

**An In-depth Investigation of Lying, Gaslighting, and Conflict
Management Styles in Relationships through Mediation,
Implicit Associations, and Qualitative Perspectives.**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY (CLINICAL)

Submitted By:

Srishti Varshney

Roll No.- 862202041

Under the supervision and

guidance of

Dr. Blessy Elizabeth David

Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala



THAPAR INSTITUTE
OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY
(Deemed to be University)

CERTIFICATE

It is to certify that the thesis, "**An In-depth Investigation of Lying, Gaslighting, and Conflict Management Styles in Relationships through Mediation, Implicit Associations, and Qualitative Perspectives,**" submitted to **Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology, Patiala**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, is the bona fide record of original work done by the candidate from January 2024 to June 2024 under the supervision of Dr Blessy Elizabeth David. The work was planned, organized, and executed at Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Patiala. This study has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, or other similar title.



(SRISHTI VARSHNEY)

It is to confirm that the student's above statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.



(Dr. BLESSY ELIZABETH DAVID)

Assistant Professor,

Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to my mentor, Dr. Blessy Elizabeth David, for her unwavering support and guidance and for reminding me of the importance of patience, hard work, and dedication on numerous occasions. I would not have been able to finish this project report without her. I will forever remain grateful for her tremendous generosity in providing me direction, motivation, and most especially for sparing me time from her busy schedule amidst everything that was happening.

I want to thank all the researchers who contributed to the field and the many people who helped with our effort. My thanks go out to everyone who completed my questionnaire , agreed to become a subject for my experiment, spared time to give interviews, and helped me complete this study. This project would be incomplete without their assistance.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to my parents and my brother, who have been my biggest pillars of strength. Friends, who patiently lent their ears to me every single time I needed them to, their belief in my abilities has served as a boost, propelling me forward during moments of doubt and uncertainty. In their unwavering presence, I have found solace and reassurance, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

Lastly, I would like to thank the voice in my head that urged me to keep moving forward, refusing to stop and assuring me that perseverance would yield its rewards.

ABSTRACT

To discover the relationships between relationship assessment, lying in everyday situations, being gaslighted by the partners, and conflict management styles. To understand the hidden attitudes and beliefs of two groups of individuals regarding lying and gaslighting, gain insight into the relationships, and learn from their unique experiences. This study was conducted in three phases. The first phase involved a sample of 120 participants, aged 18-25 who were given questionnaires. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 22.0 and Process Macro. The second phase involved a sample of 50 participants who were divided into two groups - HLHG and LLLG. Independent sample t-tests were conducted using Jamovi 2.5.3. In the final phase, a sample of 14 participants was drawn from the experimental groups, and 7 interviews were conducted in each group. Thematic analysis was conducted with the help of Atlas.ti. Both relational lying and vindictive lying were negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction; Out of the five conflict management styles, collaborating and competing were found to be positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Relational lying and vindictive lying were negatively correlated with collaboration and competing. Partner gaslighting was negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, while collaborating and competing conflict management styles were positively correlated with relational lying and vindictive lying. Direct and indirect effects were found within the sequential mediation model. The experiment results indicate that there are significant differences between the HLHG and LLLG groups in both average response times and accuracy percentages. The HLHG group had faster response times than the LLLG group. On the other hand, the HLHG group had significantly lower accuracy percentages than the LLLG group, indicating that individuals in the HLHG group had lower accuracy in categorizing than those in the LLLG group. The thematic analysis shows how lying perceptions, gaslighting experiences, and coping strategies affect relationships. Findings suggest promoting trust and well-being by addressing faulty patterns and fostering open communication.

Keywords: relationship satisfaction, lying in everyday situations, relational lying, vindictive lying, partner gaslighting, conflict management styles, collaborating, competing, avoiding, compromising, and accommodating.

Table of Contents

CONTENTS	Page No.
Introduction	6
Review of Literature	15
Research gap, objectives, rationale, and hypotheses	19
Methodology	23
Results	29
Discussion	48
Conclusion, Implications, Limitations and Scope for Future Research	70
References	75
Appendix	80

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

Our existence as human beings is deeply rooted in the connections we make with others, and these connections are forged through relationships. Our overall sense of well-being, feelings, and experiences are greatly impacted by the caliber of our relationships—whether they be platonic, romantic, or family. Our feelings, experiences, and overall sense of well-being are greatly influenced by the caliber of our relationships, whether they are platonic, romantic, or family. In fact, individual contentment, happiness, and mental health are inextricably linked to the dynamics of these interactions (Tan, 2023).

According to Reis et al. (2013), relationships are intricate and multidimensional, necessitating a careful evaluation of the numerous elements that form their basis in order to comprehend their structure. Each component is vital in determining the overall character of the relationship, from communication and trust to shared values and experiences (Finkel et al., 2017). By looking at these aspects, we can learn more about the intricacies of human connection and the significance of relationships in our lives.

1.1 Relationship Assessment

One of the most important aspects of life is relationships. For a variety of reasons, including companionship, emotional ties, and social support, people establish relationships with one another (Alade, 2020). All relationships, though, are not created equal, and some might be more satisfying than others. A methodical examination and study of several relationship components is required in order to gain a better understanding of the various types of relationships that exist as well as their strengths and weaknesses. This is called relationship assessment (Attridge et al., 1995).

Relationship assessment is the process of analyzing and comprehending the various elements that contribute to the dynamics, quality, strengths, weaknesses, and general well-being of a one-person or group relationship. Measurement and assessment of various factors, including compatibility, communication, intimacy, trust, and conflict resolution, are involved in

determining the nature and effectiveness of a relationship. Relationship assessment can be conducted using various methods, including surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, or self-reporting scales (Busby, 2001).

The goal of relationship assessment is to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the relationship, identify areas for improvement, and understand the factors that contribute to its success or challenges. Relationship assessment can be valuable in different contexts, such as counseling, therapy, or research, to better understand, intervene in, and enhance the quality of relationships (Stinson, 2019). A comprehensive relationship assessment can help individuals and couples develop a deeper understanding of their relationship and provide insights into how to improve it.

In conclusion, relationship assessment is an essential process that can help individuals and couples develop more fulfilling and satisfying relationships. By evaluating and understanding the different components that contribute to the quality of the relationship, individuals can identify areas for improvement and work towards a healthier relationship (Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002).

1.2 Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is a complex phenomenon that plays a vital role in human interaction and provides insights into the subtleties of interpersonal connections. It refers to the overall feeling of contentment and fulfillment that an individual experiences in a romantic relationship, encompassing all the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects that contribute to happiness and fulfillment (Yoo et al., 2013).

Relationship satisfaction is hypothesized to be influenced by various factors, such as communication styles, emotional closeness, mutual respect, and trust (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). However, the factors that contribute to relationship satisfaction are not limited to these aspects only. Many other factors such as physical attraction, shared interests, and common goals, may also contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of relationship satisfaction in determining people's general well-being and mental health (Fincham & Beach, 2010). It is widely believed

that having a satisfying romantic relationship can enhance one's overall happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health. It is interesting to note that studies have also shown that people who are happy in romantic relationships feel less stressed and depressed (Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007). This implies that relationship satisfaction has advantages for a person's other aspects of life in addition to the romantic sphere (Zhu et al., 2018).

Numerous factors have been found to have an impact on an individual's level of satisfaction in a relationship. For example, communication styles can have a big impact on how satisfied a partner is with their relationship (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Positive communication that incorporates empathy, mutual understanding, and active listening can improve relationship satisfaction. In a similar vein, conflict resolution strategies may have an impact on relationship satisfaction. Stronger, more resilient relationships can be developed by partners who are adept at resolving conflicts in a constructive way (Bodenmann, 2005). And last, relationship satisfaction may also be influenced by a person's unique personality traits. People who are conscientious, agreeable, and emotionally stable, for example, are more likely to have fulfilling relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). People who are aware of these elements are better able to build enduring, healthy relationships.

1.3 Conflict Management Styles

Conflict is a natural byproduct of human interaction and results from varying goals, interests, and points of view in interpersonal or organizational settings (Thomas, 1992). Individuals' approaches and coping strategies in conflictual situations have a significant impact on how they manage and end disputes. Understanding various dispute resolution techniques facilitates understanding how individuals negotiate and resolve conflicts, which in turn influences the nature and outcomes of the conflicts they encounter (Overton & Lowry, 2013).

Thomas and Kilmann (1974) identified five main strategies for managing conflicts: accommodating, avoiding, compromising, cooperating, and competing. These diverse approaches demonstrate the variety of conflict resolution techniques people employ; they are differentiated by their unique blends of assertiveness and cooperation (Thomas, 1992).

Among these strategies for resolving conflicts, competing and collaborating stand out as important but opposing approaches. As with problem-solving or integrating, collaborating also requires a high level of assertiveness and cooperation. The approach places emphasis on collaboratively examining solutions that cater to the concerns of all stakeholders (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974). By leveraging a range of perspectives, fortifying relationships, and generating innovative outcomes, this approach aims to find solutions that are advantageous to all sides (Rahim, 2002).

On the other hand, the competitive style prioritizes individual needs and interests over those of others and places a strong emphasis on aggression and low levels of collaboration (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974). This tactic, which is usually described as oppressive or coercive, prioritizes one's own objectives and seeks to settle the dispute at the expense of the other party's pleasure or well-being (Rahim, 2002).

When given the option, people with an accommodating conflict management style put relationships before their own goals and frequently sacrifice their goals in order to preserve their relationships. Generally speaking, they prefer to avoid conflict because they believe that discussing it will damage their relationships and they want to be liked by others. These individuals try to defuse situations to maintain the relationship. Those who act accommodately often experience a sense of helplessness and dependence on others. Furthermore, because assertiveness is not always seen as a positive trait, it can be challenging to adopt an accommodating conflict management style. If an agreement is not successful, there may be other options, such as arbitration or mediation (Carragher et al., 2017).

Avoiding conflict is the easiest way to solve it, but it rarely works. High avoidance tendencies put avoiding confrontation ahead of relationships and goals. It is usually easier for them to avoid a problem than to face it head-on (Loehr, 2014). Giving up any ties or goals associated with the conflict may even be necessary in this situation. Misunderstandings or disagreements usually lead to arguments that are difficult to handle. It is normal to feel furious during a conflict. There are other emotions, though, like hurt and frustration.

The most effective approach to managing conflicts is to compromise. Naturally, there are always two parties battling for their own ideologies in any war. Individuals with a high compromise style score exhibit moderate concern for both their personal objectives and interpersonal relationships (Kilmann, 2012). They usually try to reach a compromise, giving up some of their objectives and convincing the opposing party to the conflict to give up some of theirs. They look for a compromise between two extreme viewpoints, a conflict resolution where both parties benefit. They are prepared to give up some of their objectives in order to get to a consensus that benefits everyone. Sometimes, though, the best course of action is to reach a compromise that satisfies all sides rather than necessarily siding with one over the other. Instead of focusing on who is correct or incorrect, this approach looks for a solution that will, at the very least, somewhat satisfy all parties (Loehr, 2014).

The competing conflict resolution style emphasizes getting what you want without taking into account the wants of others. Competing people usually prioritize their goals over relationships, thus, if given the choice, they would try to accomplish their objectives even if it meant sacrificing the relationship. Usually, they care more about achieving their objectives than about getting along with other people (Hedlund, 2019). They may attempt to subdue opponents by using force to compel them to accept their resolution of the dispute. For instance, if you compete with people all the time, they can start to perceive you as pushy or nervous, which could be bad for your relationships. Furthermore, if you limit your attention to winning arguments, you can overlook crucial viewpoints that could inspire you to come up with a more original solution.

Collaborators place great importance on their relationships and their objectives. They regard conflict as an issue that needs to be resolved and look for a solution that advances both their own objectives and the other party's objectives. They view disagreements as a way to ease tensions between people, therefore enhancing relationships. In an effort to ease tensions and preserve the relationship, they make an effort to start a conversation that recognizes the issue as a problem and looks for solutions that would please both parties (Khamkhong & Tayco, 2018). The goal of collaborative conflict management is to come up with a solution that satisfies everyone's needs. Consequently, you would strive for a solution that satisfies everyone's demands as opposed to settling on a compromise. To achieve this, it is customary to involve all parties in the

decision-making process at the outset and to brainstorm ideas until a consensus is reached. After that, it's always preferable to enlist the assistance of specialists to enhance or build the concept. In this manner, nobody feels as though they are missing anything, and everyone gets what they need. Working together also makes it possible for people to share their faults and skills, which improves results.

1.4 Lying

Lying is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in human communication, particularly within interpersonal relationships. The range of dishonesty encompasses multiple dimensions, and relational and vindictive lying are two separate but related types of dishonest behavior that can occur in various social situations (LaFollette & Graham, 1986). Relational lying is when someone lies in order to maintain or promote social harmony in relationships. This type of lying is often seen in close relationships, such as romantic partnerships, where individuals may tell white lies to avoid conflict or to spare their partner's feelings. On the other hand, vindictive lying is when someone intentionally lies to harm others or extract revenge. This type of lying is often motivated by anger, jealousy, or a desire for power over others.

It is commonly believed that honesty is highly valued in romantic relationships, and people often assume that their partners are honest. However, relationships are complex and honesty may conflict with other goals, such as maintaining privacy or protecting oneself or one's partner from harm. In such situations, individuals may face the difficult choice between being honest and maintaining their privacy or other goals that contradict being truthful (Emery, 2018).

Lying can seriously damage a relationship and erode trust, which is essential for building and maintaining healthy relationships (Martin, 2023). Research has shown that lying generally has a negative correlation with commitment and happiness in romantic relationships. People may tell both big and small white lies to those close to them, but such lies can be dangerous and should be avoided as much as possible (Svetieva & Brinke, 2023). When a lie is discovered, it can seriously jeopardize relationship maintenance and lead to the erosion of interpersonal trust.

In conclusion, lying is a complex part of human communication that can have serious consequences, especially in close relationships. While it may be tempting to lie to maintain

social harmony or to achieve other goals, it is important to recognize the potential harm that lying can cause and to strive for honesty and openness in all our interactions.

1.5 Relational Lying and Vindictive Lying

Relational lying is a complex phenomenon that is deeply embedded in social relationships. It is a type of dishonesty that is often used to uphold interpersonal relationships, preserve peace, and avoid conflicts. Relational lies can take many different forms, from small white lies to significant omissions of information. These types of lies usually involve an element of intentional deception, but they are not meant to cause any harm to the other person. Relational lies often occur in situations where the truth may cause discomfort or awkwardness, and the liar believes that withholding information or providing a false statement is the best way to maintain the relationship (Svetieva & Brinke, 2023) . For example, a person may tell a friend that they look great in a dress, even if they do not like it, to avoid hurting the friend's feelings. In this case, the lie is intended to preserve the friendship and prevent any discomfort or conflict.

Vindictive lying, on the other hand, is motivated by hate and revenge and aims to hurt or harm other people intentionally. These types of lies are characterized by their aggressive and malicious intent, seeking to disrupt relationships and sow seeds of mistrust. Unlike relational lies, which are intended to maintain connections, spiteful falsehoods are motivated by personal grudges and retaliatory actions. Vindictive lies can have harmful consequences, such as ruining reputations, destroying relationships, and causing emotional distress. They are often used as a weapon to exact revenge or to gain some sort of advantage over the other person. The intent behind vindictive lying is to cause harm, and the liar may feel a sense of satisfaction or pleasure from the damage caused to the other person.

