sementes de dúvida na mente de uma pessoa ([Fielding-Singh e Dmowska, 2022](#)). Onde, por um lado, o gaslighting pode ser um incidente único, por outro lado, pode assumir a forma de um abuso sustentado ([Johnson e outros, 2021](#)) e, portanto, a vítima pode não perceber isso nos estágios iniciais. Mesmo a pessoa que está fazendo gaslighting com a outra geralmente não está especificamente ciente de seus comportamentos, especificamente, de como seu comportamento ou ações estão impactando o alvo. Algumas pesquisas mostraram como a pessoa que pratica tal conduta tem um transtorno de personalidade narcisista ([Chato, 2020](#)) e se esforça continuamente para alcançar o domínio sobre a outra pessoa, fazendo-a acreditar que tudo o que sente é inválido ([Chato, 2020](#)). A importância de estudar comportamentos de gaslighting pode ser estudada a partir da teoria dos nós da mente, que afirma que o abuso da mente e das emoções resulta na construção de muitos nós de más ideias e sentimentos, envolvendo danos cognitivos e emocionais ([Pétrico, 2022](#)).

Três definições principais de gaslighting foram identificadas nas diferentes correntes da literatura. Vendo de uma lente sociológica, de acordo com [Doce \(2019, p. 852\)](#), gaslighting é um “conjunto de tentativas de criar um ambiente social surreal fazendo com que o outro em um relacionamento íntimo pareça ou se sinta louco.” Gaslighting também é descrito como um comportamento “no qual um indivíduo tenta influenciar o julgamento de um segundo indivíduo, fazendo com que este duvide da validade de seu próprio julgamento” ([Calef e Weinschel, 1981, pág. 52](#)). Na literatura de comunicação, o gaslighting é definido como “uma dinâmica de comunicação disfuncional na qual um interlocutor tenta desestabilizar o senso de realidade de outro” ([Graves e Spencer, 2022, pág. 48](#)). Entretanto, como mencionado anteriormente, as definições identificadas não têm especificidade para permitir que o gaslighting

seja distinguido de outras construções no mesmo espaço nomológico e não foram operacionalizadas. Assim, os autores deste estudo identificam as principais características da iluminação a gás, extraídas de pesquisas relevantes e apoiadas pela literatura de definição de conceitos ([Podsakoff e outros, 2016](#)) que não só proporcionam a singularidade da construção, mas também melhoram a sua capacidade de ser operacionalizada. Gaslighting envolve - (1) Tendência intencional/não intencional de prejudicar a outra parte e (2) Rejeição direta das preocupações dos outros.

O que gaslighting não é: O gaslighting deve ser diferenciado de outros comportamentos prejudiciais, como manipulação, mentira, desacordo, culpa, obstrução, ghosting, bullying, lavagem cerebral, chantagem e xingamentos. As definições destes termos mencionados foram incluídas em [Tabela 1](#), no entanto, deve-se notar que nem todos são mutuamente exclusivos e coletivamente exaustivos.

TABELA 1

Construct	References	Definition
Manipulation	Susser et al., 2019 , p. 6	“To covertly influence another person’s decision-making, by targeting and exploiting decision-making vulnerabilities.”
Lying	Isenberg, 1964 , p. 466	“A statement made by one who does not believe it with the intention that someone else shall be led to believe it.”
Disagreement	Potter, 2013 , p. 23	“A disagreement between A and B (where A and B are either individuals or groups of individuals) is a case where A accepts P and B rejects P.”
Guilt-tripping	Merriam-Webster, 2022	To try to manipulate the behavior of (someone) by causing feelings of guilt.
Stonewalling	Smithson and Venette, 2013 , p. 399	“Uncooperative communication that strategically obstructs and delays the flow of information.”
Ghosting	Kay and Courtice, 2022 , p. 406	“(i) is a relationship dissolution strategy, (ii) requires the ceasing of communication, (iii) occurs without an explanation, (iv) tends to occur suddenly rather than gradually, and (v) is enacted unilaterally by one of the partners in a relationship.”
Bullying	Escartín et al., 2013 , p. 493	“Negative behaviors directed at organizational members or their work context that occur regularly and repeatedly over a period of time.”
Brainwashing	Schefflin and Opton, 1978 , p. 87	“When a person has been compelled to believe subjectively a set of principles originally alien to him.”
Blackmailing	Blackmailing, 2022	The crime of demanding money from a person by threatening to tell somebody else a secret about them.
Name-calling	Steele, 1975 , p. 361	“Conveying of a negative judgment.

	opinion, or evaluation of a person to that person.”
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Tabela 1. Termos relacionados e suas definições.

