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GASLIGHTING AND EMPLOYEES' SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF NESTLE NIGERIA PLC

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Abstract

Gaslighting has been construed as the psychological manipulation of a person by another to gain control. This also plays out in the workplace. Although few studies on the effects of gaslighting on employees' performance have been conducted; there is a paucity of Nigerian indigenous studies in the gaslighting literature. Consequently, this study seeks to cover this knowledge gap by x-raying the effect of gaslighting on employees' sustainable performance in Nigeria. Towards achieving this end, two hundred copies of a well-structured questionnaire were administered to employees of Nestle Nigeria PLC. Regression analyses were carried out on the cross sectional data generated by the instrument in order to examine the different impacts of three nuances of gas lighting: psychological abuse of employees, depression and emotional abuse, on three measures of employees' sustainable performance:

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employees' commitment, employees' efficiency and employees' effectiveness. The result - B = -0.607, R2 = 0.544; F= 72.653; P value = 0.000 - for hypothesis one showed that psychological abuse has a significant influence on employees' sustainable performance. Also, the regression result - B = -0.007; R2 = 0.512; F = 65.653; P- value = 0.000 - for hypothesis two, revealed that depression has a significant impact on employees' sustainable performance. Lastly, regression result - B = 0.115; R2 = 0.579; F = 102.333; P- value = 0.000, indicates that emotional abuse has significant impact on employees' sustainable performance. Based on these results, the study concluded that gaslighting has an impact on employees' sustainable performance. Hence managers of organsations need to prioritise the detection and prevention of gaslighting behaviours; as they significantly undermine employees' commitment, employees' efficiency and employees' effectiveness. Implementing effective policies and interventions to address gas lighting could help foster employees' sustainable performance.

Keywords*: Gaslighting; Psychological abuse; Sustainable performance*

1. Introduction

Gaslighting is an evolving construct that is predominant in almost every organisation all over the world. The American Psychological Association defines gaslighting as the act of misleading someone into disbelieving their own perception, experiences, or knowledge of what has happened. The form of psychological abuse known as gaslighting occurs when a person or group make(s) another question their own sanity, recollections, or sense of reality, or feel uneasy, scared, or untrusting of themselves. In today's workplaces, gaslighting, a very serious form of psychological abuse, is tragically all too widespread (Newport Institute, 2022), even among employees.

Employees form the most important resource in every organisation and their sustainable performance culminate in the organisation sustainability (Nangoy, Mursitama, Setiadi & Pradipto, 2020). Therefore, in an attempt for most organisations to remain relevant and sustain the performance of their employees, they stir their employees against each other as a motivating device (Luft, 2016) which sometimes turn out to be counterproductive, thereby turning these employees against themselves. Most employees result to gaslighting other employees in order to be regarded as better performing. They (gaslighters) seize the opportunity to hide, stall or withhold vital information that would benefit their colleagues or the organisation or play dumb by showing unawareness on certain vital information or knowledge (Anand & Hassan, 2019). The abuser tries to create doubt and uncertainty in the victim's mind through psychological manipulation known as gaslighting. These actions could have grave consequences on both the employee (gaslightee) and organisation. The gaslightee could feel insecure, doubt their abilities

and start falling short of the expected performance. This may affect their commitment to work, efficiency and effectiveness at work which are barriers to sustainable performance.

The term "gaslighting" which was seen as esoteric until the middle of the 2010s is derived from the 1944 American movie Gaslight, which tells the story of a husband who tricks his wife into thinking she has a mental illness so he can steal from her, although the term "gaslighting" was not really used in the movie. The house's gaslight illumination, which seems to change whenever the husband sends his wife home alone, is alluded to in the title. Maureen Dowd's column in The NewYork Times first utilized the gerund form gaslighting in 1995. They only used it nine more times in the subsequent twenty years, but after that, it began to occur considerably more regularly (Wikipedia, 2022). The American Psychological Association claims that the phrase 'gaslighting', which is now used more broadly, originally indicated manipulation to the point of causing mental illness or to support putting the gaslighted person in a psychiatric facility. Gaslighters often want to obtain power and influence over their victim by distorting reality and making them question their own judgment and instincts. (Human Search and Rescue, 2023). This type of mental abuse is commonly committed by egocentric individuals who intend to harm others.

Contrary to popular belief, gaslighting is a common occurrence in the workplace which harms the victim severely, frequently requiring them to quit their career or work in more severe cases. Organisations need to encourage their employees to bring to the fore any form of gaslighting activities and educate their team on what it is, in order to prevent its occurrence in the workplace. People will unavoidably come across gaslighting in their business-related interactions, if not addressed rightly, it would cause a possibly serious issue. (Good Therapy, 2021; Opele *et al*. 2022). Usually, in the workplace, the victim of regular gaslighting is less aware of it. Although, anyone could be a victim of gaslighting, underrepresented groups are most frequently impacted. The motivations of the gaslighter are frequently different in the workplace. Gaslighting can occur at work to strengthen one's position of authority and control, reduce the likelihood that a real or imagined threat would damage one's standing or reputation inside the company, or even when the gaslighter is unaware of the extent of his intention. In any case, it is crucial to spot gaslighting when it occurs and respond appropriately to ensure that everyone feels safe and at ease at work (Neilson, 2019), only then can employees' performance be sustained.