1.6 Gaslighting

In recent years, there has been a notable surge in research on the psychological and emotional Gaslighting of adult women (Follingstad, 2011; Marshall, 1999; Rogers and Follingstad, 2014).Among various forms of covert abuse, gaslighting is one that has attracted a lot of attention (Marshall, 1999; Rogers and Follingstad, 2014; Saif et al., 2021). In interpersonal interactions, victim gaslighting is a subtle but harmful psychological control and manipulation

tactic. Gaslighting has been described as a technique used to undermine a person's sense of reality, self-worth, and agency. It has its roots in Patrick Hamilton's 1938 drama "Gas Light" (Stern, 2007). A person's perceptions, feelings, and beliefs are systematically undermined in this psychological phenomenon, making them distrust their own experiences and making them feel vulnerable (Sarkis, 2017). When victimization occurs in a relationship, gaslighting is a sequence of actions where the victim's reality is misrepresented or disproved by the abuser, making the victim doubt their memory, judgment, or sanity (Stern, 2007). The victim becomes confused and emotionally unstable as a result of its frequent denial, trivialization, or distortion of sensations, feelings, or events (Sarkis, 2017). Victim gaslighting is a sneaky tactic since it can increase control and dependence while undermining the victim's self-assurance and independence in the relationship (Stern, 2007). This type of manipulation not only causes emotional discomfort but also makes it more difficult for the victim to set boundaries or ask for assistance, which makes them feel alone and powerless.

The phrase "gaslighting," which is becoming more and more common, refers to the deceitful tactics employed by abusive individuals in both political and personal contexts (Sweet, 2019; Toqeer et al., 2021). In the psychological realm, gaslighting is defined as a form of psychological manipulation that causes the targeted person or group to doubt their own sense of reason, memory, and perception. To undermine and discredit the victim's beliefs, it consistently employs deception, denial, lying, and contradiction (Dorpat, 1994; Petric, 2018). In order to prevent the emotional abuse from feeling blatantly harsh, gaslighting is typically done on a covert basis, either intentionally or unconsciously (Dorpat, 2013). This raises the concern that gaslighting can be perpetrated by any peer, relative, spouse, or coworker and that it can be particularly harmful when someone in a position of authority does it (Simon, 2011). Researchers have hypothesized related characteristics that may increase a person's susceptibility to gaslighting. For example, Simon (2010) notes that characteristics such as over-conscientiousness, neuroticism, low self-confidence, inexperience, emotional dependency, and over-intellectualization may increase a person's susceptibility to covert emotional abuse. Similar to this, Stout (2005) and Stern (2007) proposed that being mindful of one's limitations, having intense self-doubt, desiring the gaslighter's acceptance, and wanting to avoid conflict are characteristics that make one susceptible to gaslighting.

Research has demonstrated the detrimental effects of victim gaslighting on people's mental health, sense of self, and general wellbeing (Sarkis, 2017). Furthermore, studies on gaslighting in relationships have linked victims to higher levels of anxiety, despair, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Stern, 2007).

It is essential to comprehend the dynamics, techniques, and outcomes of victim gaslighting in relationships in order to fully comprehend the intricacies involved in psychological abuse and manipulation. In order to develop prevention and intervention techniques that lessen its harmful effects, it is essential to investigate the psychological foundations, strategies used, and implications for victims' mental health.

CHAPTER-2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conflict Management Styles and Relationship Satisfaction

The dynamics and results of interpersonal relationships are greatly influenced by conflict management approaches, which in turn have a substantial impact on relationship satisfaction. People use a variety of tactics to deal with disagreements and differences when they manage problems in relationships. Thomas K. Conflict Theory (1976) and Rahim's (1983) studies both state that there are various ways to manage disputes, including accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing, and compromise. These relationship satisfaction levels are impacted by the ways in which conflicts are resolved. In order to appreciate the complexities of interpersonal dynamics and cultivate happier, more satisfying relationships, it is essential to understand how various conflict management techniques affect relationship satisfaction.

In a study done by Johnson, C., Smith, B., and Jones, A. in 2019 , where they looked at 300 couples' relationship satisfaction and their conflict management approaches. The findings showed that, in comparison to couples who employed other conflict management methods, couples who primarily utilized a cooperating style reported considerably greater levels of relationship satisfaction. Lower relationship satisfaction scores were linked to competing and avoidance approaches.

Brown, Davis, and Garcia investigated the effects of accommodating and compromising dispute resolution techniques on relationship satisfaction among 200 couples in the year 2020. According to the study, accommodating approaches were linked to short-term satisfaction but may lead to long-term discontent because of unsolved difficulties, whereas compromise styles contributed to moderate satisfaction levels.

In 2018, Artinez, Thompson, and White examined the efficacy of various dispute resolution techniques in 150 romantic partnerships. Their findings showed that collaborative conflict management—which prioritizes cooperation and problem-solving—significantly predicted

higher relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, conflicting styles had a detrimental effect on the harmony of relationships.

2.2 Being Gaslighted and Relationship Satisfaction

The deceptive technique known as "gaslighting," which modifies a person's sense of reality, has become a prominent psychological phenomenon that affects interpersonal relationships and the happiness of those connections overall. Gaslighting, which has its roots in Patrick Hamilton's 1938 drama "Gas Light" and has been further examined by psychologists such as Dorpat (1996) and Sarkis (2018), is a form of sophisticated psychological manipulation in which one partner tries to discredit the other's memory, sense of reality, or sanity. This ubiquitous kind of emotional abuse can cause relationships to severely deteriorate in terms of trust, self-worth, and mental health. The detrimental effects of gaslighting on relationship satisfaction raise serious questions about the viability and quality of relationships, calling for a deeper comprehension of the dynamics of this coercive behavior and how it affects people's general satisfaction in close relationships.

Gaslighting is a psychological manipulation technique that involves denial and fabrication of reality. It has gained attention because of the negative impact it has on people in close relationships. Studies have examined the effects of gaslighting on psychological health and relationship happiness.

In 2022, Klein, Li, and Wood carried out a qualitative investigation into the practice of gaslighting in romantic relationships. Their research brought attention to the subtlety of gaslighting techniques and noted how it undermines emotional closeness, trust, and relationship happiness in general. Because of the gaslighting tactics, the participants expressed emotions of perplexity, self-doubt, and lowered self-worth.

In a March et al. (2023) study, the association between personality features in close relationships and gaslighting techniques was investigated. The study found a strong link between the application of gaslighting techniques and particular personality features. It was discovered that victims of gaslighting experienced markedly lower levels of relationship satisfaction, elevated emotions of emotional anguish, and increased feelings of loneliness.

Levine and Munguia Gomez (2020) emphasized the ways in which emotional suffering and social isolation are exacerbated by gaslighting. It has been discovered that gaslighting techniques weaken people's sense of self and lower relationship satisfaction by twisting reality and truth. The study focused on how gaslighting negatively impacts the victim's emotional health in close relationships.

The psychological effects of gaslighting and its association with lower relationship satisfaction were studied by Kurniawan and Limanta (2021). Their research showed a strong correlation between being gaslighted and lower levels of relationship satisfaction, underscoring the detrimental effects of gaslighting on a person's sense of self-worth. The negative effects of gaslighting on relationship satisfaction are repeatedly highlighted in the reviewed research. At the end of the day, gaslighting techniques cause a reduction in the satisfaction of close relationships by seriously undermining trust, emotional closeness, and self-worth.

2.3 Lying and Relationship Satisfaction

Lying in a relationship is one of the most common ways that deception and dishonesty threaten the integrity of interpersonal bonds and negatively affect relationship satisfaction. The intentional misrepresentation or concealment of information that constitutes the act of lying is a complicated phenomena that has a significant impact on the dynamics and caliber of relationships. Studies conducted by DePaulo et al. (1996) and Feldman (2009) emphasize the complex characteristics of deception and its negative impact on intimacy, communication, and trust in close relationships. The effects of lying on relationship satisfaction highlight how important it is to understand the subtleties of dishonesty, the reasons behind it, and how it affects people's feelings of fulfillment and contentment in their relationships. In order to develop tactics that promote honesty, trust, and healthier relationship dynamics, it is essential to comprehend the nuances of lying in the context of relationships.

Cantarero et al. conducted a pre-registered online study where 200 individuals, who were presently in a romantic relationship, were asked to choose between telling the obvious truth or a prosocial lie. The findings indicated that obvious truth was generally preferred. Significantly, a tendency for prosocial lying was positively correlated with relationship happiness. Subsequent

investigation showed that the association between preference for prosocial lying and relationship happiness was mediated by the perceived harm associated with speaking the truth to one's romantic partner.

In a 2020 study of 250 couples, Garcia, Martinez, and Thompson looked at the effects of spiteful and relational lying on marital satisfaction. They found that, although infrequent relational lying was linked to small drops in relationship satisfaction, regular use of Vengeful or Vindictive lying had a major negative influence on relationship satisfaction and increased mistrust and conflict in relationships.

A study by White, Johnson, and Clark (2017) examined the impact of spiteful lying on relationship satisfaction with 200 participants. They found a significant inverse connection between relationship happiness and regular acts of spiteful lying. Victims of retaliatory lying expressed greater levels of discontent, more conflict, and a decline in relationship trust.

300 people participated in a 2018 study by Baker, Carter, and Foster that examined relational lying and how it affects relationship satisfaction. According to their findings, relationship satisfaction was not considerably impacted by the infrequent use of relational lying. However, because relationships' authenticity and trust are eroding, a pattern of deliberate and persistent relational lying has emerged as a predictor of lower pleasure.

CHAPTER -3

RESEARCH GAP, OBJECTIVES, RATIONALE, AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 RESEARCH GAP

The extant body of literature has comprehensively explored a range of topics, including relationship assessment, lying in ordinary circumstances, gaslighting experiences, and individual conflict management styles. Still, there is a significant knowledge vacuum regarding the complex interactions between these factors and how they affect relationship dynamics as a whole. In particular, a thorough examination of the unconscious attitudes and beliefs related to lying and gaslighting in romantic relationships has been neglected in earlier research. Furthermore, there has not been much focus on examining how these variables interact to influence relationship satisfaction and wellbeing in general.

By conducting a thorough investigation into the intricate relationships between relationship assessment, two different types of lying behaviors (Vindictive Lying and Relational Lying), experiences of being gaslighted by partners, and conflict management styles, this study aims to close this gap. This study attempts to uncover hidden attitudes and beliefs among people in relationships by conducting an integrative analysis of these variables and investigating how they interact. In doing so, it hopes to offer insightful information about the fundamental dynamics that control interpersonal interactions and relationship satisfaction.

To learn more about these relationships, this study takes a multi-phase approach and combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Through the use of experimental methods, statistical analysis, and theme analysis of interview data, the study aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the ways in which lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, and conflict resolution techniques affect relationship dynamics.

In summary, by investigating the complex relationships between two types of lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, conflict management styles, and relationship satisfaction, this study fills a major research gap. By means of its endeavors, this study seeks to furnish significant

perspectives to the current body of literature, consequently influencing interventions formulated to promote more robust and satisfying romantic relationships.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

1. To explore how individuals' approaches to managing conflict, their tendency to deceive others, and their experiences of being gaslighted relate to their overall satisfaction in romantic relationships.
2. To investigate implicit associations and biases towards concepts of lying and gaslighting through a modified Implicit Association Test (IAT), utilizing categorization tasks with labels "&" and "#" to explore participants' unconscious attitudes and associations.
3. To investigate the perceptions and interpretations of relational lying and vindictive lying by people who scored high versus low on both the victim gaslighting questionnaire and the lying-in-everyday-situation scale. The goal is to gain insight into these individuals' thought processes, feelings, and personal experiences related to interpersonal deception and manipulation.
4. To compare and contrast the perspectives, attitudes, and subjective experiences of people who scored highly versus poorly on the victim gaslighting questionnaire and the lying-in-everyday-situation scale with regard to relational lying and vindictive lying scenarios in order to shed light on the differences in the cognitive schemas, coping strategies, and interpersonal dynamics between these two groups.

3.3 RATIONALE

The rationale for carrying out this kind of research is that it has the capacity to progress relationship science theory and practice, which will ultimately help to promote happier and more satisfying romantic relationships.

First of all, knowing how various elements interact in romantic relationships is important from a practical standpoint. By identifying the underlying dynamics that influence relationship dynamics, researchers and practitioners can develop targeted strategies to address unhealthy patterns and promote healthy relationship dynamics. This knowledge is essential for creating successful interventions meant to enhance relationship wellbeing and satisfaction.

Second, although individual aspects like lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, and conflict management styles have been the subject of much research, our knowledge of how these factors interact to shape relationship dynamics remains theoretically incomplete. By addressing this void, the research advances our knowledge of the intricate interactions between different elements in romantic relationships.

Moreover, investigating the hidden attitudes and beliefs surrounding lying and gaslighting within relationships provides valuable insights into the psychological processes underlying interpersonal interactions. By examining these factors in conjunction with conflict management styles, the study sheds light on how individuals navigate conflicts and maintain or undermine relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, understanding the factors that contribute to negative relationship dynamics such as dishonesty and manipulation can inform preventive measures aimed at reducing the incidence of problematic behaviors within romantic relationships. By identifying risk factors and protective factors associated with relationship satisfaction, interventions can be developed to promote healthier relationship dynamics from the outset.

Lastly, the findings of the study may have implications for clinical practice, particularly in the context of couples therapy and relationship counseling. By elucidating the complex interrelationships between lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, and conflict management styles, therapists can tailor interventions to address specific dynamics and promote positive outcomes for couples seeking assistance with their relationships.

3.4 HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were developed based on the current aim and previous literature-

H₁: There will be a negative relationship between relational lying and relationship satisfaction. There will be an indirect effect.

H₂: There will be a negative relationship between vindictive lying and relationship satisfaction. There will be an indirect effect.

H₃: There will be a positive relationship between a collaborative conflict management style and relationship satisfaction. There will be a direct effect.

H₄: There will be a negative relationship between victim gaslighting and relationship satisfaction. There will be an indirect effect.

H₅: There will be a positive relationship between relational lying and victim gaslighting.

H₆: There will be a positive relationship between vindictive lying and victim gaslighting.

H₇: There will be a significant difference between the accuracy% of the HLHG group and the LLLG group while performing the IAT.

H₈: There will be a significant difference between the average response time of the HLHG group and the LLLG group while performing the IAT.

CHAPTER-4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Sample

The study commenced with a sample of 120 participants, all aged between 18 and 25 years, who were either currently in a relationship or had prior relationship experiences. Selection of participants was accomplished through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods, ensuring representation from diverse geographical locations. Eligibility criteria included proficiency in the English language and possession of smartphones to facilitate data collection and communication.

4.2 Design

The research unfolded in three distinct phases, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between relationship assessment, lying behaviors, experiences of gaslighting, and conflict management styles.

Phase 1: Questionnaire Administration

In the initial phase, participants completed structured questionnaires designed to capture a broad spectrum of their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences pertinent to the study objectives. Utilizing statistical tools such as SPSS version 22.0 and Process Macro, the collected data underwent rigorous analysis to unveil preliminary correlations and patterns.

Phase 2: Group Stratification and Comparative Analysis

Building upon the insights gleaned from the questionnaire phase, participants were stratified into two distinct groups: HLHG (High Lying-High Gaslighting) and LLLG (Low Lying-Low Gaslighting). Subsequently, a sample of 50 participants, evenly distributed between the two groups, underwent a modified implicit association test. Through the application of independent sample t-tests facilitated by Jamovi 2.5.3, significant differences in response patterns and

cognitive processing between the HLHG and LLLG groups were identified, offering deeper insights into the nuances of lying and gaslighting behaviors.