Por exemplo, o bullying foi definido como a percepção de estar no lado receptor de comportamentos negativos por um período de tempo e ser incapaz de fazer qualquer coisa para preveni-lo ([Nielsen e Einarsen, 2012](#)). Bullying e gaslighting podem ser processos graduais aos quais um indivíduo pode ser submetido durante um período prolongado de tempo. Os comportamentos de bullying no trabalho podem ser infligidos por aqueles dentro e entre as hierarquias organizacionais. No entanto, os comportamentos de gaslighting são frequentemente experimentados onde ocorrem diferenciais de potência ([Doce, 2019](#)), por exemplo, entre um supervisor e um subordinado. O Oxford Learners Dictionary define lavagem cerebral em alguém como forçá-lo a aceitar suas ideias ou crenças, seja repetindo-as ou impedindo a outra parte de pensar com clareza. O gaslighting envolve distorcer o senso de realidade da outra parte, portanto, minar as crenças e pensamentos dos outros é essencial para os comportamentos de gaslighting.

2. Desenvolvimento de estudos

O objetivo deste trabalho foi estabelecer uma definição clara do conceito e construir uma medida confiável e válida de gaslighting que possa contribuir para o avanço da pesquisa nesta área. Os autores utilizaram um processo de cinco etapas ([Verreynne e outros, 2016](#)) desenvolver a escala para medição de iluminação a gás no trabalho. Na primeira etapa, foi gerado um conjunto de itens potenciais com base nas características da iluminação a gás definidas acima e através da utilização de dados secundários. No estudo dois, os itens assim gerados foram revisados por um painel de onze especialistas para validação facial e de conteúdo. No estudo três, foi realizada análise fatorial exploratória para identificar a estrutura fatorial da medida. No estudo quatro, foi realizada análise fatorial confirmatória para avaliar a dimensionalidade e a

confiabilidade da medida. No estudo final, estudo cinco, foi realizado um estudo nomológico para testar a validade relacionada ao critério.

2.1. Passo um: Geração de itens

As suggested by [Hinkin \(2016\)](#), preliminary items were developed on the basis of a theoretical foundation and definition of gaslighting. The study combined the deductive and inductive approaches to item generation. As also followed by [Ahmad et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Perski et al. \(2020\)](#), in the deductive approach, a thorough review of the existing literature on gaslighting and theoretically related variables such as workplace mistreatment, harmful leader behaviors and abusive relationships was used as a guide for developing items. On the other hand, in the inductive approach, related online blogs, Instagram posts, and tweets, were used to identify the characteristics of gaslighting and for developing further items. In total, 30 items were developed and subjected to a content validation study.

2.2. Step two: Content validation study

The initial 30 items developed from deductive and inductive approaches were tested for clarity of expression, understandability, and appropriateness subjected to expert review. A panel of eleven experts with academic/professional experience in the domain of organizational behavior and human resource management was presented with the authors' definition of gaslighting and asked to review the pool of items. The panel was asked to critically evaluate each item and offer their suggestion on whether to retain, delete, reword or modify the item. The panel also assessed the items for clarity of expression, preciseness, redundancy, and readability level. The content validity was established when more than 50% of the experts agreed that the item was essential ([Robinson, 2018](#)). The suggested modifications were made thereto. At the end, 21 items were retained and considered further.

A small-scale pretest was carried out to identify any improvements for the items. To carry out the pretest, 35 working people (42% females, mean age = 27 years) participated in the study. The respondents shared their opinions on

the shared items. All 21 potential scale items were retained in the study, however, the wording of 2 items was modified.

