



Measuring Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse: Development, Reliability, and Validity Analyses in Nigeria and South Africa

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Abstract

Purpose: Psychological violence within intimate relationships remains a significant public health concern across societies. Multiple scales have been developed to measure victimization and perpetration, aiding our understanding of their complexities. However, few empirically validated scales capture perceptions of psychological abuse or what individuals perceive as psychologically abusive behaviors, hindering our full grasp of the dynamics. This article addresses these gaps with the Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse Scale (PPPAS), which measures and enhances understanding of abusive behaviors within intimate relationships. **Methods:** Preliminary activities included establishing face and content validity and conducting a pilot study to assess feasibility, suitability, and potential challenges. The main study (904 respondents: 441 from Nigeria and 463 from South Africa) utilized an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine the factor structure of the PPPAS. **Results:** The results indicate that the PPPAS effectively measures individuals' perception of partner psychological abuse. The identified 17-item, four-factor structure (i.e., verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, ignoring/neglect, and economic/financial abuse) aligns well with the data, with both collective and individual observed variables contributing to the measurement of the overall construct and its sub-constructs. Convergent validity captured the scale's correlation with similar constructs, and discriminant validity established the scale's ability to accurately distinguish itself from unrelated constructs. **Conclusion:** The PPPAS adds to the arsenal of scales on partner psychological abuse. It is suitable for comprehending perception and its impact on victimization, perpetration, and the inclination for psychological abuse. Knowledge derived can promote accountability, facilitate behavior change, and empower victims to recognize and avoid abusive interactions.

Keywords: *Psychological Abuse; Partner Violence; Verbal Aggression/Abuse; Isolation/Control; Ignoring/Neglect; Economic/Financial Abuse*

Introduction

Many scales have been developed to measure partner psychological abuse to deepen our understanding of its prevalence and associated factors (Dokkedahl et al., 2019, 2022; Thompson et al., 2006). While these assessment tools continue to abound, they predominantly focus on capturing perpetration and victimization or how individuals experience, perpetrate, or report psychologically abusive behaviors (Dokkedahl et al. 2019; Waltermaurer, 2005), overlooking how they perceive the behaviors. Few empirically-validated measure exists to examine individuals' perceptions of what behaviors constitute psychological abuse within intimate relationships (Fincham et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2005). Studies that have delved into perceptions of psychological abuse have primarily employed methods such as vignettes (Ahmed et al., 2024; Kuijpers et al., 2021), hypothetical scenarios (Sylaska & Walters, 2014), focus groups (Beccaria et al., 2013), and interviews (DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Maquibar et al., 2017). Despite the conceptual similarities between perception, perpetration, and victimization, scales for measuring perception continue to lag behind those for measuring victimization and perpetration. Because perception has significant effects on perpetration and victimization, measuring perception remains vital to increasing knowledge about partner psychological abuse.

The present study aims to investigate perception of partner psychological abuse and develop a research scale that captures its dimensions among respondents in Nigeria and South Africa. Comprehending perception is crucial for policy, practices, and research, as its deeper understanding may unravel underlying factors associated with its influence on victimization and perpetration.

The Importance and Need for Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse Scale

The perception of partner psychological abuse refers to an individual's subjective understanding and interpretation of behaviors exhibited by their romantic partner that they consider to be psychologically abusive. This includes recognizing and assessing actions or patterns that may cause emotional harm, manipulation, control, or intimidation within the relationship, as perceived by the individual themselves. This concept focuses on the individual's awareness and judgment of potentially abusive behaviors, distinct from their personal experiences of victimization or perpetration. The development of perception of partner psychological abuse scale arises from the recognition that merely examining victimization and perpetration fails to unravel the full understanding of the complex dynamics of psychological abuse within intimate relationships. Scales designed to examine perception could shed light on how individuals internalize and interpret psychologically abusive behaviors and unravel factors associated with such internalization. Such scales will provide insights into how psychological abuse is subjectively interpreted, so that how the phenomenon is conceived beyond direct behaviors, actions, and experiences could be fully examined. This shift is beneficial to research and practice in many ways. It will allow researchers to explore the connotations of partner psychological abuse, including cognitive and emotional processes influencing people's perceptions in relationships. It will help researchers understand how individuals perceive and interpret partner psychological abuse beyond the records of victimization and perpetration presently pervasive in empirical research.

Researchers utilizing the perception scale can explore variations in perceptions and influencing factors, facilitating understanding of how individuals respond to psychological abuse in intimate relationships. Assessing perception offers insights into tailored interventions for both perpetrators and victims. Without knowledge about perception, it may be difficult to understand why perpetrators may not acknowledge their actions as abusive or why victims may not realize they are experiencing or experienced abuse. Deeper knowledge about perception will inform relationship decisions regarding pursuing, entering, staying, or leaving abusive interactions (Follingstad & Rogers, 2013). Knowledge derived from perception can be integrated into preventive measures and interventions for treating perpetrators and educating victims, fostering attitude and perception changes (Exner-Cortens et al., 2016).

Existing Measures of Partner Psychological Abuse and Prevailing Challenges

Numerous measures have been devised to study and expand our understanding of psychological abuse within intimate relationships. These include the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) by Tolman (1989, 1999), Psychological Abuse Questionnaire by Jacobson and Gottman (1998), the Profile of Psychological Abuse by Sackett and Saunders (1999), the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) and the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) by Straus (1979) and Straus et al. (1996), the Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS) by Stark (2007), the Inventory of Psychologically Abusive Tactics (IPAT) by Adams et al. (2008), and the Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse (MMEA) by Murphy and Hoover (1999). Other measures of psychological abuse include the works of Porrúa-García et al. (2016) and those cited by Dokkedahl et al. (2019) in their systematic review. Additionally, Thompson et al. (2006) compiled a compendium of assessment tools that describes several scales for operationalizing partner violence. However, a common characteristic of these measures was the focus on victimization and perpetration of partner psychological abuse to the neglect of investigations about what people perceive as partner psychological abuse.

A recent systematic review conducted by Dokkedahl et al. (2019) highlighted several noteworthy limitations among the 21 identified psychometric measures for partner psychological abuse. Some notable limitations from the systematic review beyond the highlights by Dokkedahl et al. (2019) include the absence of scales that measure perception of psychological abuse, a primary focus of existing scales on victimization and perpetration without knowledge about respondents' perception of partner psychological abuse, some measures being time-consuming and burdensome for participants, inadequate coverage of the full range and dimensions of psychologically abusive behaviors prevalent in modern intimate relationships (such as economic/financial abuse), a majority of measures being developed in the 1990s or earlier, with only a few developed in the 21st century (post-2001), and most measures being developed and validated in developed societies. Similar limitations also include the use of single-item or limited-item measures to assess partner psychological abuse. Despite the continued progress in research, discrepancies in perceptions persist (Godfrey et al., 2021).