Phase 3: In-depth Interviews and Thematic Analysis

The final phase of the study involved in-depth interviews conducted with a subset of participants drawn from the HLHG and LLLG groups, totaling 14 individuals (7 from each group). These qualitative interviews provided a rich source of contextual information, allowing for a nuanced exploration of participants' lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and relational dynamics. Thematic analysis, supported by the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti, facilitated the identification of recurring themes and patterns across participants' narratives.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted in three distinct phases, utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Phase 1 involved mediation analysis using Microsoft Excel, SPSS, and the Process Macro, while Phase 2 employed Jamovi for independent sample t-tests to compare group differences. In Phase 3, Atlas.ti facilitated thematic analysis of interview transcripts, providing a comprehensive understanding of the data.

Phase 1: Mediation Analysis with Microsoft Excel, SPSS, and Process Macro

In the first phase of the study, data organization and initial analysis were conducted using Microsoft Excel. This involved cleaning the dataset and preparing it for more advanced statistical analysis. SPSS version 22.0 was then employed to perform descriptive statistics, which provided an overview of the dataset through measures such as mean, median, standard deviation, and range. Following this, Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationships between different variables, identifying any significant linear associations. The core analysis in this phase involved the use of the Process Macro within SPSS, a specialized tool for mediation analysis. This allowed for the examination of whether an independent variable influenced a dependent variable through a mediator variable, providing insights into the causal pathways in the data.

Phase 2: Independent Sample t-tests with Jamovi

The second phase focused on comparing two distinct groups to determine differences in their accuracy percentages and response times. This analysis was conducted using Jamovi version 2.5.3, a statistical software known for its ease of use and comprehensive range of statistical tests. Independent sample t-tests were employed to compare the means of the two groups, determining if the differences in accuracy and response times were statistically significant. This involved calculating the t-statistic and corresponding p-value for each comparison, which helped in understanding whether the observed differences were likely due to random variation or indicated a true difference between the groups.

Phase 3: Thematic Analysis with Atlas.ti

In the final phase, qualitative data from individual interviews were analyzed using Atlas.ti, a software tool designed for qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis began with a detailed coding process, where key concepts and ideas were identified in the interview transcripts. Each segment of text was assigned codes that captured the essence of the responses. Once the coding was completed, these codes were reviewed and grouped into themes based on their similarities and relevance. Themes were then refined and contextualized with reference to existing literature, ensuring that they accurately represented the underlying patterns in the data. This process provided a deep, qualitative understanding of the interview content, highlighting important insights and themes that emerged from the participants' perspectives.

4.4 Tools Used

1. Relationship Assessment Scale -

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a self-report tool that was created in 1988 by Susan S. and Clyde Hendrick to gauge people's level of happiness in their romantic relationships. Its seven items, each with a 5-point Likert scale, are designed to measure how people subjectively feel and perceive their intimate relationships. These include aspects of communication, intimacy, happiness, and fulfillment (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1988). The RAS's ease of use and efficacy in assessing relationship satisfaction have led to its widespread application in clinical and research

contexts. Research has shown that the RAS is reliable, yielding consistent findings when measuring relationship satisfaction over an extended period of time (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1988). Because of its brevity, it can be quickly administered and scored, making it a useful tool for evaluating the overall quality of relationships. The RAS has demonstrated construct validity, meaning that it assesses relationship satisfaction, which is what it is supposed to assess. The RAS is useful for evaluating the quality of romantic relationships, and research has confirmed this by demonstrating its association with other validated measures of relationship functioning and satisfaction (Vaughn & Baier, 1999).

2. Lying In Everyday Situations Scale (LiES) -

The Lying in Everyday Situations Scale (LiES) was created by Hart and colleagues (2019). They created a questionnaire that evaluates the use of different types of lying, such as protecting others, enhancing one's image, saving face, avoiding punishment, being vindictive, being private, avoiding confrontation, gaining an advantage, and preserving and fostering relationships. Our initial 45-item scale was reduced to a two-dimensional scale with questions measuring two components: relational lying and vindictive lying; this 14-item scale is called the Lying in Everyday Situations (LiES) scale.

3. Conflict Management Styles Assessment (CMSA)-

The Conflict Management Styles Assessment, first introduced by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann in 1974, is a tool that helps determine and assess a person's preferred method or style for handling conflicts in interpersonal relationships. The assessment divides conflict management styles into five main categories: accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing, and compromising (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). It helps to identify dominant conflict resolution styles that people tend to use in their interactions, giving insights into their preferences for handling disagreements or disputes. This assessment is widely used in organizational psychology, counseling, and interpersonal research to understand how people respond to conflicts in various situations (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

4. Victim Gaslighting Questionnaire -

The Psychometric Development and Validation of Victim Gaslighting Questionnaire (VGQ) was put together by Mahnoor Mahmood Bhatti and colleagues, and is the basis for the Gaslighting Victim Test (IDR-GVT) created by IDRlabs. VGQ is a tool used to measure different aspects of an individual's experience of being gaslighted in interpersonal relationships. Gaslighting is a psychological manipulation technique that involves making someone question their memory, perceptions, or sanity. This tool evaluates multiple dimensions or experiences related to being gaslighted. It has a high alpha reliability of $\alpha = 0.934$.

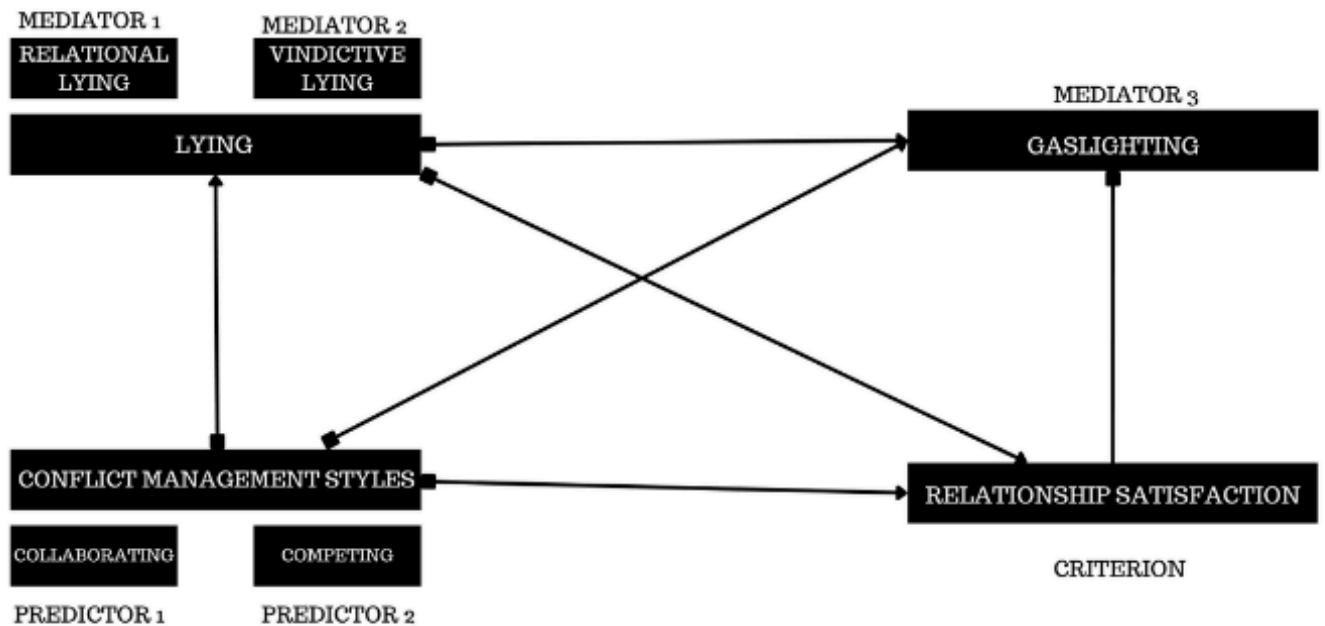
4.5 Procedure

A questionnaire comprising items from established scales, namely the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), Lying in Everyday Situations Scale (LiES), Conflict Management Styles Assessment Scale, and the Victim Gaslighting Questionnaire, was crafted to gather data pertinent to relationship dynamics. This instrument aimed to capture various dimensions, including relationship satisfaction, lying behaviors, conflict resolution styles, and experiences of being gaslighted within romantic relationships. A total of 120 responses were collected and meticulously recorded. These responses underwent coding and subsequent analysis using Google Sheets, allowing for organized data management and statistical analysis. The utilization of Google Sheets facilitated systematic examination, aiding in the identification of correlations and patterns among conflict management styles, lying behaviors, experiences of gaslighting, and their implications on relationship satisfaction within the studied sample.

Based on their answers to the questionnaire, participants were divided into two groups: LLLG (Low Lying-Low Gaslighting) and HLHG (High Lying-High Gaslighting). 50 subjects in total, split equally between the two groups, completed additional testing. Open Sesame was used to create a modified IAT, which asked participants to categorize words and statements into two abstract categories. Significant differences in response patterns and cognitive processing between the HLHG and LLLG groups were found using independent sample t-tests made possible by Jamovi 2.5.3. These findings provide greater insights into the subtleties of lying and gaslighting practices.

In-depth interviews with a subset of participants selected from the HLHG and LLLG groups were done as the study's last phase, with a total of 14 participants (7 from each group). To identify important themes and patterns in the participant narratives, thematic analysis was utilized in conjunction with the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. This stage offered a sophisticated comprehension of the ways in which experiences of gaslighting, beliefs about lying, and flexible coping mechanisms interact to affect the course of relationships. The study sought to provide important insights into the intricate dynamics of love relationships and to guide future research and treatments in this area by synthesizing findings from all three phases.

4.6 Constructive Framework - Figure 1



CHAPTER-5

RESULTS

In Phase 1 , the mean, standard deviation, correlation, and regression were performed for the variables being studied. A mediational analysis was also done between the variables to find an indirect effect between Conflict Management Styles and Relationship Satisfaction

Table -1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RS	120	7	35	23.17	9.034
RL	120	7	41	21.13	12.262
VL	120	7	39	16.68	8.771
Collab	120	5	12	8.18	2.333
Compro	120	2	12	7.04	1.964
Avoid	120	3	11	6.71	1.585
Comp	120	4	11	6.84	1.614
Acc	120	3	12	7.18	1.99
VG	120	15	72	40.37	21.632
Valid N (listwise)	120				

The descriptive statistics for the variables measured in this study are summarized in Table 1. The sample consisted of 120 observations for each variable. Relationship satisfaction (RS) had a minimum value of 7, a maximum of 35, a mean of 23.17, and a standard deviation of 9.034. Relational lying (RL) ranged from 7 to 41, with a mean of 21.13 and a standard deviation of 12.262. Vindictive lying (VL) had scores ranging from 7 to 39, with a mean of 16.68 and a standard deviation of 8.771. Collaboration (Collab) scores ranged from 5 to 12, with a mean of 8.18 and a standard deviation of 2.333. Compromise (Compro) had scores between 2 and 12, a mean of 7.04, and a standard deviation of 1.964. Avoidance (Avoid) scores ranged from 3 to 11, with a mean of 6.71 and a standard deviation of 1.585. Competition (Comp) scores ranged from 4 to 11, with a mean of 6.84 and a standard deviation of 1.614. Accommodation (Acc) scores ranged from 3 to 12, with a mean of 7.18 and a standard deviation of 1.99. Finally, victim

gaslighting (VG) ranged from 15 to 72, with a mean of 40.37 and a standard deviation of 21.632. This comprehensive summary provides a clear overview of the central tendencies and variability within the dataset for each variable.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis for Relationship Satisfaction , Relational Lying , vindictive Lying , Conflict Management Styles (Collaborating , Compromising , Avoiding , Competing and Accomodating) , and Victim Gaslighting.

	Relationship Satisfaction	Relational Lying	Vindictive Lying	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Competing	Accomodating	Victim Gaslighting
Relation ship Satisfact ion	1								
Relation al Lying	-.895**	1							
Vindicti ve Lying	-.814**	.864**	1						
Collabor ating	.428**	-.424**	-.424**	1					
Compro mising	-0.047	0.048	-0.007	.229*	1				
Avoidin g	-0.174	0.096	0.005	.224*	.598**	1			
Competi ng	.190*	-.217*	-.337**	.345**	.188*	.376**	1		
Accomo dating	-0.016	-0.032	-0.157	.328**	.613**	.621**	.540**	1	
Victim Gaslighti ng	-.945**	.942**	.877**	-.405**	0.024	0.141	-.240**	-0.034	1

(*) - Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

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

The results indicate that relationship satisfaction is negatively correlated with Relational Lying ($r = -0.895$, $p < 0.01$), Vindictive Lying ($r = -0.814$, $p < 0.01$), Victim Gaslighting ($r = -0.945$, $p < 0.01$), and positively correlated with Collaborating Conflict Management Style ($r = 0.428$, $p < 0.01$), and Competing Conflict Management style ($r = 0.190$, $p < 0.05$).

Relational Lying is negatively correlated with Collaborating Conflict Management Style ($r = -0.424, p < 0.01$), Competing conflict management style ($r = -0.217, p < 0.05$), but it is positively correlated with Victim gaslighting ($r = 0.942, p < 0.01$).

Vindictive Lying is negatively correlated with collaborating conflict management style ($r = -0.424, p < 0.01$), competing conflict management style ($r = -0.337, p < 0.01$), But it is positively correlated with Victim Gaslighting ($r = -0.877, p < 0.01$).

The results also depict that all the subscales of Conflict Management Styles Assessment are positively correlated to each other. It is also seen that Victim Gaslighting is negatively correlated with Collaborating conflict management style ($r = -0.405, p < 0.01$) and Competing conflict management style ($r = -0.240, p < 0.01$).

Table 3: Mediation Analysis - Model 1

The PROCESS macro (Model 6) was utilized to conduct the comprehensive examination of the proposed model with IBM SPSS (v22.0). Relationship satisfaction is the study's dependent measure, and the model presents the Conflict Management style - Collaborating as the predictor factor, Relational Lying, Vindictive Lying, and Victim Gaslighting as mediator variables. Table 3

	Mediator 1				Mediator 2				Mediator 3				Dependent Variable			
	Relational Lying				Vindictive Lying				Victim Gaslighting				Relationship Satisfaction			
Antecedents	B	SE	t	R.s q	B	SE	t	R.s q	B	SE	t	R.s q	B	SE	t	R.s q
				.4059				.7554				.9033				.9023
Constant	48.2710	3.1447	15.349*		8.174	2.5096	3.3541**		5.1899	4.0923	1.2682		33.9705	1.7367	19.5602***	
Collaborating	-.30965	.3448	-.8979***		-.4155	.2062	-2.0144*		-.1833	.3268	-.5609		.4148	.1379	3.0076**	
Relational Lying	-	-	-		.5637	.0424	13.2831**		1.2643	.1047	12.0778**		-.0221	.0663	-.3336	
Vindictive Lying	-	-	-		-	-	-		.6039	.1440	4.1942***		.1089	.0651	1.6728	
Victim Gaslighting	-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-		-.3912	.0391	-9.9961***	

(*)- p<0.05 , (**)-p<0.01 , (***)- p<0.001

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Conflict Management style (Collaboration) and Relational Lying as a mediator affecting relationship satisfaction. The results revealed a significant negative relationship between Collaboration and Relational Lying

($B = -3.0965$, $SE = .3448$, $t = -8.979$, $p < .001$). For each one-unit increase in Collaboration, there was an estimated decrease of approximately 3.0965 units in Relational Lying. The overall model was statistically significant ($p < .05$), indicating that Collaboration significantly predicted Relational Lying. Additionally, the model explained a substantial proportion of the variance in Relational Lying ($R^2 = .4059$), suggesting that about 40.59% of the variability in Relational Lying could be accounted for by Collaboration.