2.3. Step three: Item purification study (EFA)

A survey questionnaire was formed containing the final 21 items. Consistent with the development of similar scales like workplace mistreatment, workplace bullying, for developing GWQ, participants were asked to indicate how often they had mentioned experiences at work in the past 6 months on a scale of 1 to 5 from “Never” to “Always.” The 5-point scale to measure frequency has been chosen to keep it consistent with similar scales of workplace mistreatment and workplace bullying and minimize methodological variability ([Cowie et al., 2002](#)).

A total of 205 respondents from different organizations in service sector in India participated in the survey. Respondents ranged between 20 and 40 years of age ($M = 30.96$; $SD = 8.032$). A total of 132 respondents shared that they were unmarried, while 72 were married and 1 indicated that they were separated. Reported work experience included the range from 6 to 446 months ($M = 70.32$; $SD = 85.619$). A total of 113 respondents identified themselves as male, whereas, 90 respondents identified themselves as females, while 2 identified as third gender/non-binary.

The item-total correlations and inter-item correlations were calculated to ensure the internal consistency of the scale. In reference with [Hui et al. \(2001\)](#) and [Qian et al. \(2007\)](#), items having <0.5 item-total correlations and <0.3 inter-item correlations were removed ([Hair et al., 1998](#); [Robinson, 2018](#)). Four items exhibited item-total correlation <0.5 , whereas three items exhibited inter-item correlation <0.3 ([Hair et al., 1998](#)). Thus, seven items, in total were omitted. To identify factor structure within the items, dimension reduction analysis (factor analysis) was conducted on 14 items.

Similar to previous studies ([Gorbatov et al., 2021](#)), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring with an Eigenvalue of more than 1.0 ([Gharaibeh et al., 2019](#)) was conducted and Promax rotation was specified to allow factors to be correlated ([Hendrickson and White, 1964](#)). The Kaiser–

Meyer–Olkin value of 0.920 and Bartlett’s test of sphericity χ^2 (66) = 1021.939, $p < 0.05$ indicated that the data set was suitable for the intended analysis and the correlation matrix was factorable. Thus, two more items were omitted.

[Table 2](#) presents the items of the resulting scale, with their factor loadings and corrected item-total correlations.

TABLE 2

How often did you have these experiences at work in the past 6 months?			
	EFA factor loadings		Corrected item-total correlation
	Factor		
Item	1	2	
Your supervisor diverted the topic to project the fault onto you.	0.668		0.577
Your supervisor told you that you were “imagining” things.	0.548		0.575
Your supervisor passed degrading comments followed by rewards.	0.756		0.607
The words of your supervisor did not match with his/her actions.	0.583		0.627
Your supervisor denied the promises he/she made earlier.	0.675		0.608
Your supervisor undermined your complaints.	0.643		0.646
Your supervisor “twisted/misrepresented” things you said.	0.759		0.627
Your supervisor had unnecessary control over you.		0.721	0.666
Your supervisor made you your worst critic.		0.545	0.584
Your supervisor made you depend on him/her for making most of the decisions.		0.698	0.565
You felt emotionally drained at work because of your supervisor.		0.886	0.622
Your supervisor was very sweet to you one moment and very mean the other moment.		0.582	0.633
Extraction method: principal axis factoring.			
Rotation method: Promax with Kaiser normalization			

Table 2. Final items, factor loadings, and corrected item-total correlations.

A total of 2 factors with Eigenvalues above 1.0 were extracted ([Rejikumar and Asokan-Ajitha, 2022](#); [Padhy and Hariharan, 2023](#)). [Table 2](#) reports the rotated component matrix with item/factor correlations for this two-factor analysis solution. Only the items that were extracted into factors are reported for greater clarity. A total of 12 items, forming two factors, were thereby identified. Each item had a minimum factor loading of 0.5, which is adequate ([Hair et al., 2013](#)).

After careful consideration and referring to the previous literature, the factors were interpreted and labeled as follows:

Factor 1: The items associated with Factor 1 (7 items) load on a construct that displays a tendency to oversimplify phenomena, have skeptical attitude toward the severity of a situation, and follow a casual approach as established by [Pavelko and Myrick \(2015\)](#). Thus, Factor 1 has been named Trivialization which refers to the undermining of subordinates' perspectives, fears, and realities by the supervisor.