Employees' performance is characterised by how well they carry out their assigned activities and perform their job responsibilities. These job responsibilities can only

be fully well performed in healthy work environment. Therefore, in order to sustain employees' performance, it is imperative to critically examine the work relationships among employees to ensure sustainable performance (Ji *et al.,* 2021; Olanipekun *et al.,* 2022). This study examined employees' sustainable performance using employees' commitment, efficiency and effectiveness which are necessary ingredients for sustaining high performance in an environment devoid of any form of psychological or mental manipulations. These manipulations are usually subtle at the beginning and may not be taken seriously, and because gaslighting incidents are so uncommon, people are unable to pinpoint a specific source of their anxiety. Over time, the employee could start to question their own emotions and experiences. They may rely on their abuser to attest to the veracity of their memories or the validity of their emotions. The abuser takes advantage of this trust to exert control over the victim (Conrad, 2023), thus breeding a toxic workplace which hinders sustainable performance.

2. Problem Statement

The toxic nature of the majority of firms in today's corporate environment has attracted the interest of the human resource management in gaslighting issues that arise from underperforming employees. When businesses ignore these subtle damaging actions, their high performing employees begin to underperform and these actions may result in the unsustainable performance of employees which consequently are always detrimental to the revenue stream.

So many past studies have examined the concept of gaslighting and its various consequences and outcomes both to individuals and organisations (Kopala- Sibley, 2020; Schilpz *et al.,* 2020; Sweet, 2019; Ruiz, 2019; Cerny, 2019; Clance & Dalton, 2018; Ajibola *et al*., 2021; Kathy, 2017). However, these studies were focused on the western context in examining gaslighting and its impact.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is very limited past empirical examination of the concept of gaslighting using the local context, hence the study is filling this lacuna by examining the impact of gaslighting on the sustainability of employees' performance in the local context to determine the extent to which context affect outcomes. Therefore, this study examined the impact of gaslighting on employees' sustainable performance in Nestle Nigeria Plc, Ogun State, Nigeria.

3. Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study was to examine gaslighting and employees' sustainable performance in Nestle Nigeria, Plc, Ota Ogun state. Specifically, the study aimed at:

   i. determining how psychological abuse affects employees' sustainable performance in Nestle Nigeria, Plc;

   ii. examining the impact of depression on employees' sustainable performance in Nestle Nigeria, Plc;

   iii. Investigating the effect of emotional abuse on employees' sustainable performance in Nestle Nigeria, Plc.

4. Research Hypotheses

Based on the on the objective of the study and research questions, the hypotheses below were formulated:

H_0: Psychological abuse has no significant effect on employees' sustainable performance in Nestle

   Nigeria Plc.

H_0: Depression has no significant impact on employees' sustainable performance in Nestle Nigeria

   Plc.

H_0: Emotional abuse has no significant effect on employees' sustainable performance in Nestle

   Nigeria, Plc.

5. Literature Review

5.1. Conceptual Clarification

Gaslighting is a method in which a person or entity makes a victim question their reality in order to obtain more power. The harmful practice of gaslighting involves causing a victim to question their own judgment and emotions. Gaslighting was described as a type of psychological abuse whose objective is to make their victim

look or feel 'insane' (Sweet, 2019). The abuse usually start out subtly. A little detail might be disputed, for instance, if the victim is recalling a story, the person might go on after admitting they were mistaken about a specific point. The next time, the abuser might make use of that previous success to further damage the victim's reputation, perhaps by raising doubts about their recollection. A person may initially respond by disputing. The tiny nature of each gaslighting encounter prevents them from identifying a particular source of their anxiety. The individual can begin to doubt their own feelings and memories in the future. (Good Therapy, 2014). The gaslightee may go to their abuser to confirm whether their recall is accurate or if their emotions, are normal. The abuser usually takes advantage of this trust to exert control over their victim.

According to Sweet 2019, the term gaslighting which gained popularity in the 2010s was introduced in 1944 in George Cukor's film which narrated a story of man who isolated his wife to make her feel or look crazy. He performed the act by brightening and diming the gas light and made her feel it was all in her imagination simply to manipulate and alter her sense of reasoning. Subsequently, gaslighting has been used to depict any form of mind manipulations which occurs in every sphere of life. this led to the effort of the United Kindom to make gaslighting an official part of criminal domestic violence in 2015, in which over 300 individuals have been found culpable (Sweet, 2019).

Gaslighting is not a personality disorder, it is a social phenomenon which involves psychological dynamics which may be worse than physical abuse (Fraser, 2021). It often seen by a manipulation used by a superior to exert overt control on his subordinate (Fraser, 2021), but as the study gained attention, it has been discovered that it could occur to any one irrespective of the individual's position. Hence, Good Therapy, 2014, opined that gaslighting could happen between superiors and subordinates or among employees. Therefore, anyone could be a target. In popular culture, gaslighting is sometimes portrayed as a husband torturing his wife. However, anyone, regardless of gender, has the ability to gaslight the others or be gaslighted.

There are so many detrimental effects of gaslighting on employees in an organisation (Schilpz *et al.,* 2020). These psychological and mental manipulations may make it difficult for employees to solve seemly easy problems, making them consistently feel undervalued or excluded. They could also experience low self-esteem, bewilderment, self-doubt, and difficulties finishing tasks or participating in social interactions (Kopala- Sibley, 2020). As a result, they begin to experience trust

concerns at work. Their confidence and productivity decline. These chain of effects hinders the sustainable performance of employees in the workplace. Furthermore, even after surviving an abusive manipulation, victims of gaslighting frequently experience post traumatic social disorder (PTSD) and have trouble both trusting other people and themselves. As a result, they could develop codependent relationships and have trouble delivering successful results, it is better for gaslighting to be nibbed in the bud as soon as it is spotted in the work environment.