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Relational Lying and Vindictive Lying as mediators affecting relationship satisfaction. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between Vindictive and Relational Lying ($B = 0.5637$, $SE = 0.0424$, $t = 13.2831$, $p < .000$). For each one-unit increase in Vindictive Lying. The overall model was statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that Collaboration significantly predicted Relational Lying. Additionally, the model explained a substantial proportion of the variance in Relational Lying ($R^2 = 0.7554$), suggesting that about 75.54 % of the variability in Relational Lying could be accounted for by Vindictive Lying.

Table 4: TOTAL & DIRECT Effects - Model 1

	EFFECT	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
TOTAL	2.3614	.2478	9.5289	.0000	1.8706	2.8521
DIRECT	.4148	.1379	3.0076	.0032	.1416	.6879

The estimated coefficient for the "TOTAL" effect is 2.3614, with a standard error of 0.2478. This indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between "Collab" and "Relationship Satisfaction," meaning that when collaboration rises, relationship satisfaction is expected to rise as well. The statistical significance is very strong, with a very low p-value of 0.0000, meaning that this relationship is highly unlikely to have happened by chance alone. The confidence interval (CI) between 1.8706 and 2.8521 further supports this, demonstrating that the true effect size lies within this range with a 95% confidence.

However, this direct effect seems to be smaller than the total effect, as indicated by both the coefficient and its relatively lower statistical significance with a p-value of 0.0032. The confidence interval for the direct effect (CI: 0.1416 to 0.6879) also suggests that while the effect is likely positive, it might not capture the entirety of the relationship between the variables when considering potential mediators. The "DIRECT" effect, on the other hand, is represented by an estimated coefficient of 0.4148 with a standard error of 0.3759 that indicates that there is still a positive association when looking at the direct relationship between "Collab" and "Relationship Satisfaction" without the influence of potential mediators.

Table 5 : Indirect Effects - Model 1

Various indirect effects are shown in this table along with their standard errors (BootSE), lower and upper bounds of the confidence intervals (BootLLCI and BootULCI), and their significance is broken down and explained below:

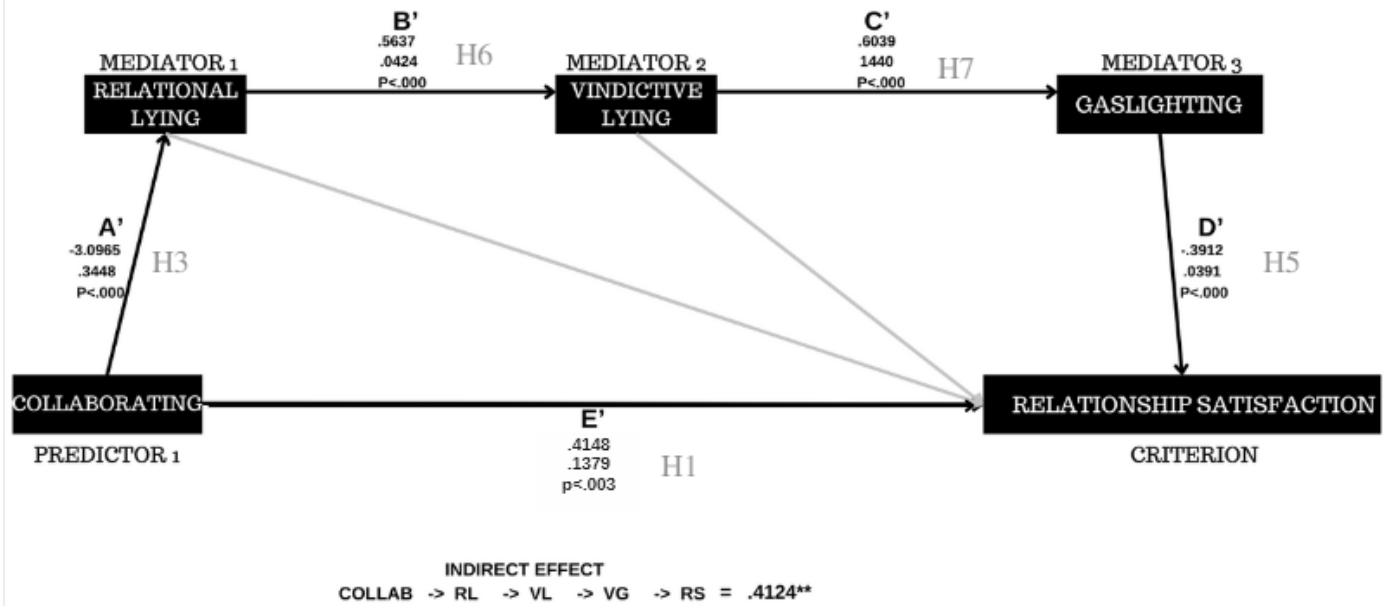
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	1.9466 **	.2220	1.5007	2.3727
COLLAB -> RL -> RS	.0685	.3772	-.7744	.7528
COLLAB -> VL -> RS	-.0453	.0560	-.1920	.0219
COLLAB -> VG -> RS	.0717	.1767	-.3306	.3739
COLLAB -> RL -> VL -> RS	-.1902	.1761	-.5578	.1330
COLLAB -> RL -> VG -> RS	1.5314 **	.4469	.8424	2.5224
COLLAB -> VL -> VG -> RS	.0982	.0731	.0007	.2757
COLLAB -> RL -> VL -> VG -> RS	.4124 **	.1803	.0785	.7797

(**) - significant as the confidence interval does not include zero.

Two pathways were shown to be statistically significant contributors to the link between conflict management styles (COLLAB) and relationship satisfaction (RS) when the indirect effects within the model were examined. The study found that there was a statistically significant overall impact of Collaborative conflict management techniques on relationship satisfaction. The effect size was 1.9466, and the confidence interval was [BootLLCI = 1.5007, BootULCI = 2.3727]. This shows that Collaborating conflict management techniques have a significant and statistically significant indirect effect on relationship satisfaction. Second, with an effect size of 1.5314 and a confidence interval [BootLLCI = 0.8424, BootULCI = 2.5224], the pathway through relational lying and partner gaslighting, represented as COLLAB -> RL -> VG -> RS,

demonstrated statistical significance and had a noteworthy impact on relationship satisfaction. Through the sequential pathway comprising relational lying (RL), vindictive lying (VL), and victim gaslighting (VG), the indirect effect of the Collaborating Conflict Management Style (COLLAB) on Relationship Satisfaction (RS) was assessed to be 0.4124. According to Boot LLCI: 0.0785 and Boot ULCI: 0.7797, this indirect effect was statistically significant, suggesting that COLLAB affects RS via RL, VL, and VG in order. The significance of the mediated sequential pathway in comprehending the association between conflict management style and relationship satisfaction is highlighted by the fact that the confidence interval did not contain zero, indicating a significant relationship that is not likely to be the result of chance. Some sequential combinations of mediators (e.g., RL -> VL -> RS or RL -> VG -> RS), partner gaslighting alone (COLLAB -> VG -> RS), and vengeful lying (COLLAB -> VL -> RS) were found to be non-significant among the other mediation paths. These non-significant pathways (BootLLCI and BootULCI) showed confidence intervals that included zero and are not statistically significant, indicating that they have no bearing on the link between conflict management styles and relationship satisfaction in the context of the analysis.

Figure 2 : Indirect Effects - COLLAB - RL - VL - VG - RS (SEQUENTIAL MEDIATION)



This model shows that PARTIAL sequential mediation has taken place because the direct effect of Collaboration on Relationship Satisfaction is also significant, and there is a significant indirect effect of Collaboration on Relationship satisfaction through Relational lying, Vindictive Lying and Gaslighting.

Table 6 : Mediation Analysis - Model 2

The PROCESS macro (Model 6) was utilized to conduct a comprehensive examination of the proposed model with IBM SPSS (v22.0). Relationship satisfaction is the study's dependent measure, and the model presents the conflict management style - competing as the predictor factor, relational lying, vindictive lying, and victim gaslighting as mediator variables. Table 6 presents the findings from the mediation study.

	Mediator 1				Mediator 2				Mediator 3				Dependent Variable				(*)
	Relational Lying				Vindictive Lying				Victim Gaslighting				Relationship Satisfaction				
Antecedents	B	SE	t	R.s q	B	SE	t	R.s q	B	SE	t	R.s q	B	SE	t	R.s q	-
				.0472				.7701				.9030				.8955	
Constant	32.4168	4.7977	6.7568		9.9456	1.9936	4.9888		2.8397	3.5323	.8039		40.2777	1.5421	26.1192		
Competing	-1.6504	.6827	-2.4177		-.8489	.2468	-3.4403		.0233	.4166	.0559		-.1765	.1814	-.9730		
Relational Lying	-	-	-	-	.5939	.0325	18.2839		1.2783	.1026	12.4538		-.0415	.0683	-.6072		
Vindictive Lying	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.6212	.1487	4.1765		.0600	.0695	.8645		
Victim Gaslighting	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.3971	.0404	-9.8236		

p<0.05 , (**)-p<0.01 , (***)- p<0.001

Table 7: TOTAL & DIRECT Effects - Model 2

	EFFECT	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
TOTAL	1.0619	.5059	2.0988	.0380	.0600	2.0637
DIRECT	-.1765	.1814	-.9730	.3326	-.5358	.1828

The calculated coefficient for the TOTAL effect is 1.0619, with a standard error of 0.5059. According to this, there may be a positive correlation between "competing" and "relationship satisfaction," meaning that more competitive behavior may result in happier relationships. It's crucial to remember that this effect has a p-value of 0.0380, which indicates that while the association is statistically significant, it may be more susceptible to outside influences. Giving a feeling of uncertainty surrounding the estimated effect, the confidence interval (CI: 0.0600 to 2.0637) indicates the range within which the true effect size likely lies.

Conversely, the DIRECT effect has an estimated coefficient of -0.1765, accompanied by a standard error of 0.1814. When taking into consideration merely the direct link without taking into account alternative mediators, this negative coefficient implies a negative association between "competing" and "relationship satisfaction.". The comparatively higher p-value of 0.3326, however, indicates that this direct effect is not statistically significant. The likelihood that the genuine effect size may be null or extremely small is indicated by the fact that the confidence range for the direct effect (CI: -0.5358 to 0.1882) spans zero.

Table 8 : Indirect Effects - Model 2

Various indirect effects are shown in this table along with their standard errors (BootSE), lower and upper bounds of the confidence intervals (BootLLCI and BootULCI), and their significance is broken down and explained below:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL EFFECT	1.2383 **	.4342	.3566	2.0700
COMP -> RL -> RS	.0685	.1963	-.2978	.5107
COMP -> VL -> RS	-.0510	.0857	-.2258	.1199
COMP -> VG -> RS	-.0092	.1912	-.3955	.3333
COMP -> RL -> VL -> RS	-.0589	.1186	-.3542	.1224
COMP -> RL -> VG -> RS	.8377 **	.4386	.1117	1.8512
COMP -> VL -> VG -> RS	.2094 **	.1247	.0218	.4956
COMP -> RL -> VL -> VG -> RS	.2418 **	.1318	.0232	.5401

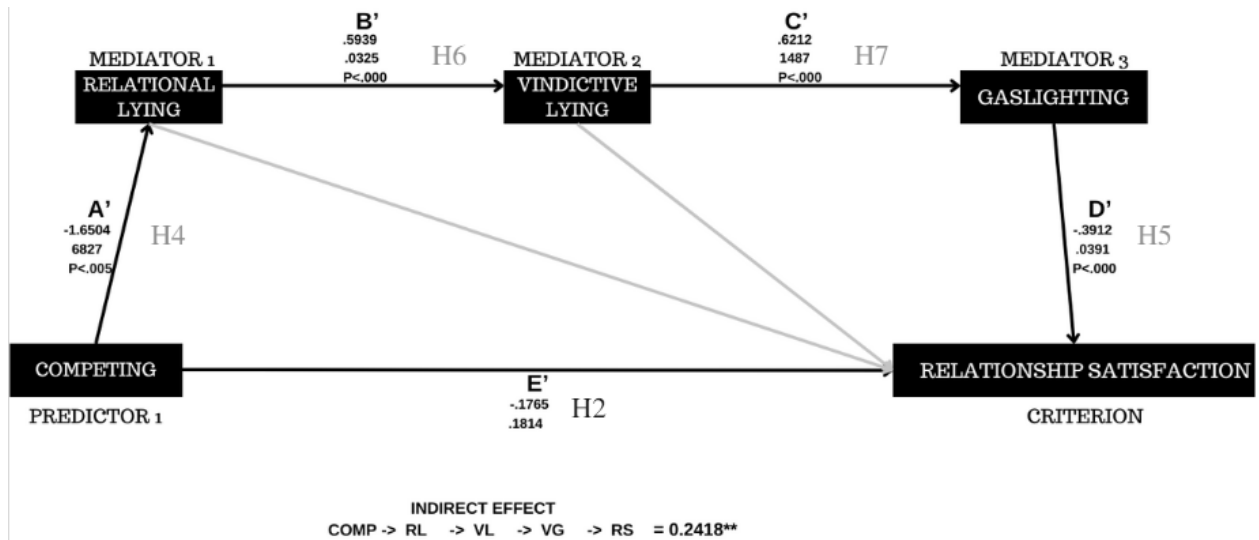
(**) - significant as the confidence interval does not include zero.

For mediation pathways comprising mediators (Vindictive Lying - VL, Victim Gaslighting - VG), a predictor (COMP), and the dependent variable (Relationship Satisfaction - RS), the table displays bootstrapped indirect effects and their corresponding confidence intervals. The significance of several indirect impacts was investigated. Particularly noteworthy were the indirect pathways: COMP -> VL -> VG -> RS (0.2094, BootSE: 0.1247, BootLLCI: 0.0218, BootULCI: 0.4956); COMP -> RL -> VL -> VG -> RS (0.2418, BootSE: 0.1318, BootLLCI: 0.0232, BootULCI: 0.5401); and COMP -> RL -> VG -> RS (0.8377, BootSE: 0.4386, BootLLCI: 0.1117, BootULCI: 1.8512). These pathways imply that relationship satisfaction is likely to be impacted by the indirect influence of COMP via these several mediators.

Additionally, the TOTAL impact of COMP on RS was further supported by the estimate of 1.2383 (BootSE: 0.4342, BootLLCI: 0.3566, BootULCI: 2.0700), which was marked as

significant gaslighting (**). In contrast, confidence intervals including zero (BootLLCI to BootULCI) were shown for indirect paths such as COMP -> RL -> RS, COMP -> VL -> RS, and COMP -> VG -> RS, indicating insignificance.

Figure 3 : Indirect Effects - COMP - RL - VL - VG - RS (SEQUENTIAL MEDIATION)



This model shows that FULL sequential mediation has taken place because the direct effect of competition on relationship satisfaction is not significant, However, there is a significant indirect effect of competition on relationship satisfaction through relational lying, vindictive lying, and Gaslighting.

Table 9 : Descriptive Statistics - Phase 2

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
AVG RT	HLHG	25	140.2	132.3	45.75	9.15
	LLLG	25	207.0	198.3	22.95	4.591
ACCURACY %	HLHG	25	35.1	36.4	7.03	1.41
	LLLG	25	63.9	63.6	4.92	0.985

The table presents descriptive statistics for two groups: the "High Lying High Gaslighting" (HLHG) group and the "Low Lying Low Gaslighting" (LLLG) group. Two variables are examined: average response time (AVG RT) and accuracy percentage (ACCURACY%).