Factor 2: The items associated with Factor 2 (five items) load on a construct that elicits emotions of pain, suffering and torment as established by [Robinson \(2015\)](#). Thus, Factor 2 has been named Affliction, given its association with the negative emotions that a gaslighter (supervisor) can direct toward the target (subordinate).

The corrected item-to-total correlations varied from 0.577 to 0.666, and the Cronbach's α of each dimension ($\alpha_{Trivialization} = 0.86$, $\alpha_{Affliction} = 0.842$) surpassed the accepted threshold of 0.80 ([Clark and Watson, 1995](#)), indicating the satisfactory reliability (internal consistency) of the scale. Therefore, the results confirmed that gaslighting at work construct consists of two factors.

Additionally, the correlation coefficient between the two factors was 0.680. The high correlation between the factors endorsed that trivialization and affliction may comprise a second-order construct ([Thompson, 2004](#); [DeVellis, 2016](#)). Subsequent confirmatory factor analysis aimed to further elucidate the dimensionality of the resultant scale. Therefore, the scale constituting 12 items was thenceforth subjected to confirmatory factor analysis.

2.4. Step four: Dimensionality and reliability study (CFA)

To verify the structure identified by EFA, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run. The items were readministered to a different sample of 216 participants to achieve statistical consensus for the factor structure. The respondents working in different organizations in service sector in India varied in age in the range of 20 to 54 years ($M = 26.88$ years, $SD = 0.403$). A total of 165 respondents identified themselves as males, 48 identified themselves as females, and 3 chose not to disclose their gender identity. The work experience

of the respondents ranged from 6 months to 30 years ($M = 36.47$ months, $SD = 47.045$). The majority of the respondents were unmarried (81.8%).

A second-order construct was specified, having two dimensions-trivialization and affliction. The authors used multiple indices to evaluate the goodness of fit of the second-order model as shown in [Table 3](#). These included chi-square/df = 1.244, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.992, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.034, and the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) = 0.030. The acceptable fit was defined as chi-square/df less than 3, CFI values of 0.95 or greater, RMSEA values of 0.06 or less, and an SRMR of 0.10 or less ([Hu and Bentler, 2009](#)).

TABLE 3

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	NFI
One-factor model	100.755	52	1.938	0.969	0.042	0.066	0.939
1st order 2-factor model	106.058	53	2.001	0.967	0.039	0.068	0.936
Second order model	63.441	51	1.244	0.992	0.03	0.034	0.962

Table 3. Model fit indices of competing models.

As previously shown in [Table 2](#), all items loaded significantly on their respective dimensions with standardized loadings above 0.5. Composite reliability (CR) values for both the first-order dimensions ($CR_{Trivialization} = 0.909$, $CR_{Affliction} = 0.876$) and the second-order construct ($CR_{Gaslighting} = 0.953$) exceeded the cutoff value of 0.7 ([Hair et al., 2013](#)). Average variance extracted (AVE) values ($AVE_{Trivialization} = 0.588$, $AVE_{Affliction} = 0.587$, $AVE_{Gaslighting} = 0.910$) were above the 0.5 threshold ([Fornell and Larcker, 1981](#)).

Multiple tests were conducted to determine the discriminant validity between the dimensions of gaslighting. First, the 95% confidence intervals for estimated correlations between the two factors did not contain 1.0, indicating the divergence between the factors ([Burnkrant and Page, 1982](#); [Anderson and Gerbing, 1988](#)). Second, in accordance with [Bearden et al. \(1989\)](#), the second-order model was compared against two competing models (i) in which each item loaded on a single factor (one-factor model), and (ii) first order two-factor

model. The second-order model was significantly superior to the one-factor model and first order two-factor model (χ^2 of second order model = 63.441, χ^2 of one factor model = 100.755, χ^2 of first order two-factor model = 106.058; $p < 0.001$). Third, the second order model has the lowest χ^2/df , SRMR and RMSEA, and the highest CFI and NFI amongst the three models, which implies that the model fit indices of the second order model were superior fit indices when compared with the one-factor model and first order two-factor model as shown in the [Table 3 \(Hu and Bentler, 2009\)](#).