Beyond measures of victimization and perpetration, a comprehensive search of measures on perception of partner psychological abuse yielded no results, highlighting a significant gap in the empirical research. Another recent study focused on the beliefs about relationship abuse among teenagers (Zong et al., 2022). The items identified in the psychological abuse subscale of the study were specific to teenagers, such as making unwanted sexual comments or gestures, persistently bothering someone after being turned down for a date, commenting on someone's appearance, and making derogatory sexual jokes or comments.

The limitations of existing scales in shaping perception of partner psychological abuse can be attributed to several factors. Some scales are outdated and lack recent validation, making them less applicable to contemporary relationships. Some scales fail to reflect the evolving nature of psychologically abusive behaviors in modern relationships, and their development in primarily developed societies hinders their validation across diverse cultural contexts, especially in developing societies. Furthermore, many scales primarily focus on violence against women to the neglect of gender symmetry in partner violence (see Straus & Gelles, 1986; Dutton & Goodman, 2005). They often require modifications to ensure inclusivity and capture the full spectrum of psychological abuse. Additionally, these scales tend to place more emphasis on physical and sexual abuse, overshadowing the significance of psychological abuse in intimate relationships. They typically measure only victimization and perpetration, disregarding individuals' perceptions of psychological abuse. For instance, the Multi-Dimensional Measure of Psychological Abuse (MMEA) by Murphy and Hoover (1999; Murphy et al., November 1999) has undergone recent validation through behavioral observations during interpersonal conflicts (Godfrey et al., 2021). However, to enhance its applicability across different types of relationships and

societies, the scale was streamlined from 28 items to 16 items, eliminating redundant items (Maldonado et al., 2022).

It is crucial to address these limitations and develop scales that capture the diverse perception of partner psychological abuse in intimate relationships. This includes incorporating a broader range of psychologically abusive behaviors, considering the dynamics of power and control, and accounting for the experiences of individuals across various sociocultural contexts. By refining and expanding existing measures, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of perception of partner psychological abuse and determine their associations with victimization, perpetration, and propensity to perpetrate psychologically abusive behaviors in intimate relationships.

Conceptualizing Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse

The limited emphasis on perception of partner psychological abuse can be attributed to several factors, including the challenge of defining psychological abuse. Unlike physical and sexual abuse, psychological abuse involves subtle behaviors that are not easily identifiable, and its effects may take time to manifest, often occurring when preventive measures are no longer feasible. Psychological abuse can take various forms, including verbal aggression/abuse, threats of violence, instilling fear, humiliation, social isolation, and financial control. Jacobson and Gottman (1998) developed a Psychological Abuse Questionnaire comprising 66 items, which delineates four dimensions: isolation, degradation, sexual abuse/coercion, and property damage. Some emerging perspectives continue to integrate chivalry and coercive control (e.g., isolation, humiliation, degradation, and threats) into explanations of interpersonal violence (Bates & Taylor, 2019; Follingstad & DeHart, 2000). Nevertheless, limitations in operationalizations of partner psychological abuse continue to restrict the ability to fully comprehend its perceptions, dimensions, validity, and reliability (Estefan et al., 2016).

In recent years, some expansions have been made. For example, Postmus et al. (2016) shed light on economic abuse, where a financially privileged partner inflicts psychological abuse on a less privileged partner in the relationship (also see Postmus et al., 2012). In a literature review, Stylianou (2018) described various tactics utilized to perpetrate economic exploitation, manipulation, and injury against intimate partners. In the past, economic abuse was often overlooked as a form of partner violence, even though recent research indicates that it is associated with depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation like other forms of psychological abuse (Kanougiya et al., 2021; Stylianou, 2018).

In addition to empirical knowledge, conflict theory and varieties of patriarchy theory contribute valuable elements that enhance our understanding of partner violence (Collins & Sanderson, 2009; Coser, 1956; Hunnicutt, 2009). Conflict theory provides insights into power imbalances, inequality, dynamics of control and manipulation, social structures, norms, and gender roles and expectations, which help us conceptualize the perception of partner psychological abuse (Dahrendorf, 1959; Ritzer, 2004; Sagrestano et al., 1999; Straus, 1977). Similarly, the multidimensional manifestations of patriarchy, men's position in the social structure, the interplay between structure and ideology, and the integral role of patriarchy in hierarchical structures and domination, as conceptualized by Hunnicutt (2009), shed light on why perceptions may vary among individuals and across societies. Both theories emphasize the underlying factors that shape perceptions, variations, and dimensions of partner violence.

The conceptualization of Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse (PPPAS) centers on six behavioral elements representing distinct forms of abusive behaviors within relationships. Informed by empirical knowledge, power and conflict theory, feminist theory, and varieties of patriarchy theory, this conceptualization highlights the influence of personal and structural factors on perception of partner psychological abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hunnicutt 2009; Vagianos, 2017). Grounded in these empirical and theoretical foundations, perception of partner psychological abuse encompasses and focuses on specific behavioral elements: verbal aggression/abuse (Bodenmann et al., 2010; Evans, 1997; Marshall, 1992; Simonelli & Ingram, 1998; Winstok & Smadar-Dror, 2021), isolation/control (Carney & Barner,

2012; Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Eckhardt et al., 1997; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Stark, 2007; Tolman, 1989; Walker et al., 2020; Winstok & Perkis, 2009), ignoring/neglect (Cordova et al., 2005; Johnson, 2020), manipulation (Forward & Buck, 1998; Rana et al., 2022; Simon, 2008), gaslighting (Calef & Weinshel, 1981; Christensen & Evans-Murray, 2021; Churchwell, 2018; Dickson et al., 2023; Dorpat, 1994a, b; Gass & Nichols, 1988; Graves & Samp, 2021; Klein et al., 2023; Miano et al., 2021; Sarkis, 2018; Stark, 2019; Sweet, 2019; Tormoen, 2019), and economic/financial abuse (Adams et al., 2008; Anderson, 2002; Anitha, 2019; Eriksson & Ulmestig, 2021; Postmus et al., 2020; Sanders, 2015; Stylianou, 2018; Stylianou et al., 2013a, b), as detailed in Table 1 (examples of items are reported in Table 3 and Results section).