5.2. How to Spot a Gaslighter

Gaslighters desire power and control. They must be in charge in a relationship and must always be right, routinely pressing their opinions on you. The techniques used by a gaslighter include constantly criticising, blaming, speaking indecently, intimidating, denying responsibility, downplaying abusive conduct, and declaring discontent with a relationship (McQuillan, 2021). People who use the phrase "you made me do it" or "I did it because you wouldn't listen to me" are seen to be guilty of gaslighting (McQuillan, 2021). According to Christensen and Evans-Murray, (2021), there are 3 stages of gaslighing techniques; the idealisation stage which is when the individual put up their best performance. The gaslighter gives utmost attention and interest on the gaslightee, showing great affection. They tend to create a positive image of themselves to gain attention and trust, thus creating a false sense of security and trust. By so doing, the gaslighter sets the stage for the subsequent stages of the gaslighting process.

Once the victim has been idealised, the gaslighter may begin to slowly shift their behavior and attitude, introducing small criticisms or negative comments that may be disguised as helpful feedback. This gradual shift from idealisation to criticism is designed to confuse and disorient the victim, causing them to doubt their own judgment and perception of reality. Ultimately, the idealisation stage is a critical component of the gaslighting process, as it establishes a foundation of trust and admiration that can be manipulated and exploited to gain control over the victim. By recognising the signs and patterns of gaslighting, individuals can protect themselves from these harmful manipulation tactics and seek help if necessary.

The next is the devaluation stage, which involves the gaslighter making the victim feel unworthy or unimportant. In this stage, the gaslighter may belittle the victim, criticize their thoughts or actions, and dismiss their feelings or opinions. They may also begin to isolate the victim from their support systems or spread rumors or lies about them. This is where the gaslighter's tactics become more aggressive, and they

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may use more direct forms of manipulation to make the victim question their sanity or worth. The gaslighter may deny the victim's accomplishments, blame them for problems that are not their fault, and use gaslighting to make the victim doubt their own memory or judgment. This stage can be particularly damaging to the victim's self-esteem and mental health, as they may begin to internalise the gaslighter's criticisms and doubts about their worth. The gaslighter may use this to their advantage, further isolating the victim and making them more dependent on their (gaslighter's) approval and validation.

The Discarding Phase is the stage where the game's resolution is reached. They ensure their victim is totally dependent on them. As soon as this occurs, the gaslighter's enthusiasm for the game wanes, they believe they have already won the competition, and the pleasure is over. At this point, the victim no longer exists in the gaslighter's mind; they are completely unconcerned with any needs or wishes the victim may have. Now, the victim is left feeling wounded and bewildered and wanting to find answers to "fix" the failing relationship. The gaslighter will bully with silence or, if a reaction does come, it will be icy cold, but they will rebuff all efforts to save the connection. The victim would have become effectively "worthlessly inferior" to them; they recognise that they have used up all of the victim's resources and that they are no longer needed. They then turn to the next victim.

5.3. Signs of Gaslighting in the Workplace

There are so many signs of gaslighting in the workplace. According to (The National Bullying Helpline, 2022), they include a lack of transparency and openness which may take place in a one-on-one setting with immediate line management or it may occur at the corporate level with the participation of the full Executive Board and/or a firm owner, or even among employees; an unwillingness to record meeting minutes or create file notes, refusal to abide by rules unless doing so benefits the company, thereby putting the employee in the organisation's limelight. Ignoring a verbal employees' complaint or failing to look into a formal grievance while enforcing disciplinary and performance management rules with vigor, drip-feeding information, withholding crucial information, continually rescheduling meetings, and omitting to offer whole fact all of which have historically been referred to as setting a person up to fail; moving the goal posts or altering a part of a job description without first having a conversation or citing a change management policy; organising last-minute meetings without sharing information or informing other

employees in advance of the meeting's goal and potential outcomes. Springing unnecessary surprises on serious official matter, knee-jerk suspensions for trivial matters that could have been handled by conversation or a casual encounter and so many other (The National Bullying Helpline, 2022).

When a worker's perception of reality is distorted by an employer or another employee's actions, this is known as gaslighting. In the workplace, lying is the most typical sign of gaslighting. A gaslighter will speak explicit lies, setting a standard for subsequent behavior. The gaslightee is then incapable of distinguishing between what is true and what is false. Self-doubt may result from this. Other indications of gaslighting include saying something they didn't mean to say (or the opposite), using someone else's information against them, and criticising someone else's words, behavior, or work (Christensen & Evans-Murray, 2021). Gaslighting is not something that can be done in a day or two; rather, it is a behavior that develops progressively over time in the workplace (Christensen & Evans-Murray, 2021). A power imbalance rooted in formal hierarchy, interpersonal dynamics, or both is typically present in cases of gaslighting. As a result, the workplace serves as an ideal setting for these behaviors, with bullying being a common variant. Specific workplace bullying strategies might range from being very clear and transparent to being astonishingly cunning and calculating. Gaslighting is among the most dangerous of the latter. Gaslighting at work can take many different forms, such as staged, manipulative aggressor-to-target behaviors or HR representatives feigning surprise in the face of complaints of abusive abuse. (Yamada, 2017). Therefore, this study examined gaslighting using psychological abuse, depression and emotional abuse.

5.4. Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse is the routine and intentional use of a variety of words and non-physical actions with the goal of manipulating, hurting, weakening, or frightening a person mentally and emotionally (Herrick & Thomas, 2021). It can also distort, confuse, or influence a person's thoughts and actions in daily life, changing their sense of self and harming their wellbeing (Gupta, 2022). Psychological abuse by a superior or a colleague can have serious negative effects on a person, including elevated levels of depression, emotional tiredness, and anxiety, as well as insomnia, problem drinking, and decreased life satisfaction (Schyns, 2021).