Overall, the results suggested that gaslighting is a second-order construct encompassing two first-order dimensions, trivialization and affliction. In addition, a reduced pool of 12 items (seven for trivialization, and five for affliction), was retained for the next study.

Further, it was important to assess the nomological validity of constructed gaslighting scale. Nomological validity examines whether or not empirical data supports a theoretical linkage between a construct and its antecedents or consequences ([Cronbach and Meehl, 1955](#); [MacKenzie et al., 2011](#)). It was done by showing the relationship of gaslighting at work with other two constructs, one an antecedent and another consequence of gaslighting at work to provide evidence of nomological validity.

2.5. Step five: Nomological validity study

The nomological validity of the scale was assessed by checking whether the relationships with the constructs in the nomological space of abusive behaviors at work were significant.

To achieve the above-stated objectives, a three-phase study was conducted for data collection ([Tripathi et al., 2022](#)). The data collection was done as a part of a larger study. In the first phase (T1), data were collected on an antecedent of gaslighting at work. In the second phase (T2, T2 = T1 + 3 days); data were collected on the 12-item gaslighting at work scale and in the third phase (T3, T3 = T2 + 3 days) on a consequence of gaslighting at work. The relationships between the gaslighting at work scale and the theoretically related antecedent

and consequence were then tested. The following section talks about the conceptualization of nomological validity for gaslighting at work and offers predictions about one specific antecedent and consequence.

2.5.1. Hypothesis development

The authors chose role conflict as an antecedent and job satisfaction as a consequence for testing the nomological validity of GWQ. Role conflict is defined “in terms of the dimensions of congruence-incongruence or compatibility-incompatibility in the requirements of the role, where congruence or compatibility is judged relative to a set of standards or conditions which impinge upon role environments that would diminish an employee’s coping resources” ([Rizzo et al., 1970](#), p. 155). Past research has shown that all parties involved in a bullying situation—victims, perpetrators, and bystanders—have reported role conflict to be a significant antecedent of bullying behaviors ([Hauge et al., 2007](#)). Role conflict is a role stressor that has been identified as one of the job stressors most consistently associated with complaints of workplace bullying ([Reknes et al., 2019](#)). Theoretically, Victim Precipitation Theory ([Rock and Elias, 1987](#)) helps understand the relationship and asserts that in certain situations, victims indulge in behaviors that ultimately cause their harm or injury. The conflicting role demands in the work environment lead to target’s frustration and perceiving of the situation as threatening, provokes negative behaviors ([Topa et al., 2019](#)) from others such as bullying and gaslighting. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H1: Role conflict at workplace is positively related to gaslighting at work.

Job satisfaction is a measure of total wellbeing and a key predictor of individual behavior ([Clark, 1997](#)). Job satisfaction has been defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” ([Locke, 1976](#), p. 1300). The manner in which employees assess job satisfaction is contingent on their perceptions and evaluations of their job’s qualities and their physical and interpersonal work environment ([Giorgi et al., 2015](#)). Accordingly, the prevalent assumption is that exposure to abusive

practises at work would cause employees to see their work environment as hostile and unpleasant ([Bowling and Beehr, 2006](#)) and gaslighting will thus negatively influence job satisfaction.

H2: Gaslighting at work is negatively related to job satisfaction of the employee.

H1 and H2 can be represented in a conceptual model that establishes these three constructs- role conflict, gaslighting at work, and job satisfaction- in a nomological network and establishes a relationship as displayed in [Figure 1](#).