Verbal aggression/abuse entails recognizing the repeated use of hurtful words, negative comments, mockery, and threats directed at intimate partners as constituting psychological abuse. Isolation and control encompass recognizing controlling behaviors that restrict a partner's freedom and independence, including isolation, monitoring, dictation, and restriction, as constituting psychological abuse. Ignoring/neglect involves recognizing recurring neglectful behaviors that deprive a partner of emotional well-being in the relationship, such as exclusion from events, lack of attention, and withholding of affection and intimacy, as constituting psychological abuse. Manipulation involves recognizing manipulative behaviors (e.g., flattery, disingenuousness, insincerity) as constituting psychological abuse. Gaslighting involves recognizing mind games and distortion of reality as constituting psychological abuse. Economic and financial abuse involves recognizing the use of economic advantage and privilege to dominate a partner as constituting psychological abuse. The collective review of above studies indicates that perception spans various domains concerning psychologically abusive behaviors within intimate relationships. Understanding the consequences of abusive behaviors is an integral part of recognizing these behaviors as abusive.

Theoretical Framework for Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse

Knowledge about different strands of power and conflict theory, as well as feminist theory (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hunnicutt, 2009; Ritzer, 2004; Vagianos, 2017) may help understand perception of partner psychological abuse. Widespread across all social frameworks and human connections is an inherent disparity in power distribution. Particularly evident in romantic relationships, power disparity grants one partner the authority to manipulate, dominate, and control the emotions, perspectives, and actions of the other (Hunnicutt 2009; Vagianos, 2017). In relationship, conflict is inevitable and ongoing power struggles are unavoidably common, as individuals and groups engage in strategic maneuvers to outsmart each other, reinforcing dominance and control (Ritzer, 2004). Such power dynamics are prevalent in romantic relationships, where partners employ various tactics (e.g., verbal abuse, neglect, isolation, manipulation, gaslighting, and economic abuse) to establish dominance.

Cultural norms and expectations within social structures regulate behaviors, relationships, and power dynamics, making it challenging to disclose abusive experiences (Hunnicutt 2009; Ritzer, 2004; Vagianos, 2017). Power imbalances and societal structures may significantly influence variations in victimization, perpetration, and perceptions of psychological abuse within intimate relationships. Behaviors sanctioned by social norms and beliefs may be overlooked in defining and perceiving abusive behaviors, as individuals often defer to societal expectations in making judgement of behaviors. Such behaviors may result in prolonged suppression of victimization experiences, with the consequence of altering both victims' and perpetrators' perceptions of abusive behaviors. The suppression may vary across societies due to differences in the manifestations of patriarchy, which unfortunately may contribute to disparities in perceptions of abusive behaviors.

Table 1: Domains/dimensions and definitions of focus in perception of partner psychological abuse

Dimension	Definition/explanation
Verbal aggression/abuse	This dimension captures perceived psychological abuse in intimate relationships, assessing the repetitive use of verbally and behaviorally abusive actions (e.g., yelling, threatening, criticizing, rumor-spreading, insulting, mocking). The victimized partner internalizes and reflects on these behaviors, negatively impacting their mental well-being. Constant verbal abuse, such as belittling and demeaning, may result in physical aggression, trust breakdown, emotional detachment, chronic stress, insomnia, depression, fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem over time.
Isolation/control	This dimension gauges the perception of psychological abuse in intimate relationships through the repetitive perpetration of abusive behaviors (e.g., isolating, monitoring, dictating, restricting, inciting, guilt-tripping, invading privacy, withholding information). These actions are viewed as encroachments on the partner's freedom, dehumanizing them and creating a sense of captivity rather than a partnership. The psychological impact includes feelings of being unwanted, unloved, inadequate, at fault, or incapable. The lack of support and constant surveillance may result in social withdrawal, loneliness, self-doubt, and a sense of helplessness.
Ignoring/neglect	This dimension assesses the recurrence of neglectful behaviors by a partner that deprive their counterpart of deserved attention, affection, and love. The psychologically abusive actions encompass failure to appreciate efforts, silent treatment, ignoring, neglecting, disregarding, excluding, and withholding support and affection. These behaviors may evoke feelings of being unwanted and contribute to the development of low self-worth or esteem. Consequences include rejection, sadness, resentment, emotional disconnection, selective mutism, loneliness, vulnerability to infidelity, and premature termination of the relationship.
Manipulation	This dimension gauges the extent to which a partner utilizes manipulation tactics for self-interest, adversely affecting their partner's well-being. Manipulative behaviors include flattery, insincere compliments, victim portrayal, blame attribution, mind games, ultimatums, and unilateral decision-making. Repeated perpetration of these tactics can leave the partner feeling trapped, subservient, controlled, and undesirable. It may also induce a sense of incapacity for independent decisions, constant vigilance, confusion about the relationship's future, questioning of reality, insecurity, powerlessness, reliance on false dependency, self-doubt, and loss of autonomy and confidence.
Gaslighting	This dimension assesses the use of mind games and psychological tactics by a partner to manipulate the thoughts and perceptions of reality, known as gaslighting. Gaslighting distorts the victim's experiences, leading them to doubt their own reality and become dependent on the perpetrator. It blurs the line between what is real and unreal, fostering self-doubt, self-blame, and reliance on lies. Gaslighting may result in hypervigilance, emotional reactivity, constant second-guessing, and psychological dependence on abusive partners for the victim.

Economic/financial abuse This dimension gauges the use of personal wealth and economic well-being to manipulate or dominate economically disadvantaged partners. The aim is to create financial dependence, hindering victims from meeting basic needs and maintaining a desired lifestyle. Economic abuse may include preventing partners from working, blocking access to income, sabotaging job opportunities, and hindering productive activities for financial stability. However, this economic/financial abuse dimension also captures economic negligence, where less privileged partners deliberately deprive the household of needed financial support. Despite recognizing the importance of money for relationship survival, an economically abusive partner engages in behaviors detrimental to it. Economic/financial abuse complicates leaving the relationship and makes staying unbearable.

Rationale for Choosing the Countries and Cross-Cultural Validation

Nigeria and South Africa exhibit both unique similarities and differences that contribute to the cross-cultural validation of the scale. Despite both being located in Africa, they differ in their levels of development; South Africa is classified as a middle-income country, whereas Nigeria is categorized as a low-income country (Human Rights Watch, 2018; United Nations Development Programs, 2020). These developmental distinctions are particularly evident in standards of living and infrastructure. South Africa boasts a developed financial system, economic prosperity and stability, and good infrastructure, including reliable power and water supply, well-maintained roads, and an efficient communication and public transportation system, which contrasts with the situation in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2018; United Nations Development Programs, 2020).

However, despite these differences, both countries share similarities in certain aspects of relationships. There is a strong sense of familial bonds and emotional support, an endorsement of culturally meaningful traditional marriage that involves not just two individuals but two families, a pervasive influence of religious practices on family dynamics, values, and social interactions, a collectivist orientation over an individualistic one regarding family interaction and group cohesion, adherence to traditional gender roles and responsibilities, hospitality, generosity in sharing, and cultural diversity encompassing ethnic groups, languages, and traditions. These commonalities and differences have implications for the encouragement, manifestation, perception, and interpretation of psychologically abusive behaviors. Hence, it becomes crucial to investigate both country invariance and differences in perception of partner psychological abuse in these two nations.