5.5. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is any form abuse that includes any emotional maltreatment of an individual. It often replicated with psychological abuse. Emotional abuse often makes the victim doubt their own emotions, intuition, and sanity, giving the abuser a lot of power (and we know that abuse is about power and control). Victims are more likely to remain in abusive relationships once their ability to trust their own views has been undermined by an abusive partner (National domestic violence hotline, 2020). The target of emotional abuse often experiences a great deal of stress as a result of a wide range of behaviors. Emotional abuse can be deliberate or accidental, and in other circumstances, it might just be a sign of a much bigger issue that might point to a poisonous work environment. (Mullen, 2021). Emotional abuse in the workplace means a form of mental abuse which has impact on the victims' well-being as well as the overall productivity and effectiveness of the business thus affecting the sustainability of the victim's performance. Stress-related symptoms, such as decreased motivation, physical illness, and absenteeism, can affect victims of mental abuse (Schyns, 2021). If the victims believe there is no other way to resolve the situation, abuse may at its worst, result in turnover; on the other hand, management may attempt to deal with the situation, and as a result of employees' distractions and the allocation of resources to address the abuse, the organisation's production is hampered. (Benjamin, 2021).

5.6. Depression

Depression is a complex condition with a varied manifestation of thoughts, feelings, and behavior that can affect anyone and everyone, and a variety of work and non-work-related factors might be at play when we consider someone struggling with workplace depression. (Gupta, 2021). Depression can result in weight loss, appetite loss, and other short-term health problems which could be detrimental to employees' commitment, efficiency and effectiveness.

6. Concept of Employees' Sustainable Performance

Employees' sustainable performance is a state of control in which employees attain a favourable organizational objectives putting into consideration his level of well-being (Ji *et al.*, 2021). From research is more practical than in theory and empirical research (Spreitzer & Gibson, 2022), hence the limited empirical findings. Also, De Jonge and Peeters, 2019, opined that the concept of employee sustainable

performance is still in an evolving state and therefore may be devoid of well tested theoretical frameworks (De Jonge & Peeters, 2019). Viewing this concept in a practical perspective, it attempts to portray the expected working condition of an individual in an organisation.

Some Human Resource Management experts further analysed sustainable performance to mean the expected working condition of an employee which equates the performance of the individual to the work needs without any influence on futureperformance and needs of the organisation (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Work related sustainability was initially introduced by Docherty *et al.*, (2002) who sensed the need to move work focused attention from the past to the future (Docherty *et al.*, 2002). They argued that the future of an organisation supersedes the mere analysis of the past. Therefore, in sustaining employees' performance, it is imperative to put into consideration employees mental or psychological state.

While past research utilized various concept in analysing the factors that relate to employees' sustainable performance as it benefits the employees in an organisation (Ji, *et al.*, 2010), this study analysed employee sustainable performance using employees' commitment, efficiency and effectiveness of work in the organisation. Employees' commitment has been described as a state of continuance loyalty to the goals and aspirations of the organisation (Saputra & Mahaputra, 2022; Lanre-Babalola *et al*., 2023). When employees are treated right in the workplace, they continually pledge their loyalty to the achievement of the goals of the organisation. Employees' efficiency on the other hand, simply means the rate of effective job performance of employees which results in higher productivity (Team EmpMonitor, 2022); while employees' effectiveness is the ability of a worker to produce the expected result in an organisation (Nadaee *et al.*, 2012). This study argues that in order to sustain the performance of employees using these variables, there is need for employees to maintain a healthy mental state devoid of psychological abuse, depression and emotional abuse in the workplace.

7. Theoretical Justification

7.1. The Knot Theory of Mind

This psychological theory called the Knot Theory of Mind was discovered by Domina Petric. Mind knots are made up of unhealthy and incapacitating unpleasant emotions, feelings (subconscious knots), and thoughts. Both emotional and cognitive functioning are impaired by mind knots, which have a wide range of negative effects, including slowed ideation and decision-making, lower productivity, overthinking, broken-mirror syndrome, anxiety, sadness, and even psychosis (mental constructs, delusions), among others. As one of the most prevalent and potent causes of mind knots, hatred must be avoided in adversarial interpersonal interactions. Animosity in the traditional sense is frequently inescapable in life. The true cause of enmity, or the objective component of animosity, cannot be altered. In order to prevent the formation of mental knots and to initiate the mediation process in antagonistic relationships whenever is possible, the subjective component of enmity, envy, or hatred can be replaced with love and respect. In hostile relationships, love converts hostility into the objective antagonism that allows for problem-solving and even mediation. In conclusion, this theory explains that Gaslighting is a powerful strategy used by abusers and can have very bad consequences for the victim. Abuse of the mind and emotions leads to the development of many knots of unpleasant thoughts and emotions as well as cognitive and emotional deterioration.

7.2. The Sociology Theory of Gaslighting.

The sociology theory of gaslighting suggests that gaslighting is a form of social control that is used by those in power to manipulate and control individuals or groups who are deemed to be weaker or subordinate. The theory put forth that gaslighting happens when perpetrators influence victims' truths by using institutionalised injustices and systemic biases against them based on their gender, and other forms of victimisation. Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation that involves denying a person's reality and causing them to doubt their own perceptions, feelings, and memories. This can occur in various contexts, including in personal relationships, social groups, and the workplace.