FIGURE 1

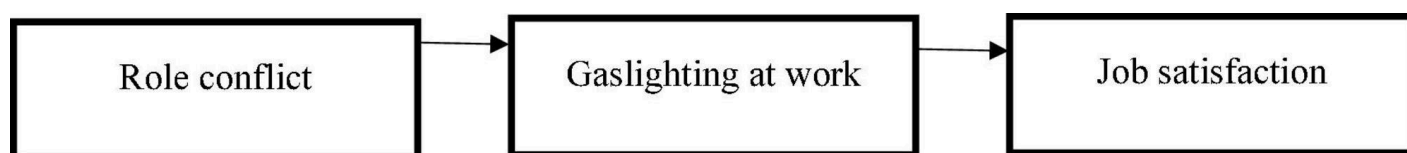


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

2.5.2. Procedure

In order to reduce the common method bias while testing the model, a time-lagged temporal design was used ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)). Respondents were US citizens aged 21 to 50 years, recruited through an online service named Prolific for participation in a three-phase online study. Data were collected in three phases T1, T2, and T3. There was a gap of 3 days between T1 and T2 and between T2 and T3 as suggested by [Podsakoff et al. \(2003\)](#). A temporal interval of 3 days, being of moderate duration for observing effects of psychological variables allows for the gradual unfolding of phenomena, while also mitigating the potential confounding influence of immediate effects.

In the first phase, T1, the role conflict as experienced by the subordinate was measured. In T2, data were collected on the 12-item gaslighting at work scale. Finally, in T3, the job satisfaction of the subordinate was captured. The final sample of the respondents who had completed all three instruments in T1, T2, and T3 was 258, comprising 131 male, 122 female, and 5 other respondents.

Out of the respondents, 140 were unmarried, 110 married, 7 separated, and 1 widowed. The age of the respondents ranged from 21 to 62 years, Mean age = 36.5 years, SD = 9.93 years. The majority of the respondents (45.3%) had a bachelor's degree, while 20.2% also had a master's degree. The average number of months that the respondents have spent at their present organization was 65.6 months, SD = 36.6 months.

2.5.3. Measures

Role conflict was measured using a six-item scale from [Bowling et al. \(2017\)](#). A sample item is "In my job, I often feel like different people are pulling me in different directions." Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.910. Gaslighting at work was assessed with the present authors' 12-item measure of gaslighting at work. Cronbach's alpha for the trivialization dimension of GWQ was 0.925 and for the affliction dimension of GWQ was 0.876. Job satisfaction was assessed using a three-item job satisfaction scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire ([Cammann et al., 1983](#)). A sample item is "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.921.

2.5.4. Findings

As displayed in [Table 4](#), the model fit indices of the model including role conflict as an antecedent and job satisfaction as a consequence of gaslighting at work, lie in the acceptable ranges ([Hu and Bentler, 2009](#)).

TABLE 4

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	425.186	–	–
DF	181.000	–	–
CMIN/DF	2.349	Between 1 and 3	Excellent
CFI	0.937	> 0.95	Acceptable
SRMR	0.076	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.072	<0.06	Acceptable
PClose	0.000	> 0.05	Not estimated

Table 4. Model fit indices for testing nomological validity.

Firstly, the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs were established and later the hypotheses were tested, as also suggested by the two-step approach by [Anderson and Gerbing_\(1988\)](#). Since the composite reliability (CR) >0.7, it is valid. As average variance extracted (AVE) >0.5, it has convergent validity. As maximum share variance (MSV) <AVE, it establishes discriminant validity. [Table 5](#) provides the detailed statistics.

TABLE 5

	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	MSV	Gaslighting	Role conflict	Job satisfaction
Gaslighting	2.092	0.903	0.968	0.939	0.135	0.969		
Role conflict	3.953	1.436	0.901	0.604	0.135	0.367***	0.777	
Job satisfaction	4.301	1.318	0.924	0.802	0.119	–0.299***	–0.345***	0.896

***Significant at 0.001 level.

CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; MSV, maximum shared variance; values on the diagonal represent the square root of AVE.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and validity analysis.

Controlling for gender, age, and educational level, role conflict was positively associated with gaslighting at work ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.01$), i.e., when role conflict increases, gaslighting at work also increases. Similarly, controlling for gender, age, and educational level, gaslighting at work was negatively related to job satisfaction of the employee ($\beta = -0.275$, $p < 0.01$). It implies that gaslighting at

work reduces the job satisfaction of employees. Therefore, empirical support is found for both Hypotheses 1 and 2. Thus, the relationship between role conflict and gaslighting behaviors, and gaslighting behaviors and job satisfaction has been established.