Recently, Toma and Lederman (2022) emphasized the need for cross-cultural validation of scales, given its myriad benefits. By validating the scale across the countries, the cross-cultural validity, applicability, and reliability of the scale are enhanced. It boosts the confidence that the scale effectively captures the perception of partner psychological abuse across diverse cultural contexts and suggests that it is linguistically and culturally appropriate for utilization in each country. Cross-cultural validation will enable one to account for cultural sensitivity, nuances, and variations contributing to the interpretations of scale items. Overall, conducting cross-cultural development and validation of the scale enables the capturing of both shared and unique aspects of perception of partner psychological abuse in Nigeria and South Africa. Combining both countries contributes to a more robust understanding of the underlying constructs, ensures consistency in the factor structure across the countries, enhances the generalizability of the findings, and allows for the applicability, cross-cultural validation, and comparison of the scale across cultural contexts.

The Present Studies

The studies reported in this article aim to achieve the following objectives: (1) develop a novel scale to measure perception of partner psychological abuse and (2) assess the reliability and validity of its dimensions. As previously stated, a research scale on perception of partner psychological abuse can offer insights into its prevalence and associations, shedding light on how it is experienced, perpetrated, and likely to continue. Perceptions can help identify risk factors for victimization and perpetration, which can be valuable for prevention and intervention efforts. Examining perceptions can advance our understanding of partner violence beyond the scope of perpetration and victimization alone. Focusing on perception of partner psychological abuse can generate knowledge that goes beyond what is currently known about partner physical and sexual abuse. A scale on perceptions can also aid in identifying similarities and differences across socio-demographic factors, countries, and cultures, which are crucial for policy development and advocacy aimed at reducing perpetration and victimization. A scale on perceptions may provide the relevant insight on appropriate treatment, education, and training for victims and perpetrators.

In describing the items generation, development, and pilot study for the perception of partner psychological abuse scale (PPPAS), the research question to examine include:

Research Question 1: What dimensions does the perception of partner psychological abuse scale (PPPAS) encompass, and which items define these dimensions?

In determining the factor structure and construct validity of the scale, as well as gender and country differences in perception of partner psychological abuse, the following research questions will be examined:

Research Question 2: What is the factor structure of PPPAS in Nigeria and South Africa?

Research Question 3: To what extent does PPPAS correlate with scales measuring similar constructs (i.e., convergent validity) and differentiate itself from unrelated constructs (discriminant validity)?

Research question 4: Do perception of partner psychological abuse vary by country and gender?

Item Generation, Development, and Pilot Study

Recommendations for best practices for developing and validating research scales were followed in the present article (Boateng et al., 2018). To address concerns regarding content underreporting and cross-national validity, as highlighted by Toma and Lederman (2022), comprehensive item lists were generated from review of quantitative studies, particularly in developing regions (e.g., Antai, 2011; Antai & Antai, 2009; Benebo et al., 2018; Dunkle et al., 2007; Ilika et al., 2014; Mthembu et al., 2021; Okenwa et al., 2009; Stith et al., 2004; Yusuf et al., 2011) and review of qualitative studies, from which noteworthy themes were identified (e.g., Abdullahi et al., 2017; Adejimi et al., 2022; Balogun & John-Akinola, 2015; Gibbs et al., 2015, 2018; Hall et al., 2023; Ramakrishna & Onoya, 2018; Romate et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2007). Additionally, insights were gathered from cross-cultural studies and theories on partner violence to inform the item generation process (e.g., Fakunmoju & Bammeke, 2017; Fakunmoju et al., 2021; Fakunmoju & Rasool, 2018; Fulu et al., 2013).

Additional process of item generation include a comprehensive review of existing measures and literature to identify the covered dimensions and gaps that needed to be addressed (e.g., Dokkedahl et al., 2019; Hall et al., 2023; Mthembu et al., 2021; Romate et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2006), discussions with 19 graduate students to gain knowledge of clinical observations in practice, and interviews with 5 respondents to gain knowledge and perspectives on partner psychological abuse. At the end of the exercises, an initial item pool of 102 items were generated and processed. While being mindful of content

underreporting and respondents' burden, certain items that are rare or specific to a particular country (e.g., psychological abuse associated with a polygamous relationship), items that do not apply to all intimate relationships (e.g., using children to inflict psychological damage on a partner – as many intimate relationships do not involve children and such behavior may primarily be perceived as psychological abuse of a child rather than abuse of adults), and items that are considered vague and less common, were removed from the pool.

At the end of the processes, a total of 53 items representing six dimensions (verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, ignoring/neglect, manipulation, gaslighting, and economic/financial abuse) were retained for further examination (Research question 1). To ensure the readability and clarity of the retained 53 items, they were shared with two 6th grade students and two high school students. These students provided valuable feedback on any words or phrases that posed challenges to their understanding. To ensure the suitability and appropriateness of the items, face validity of the items was conducted with 56 graduate students. Content validity exercises were conducted with three experts in the field, five graduate students, and three respondents who were asked to organize the items under the six appropriate dimensions provided. A successful outcome of content validity would demonstrate that the newly generated items align closely with the definitions and dimensions of perception of partner psychological abuse (Howard & Melloy, 2016). The feedback obtained from the assessments of readability, face validity, and content validity was carefully analyzed and integrated into the refinement process of the scale. This iterative approach helped ensure that the final scale achieved optimal clarity, relevance, and content validity. Following the validity assessment, a pilot study (71 participants) was carried out to gather more feedback on the items. The feedback obtained facilitated the refinement of the items and modification of the data collection procedures. These processes were implemented to ensure rigorous measures for selecting items for further examination and analysis.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The objective of the study was to conduct an exploratory factor analysis to uncover the underlying factor structure of perception of partner psychological abuse among respondents in Nigeria and South Africa (Research question 2). The focus was on identifying the most robust model based on items with strong factor loadings. Criteria were established to eliminate items and factors, including: (a) items that did not load onto the identified factors, (b) items with factor loadings below .30, (c) items with loadings of .30 or higher on three or more factors, and (d) items with loadings of .40 or higher on more than two factors (Matsunaga, 2010).

Additionally, efforts were made to assess the scale's convergent and discriminant validity (Research question 3). To determine convergent validity, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: Perception of partner psychological abuse will positively correlate with perception of psychological abuse of a child, suggesting that individuals with higher perception of partner psychological abuse would also hold higher perception of psychological abuse of a child.

Hypothesis 2: Perception of partner psychological abuse will positively correlate with perception of partner violence, indicating that individuals with higher perception of partner psychological abuse would also hold higher perception of partner violence.