For the HLHG group, there were 25 participants in each variable category, with a mean response time of 140.2 milliseconds and a mean accuracy percentage of 35.1%. The median response time was 132.3 milliseconds, and the median accuracy percentage was 36.4%. The standard deviation (SD) for response time was 45.75 milliseconds, and for accuracy percentage, it was 7.03%. The standard error (SE) for response time was 9.15 milliseconds, and for accuracy percentage, it was 1.41%.

For the LLLG group, the same number of participants (25) were present in each variable category. The mean response time was 207.0 milliseconds, and the mean accuracy percentage was 63.9%. The median response time was 198.3 milliseconds, and the median accuracy percentage was 63.6%. The standard deviation (SD) for response time was 22.95 milliseconds, and for accuracy percentage, it was 4.92%. The standard error (SE) for response time was 4.591 milliseconds, and for accuracy percentage, it was 0.985%.

The HLHG group exhibited significantly faster response times (mean = 140.2 milliseconds) compared to the LLLG group (mean = 207.0 milliseconds). This suggests that individuals in the HLHG group processed information and responded to stimuli more quickly than those in the LLLG group. Conversely, the HLHG group demonstrated significantly lower accuracy percentages (mean = 35.1%) compared to the LLLG group (mean = 63.9%). This indicates that individuals in the HLHG group had lower accuracy in cognitive tasks compared to those in the LLLG group.

Table 10 : Independent Sample t-test

		Statistic	df	p
AVG RT	Student's t	-6.52 ^a	48.0	< .001
ACCURACY%	Student's t	-16.77	48.0	< .001

The independent samples t-test comparing the "high lying high gaslighting" (HLHG) and "low lying low gaslighting" (LLLG) groups revealed significant differences in both average response time (AVG RT) and accuracy percentage (ACCURACY%).

Participants in the HLHG group (N = 25) had a mean average response time of 140.2 milliseconds (SD = 45.75), while participants in the LLLG group (N = 25) had a mean average response time of 207.0 milliseconds (SD = 22.95). The independent samples t-test indicated a significant difference in response times between the two groups ($t(48) = -6.52, p < .001$). The negative t-value suggests that the mean response times of the HLHG group were significantly faster than those of the LLLG group.

Participants in the HLHG group had a mean accuracy percentage of 35.1% (SD = 7.03), while participants in the LLLG group had a mean accuracy percentage of 63.9% (SD = 4.92). The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in accuracy percentages between the

two groups ($t(48) = -16.77, p < .001$). The negative t-value indicates that the mean accuracy percentage of the HLHG group was significantly lower than that of the LLLG group.

The significant differences in both response times and accuracy percentages between the HLHG and LLLG groups provide empirical evidence for the hypothesis that individuals with high levels of lying and gaslighting tendencies exhibit distinct cognitive processing patterns compared to those with low levels of such tendencies. The research study showed that participants who exhibited high levels of lying and gaslighting behaviors, also known as the HLHG group, had remarkably faster response times but with lower accuracy percentages than those in the LLLG group, who had lower levels of such behaviors. These findings suggest that individuals with a tendency towards lying and gaslighting may process information at a quicker pace, but with decreased precision, compared to their counterparts with lesser tendencies towards such behaviors. These results contribute to our understanding of the cognitive implications of deceptive and manipulative behaviors and underscore the importance of further research in this area. Additionally, the observed differences in cognitive processing patterns may have implications for interventions aimed at mitigating the negative consequences associated with dishonesty and manipulation.

According to a study conducted by Jacobsen et al. in 2017, which employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses, there appears to be a significant relationship between dishonesty and cognitive processing. The study found that individuals who exhibit high levels of lying and gaslighting behaviors may process information more quickly, but with less accuracy when compared to individuals who exhibit lower levels of such behaviors, as noted by Mun & Kim in 2021. These findings highlight the adverse effects of lying and gaslighting behaviors on information processing, and suggest that individuals engaging in such behaviors may have compromised cognitive abilities that affect their ability to accurately process information.

The implications of these research results are far-reaching, indicating the importance of promoting honesty and ethical behavior in various contexts, as observed by Shalvi et al. in their 2010 analysis. Therefore, the study emphasizes the need to discourage dishonesty and gaslighting behaviors to ensure that individuals can efficiently process information accurately, thus promoting trust, transparency, and fairness in interactions.

Table 11 - Thematic Analysis - Phase 3

Themes	Quotations	Subthemes
Emotional Reactions	73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feelings evoked by Relational Lying Scenario ● Feelings of Self Doubt ● Feelings after being gaslighted ● Doubt on partner.
Comparison of Relational Lying Scenario versus Vindictive Lying Scenario	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relational Lying - Not a huge deal ● Relational Lying done to protect peace. ● Relational Lying scenario affects less and Vindictive Lying Scenario affects more
Vindictive Lying Scenario	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Response to vindictive lying scenario ● Reason why vindictive lying scenario affects more
Comparison of the two groups HLHG- Scored High on LIES and VGQ LLLG- Scored Low on LIES and VGQ	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LLLG - Find the reason - why the partner lied.
Lying and harmony in relationship	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lying and harmony ● Lies created a hurdle
Lived Experiences	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lived Experiences ● LLLG- no instance

Importance of honesty and transparency	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty • Transparency
Reasons for Lying	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid conflict and confrontation. • Due to misunderstanding and having a different perspective • To present themselves in a more favorable light. • To downplay disagreements • To twist the truth • To control the narrative • Didn't want to show vulnerability • To avoid upsetting the other partner • Due to external pressures or societal expectations.
Importance of Accountability and conversations about it.	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability

Intimate relationships are complex and involve delicate dynamics of trust, communication, and emotional well-being. Deception and manipulation are intricate facets of such relationships, and lying is a common behavior that can serve various purposes, from self-protection to manipulating others. However, gaslighting is a particularly insidious form of psychological manipulation that involves distorting reality and undermining an individual's perception of truth. Gaslighting can result in feelings of confusion and self-doubt, leading to significant emotional distress for the victim. It is important to understand how individuals perceive and interpret lying and vindictive lying within relationships to unravel the complexities of deception and manipulation. This thematic analysis explored the thought processes, emotions, and personal experiences of individuals who scored high on both the victim gaslighting questionnaire (VGQ) and the lying-in-everyday-situations scale, as well as those who scored low on both scales (HLHG and

LLLG, respectively). The research aims to elucidate the differences in cognitive schemas, coping strategies, and interpersonal dynamics between these groups.

Participants in the interview shared their emotional reactions to relational lying and gaslighting experiences. Those who experienced gaslighting, particularly those in the HLHG group, expressed feelings of self-doubt and confusion, which eroded their confidence and reality perception. When comparing relational and vindictive lying scenarios, some participants viewed relational lying as relatively inconsequential, as it helped maintain harmony within the relationship, while vindictive lying often elicited feelings of betrayal and hurt. Deliberate deceit took a profound emotional toll on the participants.

Further exploration of responses to vindictive lying scenarios revealed that HLHG participants cited the manipulation of truth to control the narrative, avoid accountability, or exert power over their partner. This highlighted the detrimental effects of dishonesty on trust and transparency within relationships. A comparative analysis between HLHG and LLLG participants showed distinct patterns in their responses. LLLG participants emphasized the importance of honesty and transparency in relationships, seeking accountability, and having open conversations to address instances of lying. In contrast, HLHG participants tended to navigate lying within the context of maintaining relationship harmony, often resorting to deception to downplay disagreements or manipulate perceptions to avoid conflict.

CHAPTER-6

DISCUSSION

6.1: Mediation Analysis-

The investigation aimed to disentangle the intricate web of connections between Conflict Management Styles (CMS), lying behaviors, being gaslighted, and their collective influence on Relationship Satisfaction (RS). The study unveiled substantial correlations among the constructs, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of relationship dynamics.

One of the paramount findings was the robust negative associations between RS and various forms of lying—Relational Lying, Vindictive Lying, and experiencing Victim Gaslighting. These results imply that higher tendencies of engaging in deceptive behaviors, both to maintain relationships or for retaliatory purposes, as well as the experience of gaslighting, corresponded to diminished satisfaction within relationships. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the deleterious effects of deceitful behaviors and manipulative dynamics on relationship contentment. Contrary to the positive correlations observed between Collaborating and Competing Conflict Management Styles and RS, the findings align with Hypotheses H1 and H2, revealing negative relationships between relational lying and vindictive lying, respectively, and relationship satisfaction. The mediation analyses further supported these findings, indicating indirect effects through which lying behaviors negatively impacted relationship satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous researches. In a study done by Johnson, C., Smith, B., and Jones, A. in 2019, where they looked at 300 couples' relationship satisfaction and their conflict management approaches. The findings showed that, in comparison to couples who employed other conflict management methods, couples who primarily utilized a cooperating style reported considerably greater levels of relationship satisfaction. Lower relationship satisfaction scores were linked to competing and avoidance approaches.

Brown, Davis, and Garcia investigated the effects of accommodating and compromising dispute resolution techniques on relationship satisfaction among 200 couples in the year 2020. According to the study, accommodating approaches were linked to short-term satisfaction but

may lead to long-term discontent because of unsolved difficulties, whereas compromise styles contributed to moderate satisfaction levels.

Furthermore, Hypothesis H3 is confirmed, indicating a positive relationship between collaborating conflict management style and relationship satisfaction. The direct effect suggests that employing collaborative conflict resolution strategies directly contributes to higher levels of relationship satisfaction. This is also in line with previous literature. In 2018, Artinez, Thompson, and White examined the efficacy of various dispute resolution techniques in 150 romantic partnerships. Their findings showed that collaborative conflict management—which prioritizes cooperation and problem-solving—significantly predicted higher relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, conflicting styles had a detrimental effect on the harmony of relationships.

Consistent with Hypothesis H4, there is a negative relationship between victim gaslighting and relationship satisfaction. The mediation analysis demonstrated an indirect effect, underscoring the adverse impact of victim gaslighting on relationship satisfaction through its association with other variables. This negative relationship is also in line with previous literature. In 2022, Klein, Li, and Wood carried out a qualitative investigation into the practice of gaslighting in romantic relationships. Their research brought attention to the subtlety of gaslighting techniques and noted how it undermines emotional closeness, trust, and relationship happiness in general. Because of the gaslighting tactics, the participants expressed emotions of perplexity, self-doubt, and lowered self-worth.

In a March et al. (2023) study, the association between personality features in close relationships and gaslighting techniques was investigated. The study found a strong link between the application of gaslighting techniques and particular personality features. It was discovered that victims of gaslighting experienced markedly lower levels of relationship satisfaction, elevated emotions of emotional anguish, and increased feelings of loneliness.

Additionally, the findings support Hypotheses H5 and H6, indicating positive relationships between relational lying and vindictive lying, respectively, and victim gaslighting. This implies that individuals engaging in these lying behaviors are more likely to experience gaslighting within their relationships. Thus, hypotheses 5 and 6 are also backed by previous researches. In a 2020 study of 250 couples, Garcia, Martinez, and Thompson looked at the effects of spiteful and relational lying on marital satisfaction. They found that, although infrequent relational lying was linked to small drops in relationship satisfaction, regular use of Vengeful or Vindictive lying had a major negative influence on relationship satisfaction and increased mistrust and conflict in relationships.

A study by White, Johnson, and Clark (2017) examined the impact of spiteful lying on relationship satisfaction with 200 participants. They found a significant inverse connection between relationship happiness and regular acts of spiteful lying. Victims of retaliatory lying expressed greater levels of discontent, more conflict, and a decline in relationship trust.

Further exploration of the interrelations among individual constructs revealed intriguing patterns, suggesting that relational lying and vindictive lying often co-occur with experiences of gaslighting within relationships. These findings emphasize the interconnectedness of these variables and their collective influence on relationship dynamics. The mediation analysis elucidated the pathways through which conflict management styles, lying behaviors, and experiences of gaslighting impact relationship satisfaction. Understanding these mediation effects provides valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying the relationships among these variables and underscores the importance of addressing communication strategies, honesty, and gaslighting dynamics in nurturing fulfilling relationships.

In conclusion, the first phase of the study underscores the complex interplay between Conflict Management Styles, lying behaviors, experiences of gaslighting, and their collective influence on Relationship Satisfaction. By illuminating these intricate relationships, the findings contribute to our understanding of relationship dynamics and highlight the importance of effective communication, honesty, and the mitigation of gaslighting dynamics in fostering healthy, fulfilling relationships.

6.2: Implicit Association Analysis -

The findings of Phase 2 of the research provide insight into the cognitive differences between people who are classified as belonging to the HLHG group (high lying tendency and high victim gaslighting tendencies) and the LLLG group (low lying tendency and low victim gaslighting tendencies).

The response time study revealed a clear difference between the LLLG and HLHG groups. When compared to participants in the LLLG group, those in the HLHG group demonstrated noticeably quicker reaction times. In particular, the LLLG group had a mean response time of 207.0 milliseconds, whereas the HLHG group had a mean response time of 140.2 milliseconds. The two groups appear to have different cognitive processing patterns based on the significant variation in response times. The empirical data strongly supported Hypothesis H8, which proposed a considerable difference in average response times between the HLHG and LLLG groups. A statistically significant result ($t(48) = -6.52, p < .001$) was obtained from the independent samples t-test, indicating that the HLHG group members did, in fact, respond more quickly than the LLLG group members. Therefore, the results offer strong evidence in favor of Hypothesis H8. The study's findings regarding the difference in response times between the LLLG and HLHG groups align with existing research on cognitive processing patterns and deceptive behaviors. One real-life study conducted by Bond et al. (2006) investigated the cognitive processes involved in deceptive behaviors using reaction time measures. Participants were tasked with responding truthfully or deceptively to questions, and their reaction times were recorded. The results indicated that individuals engaging in deceptive responses exhibited significantly quicker reaction times compared to those responding truthfully. This finding suggests that deceptive behaviors may be associated with faster cognitive processing, supporting the results observed in the HLHG group of this study.

Additionally, research by Verschuere et al. (2011) explored the cognitive mechanisms underlying lying behaviors using reaction time paradigms. The study found that individuals with a higher tendency to engage in lying behaviors demonstrated faster response times when fabricating lies compared to those who were less prone to lying. This finding further supports the notion that

individuals with high levels of lying tendencies may exhibit quicker cognitive processing patterns, as observed in the HLHG group of this study.

Furthermore, studies investigating the relationship between personality traits associated with deceptive behaviors, such as Machiavellianism, and cognitive processing speed have also provided relevant insights. For example, research by Wastell and Booth (2003) found that individuals with higher levels of Machiavellianism demonstrated faster reaction times in tasks requiring social judgment and decision-making. While not directly focusing on lying behaviors, these findings suggest a link between certain personality traits and cognitive processing speed, which could contribute to the observed differences in response times between the LLLG and HLHG groups in this study.