Sociologists suggest that gaslighting is often used by those in positions of power to maintain their dominance over others. This can occur in workplaces where managers or supervisors may use gaslighting techniques to control their employees

and maintain their power over them. In such cases, the gaslighting is used as a form of social control to manipulate employees and to maintain the existing power structures within the workplace. Gaslighting can also be used by social groups to maintain their dominance over others. For example, in cases of bullying or peer pressure, a group may use gaslighting techniques to manipulate a targeted individual and to maintain their social status within the group. In such cases, the gaslighting is used as a means of social control to maintain the status quo and to prevent the targeted individual from challenging the existing power structures within the group. Sociologists also suggest that gaslighting is a form of social inequality. Those who engage in gaslighting often have more power and privilege than their targets, and they use this power to maintain their dominance over others. Gaslighting is therefore seen as a manifestation of the power imbalances that exist within society. In conclusion, the sociology theory of gaslighting suggests that gaslighting is a form of social control that is used by those in power to maintain their dominance over others. This theory highlights the power imbalances that exist within society and emphasizes the importance of understanding these imbalances in order to prevent gaslighting and other forms of psychological manipulation from occurring. By addressing these power imbalances and promoting equality and respect, it may be possible to create a more inclusive and supportive social environment.

8. Methodology

The population of the study was made up of 350 employees' of Nestle Nigeria Plc in Ota, Ogun State, while the sample size was 200 determined using Taro Yamane formula to ensure that each member of the target population got an equal and independent chance of being included in the survey. Both primary and secondary sources were used to gather the data. The primary data included the use of systematic, straightforward, and direct questionnaires and interviews, while the secondary data were materials derived from data that had already been collected which were not created by the initiator, including magazines and newspapers, journals, online publications, and unpublished works. The study made use of a well-structured questionnaire which comprised three sections; section (A) assessed the respondents' demographics, section (B) evaluated the factors that contributed to gaslighting and how it occurs, and section (C) evaluated employees' performance. There were 35 questions on the survey, and responses were to be made using a likert scale. The five alternative responses for each of the five variables examined ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree and had a numerical value of 1 to 5. The

research instrument was validated through a staff survey earlier conducted while the reliability of the instrument was done through Cronbach Alpha. Descriptive statistics was employed to examine the quantitative data. The findings were presented in table and SPSS analysis was used to examine the hypotheses.

9. Results and Analysis

187 of the 200 questionnaires distributed to respondents Nestle Nigeria Plc Ota were recovered, accounting for 93.5% of the total distributed. 187 of the total questionnaires administered were subsequently examined.

Table 1. Questionnaire Response Rate

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Retrieved	187	93.5
Un-retrieved	13	6.5
Total Questionnaire	200	100

Source: Field survey (2023)

The respondents' demographic data shown in this section, included the respondent's gender, age, highest level of education, and years of service or employment experience. The study's use of demographic data demonstrates the suitability of the respondents for the investigation. The tables below show the data distribution.

Table 2. Respondents' Demographic Information

S/N	Demographic Variables	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	129	69
		Female	58	31
		Total	187	100
2.	Age	21-35 years	31	17
		36-50 years	76	41
		51 and above	80	43
		Total	187	100
3.	Marital Status	Single	36	19
		Married	123	66
		Separated	28	15
		Total	187	100
4	Educational Qualifications	WASC/SSCE	12	06
		OND/NEC	67	36
		B.Sc./HND	108	57
		Total	187	100

5	Length Of Service	1-5 years	56	30
		6-10 years	33	17
		11-15 years	76	41
		15 years and above	22	12
		Total	187	100
6.	Management Level	Top Level	52	27
		Middle Level	33	17
		Low Level	102	54

Source: Field survey (2023)

The table shows that for gender, 31% of responders are women, compared to a male majority of 69%. Therefore, there is an adequate representation of each gender in the sample size, which is more male than female. According to the respondents' age's descriptive analysis, 17% of them were between the ages of 21 and 35; 41% of them were between the ages of 36 and 50; and 43 % were over the age of 51. According to the analysis's repercussions, respondents 51 years of age and above make up the majority of the sample.

The marital status distribution shows that 15% of respondents were separated from their spouses, 66.5% of respondents were married, and 19.5% of respondents were single. Because the bulk of them are married, the sample size is impliedly made up of highly responsible employees. In terms of the highest degree obtained, 6% of respondents had a WASC/SSCE, 36% had an OND/ NEC, and 57% had a B.Sc./HND. Overall, the majority of respondents held a bachelor's or higher national diploma, suggesting that all respondents are educated. According to the analysis of respondents' length of service in the organisation, 30% of them have worked there for less than one year, 17% have been there for between six and ten years, 13% have been there for between eleven and fifteen years, and 41% have worked there for more than fifteen years. Inferentially, the majority of the respondents who took part in the study have been employed for at least 15 years.

9.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for Emotional abuse

S/N	Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean	S.d deviation
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	Attempts to prove that I am lying by catching me at contradictions.	41	21.9	94	50.3	18	19.6	26	13.9	8	4.3	3.7166	1.08751
2	Humiliates me in front of others.	47	25.1	102	54.5	17	9.3	16	8.6	5	2.6	3.9091	0.96010
3	Tries to convince others that I am crazy.	15	8	58	31	38	20.2	58	31	18	9.6	2.9679	1.15425
4	Tells other people personal information or secret about me.	35	18.8	76	40.6	29	15.5	33	17.6	14	7.5	3.5045	1.19669
5	Has insulted me by telling me that I am incompetent (stupid).	56	29.9	70	37.6	27	14.1	19	10.1	15	8	3.7112	1.22344
	CLUSTER MEAN											3.5517	1.124389

9.2. Decision Rule

If mean < 3.0 the respondent Disagree; If $3.5 \leq$ Mean ≤ 3.0 the respondents are undecided

If mean ≥ 3.5 the respondent Agree. Table 3 indicates the descriptive statistics for emotional abuse as gaslighting technique. The sample mean for Item 1 is 3.7166, and the sample standard deviation is 1.08751. Since the sample mean is greater than 3.5, it can be assumed that a majority of respondents agreed with the statement under consideration.