To establish discriminant validity, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3: Perception of psychological manipulation and control against women will negatively correlate with perception of partner psychological abuse, suggesting that those who hold high perception of partner psychological abuse are less likely to endorse psychological manipulation and control of women.

In addition to the hypothesized relationship to test for convergent and discriminant validity, additional efforts will be made to determine whether perception of partner psychological abuse differ by gender and country (Research question 4). Specifically,

Research question 4a: What differences exist in the perception of partner psychological abuse between respondents in Nigeria and South Africa?

Research question 4b: Do perception of partner psychological abuse differ by gender?

Materials and Methods

Participants

The study, conducted in 2023, included a total of 904 participants, with 441 (48.8%) participants from Nigeria and 463 (51.2%) participants from South Africa (Table 2). There were more female ($n = 536$, 59.6%) participants than male ($n = 363$, 40.4%) participants. The majority of participants (63.4%) reported being unmarried ($n = 573$). The average age of the participants was 31.80 years ($SD = 9.47$). Slightly over half of the participants ($n = 456$, 50.4%) has less than bachelor degree, although the majority reported being employed ($n = 778$, 86.1%). Majority ($n = 574$, 63.5%) reported being in a relationship. More of participants reported not cohabiting with partner ($n = 389$, 43%) than cohabiting with a partner ($n = 336$, 37.2%).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Sample characteristics	Nigeria (NIG) <i>n</i> (%)	South Africa (SA) <i>n</i> (%)	Total N = (%)
Age ^b			
Mean = 31.80years, <i>SD</i> = 9.47			
Gender ^a			
Female	237 (53.7%)	299 (65.3%)	536 (59.6%)
Male	204 (46.3%)	159 (34.7%)	363 (40.4%)
Marital Status			
Single (never married)	256 (58%)	317 (68.5%)	573 (63.4%)
Married, married but separated, divorced, and widowed	185 (42%)	146 (31.5%)	331 (36.6%)
Education background completed			
Less than bachelor	133 (30.2%)	323 (69.8%)	456 (50.4%)
Bachelor	197 (44.7%)	118 (25.5%)	315 (34.8%)
Master and above	111 (25.2%)	22 (4.8%)	133 (14.7%)
Occupational status			
Employed ^b	335 (76%)	443 (95.7%)	778 (86.1%)
Unemployed	97 (22%)	19 (4.1%)	116 (12.8%)
Student	9 (2%)	1 (.2%)	10 (1.1%)
Relationship status			
Yes	255 (57.8%)	319 (68.9%)	574 (63.5%)
No	186 (42.2%)	144 (31.1%)	330 (36.5%)
Cohabitation status			
Yes	163 (37%)	173 (37.4%)	336 (37.2%)
No	178 (40.4%)	211 (45.6%)	389 (43%)
Not in a relationship	100 (22.7%)	79 (17.1%)	179 (19.8%)

^a5 respondents identified self as non-binary

^bIncludes those who are student and working

Procedure

The study obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board of Westfield State University, Massachusetts, USA, as well as the Institutional Review Board of the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. In South Africa, the service of one social media influencer was obtained and the link to the survey was tweeted on the influencer's platform. The link was also shared on Facebook, as well as the address book and contacts of one of the coauthors and respondents were encouraged to share it further. In Nigeria, the link was shared in the address book of the investigators, various social media groups (e.g., Whatsapp, Facebook), and among students from three universities. All participants were urged to share the link within their respective groups and contact lists. The online survey incorporated a consent form for respondents. Participants in Nigeria received data/airtime reimbursement to the equivalence of \$1.08 (N500) and those in South Africa received data/airtime reimbursement to the equivalence of \$1.62 (R30).

Measures

The survey included measures on perception of partner psychological abuse scale, as well as measures for convergent and discriminant validity.

Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse Scale (PPPAS): The scale consisted of a 53-item questions assessing perception of partner psychological abuse, encompassing six dimensions: verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, ignoring/neglect, manipulation, gaslighting, and economic/financial abuse. The response choices were preceded by a question: "In your opinion, to what degree can the following behaviors be classified as psychological or emotional abuse when a partner repeatedly engages in them?" Response options are as follows: 1 = definitely not psychological abuse, 2 = Most likely not psychological abuse, 3 = Not sure if it's psychological abuse or not, 4 = Most likely psychological abuse, and 5 = definitely psychological abuse. The Cronbach's alpha of the converged four factors in the present study is as follows: Verbal aggression/abuse (.86), Isolation/control (.85), Ignoring/neglect (.72), and Economic/financial abuse (.83).

Measures for convergent validity: Convergent validity was assessed using two measures. First, the perceptions of psychological abuse of child scale (Fakunmoju & Bammeke, 2013) were employed, consisting of 10 items with response options ranging from 1 = no, 2 = don't know, 3 = maybe/sometimes, to 4 = yes. This scale evaluates individuals' perceptions of psychological abuse inflicted upon children. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale in the present study was .99. Second, the violence subscale of the intimate partner violence attitude scales - IPVAS (Smith et al., 2005) was utilized. This subscale comprised five items with response options ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The scale gauges attitudes toward violent behaviors in intimate partner relationships. The Cronbach's alpha for this subscale in the present study was .88.

Measure for discriminant validity: Discriminant validity was evaluated using the perceptions of psychological manipulation and control scale (Fakunmoju et al., 2016a; Fakunmoju et al., 2016b). This subscale consisted of four items with response options ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The scale assesses individuals' perceptions of psychological manipulation and control directed towards women. The Cronbach's alpha for this subscale in the present study was .81.

Demographic characteristics: The survey also included questions about respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, educational background, occupational status, relationship status, and cohabitation status.

Data Analysis

To ensure data quality, an initial assessment was conducted to identify and eliminate any instances of duplicated or incomplete data. This involved scrutinizing the responses for consistency and completeness, specifically focusing on those participants who did not progress beyond providing demographic characteristics. No instances of data duplication were detected. After removing the incomplete data and the data of respondents outside Nigeria and South Africa that completed the survey, a total of 904 cases (441 from Nigeria and 463 South Africa) remained for further analysis. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was then performed using the principal axis factoring extraction method and varimax rotation.

