

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY AND SELF-ESTEEM OF GASLIGHTED YOUNG ADULTS IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

ABSTRACT

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This study explores the correlation between emotional dependency and self-esteem among young adults subjected to gaslighting within romantic relationships. Gaslighting, a psychological manipulation technique that causes individuals to question their reality and perceptions, often leads to confusion, heightened emotional reliance on the partner, and diminished self-worth. This form of abuse perpetuates power imbalances, fostering anxiety and self-doubt in victims. Emotional dependency—characterized by excessive reliance on a partner for validation—can trap individuals in toxic relationship cycles, while low self-esteem exacerbates their difficulty in asserting autonomy and establishing healthy boundaries. Although existing literature addresses the broader effects of gaslighting, there remains a significant gap in understanding its specific impact on emotional dependency and self-esteem among young adults. This study aims to fill this void and provide a foundation for the creation of an Emotional Dependency and Self-Esteem Intervention Program tailored to this vulnerable population. This study employed a quantitative correlational research design, utilizing purposive and criterion sampling methods to select self-reported gaslighted young adults from third-year psychology students at Bestlink College of the Philippines. Data were collected through three rigorously validated instruments: the Victim Gaslighting Questionnaire (VGQ) by Bhatti et al. (2021), which served as the screening tool to identify participants who have experienced gaslighting; the Emotional Dependence Questionnaire (EDQ) by Lemos and Londoño (2006), used to quantify levels of emotional dependency; and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), employed to assess participants' self-esteem. This methodological approach ensured the reliability and validity. The study's findings revealed a statistically significant but weak positive correlation ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) between emotional dependency and self-esteem. This suggests that, unexpectedly, higher emotional dependency was modestly associated with higher self-esteem, challenging previous research that typically links elevated emotional dependency to diminished self-worth. Moreover, participants exhibited moderate levels of emotional dependency—particularly in the domain of affective expression—coupled with generally low self-esteem. These results imply that while gaslighting experiences may erode self-esteem, the relationship between emotional dependency and self-worth is complex and may involve additional psychological factors, warranting further investigation. These findings underscore the urgent need for tailored intervention programs that focus on bolstering self-esteem and cultivating emotional independence among young adults affected by gaslighting. By deepening the psychological understanding of gaslighting's detrimental effects, this study lays the groundwork for developing effective support initiatives aimed at empowering victims. Future research should expand on these insights by exploring additional influencing factors such as attachment styles, coping mechanisms, and resilience, to provide a more comprehensive framework for addressing emotional dependency and self-esteem in this vulnerable population.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

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