It was hypothesized that the prevalence of role conflict would lead to increased exposure to gaslighting behaviors and experiencing gaslighting at work would lead to reduced job satisfaction. The empirical evidence has been demonstrated through a time lagged study. Therefore, it is safe to say that the developed construct of gaslighting at work occupies a meaningful place in the nomological network.

3. Discussion

The study makes a significant contribution to the literature on harmful leader behaviors by conceptualizing and operationalizing gaslighting behavior in the workplace. Despite its harmful effects on individuals and organizations, gaslighting has received relatively little importance in the context of workplace. The study, thus aimed to address this lacuna in the literature.

The authors developed a 12-item Gaslighting at Work Questionnaire (GWQ) to measure gaslighting behaviors directed from a supervisor toward a subordinate. The analysis revealed that gaslighting is a second-order construct having two underlying dimensions: trivialization and affliction. Trivialization refers to the supervisor's actions that undermine the subordinates' perspectives, fears, and realities. On the other hand, affliction refers to the pain that the supervisor directs onto the subordinate. The authors thereafter, propose a refined definition of gaslighting as a negative workplace behavior wherein a person in position of power indulges in trivialization and affliction when dealing with subordinates. The proposed definition meets the requirements set forth by [Granstrand and Holgersson \(2020\)](#), as it satisfies an empirical and theoretical void, has enough precision, parsimony, and logical consistency without circularity, is operationalizable, qualifiable, typological, and

usable for taxonomies, and is consistent syntactically and semantically with the prevalent conceptualizations of related topics.

[Almeida et al. \(2021\)](#), depicted harmful leader behaviors on a graph having two dimensions- intensity and orientation. In this depiction, gaslighting at work can be placed in Quadrant I as shown in [Figure 2](#), which implies gaslighting at work has moderate to high intensity, and is people oriented. It also reveals some overlap of gaslighting at work with bullying, abusive supervision and toxic leadership, and provides valuable insights into the nature and consequences of gaslighting behavior. In conclusion, the proposed definition and operationalization of gaslighting at work in the form of GWQ provide useful tools for researchers and practitioners to identify and address gaslighting behavior in the workplace.

FIGURE 2

4. Contributions

Through this paper, the study makes three essential theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on workplace abuse. First, to advance research on gaslighting, the study offers a clear and concise definition that encompasses two underlying dimensions: trivialization and affliction. Secondly, it adds to the literature on gaslighting by providing a reliable and valid scale to measure gaslighting at work. Furthermore, the study differentiates between gaslighting and other constructs in the same nomological sphere. Finally, the study is one of the initial attempts to draw attention and empirically demonstrate the importance of studying gaslighting in work settings. Specifically, the study provides empirical evidence that gaslighting is related to role conflict at the workplace and to job satisfaction of the employee.

5. Limitations and future research directions

There are certain limitations of the study that should be considered. Although the predictive validity of the developed scale has been established taking into account an antecedent and a consequence, it requires more investigation.

Although control variables such as age, gender, educational level have been taken into consideration, other variables such as personality, tenure of the relationship may also affect the causal relationships in the study. Longitudinal studies showing various antecedents and consequences associated with gaslighting behaviors such as emotional labor ([Pandey et al., 2018](#)), job performance ([Tett et al., 1991](#)) knowledge hiding ([Pandey et al., 2021](#)), empowerment ([Pandey, 2016](#)) would be a valuable contribution toward a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of gaslighting at work. Possible mediators and moderators in the study of gaslighting in work settings are also encouraged. Gaslighting at work would lead to negative outcomes for the target employee, however, it is yet to be understood what all other factors may strengthen or weaken (moderate) this relationship, and may be able to better explain the linkage between gaslighting and unfavorable negative outcomes.

The scale is yet to be tested for other cultural settings as acceptance levels to abusive behaviors may differ from culture to culture ([Power et al., 2013](#)). The scale should be translated to other languages for using it in different cultures. Thus, the authors call for additional studies to verify the use of existing scale to the population beyond the current sample. The authors made sure to account for common method bias in the study and thus used a temporal gap to control for it. However, it should not be ignored that the study uses self-reported measures for the constructs under discussion. Thus, future studies using objective measures of the concepts under study are encouraged.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Institutional and/or National Research Committee and are in accordance with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical

standards. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

Both authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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