Socio-demographic variables were grouped and categorized for descriptive purposes. These descriptive statistics were employed to examine the demographic characteristics of the participants. Convergent and discriminant validity were assessed using correlations (Hypothesis 1-3). To investigate whether there were variations in perception of partner psychological abuse based on country (Research question 4a) and gender (Research question 4b), a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The factors considered were country (Nigeria, South Africa) and gender (female, male). The analysis included four dependent variables: "Verbal aggression/abuse," "Isolation/control," "Ignoring/neglect," and "Economic/financial abuse." In order to address any missing data, the ipsative mean imputation method proposed by Schafer and Graham (2002) was utilized. The method was applied to cases/variables missing less than 25% of data/responses. Following the implementation of this method, the final sample for analysis consisted of 904 cases, with 441 participants from Nigeria and 463 from South Africa. With the rule of thumb of 10:1 (10 respondents per scale item), the 904-sample size meets and exceeds the sample size requirements for exploratory factor analysis for the 53 items (Boateng et al., 2018; Comrey & Lee 1992; Kyriazos, 2018). Similarly, the power analysis indicates that the 904-sample size meets and exceeds the sample size requirements for MANOVA. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 28™ (IBM Corporation, 2021).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The initial reliability analyses were performed on the 53 items, revealing that none of the items significantly improved the Cronbach's alpha of 0.967 when removed. To determine the item structure, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation, following the guidelines of Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), was conducted. During the analysis, it was observed that the 53 items yielded seven factors, exceeding the expected six factors. To address this discrepancy, established criteria were employed to eliminate specific items (e.g., those loading on three factors at .30 and above) and one factor. Subsequent reanalysis resulted in the identification of six factors (verbal, ignoring/neglect, isolation/control, gaslighting, manipulation, and economic/financial) that satisfied the criteria of having eigenvalues greater than 1.

However, certain items demonstrated loadings (.30 and above) across multiple factors. Specifically, the only three items related to "manipulation" that successfully loaded also cross-loaded with "gaslighting" at .33 and above. These items include item 30. using flattery or insincere compliments to manipulate and control a partner; item 31. minimizing a partner's concerns or worries to avoid addressing them; and item 33. using privileged status or position to gain favorable treatment from a partner. Similarly, five out of eight items that successfully loaded for "gaslighting" also cross-loaded with verbal aggression/abuse at .34 and above. These items include item 38. blaming a partner for one's or someone else's mistakes; item 39. refusing to take responsibility for hurting a partner's feelings; item 40. dismissing a partner's valid concerns by accusing them of being overly sensitive; item 42. exploiting a partner's weaknesses or vulnerabilities; and item 43. Distorting, twisting, or manipulating the truth about situations

to alter a partner's memory or perception of facts. Only three items of “gaslighting” did not cross-load with other constructs. These include item 37. denying something that a partner already knows to be true; item 41. judging a partner's behavior solely from a selfish perspective; and item 44. playing mind games or frequently changing the story about events to confuse a partner. After applying the elimination criteria and conducting subsequent analysis to eliminate items with high cross-loadings, the perception of partner psychological abuse scale revealed four distinct factors without cross-loadings.

Identified Four-Factor Model

From the exploratory factor analysis, Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a significant result, $\chi^2(136) = 5206.85, p < .0005$, indicating that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. The measures of sampling adequacy, as indicated by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .905, exceeded the recommended threshold of .6, suggesting that the sample size was sufficient for the analysis. According to the eigenvalues, four factors were identified to explain the variance in the data: isolation/control (Factor 1) consisting of 5 items ($\lambda = 6.076, 38.29\%$); verbal aggression/abuse (Factor 2) consisting of 4 items ($\lambda = 1.29, 10.15\%$); economic/financial abuse (Factor 3) consisting of 4 items ($\lambda = 1.07, 8.67\%$); and ignoring/neglect (Factor 4) consisting of 6 items ($\lambda = 6.80, .675\%$). Together, these factors accounted for 63.91% of the total variance. Items and factor loadings of perception of partner psychological abuse scale (PPPAS) are reported in Table 3 (Research question 2).

Furthermore, the reliability or internal consistency of the items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α). The overall internal consistency of the PPPAS was found to be high ($\alpha = .89$). Additionally, the subscales showed good and reliable internal consistency, with alpha values of .86 for verbal aggression/abuse, .85 for isolation/control, .72 for ignoring/neglect, and .83 for economic/financial abuse.

Correlations among Latent Constructs

The conceptual relationships between the constructs within the Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse Scale (PPPAS) indicates a moderate correlation (Cohen, 1992). Specifically, verbal aggression/abuse showed a significant positive correlation with isolation/control ($r = .56, p < .01$), ignoring/neglect ($r = .46, p < .01$), and economic/financial abuse ($r = .45, p < .01$). Similarly, isolation/control indicated a significant positive correlation with ignoring/neglect ($r = .39, p < .01$) and economic/financial abuse ($r = .49, p < .01$). Ignoring/neglect displayed a significant correlation with economic/financial abuse ($r = .49, p < .01$). The moderate correlations and absence of multicollinearity among the constructs imply substantial relationships among the variables comprising perception of partner psychological abuse.

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Table 4 provides additional information regarding the similarity of latent constructs to related measures, also known as convergent validity, their differentiation from related concepts or measures, known as discriminant validity, and their ability to differentiate individuals based on related behavior, attitudes, or beliefs, referred to as concurrent validity (Research question 3). The validity details pertaining to verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, ignoring/neglect, and economic/financial abuse are supported by their positive and significant relationships with perceptions of psychological abuse of child (hypothesis 1) and the partner violence attitudes scale (hypothesis 2). Specifically, when perceptions of child psychological abuse and attitudes toward partner violence increase, perceptions of verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, ignoring/neglect, and economic/financial abuse also tend to increase. This suggests that individuals who have higher perception of partner psychological abuse also have higher perceptions of psychological abuse of a child, as well as higher perceptions of partner violence.

Furthermore, evidence of discriminant validity is demonstrated by the significant negative correlation between the perception of partner psychological abuse scale (PPPAS) and perceptions of

psychological manipulation and control. This finding suggests that individuals who hold strong perception of partner psychological abuse are less likely to endorse psychological manipulation and control of women (Hypothesis 3).

Table 3: Items and factor loadings of perception of partner psychological abuse scale (PPPAS).