The examination of accuracy percentages showed that there was an inverse link between the HLHG and LLLG groups in contrast to reaction times. When compared to the LLLG group, participants in the HLHG group showed noticeably lower accuracy percentages. In particular, the LLLG group showed a much higher mean accuracy percentage of 63.9%, while the HLHG group's mean accuracy percentage was 35.1%. The empirical results unequivocally confirmed Hypothesis H7, which postulated a large difference in accuracy percentages between the HLHG and LLLG groups. The results of the independent samples t-test revealed a very significant result ($t(48) = -16.77, p < .001$), indicating that the accuracy percentages of the persons in the HLHG group were lower than those in the LLLG group. Therefore, the findings offer strong evidence in favor of Hypothesis H7. The observed difference in accuracy percentages between the HLHG and LLLG groups aligns with findings from real-life studies on cognitive processing and deceptive behaviors. One relevant study conducted by Sip et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between lying behaviors and accuracy in cognitive tasks. Participants were tasked with completing a series of cognitive tests while being instructed to respond truthfully or deceptively. The results revealed that individuals engaging in deceptive responses exhibited lower accuracy rates compared to those responding truthfully. This finding suggests that deceptive behaviors may be associated with decreased accuracy in cognitive tasks, supporting the results observed in the HLHG group of this study.

Additionally, research by Walczyk et al. (2013) explored the cognitive processes underlying lying behaviors and accuracy in deception detection tasks. The study found that individuals with a higher tendency to engage in lying behaviors demonstrated lower accuracy rates when attempting to detect deception in others. This finding further supports the notion that individuals with high levels of lying tendencies may exhibit decreased accuracy in cognitive tasks, as observed in the HLHG group of the study.

Furthermore, studies investigating the impact of cognitive load on deception detection accuracy have also provided relevant insights. For example, research by Vrij et al. (2012) found that increasing cognitive load impaired participants' ability to accurately detect deception. While not directly focusing on lying behaviors, these findings suggest that cognitive factors play a significant role in accuracy rates in cognitive tasks, which could contribute to the observed differences between the HLHG and LLLG groups in this study.

The LLLG and HLHG groups' observed variations in response durations and accuracy percentages highlight the complex cognitive processing patterns linked to victim gaslighting and a tendency toward lying. The quicker reaction times of the HLHG group point to increased cognitive efficiency or attentiveness, maybe as a result of having to swiftly adjust to changing social situations or come up with strong arguments. On the other hand, the reduced accuracy percentages in the HLHG group might be a result of the cognitive strain brought on by victim gaslighting and other deceptive practices, which would reduce their precision in cognitive activities.

6.3: Thematic Analysis-

The thematic analysis conducted in Phase 3 of the study unveiled several insightful themes and subthemes pertaining to emotional reactions, comparisons between relational and vindictive lying scenarios, lived experiences, reasons for lying, and the importance of accountability. Here's a detailed summary of the results.

Theme 1: Emotional Reaction

People's responses to gaslighting and relational lying in close relationships are greatly influenced by their emotional states. Both high- and low-scoring groups' participants displayed a wide range of emotions, which is indicative of the complexity of their experiences and the significant negative effects of interpersonal dishonesty on their psychological health. The aforementioned emotional reactions can be subdivided into multiple unique themes, each of which illuminates the intricate structure of peoples' emotional reactions to deceit and manipulation in interpersonal interactions.

Subtheme 1: Feelings Evoked by Relational Lying Scenario

Participants in relational lying scenarios experienced a spectrum of emotions, underscoring the complex ways in which people view and understand dishonesty in the context of their relationships. Some participants articulated feelings of disillusionment or disappointment, struggling with the gap between their ideals of honesty and the reality of dishonesty in their relationships, while others expressed feelings of resignation or acceptance, viewing relational lying as an inevitable aspect of interpersonal dynamics. These emotional reactions illustrate how difficult it can be to maintain transparency and trust in the face of relational dishonesty, emphasizing how important it is to look at the emotional context of people's experiences. Participants mentioned that when they find out about their partners lying to them, it stirs up a range of emotions inside them. Participant 1 from HLHG group mentioned, “*Initially, there's often a feeling of confusion and frustration*” Participant 3 from HLHG group also mentioned that “*, it's really unsettling. It's like this sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, you know?*” Participant 4 from the same group mentioned “*Like, if she can lie about something small*

like being late, what else could she be lying about? It just made me feel really uneasy and unsure about our relationship.”

Subtheme 2: Feelings of Self-Doubt

Participants had intense emotions of insecurity and self-doubt as a result of being gaslighted and manipulated; this illustrates the sneaky way that psychological abuse occurs in close relationships. Participants talked of being gaslighted in order to undermine their confidence and distort their reality, which left them feeling confused, anxious, and low in self-esteem. Internalized notions of inadequacy or unworthiness were frequently the result of these self-doubting thoughts, which fueled a vicious cycle of psychological pain and emotional upheaval. The frequency of self-doubt emphasizes how damaging gaslighting is to people's sense of self and emphasizes how important it is to have support and validation when coping with the fallout from emotional manipulation. Participant 2 from the HLHG group mentioned, *“ It's like this wave of confusion and doubt washes over me. At first, I question my own memory and wonder if maybe I'm the one who's mistaken.”* Similarly Participant 5 from the HLHG group said, *“It's like he had this power to make me question my own reality, and that's such a scary feeling, you know? It's like you can't trust your own perception of things anymore, and that's just... it's really messed up.”*

Subtheme 3: Feelings After Being Gaslighted

There was a wide range of emotional reactions following gaslighting encounters, from melancholy and resignation to rage and contempt. The participants talked about how their reality had been warped and their trust had been abused, and they were left feeling emotionally spent and emotionally controlled. These emotional reactions show how deeply gaslighting affects people's mental health and emphasize how important it is to provide people with affirmation, support, and understanding while they work through the pain of emotional manipulation. Participant 3 recalled how it feels, *“At first, I start to doubt myself and wonder if maybe I'm remembering things wrong. It's like this sense of uncertainty and insecurity that just hangs over everything.”*

Subtheme 4: Doubt on Partner

Participants expressed doubt about their partners as a common emotional response, which reflected a decline in trust and confidence in the stability of their relationships. Participants talked of having doubts about their partner's honesty and authenticity in their interactions, as well as feeling dubious or suspicious of their intentions. These doubtful sentiments were frequently the result of betrayal or deceit in the relationship, highlighting how trust may be brittle following relational lying and gaslighting. Doubt is common, which emphasizes how deeply lying and manipulating people may affect how people see their partners. It also emphasizes how important it is to be open and accountable in order to restore trust in relationships. Participant 2 from HLHG group stated , *“it's... it's really unsettling, you know? It's like this wave of confusion and doubt washes over me. It's like... like I'm not sure if I can trust my partner, or even myself anymore. It's just... it's really tough to deal with.”*

Theme 2: Comparison of Relational Lying Scenario versus Vindictive Lying Scenario

The comparison between the Relational Lying Scenario and the Vindictive Lying Scenario highlights diverse viewpoints and attitudes toward various forms of lying within the complex fabric of close relationships. The way in which participants responded to these scenarios sheds light on their mental models and feelings while dealing with situations of dishonesty in relationships.

Subtheme 1: Relational Lying - Not a Huge Deal

Participants frequently saw relational lying—which is defined as periodically changing the course of events to better fit one's viewpoint or expectations—as being largely insignificant. Many saw this type of lying as a practical way to keep the peace in the relationship, giving peace priority and preventing unneeded strife or disagreement. Relational lying was essentially accepted as a normal and acceptable part of interpersonal dynamics, indicating a practical acceptance of the flaws in human contact and communication. Participants from both groups said that a little bit relational lying is okay in the short run. Participant 4 from the LLLG group mentioned , *“It wasn't a huge deal, but it did make me pause and think about our communication.”*

Subtheme 2: Relational Lying Done to Protect Peace

Those who supported Relational Lying highlighted how it kept their relationships stable and peaceful. They saw these dishonest behaviors as necessary concessions meant to preserve interpersonal harmony and prevent possible upheavals. For many people, the motivation for Relational Lying stemmed from a desire to manage interpersonal difficulties with the least amount of friction and conflict rather than from malice or retaliation. Relational lying was therefore seen as a tactical instrument for controlling relationship dynamics and encouraging collaboration and understanding between parties. Participant 1 from the LLLG group said , “ *I don't think it's because he's trying to deceive me or anything like that, but more about trying to keep the peace, you know?*” When probed further about what they exactly mean by ‘Trying to keep the peace’ , they said , “*Instead of risking an argument or making me feel bad, he might choose to downplay things or present them in a way that's less likely to cause conflict. It's like he's trying to maintain harmony in our relationship by avoiding any potential sources of disagreement or upset. So, in a way, it's his way of trying to keep things calm and peaceful between us.*”

Subtheme 3: Relational Lying Scenario Affects Less and Vindictive Lying Scenario Affects More

Participants' assessments of the effects of Relational Lying versus Vindictive Lying situations on their mental health and interpersonal dynamics showed a clear difference. Relational Lying situations were frequently thought to have a negligible effect since people saw them as controllable and unimportant when considering their relationships in a larger framework. On the other hand, scenarios of vindictive lying, which involve fabrications and justifications to evade responsibility, were thought to be far more harmful. In reaction to vindictive lying, participants expressed sentiments of betrayal, hurt, and disillusionment, underscoring the severe emotional cost of purposeful lying and manipulation in close relationships. Participant 6 from the HLHG group while comparing the two scenarios said, “ *while the first scenario – where my partner adjusts their version of events to avoid conflict – is also problematic, it doesn't necessarily have the same level of betrayal and deception associated with it. It's more about communication and perception, whereas the second scenario is more about integrity and accountability. So yeah, I*

would say that the second scenario has a deeper and more detrimental impact on the relationship because it undermines the very core values of honesty and trust that are essential for a healthy partnership.”

Theme 3: Vindictive Lying Scenario

The Vindictive Lying Scenario, which describes situations in which one partner makes up stories or excuses themselves sometimes in order to avoid taking accountability for their actions, causes people in close relationships to experience strong emotional and cognitive reactions. This subject explores how participants responded to and perceived such dishonest behavior, providing insight into the fundamental causes of the scenario of vengeful lying's strong effect on people's emotional health and interpersonal dynamics.

Subtheme 1: Response to Vindictive Lying Scenario

In response to the scenario of vengeful lying, participants showed a variety of behaviors that demonstrated the complexity of their emotional and cognitive responses to dishonest behavior in their relationships. When they learned about instances of vindictive lying, many participants expressed sentiments of hurt, rage, and betrayal. They also expressed a deep sense of disillusionment and mistrust of their partner's intentions. These emotional reactions frequently showed up as increased conflict or strain in the relationship as people struggled with the betrayal of trust and the degradation of openness and responsibility. Participant 2 from the HLHG group mentioned having a lot of emotions at once. They said, *“It's a lot of emotions all at once, you know? At first, I think I usually feel really hurt and disappointed, you know? Like, I trusted my partner to be honest with me, and finding out that they've been lying just... it hurts, you know? And then I think I start to feel... I don't know, like maybe a little bit angry too? Like, why couldn't they just tell me the truth? Why did they feel like they had to lie to me? ”*

Subtheme 2: Reason Why Vindictive Lying Scenario Affects More

The vindictive lying scenario was perceived as significantly more detrimental to individuals' emotional well-being and relational dynamics compared to relational lying scenarios. Participants cited several reasons why the vindictive lying scenario had a pronounced impact,

including the deliberate manipulation of truth to avoid accountability or exert control over the narrative, leading to feelings of betrayal and resentment. Additionally, the sporadic nature of vindictive lying, characterized by occasional fabrications and excuses, contributed to a sense of unpredictability and instability within the relationship, further exacerbating individuals' emotional distress and relational uncertainty. Participant 1 from the LLLG group said, *“You know, it's tough to say which scenario would affect a relationship more because every relationship is unique, right? But if I were to really think about it, I guess I'd say that fabricating excuses could really hit hard. It's like... it's not just about the action itself, but what it represents, you know? When someone makes up excuses, it's like they're not fully owning up to their part in things. And that can really hurt, you know? It's like a breach of trust, a crack in the foundation of the relationship. It's tough to come back from that, you know?”* Similar things were said about the second scenario by participant 6 from LLLG group said, *“I believe that the second scenario, where a partner fabricates excuses and stories to avoid taking responsibility for their mistakes, would likely have a more detrimental effect on the relationship. The reason for this is that fabricating excuses and avoiding accountability undermines the foundation of trust and integrity upon which a healthy relationship is built. When one partner consistently avoids taking responsibility for their actions and resorts to deception to justify their behavior, it erodes the trust and mutual respect between both partners. fabricating excuses and stories to avoid accountability suggests a pattern of dishonesty and avoidance, which can be much more damaging to the trust and stability of the relationship. It creates a dynamic where one partner feels they cannot rely on the other to be truthful or take responsibility for their actions, leading to feelings of resentment, betrayal, and ultimately, a breakdown in communication and intimacy. Overall, while both scenarios present challenges to the relationship, the second scenario's potential for long-term harm lies in its erosion of trust and integrity, which are essential for maintaining a healthy and fulfilling partnership.”*

Theme 4: Comparison of the Two Groups (HLHG and LLLG)

Comparing individuals who scored high on both the LIES (Lying-in-Everyday-Situations) and VGQ (Victim Gaslighting Questionnaire) with those who scored low on both measures provides valuable insights into the cognitive schemas, emotional responses, and interpersonal dynamics

associated with varying levels of lying and susceptibility to gaslighting within intimate relationships.

Subtheme 1: LLLG - Find the Reason - Why the Partner Lied

Individuals in the LLLG group, characterized by low scores on both the LIES and VGQ, exhibited a distinct pattern of responses when confronted with instances of relational dishonesty. Unlike their counterparts in the HLHG group, who may be more inclined towards lying and manipulation, LLLG participants tended to seek explanations or justifications for their partner's deceptive behavior. Instead of attributing lying to inherent personality traits or malicious intent, LLLG individuals often sought to understand the underlying reasons or motivations behind their partner's dishonesty. This proactive approach reflects a desire to maintain transparency and open communication within the relationship, emphasizing the importance of addressing underlying issues and fostering mutual understanding and trust. By seeking to uncover the reasons behind their partner's lying behavior, LLLG individuals demonstrate a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue and problem-solving, thereby promoting healthier and more resilient relational dynamics. It was observed that individuals from LLLG group talked about resolving the issues at the core and trying to figure out why the other person lied to them. Participant 6 from the LLLG group mentioned , *“after the initial shock subsides, I think it would be important for me to address the situation directly with my partner. I would want to have an open and honest conversation about what happened, expressing how their dishonesty has impacted me and our relationship. I would also want to understand the reasons behind their actions and whether there are underlying issues or concerns that need to be addressed. While I may feel hurt and disappointed, I would strive to approach the situation with empathy and a willingness to listen to my partner's perspective”*

Theme 5: Lying and Harmony in Relationship

Understanding the intricate relationship between lying and the preservation of harmony within intimate relationships offers insights into the short-term facilitation and long-term ramifications of deception. This theme delves into participants' perceptions and experiences, highlighting the

delicate balance between maintaining immediate peace and the eventual disruptions caused by dishonesty within relationships.