Since the sample mean for item 2 in the above table is 3.9091 which is larger than 3.5, it suggests that the respondents are clearly in agreement with the statement being evaluated. They fall under the agreed group. Since the sample size is smaller than 3.0 and Item 3 has a mean of 2.9679 and a standard deviation of 1.15425, it is clear that the respondents don't agree with the statement. The mean value for item 4 is

3.4545, while the standard deviation is 1.19669. It implies that the responders agree with the statement. The mean value for item 5 is 3.7112, and its standard deviation is 1.22344. Since the value is greater than 3.5, it is assumed that the respondents concur with the statement. On the aggregate, all the items in table 3 has a mean score of 3.5517 with a corresponding standard deviation of 1.124398. this implies that the respondents agree that they are emotionally abused.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Depression

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean	S.d Deviation
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
You are facing a lack of concentration.	86	46.0	44	23.5	30	16.2	7	3.7	20	10.7	3.7487	1.05031
You are feeling that everything you have done has been a failure.	62	33.2	43	23.0	39	20.9	10	5.3	33	17.6	3.5080	1.17943
You are having trust issues with everyone around you.	77	41.2	44	23.0	39	20.3	33	17.3	10.6	5.6	3.5561	1.25330
You have lost interest in all things that were important to you once upon a time.	25	13.4	12	6.4	67	35.8	56	29.9	27	14.4	2.6738	1.08038
You have been very irritated and angry recently.	88	47.1	38	20.3	26	13.9	11	5.9	24	12.7	3.6310	1.12053
CLUSTER MEAN											3.51204	1.24478

Source: survey (2023)

From table 4 which contains the response on how gaslighting can lead to depression the first item in the table has a mean value of 3.7487 and a standard deviation of 1.05031. since the mean value is greater than 3.5, it implies that the respondents agree with the statement. Also the second item has a mean value of 3.5080 and a corresponding standard deviation of 1.17943. the mean value is equals to 3.5, it implies that the respondents agree on the statement. The third item shows the mean value of 3.5561 and a corresponding standard deviation 1.25330, since the mean

value is equal to 3.5 the respondents agree with the statement. The forth item on the table displays the mean value of 2.6738 and the standard deviation is 1.08038, the mean value is less than 3.0 so the repondents disagree with the statement. The last item on the table shows that the mean value of 3.6310 and the standard deviation is 1.12053, the respondents agree with the statement since the mean value is greater than 3.5. On the aggregate all the items on table 3 has a cluster mean of 3.51204 with a corresponding standard deviation of 1.24479. This implies that the respondents agree that they suffer from depression.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for Psychological abuse

S/N	Statement	SA		A		UN		D		SD		Mean	S.d
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	Treating you badly because of things you can't change e.g your religion, past, sexuality, or family.	49	26.2	28	15	29	15.5	43	23	38	20.3	2.9251	1.38143
2	Ignoring you or pretending you aren't there.	79	42.2	52	27.8	25	13.4	22	11.8	9	4.8	3.7647	1.12558
3	Always correcting what you say with the aim of making you look or feel foolish.	71	38.0	55	29.4	32	17.1	16	8.6	8	4.3	3.7433	1.17244
4	Embarrassing you in public or in front of friends or people you work with.	87	46.5	51	27.3	23	12.3	18	9.6	8	4.3	3.8289	1.06893
5	Doing and saying things that make you feel confused.	89	47.6	46	24.6	20	10.7	24	12.8	8	4.3	3.8289	1.09418
	CLUSTER MEAN											3.0802	1.227692

Source: Field Survey (2023)

From table 5 which contains the response on psychological abuse, Item 1 on the table has a mean of 2.9251 and a corresponding standard deviation of 1.38143, since the mean value is less than 3.0 it implies that the respondents disagree with the statement. Also, item 2 on the table shows a mean value of 3.7647 and a

corresponding standard deviation of 1.12558. The mean value is greater than 3.5 and this implies that the respondents get ignored. Similarly, item 3 has a mean value of 3.7433 and a standard deviation of 1.17244 this shows that the respondents agree with the statement. Item 4 has a mean value of 3.8299 and standard deviation of 1.06893. Item 5 displays a mean value of 2.7540 and standard deviation of 1.168512 which indicates that the respondents disagree with the statement. The aggregate shows that the mean cluster is 3.0802 and standard deviation of 1.227692 shows that the respondents are not psychologically abused.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for Employee Performance

S/N	Statement	SD		D		N		SA		A		Mean	S.d
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I feel no loyalty toward the organization	25	13.4	74	39.6	44	23.5	29	15.5	15	8	2.6524	1.13689
2	My organization motivates me to give my all at work.	14	7.5	56	29.9	43	23.0	52	27.8	22	11.8	3.0642	1.16220
3	I understand how I contribute to the organization's goals.	12	6.4	38	20.3	46	24.6	64	34.2	27	14.4	3.2995	1.63883
4	I am glad I chose to work for this organization.	14	7.5	43	23.0	57	30.5	51	27.3	22	11.8	3.1283	1.12384
5	High work ethic exists at this organization.	43	23.0	11	5.9	32	17.1	64	34.8	36	19.8	3.3850	1.20098
6	You have good communication skills.	14	7.5	35	18.7	40	21.4	73	39.0	25	13.4	3.3422	1.14711
7	You inspire other employees in the organization.	42	22.5	12	6.4	37	19.8	62	33.2	34	18.2	3.4332	1.19609