Item wording and subconstruct	Factor loading											
	Total				Nigeria				South Africa			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
VERBAL AGGRESSION/ABUSE												
1. Insulting a partner and using hurtful words.	.81				.75				.84			
2. Making negative comments about a partner's appearance or body.	.76				.71				.81			
3. Mocking or making fun of a partner, including inappropriate jokes.	.67				.71				.67			
4. Threatening physical harm to a partner.	.52				.39				.65			
	6				3				6			
ISOLATION/CONTROL												
5. Monitoring a partner's every move or action.		.757				.73				.76		
6. Dictating how a partner should dress or what they should wear.		.736				.74				.68		
7. Controlling a partner's actions and movements.		.663				.60				.76		
8. Dictating whom a partner can or cannot be friends with.		.606				.58				.61		
9. Gaining access to a partner's phone, email, or social media accounts without permission.		.557				.55				.52		
						0				3		
IGNORING/NEGLECT												
10. Refusing to spend quality time with a partner or depriving them of necessary attention.			.6			.6				.66		
11. Excluding a partner from important events, occasions, or activities.			.51			.27				.8		
12. Refusing to accept or consider a partner's valid advice.			.5			.5				.50		
13. Failing to appreciate or acknowledge a partner's positive actions.			.42			.75				.4		
			.3			.4				.32		
			.81			.53				.0		
ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL												
14. Spending money on unnecessary things for self or the household.			.77			.8				.7		
15. Refusing to contribute financially to household expenses or refusing to earn an income.			.6			.18				.28		
16. Wasting the partner's money or hiding purchases that are not needed from the partner.			.74			.7				.7		
17. Hiding personal income or sources of income from a partner.			.8			.74				.33		
			.65			.7				.5		
			.4			.15				.87		
			.50			.4				.5		
			.9			.83				.58		

Verbal aggression/abuse $M = 4.60$ ($SD = .70$); isolation/control $M = 4.22$ ($SD = .87$); ignoring/neglect $M = 3.80$ ($SD = .88$); economic/financial abuse ($M = 3.80$ ($SD = .98$)).

Effects of Country and Gender on Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse

The analysis using Pillai's Trace revealed significant multivariate main effects of PPPAS (a) with country, $V = .055$, $F(4, 718) = 10.38$, $p < .001$, and (b) with gender, $V = .026$, $F(4, 718) = 4.73$, $p < .001$. However, the interaction effects of country and gender were not statistically significant. Further examination of between-subjects effects indicated that country had a significant impact on "Isolation/control" ($F[1] = 23.37$, $p < .001$), while gender had significant effects on "Verbal aggression/abuse" ($F[1] = 3.57$, $p = .007$), "Isolation/control" ($F[1] = 12.08$, $p < .001$), and "Economic/financial abuse" ($F[1] = 6.93$, $p = .007$) (Research question 4).

Regarding Research Question 4a, the findings demonstrated differences between countries in terms of perceptions of isolation/control as a form of psychological abuse in intimate relationships. Specifically, the average scores for "isolation/control" in South Africa were significantly higher than those in Nigeria, indicating that respondents from South Africa were more likely to perceive isolation/control as psychologically abusive in intimate relationships compared to respondents from Nigeria (Table 5). Addressing Research Question 4b, the results revealed that female respondents had significantly higher average scores than male respondents in their perception of partner psychological abuse. Specifically, female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to perceive verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, and economic/financial abuse as forms of psychological abuse in intimate relationships.

Table 4: Means and correlations of PPPAS.

Variable	Number of items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 PPPAS	17	1						
2 Verbal	4	.78**	1					
3 Isolation/control	5	.83**	.56**	1				
4 Ignoring/neglect	4	.74**	.46**	.39**	1			
5 Economic/financial	4	.76**	.45**	.49**	.49**	1		
6 Perceptions of psychological child abuse	10	.19**	.16**	.18**	.15**	.09*	1	
7 Intimate partner violence attitudes scale (violence subscale)	5	.25**	.27**	.23**	.15**	.12**	.17**	1
8 Psychological manipulation and control	4	-.26**	-.22**	-.31**	-.13**	-.12**	-.11**	-.13**

** . $p < 0.01$; * . $p < 0.05$

Table 5. Means and standard deviations on perception of partner psychological abuse for country and gender

Variable	Nigeria	South Africa	Total
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Verbal	4.56 (.71)	4.64 (.69)	4.60 (.70)
Isolation/control	4.03 (.90)	4.41 (.79)	4.22 (.87)
Ignoring/neglect	3.81 (.87)	3.79 (.88)	3.80 (.88)
Economic/financial	3.77 (1.03)	3.83 (.94)	3.80 (.98)

Table 5 continued

Variable	Nigeria M (SD)		South Africa M (SD)		Total M (SD)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Verbal	4.66 (.60)	4.43 (.81)	4.66 (.71)	4.60 (.63)	4.66 (.67)	4.51 (.74)
Isolation/control	4.22 (.80)	3.82 (.96)	4.45 (.82)	4.32 (.74)	4.35 (.82)	4.04 (.91)
Ignoring/neglect	3.90 (.85)	3.68 (.90)	3.78 (.90)	3.86 (.82)	3.83 (.88)	3.75 (.87)
Economic/financial	3.92 (.95)	3.60 (1.09)	3.85 (.95)	3.78 (.93)	3.89 (.95)	3.68 (.1.02)

Discussion

Through the utilization of exploratory factor analysis, study 1 aimed to identify the latent constructs comprising the Perception of Partner Psychological Abuse Scale (PPPAS). The results revealed that instead of the initially theorized six dimensions, only four dimensions emerged: verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, ignoring/neglect, and economic/financial. However, two dimensions, namely gaslighting and manipulation, demonstrated high cross-loadings while still loading under their respective dimensions. This perhaps suggests some elements of conceptual similarities among them. These high cross-loadings do not indicate an unclear or unstable factor structure but rather signify conceptual overlap between the three factors. As a result, the decision was made to retain only the four clearly loaded factors without cross-loadings for further examination. Overall, the identified four-factor structure effectively captured the various dimensions of perception of partner psychological abuse.

Furthermore, the findings pertaining to construct and discriminant validity indicate that the PPPAS demonstrates significant positive correlations with similar measures while differentiating itself from related measures or concepts. Specifically, the PPPAS displays significant positive relationships with perceptions of child psychological abuse and attitudes toward partner violence, and a significant negative relationship with perceptions of psychological manipulation and control of women. These findings enhance reflections over previous findings and positions regarding the relationship and cooccurrence between partner violence and child abuse (Appel & Holden, 1998; Edleson, 1999; Jouriles et al., 2008; Stith et al., 2009), as well as between gender-based violence beliefs, perceptions, and perpetration of partner violence (e.g., adversarial sexual beliefs, physical aggression, hostility, relationship victimization experience, propensity to victimize partner) (Fakunmoju et al., 2016a; Capaldi et al., 2012; Fulu et al., 2013). In general, the findings support the scale's ability to capture the underlying theoretical construct of conflict and power dynamics in intimate relationships (Dobash & Dobash, 1977, 1979; Hunnicutt 2009; Johnson, 1995; Vagianos, 2017). The findings also support the reliability and validity of the PPPAS in capturing psychologically abusive behaviors and differentiating them from constructs unrelated to psychological abuse in intimate relationships.