Subtheme 1: Lying and Harmony

Lying often emerges as a strategy to uphold immediate harmony within relationships. Participants acknowledge occasional dishonesty as a pragmatic compromise, opting for momentary tranquility over potential conflict or discomfort. In this light, lies are perceived as tools to navigate the complexities of intimate interactions, prioritizing surface-level peace without delving into deeper truths. However, this approach often masks underlying issues, sacrificing long-term relational health for short-term tranquility. Participant 5 from HLHG category said, *“Trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship, and when one person starts twisting the truth or manipulating situations, it erodes that trust. It's like building a house on a shaky foundation—it might look okay for a while, but eventually, it's going to come crashing down.”*

Subtheme 2: Lies Created a Hurdle

Despite initial intentions to preserve harmony, dishonesty often sows seeds of discord in the long run. Participants recount how lies, once uncovered, breed mistrust and resentment, fracturing the very foundation of their relationships. What initially seemed as a means to avoid confrontation eventually becomes a barrier to genuine connection and understanding. Lies, in this context, are not mere tools for harmony but catalysts for relational breakdown, creating rifts that are challenging to mend and eroding the trust essential for sustainable intimacy. In essence, while lying may offer fleeting harmony in the present, its long-term consequences prove detrimental to the health and sustainability of intimate relationships. Participant 7 from HLHG category said, *“, at first, I think I tried to give them the benefit of the doubt, you know? Like, maybe there really was some legitimate reason why they couldn't follow through. But as I started to see a pattern of them making excuses and avoiding taking responsibility, it just... it just became harder and harder to trust them. So, I think I started to push back a bit, you know? Like, I would point out inconsistencies in their stories or ask them to clarify certain things. But it was like talking to a wall sometimes, you know? It made me feel really alone, you know?.”*

Theme 6: Lived Experiences

Exploring lived experiences provides a rich tapestry of personal narratives that illuminate the nuances of individuals' encounters with deception and manipulation within intimate relationships. This theme delves into participants' unique experiences, offering valuable insights into the varied ways in which lying and gaslighting manifest in their everyday lives.

Subtheme 1: Lived Experiences of HLHG

Individuals categorized as HLHG, scoring high on both the LIES and VGQ, recount vivid experiences characterized by frequent encounters with deception and manipulation within their relationships. These individuals narrate instances of being both perpetrators and victims of dishonesty, grappling with the complexities of trust, transparency, and emotional vulnerability. Their lived experiences reflect a tumultuous terrain marked by shifting power dynamics and emotional turmoil, highlighting the pervasive influence of deception on their relational dynamics and personal well-being. One difference noted between the responses given by the two groups is the fact that almost every participant from the HLHG had an a living experience to share almost immediately. Participant 5 from HLHG group said , *“Yeah, there were so many instances... one that really stands out was when we had this argument about his ex-girlfriend. He'd been texting her a lot, and it made me really uncomfortable. When I confronted him about it, he tried to downplay it, saying they were just friends and I was overreacting. But I saw the messages, and they were definitely not just friendly. It felt like he was twisting the truth to make himself look better and make me doubt my own feelings. It was really frustrating and hurtful.”* Participant 7 from the same group had a similar incident to share *“Um, yeah, there was this one time... I remember my partner had promised to do something really important, like, it was a big deal for both of us. But when the time came, they didn't follow through, and when I asked them about it, they started coming up with all these excuses, you know? Like, "Oh, I forgot because I was so busy with work," or "Something came up last minute and I couldn't make it." But the thing is, I knew they didn't forget, and I knew there weren't any last-minute emergencies. It just felt like they were trying to avoid admitting that they messed up, you know? And it was really frustrating because it's like... just own up to it, you know? We're all human, we all make mistakes. But*

instead of taking responsibility, they just kept making excuses, and it made me feel like they didn't respect me enough to be honest with me. It was really disappointing.”

Subtheme 2: LLLG - No Instance

Conversely, individuals categorized as LLLG, scoring low on both the LIES and VGQ, recount a starkly different narrative characterized by a notable absence of instances involving deception and manipulation within their relationships. These individuals described experiences marked by trust, transparency, and mutual respect, devoid of the relational tensions and emotional distress associated with dishonesty. Their lived experiences offer a contrasting perspective, underscoring the significance of honesty and authenticity in fostering healthy and fulfilling relationships. Participant 6 from LLLG category mentioned, *“In our relationship, honesty and accountability are paramount, so I haven't experienced my partner fabricating excuses or stories to justify their actions. We both understand the importance of taking responsibility for our choices and facing the consequences, rather than deflecting blame onto external factors.”*

Theme 7: Importance of Honesty and Transparency

Central to the fabric of healthy and sustainable intimate relationships is the bedrock of honesty and transparency. This theme delves into the fundamental value placed on these virtues within the context of interpersonal dynamics, shedding light on their pivotal role in fostering trust, communication, and relational well-being.

Subtheme 1: Honesty

Honesty emerges as a cornerstone of relational integrity, embodying a commitment to truthfulness and authenticity in interpersonal interactions. Participants emphasize the intrinsic value of honesty in cultivating mutual respect, understanding, and emotional intimacy within their relationships. They articulate a deep-seated belief in the power of honesty to nurture trust and fortify the foundations of their partnerships, emphasizing its role as a catalyst for genuine connection and relational growth. Some individuals from the HLHG revealed that even though they understand honesty is pivotal in a relationship, they have tried but it has been challenging. Participant 3 from HLHG group stated *“We've had discussions about honesty and transparency in*

our relationship, but it's been challenging. I've tried to express to my partner how important it is for us to be open and truthful with each other, especially when it comes to sharing experiences and memories. I've shared with them how much it hurts me when I feel like they're not being honest with me, and how it undermines the trust between us." However, participants from the LLLG group stated that talking about the challenging things and uncertain situations have helped them develop more closeness and intimacy in their relationships. Participant 6 from LLLG group stated *"We've also talked about how transparency fosters mutual understanding and helps us navigate challenges together as a team. These discussions have been an ongoing part of our relationship, reaffirming our commitment to honesty and integrity in all aspects of our partnership. We both value the trust and respect that come from being truthful and transparent with each other, and it's something we strive to uphold every day."*

Subtheme 2: Transparency

Transparency, closely intertwined with honesty, encompasses a willingness to openly share thoughts, feelings, and experiences with one's partner. Participants highlight the importance of transparency in fostering mutual understanding, fostering open communication, and promoting emotional intimacy within their relationships. They recognize transparency as a means to cultivate trust and vulnerability, facilitating authentic engagement and mutual support in navigating the complexities of interpersonal dynamics. Participants from both the groups claimed that it was essential to maintain transparency in their relationship. Participant 1 from HLHG category said, *"I believe that open communication is fundamental to building trust and understanding in any relationship."* and talking about the same, participant 7 from the LLLG category said *"Honesty and transparency are foundational to our relationship. We've had many conversations about how important it is for us to be open with each other, even if it means discussing uncomfortable topics or admitting when we've made mistakes. We both value trust and believe that being honest with each other strengthens our bond and allows us to navigate any challenges that come our way together."*

Theme 8: Reasons for Lying

Lying, a complex and multifaceted behavior, often arises from a myriad of underlying motivations and circumstances within intimate relationships. This theme delves into the diverse array of reasons individuals cite for engaging in deceptive practices, shedding light on the intricate interplay between personal, relational, and societal factors that drive dishonesty.

Subtheme 1: Avoid Conflict and Confrontation:

Lying may serve as a means to sidestep conflict or confrontation within relationships. Participants describe resorting to dishonesty to maintain a semblance of peace and harmony, avoiding potentially volatile disagreements or confrontations that could threaten the stability of their partnerships. Participant 3 from the HLHG group stated *"sometimes I think they do it because they're afraid of conflict, you know? Like, they don't want to upset me or start an argument,"*

Subtheme 2: Due to Misunderstanding and Different Perspective:

Misunderstandings and differing perspectives can precipitate dishonesty within relationships. Individuals may distort the truth or fabricate narratives to align with their own interpretations of events, seeking to bridge perceptual gaps and mitigate discord arising from conflicting viewpoints. Participant 1 from HLHG category said *" Adjusting the narrative of events can also cause tension, but sometimes it might happen because of misunderstandings or different perspectives. It doesn't always feel like a deliberate attempt to deceive"*

Subtheme 3: To Present Themselves in a More Favorable Light:

Lying often stems from a desire to cultivate a favorable self-image or impression within the eyes of one's partner. Participants acknowledge embellishing truths or concealing aspects of themselves to project an idealized version of their identity, seeking validation, acceptance, or admiration from their significant other. Participant 1 from the HLHG category mentioned about their partner saying, *"They might alter their version of events in order to present themselves in a more favorable light "* Participant 6 from the same group stated *"they try to downplay things to*

keep the peace. Or maybe they're insecure and they feel like they have to present themselves in a certain way to maintain my approval or avoid disappointing me. ”

Subtheme 4:To Downplay Disagreements:

Deception may be employed to downplay or minimize disagreements or conflicts within relationships. Participants recount instances of sugarcoating or understating the severity of disagreements, opting to distort the truth to preserve relational harmony and avoid exacerbating tensions. Participant 2 from HLHG group stated , *“I think they do it because they're afraid of conflict, you know? Like, they don't want to upset me or start an argument, so they try to downplay things or make them seem less serious than they really are. ”*

Subtheme 5:To Twist the Truth:

Distorting or manipulating the truth may serve as a strategy to gain an advantage or exert control within relationships. Individuals describe bending reality or selectively omitting information to sway perceptions, shape narratives, or gain a strategic advantage in interpersonal interactions. Participant 5 from HLHG group stated this while recalling an incident from the part , *“Like, whenever he messed up or did something hurtful, instead of owning up to it, he would twist the truth to make himself look better. ”*

Subtheme 6:To Control the Narrative:

Lying may be wielded as a tool to control the narrative or shape the course of interpersonal dynamics within relationships. Participants narrate instances of strategic manipulation of information or events to influence outcomes, maintain power dynamics, or safeguard personal interests. Participant 5 from the HLHG group who broke up from their partner recently stated *“It's like he was afraid of facing the consequences of his actions, so he tried to manipulate the situation to his advantage. And maybe he also did it to maintain control over me, you know? Like if he could make me doubt myself, then he could keep me under his thumb. It was a really toxic dynamic”*

Subtheme 7: Didn't Want to Show Vulnerability:

Vulnerability aversion often underlies deceptive behavior within relationships. Participants express reluctance to disclose vulnerabilities or insecurities, opting instead to conceal perceived weaknesses or imperfections to maintain a facade of strength or composure. Participant 5 from the HLHG category stated, *“It's like... maybe they felt like if they could just paint things in a different light, then they wouldn't have to face the consequences or deal with the uncomfortable feelings that come with being honest. I don't know; it's hard to say for sure, but it just felt like they were trying to maintain this image or something, you know? Like they didn't want to show any vulnerability or admit when they were wrong.”*

Subtheme 8: To Avoid Upsetting the Other Partner:

Protecting one's partner from emotional distress or discomfort may prompt individuals to resort to dishonesty. Participants cite instances of white lies or half-truths aimed at sparing their significant other from hurt feelings or unnecessary worry, prioritizing their partner's emotional well-being over absolute truthfulness. Participant 6 from the LLLG category stated, *“They might worry about upsetting me or causing tension between us, so they choose to present a more positive or agreeable version of events. Another reason could be a concern for my feelings or well-being. Perhaps my partner would modify their narrative out of a desire to protect me from unnecessary stress or worry. They might feel that certain details are not relevant or helpful for me to know”*

Subtheme 9: Due to External Pressures or Societal Expectations:

External pressures or societal expectations can compel individuals to engage in deceptive practices within relationships. Participants highlight the influence of cultural norms, social expectations, or external pressures in shaping their decision to lie, conforming to perceived standards or norms at the expense of authenticity or honesty. Participant 6 from the LLLG group said *“it's possible that external pressures or societal expectations could play a role in prompting someone to modify their narrative. They might feel pressure to conform to certain standards or portray themselves in a particular light, leading them to adjust their account of events to fit those expectations.”*

Theme 9: Importance of Accountability and Conversations About It

In the fabric of healthy and resilient intimate relationships, accountability serves as a cornerstone, fostering trust, transparency, and mutual respect. This theme delves into the significance of accountability within relationships and the pivotal role of open conversations in cultivating a culture of responsibility and integrity.

Subtheme 1: Accountability

Accountability emerges as a fundamental principle underpinning the integrity of intimate relationships. Participants underscore the importance of holding oneself and one's partner accountable for actions, decisions, and behaviors within the relationship. This entails taking ownership of mistakes, acknowledging shortcomings, and committing to rectifying any harm caused. By embracing accountability, individuals demonstrate a commitment to mutual respect, honesty, and trust, laying the groundwork for constructive conflict resolution and relational growth. However, it was noted that individuals from the LLLG group were open about conversations regarding accountability. Participant 6 from the LLLG group said, *“We’ve discussed how accountability means taking responsibility for our actions and the impact they have on each other. It’s about owning up to our mistakes, apologizing when necessary, and working together to find solutions to any problems that arise.”* Something similar was said by participant 7 from the LLLG group *“Accountability and honesty are essential pillars of our relationship, and we’ve definitely discussed their importance with each other. We believe that taking responsibility for our actions and being truthful, even when it’s difficult, strengthens our bond and builds trust between us.”*

Individuals from the HLHG group said their partners don’t take it well, they brush it off or get defensive about it. *“I told him how important it was for me to be able to trust him and for us to be honest with each other, no matter what. But every time I brought it up, he either brushed it off or got defensive, like I was attacking him or something.”* Some participants from the HLHG group also reported that they were working on making their relationship better. Participant 2 from the HLHG group stated, *“I think my partner understands that, you know? They’ve told me that they*

want to be better about being honest and accountable, and that they're going to try harder to do so.”

The thematic analysis findings are in line with the previous literature. Serota et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study to explore the various reasons individuals may engage in lying behaviors within relationships. Their findings suggested that reasons for lying may include avoiding conflict, presenting oneself more favorably, controlling the narrative, and avoiding vulnerability, among others , which are in line with the findings of this study. DePaulo et al. (1996) conducted a qualitative study exploring the emotional reactions of individuals upon discovering deception in their romantic partners. They found that individuals commonly experienced feelings of self-doubt and mistrust in response to discovering relational lying in their partners , again the results of the thematic analysis are in line with the previous literature.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 CONCLUSION

In order to unravel the intricate web of relationships between conflict management styles, lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, and their combined impact on relationship satisfaction, we set out on a multipronged investigation of the complex dynamics of romantic relationships in this study. By means of a carefully crafted three-phase research approach, we attempted to illuminate the complex interactions between these factors and how they affect the health of relationships.

Our mediation study showed strong relationships in the first phase between the following variables: relationship satisfaction, lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, and conflict management techniques. Notably, we discovered strong negative correlations between relationship satisfaction and many types of lying, including victim gaslighting, vengeful lying, and relational lying. These results highlighted how manipulative dynamics and dishonest behaviors negatively impact relationship satisfaction, underscoring the vital role that honesty and openness play in creating happy, healthy relationships. Additionally, our investigation into conflict management styles clarified the beneficial correlation between a cooperative conflict management style and relationship satisfaction, emphasizing the critical role that cooperation and effective communication play in overcoming relationship obstacles.

The cognitive distinctions between people classified into the HLHG (high lying tendency and high victim gaslighting tendencies) and LLLG (low lying tendency and low victim gaslighting tendencies) groups were better understood in the second phase thanks to our modified implicit association test. By analyzing answer times and accuracy percentages, we were able to identify unique patterns of cognitive processing linked to victim gaslighting and a propensity for lying. In contrast to the LLLG group, the HLHG group showed faster reaction times but lower accuracy percentages, indicating that distinct cognitive methods are used by people with various degrees of lying inclinations and gaslighting experiences. These results further illuminate the complex

interaction between psychological mechanisms and relational dynamics, and they are consistent with previous studies on cognitive processing patterns and deceitful behaviors.

Furthermore, the third phase's thematic analysis offered deep insights into the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and emotional responses of people navigating the difficulties of deceit and manipulation in relationships. The personal accounts shared by the participants emphasized the severe emotional damage caused by intentional deception and gaslighting, emphasizing how crucial it is to build open communication, trust, and responsibility in order to develop positive relationship dynamics.