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8	You are open to constructive feedback.	15	8	31	16.6	43	23	54	28.7	44	23.5	3.3369	1.23983
9	You are always punctual to work.	37	16.4	59	32	49	26.9	41	21.9	8	4.3	3.5668	1.21100
10	You have worked hard on self-improvement.	32	17.1	8	4.3	37	19.8	81	43.3	29	13.7	3.1123	1.10794
11	You like high intensity training.	57	27.3	18	9.6	37	19.8	54	28.9	27	14.4	3.0261	1.23271
12	You don't have any problem dealing with each days tasks.	20	10.7	54	28.9	48	25	43	23	22	11.8	2.6991	1.19303
13	You are hardly absent from work on health grounds or others problems.	31	16.6	62	33.2	43	23.0	38	20.3	13	7	3.3791	1.17489
14	You are consistent and stable under stress.	19	10.2	57	30.5	54	28.9	10	5.3	46	24.6	3.0930	1.24289
15	Your level of efficient performing decreases during the day.	27	14.4	4	1.3	13	5.7	97	57.9	56	29.9	4.0632	1.082335
	CLUSTER MEAN											3.231253	0.980948

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Decision Rule: if mean < 3.0 the respondent Disagree; if 3.5 < mean < 3.0 the respondents are undecided; if mean > 3.5 the respondent Agree.

9.3. Test of hypotheses

In this section of study, the drive is in the three hypotheses formulated to give direction to the study. To do this, the hypotheses are re-stated, the variables involved in them are identified and simple linear regression was adopted as the statistical

tool. The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 26) to analyze the data collected and for the statistical analysis.

All the data was interpreted and treated by using relevant information such as students' values, goodness of fit and F-statistic test.

- Coefficients of the parameters.

- R^2 (test of goodness of fit) will enable the researcher to know the percentage of variations between the dependent variable and the explanatory variables.

- F-statistics test will be used to determine the overall sign finance of the multiple regression models.

Hypothesis 1

Table 7. Regression Output (Model Summary) for Hypothesis I

Parameters	Value of the Parameters
R	.737
R Square	.544
Adjusted R –square	.536
F- Statistics	72.653
F – Sign (P –value)	.000
β – Beta Coefficient	.607
α – Constant	3.976

Source: Adapted from Researchers Regression Output

a) Dependent variable: EP

b) Predictors: (Constant), PSYS

Table 7 shows us the result of the regression analysis conducted on whether psychological abuse has a significant influence on the performance of employees in Nestle Nigeria Plc. For R and R Square, the value of R (0.737) indicates a moderate positive correlation between the dependent variable (Employee Performance, EP) and the independent variable (Psychological Abuse, PSYA). R Square (0.544) represents the proportion of variance in EP that can be explained by PSYA. Approximately 54.4% of the variation in EP can be explained by PSYA.

For adjusted R-square, the Adjusted R-square value (0.536) takes into account the number of predictors in the model and adjusts R-square accordingly. It is slightly lower than R Square because it penalizes the inclusion of unnecessary predictors. For F-Statistics and F-Significance (P-value), the F-Statistics (72.653) is a measure of overall model fit. It determines whether the relationship between EP and PSYA is statistically significant. The F-Significance (P-value) (0.000) indicates the probability

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of obtaining the observed F-Statistics by chance. In this case, the P-value is very small, suggesting that the relationship between EP and PSYA is statistically significant.

For β (Beta Coefficient) and α (Constant), the β coefficient (-0.607) represents the estimated change in EP for a one-unit increase in PSYA, holding other variables constant. In this case, a one-unit increase in PSYA is associated with a -0.607 decrease in EP. This negative coefficient suggests a negative relationship between PSYA and EP. In other words, as PSYA increases, EP is expected to decrease. The α constant (3.976) represents the estimated value of EP when PSYA is zero. Therefore, the results indicate a statistically significant negative relationship between PSYA and EP. As PSYA increases, there is a corresponding decrease in EP.

Hypothesis II

Table 8. Regression Output (Model Summary) for Hypothesis II

Parameters	Value of the Parameters
R	.705
R Square	.512
Adjusted R –square	.500
F –Statistics	65.653
F – Sign (P –value)	.000
β – Beta Coefficient	.007
α – Constant	3.976

Source: Adapted from Researchers Regression Output (Appendix II)

For R and R Square,the value of R (0.705) indicates a moderate positive correlation between the dependent variable (Employee Performance, EP) and the independent variable (Depression, DEPS). R Square (0.512) represents the proportion of variance in EP that can be explained by DEPS. Approximately 51.2% of the variation in EP can be explained by DEPS. For adjusted R-square, the Adjusted R-square value (0.500) takes into account the number of predictors in the model and adjusts R-square accordingly. It is slightly lower than R Square because it penalizes the inclusion of unnecessary predictors. For F-Statistics and F-Significance (P-value), the F-Statistics (65.653) is a measure of overall model fit. It determines whether the relationship between EP and DEPS is statistically significant.

The F-Significance (P-value) (0.000) indicates the probability of obtaining the observed F-Statistics by chance. In this case, the P-value is very small, suggesting that the relationship between EP and DEPS is statistically significant. For β (Beta Coefficient) and α (Constant), the β coefficient (-0.007) represents the estimated change in EP for a one-unit increase in DEPS, holding other variables constant. In

this case, the coefficient is close to zero, suggesting a very weak relationship between DEPS and EP. The negative sign indicates a negative relationship, but the coefficient is so small that it is practically negligible. The α constant (3.976) represents the estimated value of EP when DEPS is zero. Therefore, the results suggest that the relationship between DEPS (Depression) and EP (Employee Performance) is statistically significant, but the effect size is very weak. The coefficient (-0.007) indicates a negligible negative relationship between DEPS and EP. In other words, the model suggests that there is very little impact of Depression on Employee Performance.