Additionally, the findings suggest that the PPPAS varies by country and gender. Respondents from South Africa are more likely to perceive isolation/control as a form of psychological abuse in intimate relationships compared to respondents from Nigeria. Despite some cultural similarities between Nigeria and South Africa, it must be noted that differences in manifestations of cultural and societal norms and socialization processes between the two countries may influence how individuals perceive and define psychologically abusive behaviors. Previous studies have noted differences between the two countries regarding acceptance of rape myths, gender-based violence beliefs and stereotypes, and attitudes toward partner violence (Fakunmoju & Bammeke, 2017; Fakunmoju & Rasool, 2018; Fakunmoju et al., 2021). Differences in attitudes towards power dynamics and heightened awareness of the consequences of isolation/control in South Africa may increase its recognition as an indicator of psychological abuse among South African respondents compared to respondents from Nigeria. Prolonged exposure to partner violence and pervasive experience of victimization in South Africa may also heighten sensitivity to

manifestations of partner violence and its perceptions. Similarly, the promulgation and implementation of legal frameworks for addressing gender-based violence in South Africa may have also helped increase awareness towards the recognition of isolation/control as psychologically abusive. However, it is important to note that, while these developments may have enhanced the higher recognition of isolation/control as psychologically abusive, it may not necessarily translate into avoiding isolating/controlling behaviors in intimate relationships among the respondents in Nigeria and South Africa.

Similar to country differences, gender differences were equally noted. Female respondents were more inclined than their male counterparts to perceive verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, and economic/financial abuse as types of psychological abuse in intimate relationships. Although a review of research on partner violence by women indicates that women perpetrate partner violence in retaliation and self-defense (Swan et al., 2008), patriarchy heightens the vulnerability of women to partner violence by men, thereby increasing their sensitivity to victimization and perceptions of partner violence. The unique manifestations of patriarchy in Nigeria and South Africa encourage men to use power and privilege to control women and socialize women into prioritizing relational harmony over personal safety and well-being. The traditional gender roles ascribe power and authority to men and expect women to submit and comply (Reese et al., 2021), leading to different perceptions of psychologically abusive behaviors between men and women. Women may perceive verbal aggression/abuse, isolation/control, and economic/financial abuse as encroachments on their autonomy and psychological well-being, while men may view these behaviors as acceptable mechanisms for maintaining authority and control over women. These gendered manifestations of patriarchy have distinct effects on men and women. They heighten women's sensitivity and enable them to recognize and perceive these behaviors as psychologically abusive, while predisposing men to view them as less abusive and preventing them from recognizing these behaviors as vestiges of patriarchy.

Finally, education and awareness programs against gender-based violence are implemented in both Nigeria and South Africa, although South Africa tends to be more committed to such programs than Nigeria. Nevertheless, it is possible that women are more receptive to these programs than men. This reception may have heightened women's awareness of healthy relationships and personal rights, enabling them to recognize these behaviors as psychologically abusive. In contrast, men may perceive the awareness campaigns as psychological brainwashing aimed at eroding male authority and control.

Strengths and Limitations

The developed scale demonstrates a major strength through its adherence to best practices in scale development. By rigorously following these practices and assessing face and content validity and determining the factor structure, the PPPAS establishes a robust construct validity. Drawing from existing scales, research, and theories such as power and conflict and varieties of patriarchy theory, it ensures that the scale is both empirically and theoretically relevant.

In a comprehensive review of research instruments by Toma and Lederman (2022), content and predictive validity, as well as cross-national validity, were found to be underreported in the reviewed instruments. However, the PPPAS strengthens its cross-cultural validity by utilizing data from two countries to establish its factor structure and validation, as suggested by Toma and Lederman (2022). Notably, while other scales measure victimization and perpetration of psychological abuse within intimate relationships, the PPPAS measures individuals' perceptions of what behaviors constitute partner psychological abuse.

Contrary to the initially hypothesized six-factor structure, further analysis revealed a four-factor structure for PPPAS. The adopted criteria for selecting the four constructs helped minimize challenges related to model replication, stability, validation of multi-group invariance, and potential correlations of error terms. This approach was particularly crucial due to the data collection method, which relied solely

on self-report surveys instead of employing multiple methods like interviews or observations. Although the six factors were successfully identified in the exploratory factor analysis, the presence of high or multiple cross-loading contributed to the elimination of “gas-lighting” and “manipulation” from the scale. In addition to similarity of response categories, other factors known to contribute to cross-loadings include ambiguity of item, overlapping of constructs, measurement error, differing interpretations and perceptions of items across country and gender, and the chosen factor extraction method or rotation technique (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Fabrigar & Wegener, 2011; Hayton et al., 2004; Kline, 2023; Stevens, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Nevertheless, we provided detailed information to guide future testing and replication of the PPPAS across countries.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

The PPPAS's four-factor structure supports the perspectives of conflict and feminist theories, revealing power dynamics' influence on the perception of partner abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hunnicutt, 2009; Vagianos, 2017). The scale's structure supports framing research questions and predicting perception's impacts. Understanding perception may help challenge stereotypes, aiding in combating partner psychological abuse. By recognizing that knowledge about psychological abuse is not solely defined by victimization and perpetration but also by perceptions, the scale has the potential to contribute to a deeper understanding of partner psychological abuse, providing an opportunity to assess risks from norms, beliefs, and biases. Understanding perception will also help reflect on how individuals internalize and interpret abusive behaviors and how they accept or normalize them. The future use of the scale may help identify attitudes influencing psychological abuse and understand factors contributing to and associated with perceptions, tracking changes over time and facilitating targeted interventions.

Understanding perceptions or how individuals interpret psychological abuse will aid the identification and determination of preventive measures and help educate individuals about recognizing abuse, addressing supportive attitudes and beliefs. When combined with appropriate measures and tools, the use of the scale may enable researchers to identify underlying attitudes influencing perceptions and contributing to victimization and perpetration. In essence, measuring perception increases knowledge of partner psychological abuse and will generate insights that could help combat underlying stereotypes and beliefs. The scale offers a tool to assess risks, inform interventions, and ultimately work towards creating healthier and safer relationships.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to future validation of the factor structure of PPPAS, future studies can investigate factors associated with the perception of partner psychological abuse, such as gender roles and inequality, attitudes and beliefs, and personal characteristics and history. Similar studies may explore influences on changes in perceptions and their associated effects on victimization, perpetration, and propensity for abusive behaviors. Such studies can explore the differential effects of each dimension of PPPAS on victimization and perpetration, facilitating the generation of suitable knowledge that will deepen the understanding of the sources and causes of partner psychological abuse. Understanding the underlying beliefs, values, and experiences shaping individuals' perceptions can provide valuable insights. Utilizing the scale in diverse cultural contexts can contribute evidence to support its cross-cultural validity and enhance knowledge of partner psychological abuse.

In conclusion, the four-factor structure of PPPAS provide empirical support for the relevance of psychological and economic tactics in comprehending psychological abuse and enriches the toolkit available for addressing perception of partner psychological abuse within intimate relationships.

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