As a result, this study provides a thorough grasp of the complex dynamics of romantic relationships by clarifying the connections between lying habits, conflict resolution techniques, gaslighting experiences, and relationship pleasure. Our findings provide important insights to the disciplines of psychology and relationship science by elucidating the complex mechanisms behind these interactions. These insights will guide future research projects and therapies aimed at fostering happy, fulfilled partnerships. In the end, our research emphasizes how crucial it is to promote integrity, openness, and respect for one another as the cornerstones of creating and maintaining deep love relationships in the complicated social environment of today.

7.2 IMPLICATIONS

Our study has implications not only for the Indian context but also for a wide range of cultural contexts and populations globally. Through an exploration of the complexities surrounding lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, and conflict resolution strategies in romantic relationships, our research provides insightful information that may be used to therapeutic therapies and educational programs in a variety of cultural contexts.

Counseling approaches and conflict resolution tactics must be customized to the unique social conventions, values, and interpersonal dynamics of diverse cultural contexts, including India. Therapists and counselors can improve the efficacy of their interventions and foster cultural sensitivity in mental health support services by recognizing and honoring cultural differences and designing experiences that the client can relate to.

Globally, people can gain from education initiatives that raise awareness of the frequency and negative effects of lying and gaslighting. We can enable young adults to build stronger and more satisfying relationships built on mutual respect, trust, and honesty by giving them the information and abilities to spot and deal with dishonest behavior in relationships.

The fact that this study has shown that partner gaslighting has a negative impact on mental health further emphasizes how critical it is to create therapies and support systems that are inclusive of those who have been emotionally manipulated, regardless of their cultural background. We can offer much-needed help to people struggling with the psychological anguish brought on by gaslighting by offering focused interventions and counseling services, which will promote healing and resilience in the face of hardship.

In conclusion, this study's consequences go beyond national borders, providing insightful analysis and practical suggestions that can help people all throughout the world. We may help to promote better and more happy relationships globally by using these insights to guide therapy treatments, educational initiatives, and support programs, while also honoring and addressing the unique cultural contexts, such as those found in India.

7.3 LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a few limitations to be aware of, even if our study offers insightful information about the dynamics of lying behaviors, gaslighting experiences, and conflict resolution techniques in romantic relationships. The first is that the results may not be as broadly applicable to larger populations due to sample bias introduced by using a sample of 120 university students in the age range of 18 to 24. Moreover, the use of self-reported measures may introduce biases and inaccuracies because participants may underreport or misrepresent their experiences. Moreover, our study design's cross-sectional nature hinders the ability to draw conclusions about causality, emphasizing the necessity of longitudinal research to clarify the temporal correlations between variables. Additionally, research is required to determine how modern relationships are impacted by digital technologies like social media and dating apps, which can influence deceitful behavior and gaslighting incidents. Finally, it is important to design and assess interventions that support healthy communication, trust-building, and conflict resolution techniques in order to lessen the

detrimental effects of deceitful behavior and gaslighting on relationship satisfaction and mental health. Finally, the experiences of people in LGBTQ+ partnerships were not included in our study because it was primarily focused on heterosexual relationships. By using more diverse samples, mixed-methods approaches, and investigating the subtleties of relational dynamics across different demographic groups, future research should aim to address these shortcomings.

Subsequent investigations may broaden the scope of accountability by investigating the ways in which fostering responsibility in interpersonal interactions could potentially reduce deceitful actions. This can entail looking into interventions or methods of communication that promote taking ownership of one's behaviors and how they affect the relationship. Gaining an understanding of the function of accountability in fostering openness and trust may help develop strategies for dealing with and preventing deceitful conduct and gaslighting situations.

Furthermore, characteristics not included in the current study that can affect relationship satisfaction need to be investigated. A more comprehensive knowledge of relationship dynamics could be obtained, for example, by looking at how personality traits, attachment styles, or cultural norms shape conflict resolution techniques and reactions to dishonest conduct. Future studies can better understand the complexities of human interactions and find new directions for support and intervention by taking a wider range of elements into account.

Moreover, it is imperative to explore therapies aimed at addressing gaslighting dynamics in partnerships in order to foster positive communication and emotional wellness. This could entail creating educational initiatives or therapy strategies with the goal of raising people's awareness of gaslighting practices, giving them the ability to identify and react to manipulative techniques, and creating surroundings that are supportive of gaslighting victims. Researchers have the potential to improve relationship satisfaction and mental health outcomes by preventing and reducing gaslighting in relationships through the development of effective interventions.

Furthermore, long-term research following people and couples may shed light on the long-term consequences of lying and gaslighting on the stability of relationships and personal wellbeing. Researchers can gain a better understanding of the mechanisms behind relationship satisfaction

and find potential sites of intervention to assist healthy relationship growth by looking at how these dynamics change over time and how they affect relationship trajectories.

Finally, in order to comprehend how these phenomena appear in a variety of groups, it is imperative to examine cultural variations in the ways that people handle conflict, lie, and experience gaslighting. Researchers can develop more thorough understandings of how these processes function in multiple cultural contexts and customize interventions to fit the specific requirements of distinct communities by taking into account cultural aspects including values, conventions, and communication styles. This can guarantee that interventions are successful in fostering healthy relationships across a range of cultural backgrounds while still being attentive to cultural differences.

REFERENCES

- Amelie. (2021, July 16). Collaborating Conflict Management Style, Explained. MT Copeland.
<https://mtcopeland.com/blog/what-is-the-collaborating-conflict-management-style-and-when-should-you-use-it/>
- Amelie. (2021, July 16). Compromising Conflict Management Style, Explained. MT Copeland.
<https://mtcopeland.com/blog/what-is-the-compromising-conflict-management-style-and-when-should-you-use-it/>
- Akdeniz, B., & Cihan, H. Gaslighting and Interpersonal Relationships: Systematic Review. *Psikiyatride Güncel Yaklaşımlar*, 16(1), 146-158.
- Bodenmann, G. (2005). Dyadic coping and its significance for marital functioning. In T. A. Revenson, K. Kayser, & G. Bodenmann (Eds.), *Couples coping with stress: Emerging perspectives on dyadic coping* (pp. 33-49). American Psychological Association.
- Bond Jr, C. F., Omar, A., Mahmoud, A. A., Bonser, R. N., & Paul, R. R. (2006). The time course of deception: An examination of reaction time as a function of deceivers' ability to respond truthfully and deceptively. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 11(2), 235-249.
- Bradbury, T. N. (1995). Assessing the four fundamental domains of marriage. *Family Relations*, 459-468.
- Buller, D. B., & Burgoon, J. K. (1996). Interpersonal deception theory. *Communication Theory*, 6(3), 203–242.
- Buller, D. B., & Burgoon, J. K. (1998). Emotional expression in the deception process. In P. A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion: Research, theory, applications, and contexts* (pp. 381–400). Academic Press.

- Cantarero, K., & Szarota, P. (2017). When is a lie more of a lie? Moral judgment mediates the relationship between perceived benefits of others and lie-labeling. *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 48(2), 315-325. doi:10.1515/ppb-2017-0036
- Contreras, R., Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (1996). Perspectives on marital love and satisfaction in Mexican American and Anglo-American couples. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74(4), 408-415.
- DePaulo, B. M., Kashy, D. A., Kirkendol, S. E., Wyer, M. M., & Epstein, J. A. (1996). Lying in everyday life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 979–995. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.70.5.979
- Dicke, A., & Hendrick, C. (1998). The relationship assessment scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15, 137-142.
- Duck, S. (1994). *Meaningful relationships: Talking, sense, and relating*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2010). Marriage in the new millennium: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(3), 630–649.
- Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. Harmony.
- Graham, J. M., & Liu, Y. J. (2020). Measuring love in romantic relationships: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 37(6), 1663–1687.
- Hatfield, E., & Sprecher, S. (1986). Measuring passionate love in intimate relationships. *Journal of Adolescence*, 9(4), 383–410.
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 50, 93-98.
- Hendrick, S. S. (2016). The Relationship Assessment Scale - Susan S. Hendrick, Amy Dicke, Clyde Hendrick, 1998. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0265407598151009>

- Kaplar, M. E. (2006). Lying happily ever after: Altruistic white lies, positive illusions, and relationship satisfaction (Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 1234567)
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1995). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, methods, and research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118(1), 3–34.
- Klein, W., Li, S., & Wood, S. (2022). A qualitative analysis of gaslighting in romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships*.
- Kurniawan, L., & Limanta, L. S. (2021). Unwritten Scars: Gaslighting in Relationships. *Kata Kita: Journal of Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 9(2), 253-258.
- LaFollette, H. (2016). Honesty and Intimacy - Hugh LaFollette, George Graham, 1986. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0265407586031001>
- Levine, E. E., & Munguia Gomez, D. (2020). “I’m just being honest.” When and why honesty enables help versus harm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000242
- Lying happily ever after: Altruistic white lies, positive illusions, and relationship satisfaction - ProQuest. (2023). Proquest.com.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/09be2791c455c1830765b11dc849c779/1?pq-origsite=scholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- March, E., Kay, C. S., Dinić, B. M., Wagstaff, D., Grabovac, B., & Jonason, P. K. (2023). “It’s All in Your Head”: Personality Traits and Gaslighting Tactics in Intimate Relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, 1-10.
- McCornack, S. A. (1997). The generation of deceptive messages: Laying the groundwork for a model of deceptive communication. In J. O. Greene (Ed.), *Message production: Advances in communication theory* (pp. 91–126). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- N.C., & Sibley, C.G. (2008). When accommodation matters: Situational dependency within daily interactions with romantic partners. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44, 95-104.
- Rahim, M. A. (2002). Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13(3), 206-235.
- Sarkis, S. (2017). *Gaslighting: Recognize manipulative and emotionally abusive people - and break free*. Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- Serota, K. B., Levine, T. R., & Boster, F. J. (2010). The prevalence of lying in America: Three studies of self-reported lies. *Human Communication Research*, 36(1), 2–25.
- Sip, K. E., Roepstorff, A., McGregor, W., & Frith, C. D. (2008). Detecting deception: The scope and limits. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 12(2), 48-53.
- Stern, R. M. (2007). *The gaslight effect: How to spot and survive the hidden manipulation others use to control your life*. Harmony.
- Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and conflict management: Reflections and update. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13(3), 265-274.
- Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974). *Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument*. Tuxedo, NY: Xicom, Inc.
- Vaughn, M. J., & Baier, M. E. M. (1999). Reliability and validity of the relationship assessment scale. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 27, 137-147.
- Verschuere, B., Spruyt, A., Meijer, E. H., & Otgaar, H. (2011). The ease of lying. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 20(3), 908-911.
- Vrij, A., Granhag, P. A., & Porter, S. (2012). Pitfalls and opportunities in nonverbal and verbal lie detection. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(3), 69-87.

- Walczyk, J. J., Igou, F. P., Dixon, A. P., & Tcholakian, T. (2013). Advancing lie detection by inducing cognitive load on liars: A review of relevant theories and techniques guided by lessons from polygraph-based approaches. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4, 14.
- Wastell, C. A., & Booth, A. (2003). Machiavellianism: An alexithymic perspective. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 22(6), 730-744.
- Yongyut Khamkhong, & Tayco, N. (2018). *Managing Conflicts in a Multicultural Organization: A Perspective of Educators*. Social Science Research Network.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3096834>
- Yoo, H., Bartle-Haring, S., Day, R. D., & Rashmi Gangamma. (2013). Couple Communication, Emotional and Sexual Intimacy, and Relationship Satisfaction. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 40(4), 275–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623x.2012.751072>

APPENDIX (Consent)

Hii, This study is being conducted by Srishti Varshney under the guidance of Dr. Blessy Elizabeth David from the Psychology Department at Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Patiala. We are doing a research project on young adults with an age range of 18-25 years who are in a relationship or have been in one in the past.

Consent -

We hereby mention that all information provided here will remain strictly confidential and anonymous, and nowhere will your name or identifying personal information be mentioned. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The information sought will only be used for research purposes.

I am participating in this study voluntarily.

SIGNATURE

--

If you have any questions about the study, please Contact;

Srishti Varshney (Masters Student, TSLAS) - svarshney_ma22@thapar.edu

Name (Initials of your first and last name & last 2 digits of your contact)

Age _____

Gender

MALE	FEMALE	OTHERS
------	--------	--------

Are you currently in a relationship?

Yes	No
-----	----

If not, have you been in a relationship in the past?

Yes	No
-----	----

What would you rate the strength of your relationship—current/last?

1 low	2	3	4	5 high
----------	---	---	---	-----------

(Questionnaire)

SECTION A - Relationship Assessment Scale

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your agreement from the options (5 point Likert)mentioned below In accordance to your current or past relationships -

1. How often does your partner meet your needs?
2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
3. How good is your relationship compared to most?
4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?
5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations:
6. How much do you love your partner?
- 7 How many problems are there in your relationship?

SECTION B - Lying in Everyday Situations Scale

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your agreement from the options (7 point Likert)mentioned below In accordance to your own behavior -

1. I lie in order to escape conflicts or disagreements with other people.
2. I lie to hide the bad things I've done.
3. I tell lies so I will not have confrontations with people.
4. I lie in order to hide shameful things about myself.
5. I lie to stay out of arguments with people.
6. I lie in order to be friendly and cordial with others.
7. I tell lies in order to spare another's feelings.
8. I lie in order to punish people.
9. I lie in order to take people down.
10. I lie for revenge.
11. I use lies to attack people I don't like.
12. I tell lies in order to hurt, annoy, or upset others
13. I lie because it is exciting.
14. I lie to people because it is amusing.

SECTION C - Conflict Management Styles Assessment Scale

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your agreement from the options (4 point Likert) mentioned below In accordance to your own behavior -

1. I discuss issues with others to try to find solutions that meet everyone's needs.
2. I try to negotiate and use a give-and-take approach to problem situations.
3. I try to meet the expectations of others.
4. I would argue my case and insist on the advantages of my point of view.
5. When there is a disagreement, I gather as much information as I can and keep the lines of communication open.
6. When I find myself in an argument, I usually say very little and try to leave as soon as possible.
7. I try to see conflicts from both sides. What do I need? What does the other person need? What are the issues involved?
8. I prefer to compromise when solving problems and just move on.
9. I find conflicts exhilarating; I enjoy the battle of wits that usually follows.
10. Being in a disagreement with other people makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious.
11. I try to meet the wishes of my friends and family.
12. I can figure out what needs to be done and I am usually right.
13. To break deadlocks, I would meet people halfway.
14. I may not get what I want but it's a small price to pay for keeping the peace.
15. I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself.

SECTION D - Victim Gaslighting Questionnaire

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your answer from the options (5 point Likert)mentioned below In accordance to your behavior in your relationship-

1. You constantly change your words or thoughts before speaking.
2. Your point of view is dismissed or said to be "wrong" completely.
3. You get accused of "overreacting" when you try to explain your feelings.
4. You apologise without knowing what you did wrong.
5. Most interactions leave you feeling small or ashamed of yourself.
6. They act in a way that contradicts their statements.
7. They assign motives to your actions that are opposite to your intentions.
8. You often feel that you have to defend your reality from them.
9. They make you believe that nobody can be trusted except them.
10. You often find them denying things even when there is proof.
11. Their positive actions do not complement their degrading words.
12. They accused you of lying and manipulation when in reality they are the ones doing it.
13. You feel unsure of your decision-making abilities because of their disagreement.
14. You find yourself questioning your beliefs and opinions because of their opposition.
15. You often find yourself questioning your own sanity because of their words.