Hypothesis III

Table 9. Regression Output (Model Summary) for Hypothesis III

Parameters	Value of the Parameters
R	.887
R Square	.579
Adjusted R –square	.562
F- Statistics	102.333
F – Sign (P –value)	.000
β – Beta Coefficient	.115
α – Constant	88.756

Source: Adapted from Researchers Regression Output (Appendix III)

The regression analysis aimed to examine the relationship between Emotional Abuse (EMOA) and Employee Performance (EP). The following key findings emerged from the regression output:

The correlation coefficient (R) between EMOA and EP is 0.887, indicating a strong positive correlation. This suggests that there is a tendency for higher levels of Emotional Abuse to be associated with better Employee Performance. The coefficient of determination (R-squared) is 0.579, indicating that approximately 57.9% of the variation in Employee Performance can be explained by the variation in Emotional Abuse.

Overall Significance of the Model, reveals that the F-Statistics value of 102.333 is highly significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the regression model as a whole is statistically significant. This suggests that the model provides a better fit to the data than the null model, which assumes no relationship between EMOA and EP. Regression Coefficients shows the Beta Coefficient (β_1) for EMOA as -0.115. This indicates that, on average, a one-unit increase in Emotional Abuse is associated with a decrease in Employee Performance by 0.115 units. The negative sign suggests an inverse relationship between the two variables. The Constant Term (β_0) is 88.756,

which represents the expected value of Employee Performance when Emotional Abuse is zero. In conclusion, the regression analysis suggests a statistically significant relationship between Emotional Abuse (EMOA) and Employee Performance (EP). The negative Beta Coefficient (-0.115) indicates that higher levels of Emotional Abuse are associated with lower levels of Employee Performance. However, it is important to note that the effect size is relatively small, suggesting that other factors not included in the model may also influence Employee Performance.

These findings highlight the importance of addressing Emotional Abuse in the workplace, as it appears to have a negative impact on employee performance. Organisations should consider implementing measures to prevent and address Emotional Abuse, such as providing support systems, promoting a positive work environment, and fostering open communication channels. Further research and analysis are recommended to explore additional factors that may contribute to Employee Performance and to validate these findings in different contexts.

10. Discussion

From the results of research hypothesis one, psychological abuse significantly affects the productivity of Nestle Nigeria employees in Ota, Ogun State. Findings in hypothesis two reveals that although there is a statistically significant relationship between DEPS (Depression) and EP (Employee Performance), the effect magnitude is relatively small. The association between DEPS and EP is hardly negative, as indicated by the coefficient (-0.007). In other words, the model contends that depression has little impact on employee performance.

Finally, the result of hypothesis three also shows that emotional abuse has a detrimental effect on worker performance. The provision of support networks, the encouragement of a healthy workplace culture, and the promotion of open communication channels are some steps that organisations should think about putting in place to prevent and address emotional abuse. It is advised to conduct additional research and analysis to examine potential contributors to employee performance and to confirm these findings in various scenarios.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of Gaslighting on employee performance in Nestle Nigeria, Ota, Ogun State, while the specific objectives of the study were to: determine how psychological abuse, the impact of depression and the effect of emotional abuse affect employees' performance in Nestle Nigeria, Plc. The researcher used a descriptive survey research strategy to accomplish the stated goals. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire. The research tool was validated by experts and professionals before application. Simple percentages, frequency counts, means, and standard deviation were used to analyze the demographic data. The three study hypotheses were then statistically analyzed using inferential analysis (Simple Linear Regression, SLR).

The regression result ($\beta_1 = -.607$; $R^2 = .544$; $F = 72.653$; P- Value = .000) for hypothesis one showed that psychological abuse has significant influence on employees' performance in Nestle Nigeria Plc. Further, the regression result of ($\beta_1 = -.007$; $R^2 = .512$; $F = 65.653$; P- Value = .000) for hypothesis two shows that depression has a significant effect on the performance of employees in Nestle Nigeria Plc. Lastly, the regression result of ($\beta_1 = .115$; $R^2 = .579$; $F = 102.343$; P- Value = .000) for hypothesis three revealed that emotional abuse has a significance influence on employees' performance in Nestle Nigeria Plc.

The impact of gaslighting on employees' performance in Nestle Nigeria can be significant and detrimental. When gaslighting occurs in the workplace, it can have profound effects on employees and their ability to perform effectively. Gaslighting can erode an employee's self-confidence and self-esteem, making them question their skills, abilities, and judgments. This can lead to decreased motivation, increased stress, and a decline in overall job satisfaction. As a result, their performance may suffer, impacting their productivity, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Also, a toxic work environment could be created, which negatively affecting team dynamics, collaboration, and communication.

The study however recommends the following:

1. Education and awareness: Providing training programs and workshops to employees and managers about gaslighting, its effects, and strategies for prevention and intervention.
2. Open communication and support: Encouraging a culture of open communication and establishing channels for employees to voice their concerns and seek support. This includes fostering an environment where employees feel safe reporting instances of gaslighting without fear of retaliation.

3.   Leadership role modeling: Promoting leadership behaviors that foster trust, respect, and empathy. Leaders should demonstrate integrity, active listening, and fairness in their interactions with employees, serving as positive role models for the entire organisation.

4.   Policies and procedures: Implementing clear policies and procedures that explicitly address gaslighting and provide a framework for addressing complaints or concerns. This ensures that gaslighting incidents are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken to rectify the situation.

5.   By addressing gaslighting and creating a supportive work environment, Nestle Nigeria can protect its employees from the negative impacts of gaslighting and foster a culture of well-being, trust, and high performance. Ultimately, prioritising employee mental health and ensuring a respectful and inclusive workplace will not only benefit individual employees but also contribute to the overall success and growth of the organisation.

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