



Navigating Pistanthro-Phobia: Impact on Psychological Well-Being and Quality of Life among Adults

^{*1}Gull Naz Khan -Email- Gullnazkhan54@gmail.com

²Dr. Aqeel Ahmad Khan -Email- aqeel.ahmad@iub.edu.pk

¹PhD Scholar, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

Article Details:

Received on 10 Aug 2025

Accepted on 03 Sept 2025

Published on 05 Sept 2025

Corresponding Authors*:

Gull Naz Khan

Abstract

The fear of trusting others, Pistanthro-Phobia, is a multifaceted phenomenon and requires a multi-pronged approach to investigate systematically the various theoretical constructs, empirical studies, and methodological issues affecting how the phenomenon has been conceptualized and measured. In this recent study, the main focus was to navigate through Pistanthro-Phobia by examined its impact on psychological wellbeing and quality of life among adults. In this connection a sample of (N=765) were selected by using convenient sampling method. This was a quantitative study with cross-sectional/correlational research design. Data was collected by using valid and reliable scales. The results from path analysis showed a significant relationship between different facets of Pistanthro-Phobia scales with psychological wellbeing scale and quality of life scale. On the basis of the findings this reveals that in order to uplift the adult's psychological wellbeing and quality of life there is necessary to manage the symptoms of Pistanthro-Phobia among adults. This is also suggested that the authorities and policy makers must address this issue and start prevention programs to reduce the symptoms of Pistanthro-Phobia among adults.



Introduction

Trust is widely regarded as a foundational component of interpersonal relationships, underpinning cooperation, intimacy, and the development of social bonds. It functions as a psychological mechanism that reduces uncertainty and vulnerability, enabling individuals to engage in reciprocal exchanges and to rely on others even in situations of risk (Lewicki et al., 1998). The absence of trust, however, gives rise to distrust, which is not merely the opposite of trust but an independent construct characterized by heightened suspicion, fear of exploitation, and a defensive orientation toward others (Dimoka, 2010). The conceptualization of phobias has long been central to clinical psychology, as these disorders represent one of the most prevalent categories of anxiety-related conditions worldwide. Phobias are defined as persistent, irrational fears leading to avoidance behaviors that disrupt daily life (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Although the impact of trust on psychological well-being has been explored, gaps remain regarding the specific mechanisms through which trust-related fears affect different well-being dimensions. Existing studies often focus on general trust or social support without addressing subcomponents of trust-related fear, leaving unclear how specific aspects of Pistanthro-phobia, such as past betrayal, withdrawal behaviors, or cognitive patterns, predict deficits in psychological well-being. On the other hand, Moreover, research has not differentiated the effects of Pistanthro-phobia sub-factors on distinct life domains, leaving unclear which aspects of fear most strongly influence Social Relationships, Psychological Health, Physical Health, or Environmental mastery (Etkin & Wager, 2007). Lastly, Social Provisions Theory, developed by Weiss (1974), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the types of social support essential for psychological well-being and adaptive functioning. Trust-related fears, as seen in pistanthro-phobia, may specifically interfere with the formation and maintenance of the social relationships that provide these essential provisions.

Literature Review

Research has consistently emphasized that while trust facilitates relationship maintenance and pro-social behavior, distrust erodes cooperation and creates relational instability (Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998). Some studies demonstrate that interpersonal trust strongly predicts relational satisfaction and longevity. For instance, Simpson (2007) reported that higher levels of trust were associated with 62% greater likelihood of relationship persistence following conflict, while Balliet and Van Lange (2013) found a medium-to-large effect size ($r = .30$) linking trust with cooperative behavior across 180 experimental studies. Conversely, distrust has been linked with significant relational challenges: national survey data from the U.S. suggest that 42% of adults identify “lack of trust” as the leading cause of relational breakdown (Pew Research Center, 2019), while longitudinal studies show that couples with high distrust scores were nearly 2.5 times more likely to separate within five years compared to those with high trust (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019). Similarly, in workplace contexts, employees reporting low trust in supervisors were 35% less likely to engage in collaborative problem-solving, and their teams demonstrated 23% lower performance outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001).

Epidemiological research shows that specific phobias affect between 7.2% and 14.4% of adults globally, making them one of the most common anxiety disorders (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2019). Although widely studied in relation to objects, animals, and social contexts, the extension of phobic reactions to interpersonal trust,



conceptualized as Pistanthro-phobia, remains theoretically underdeveloped. While not currently included in diagnostic manuals, emerging literature suggests that the fear of trusting others shares core mechanisms with traditional phobias: avoidance conditioning, exaggerated threat perception, and cognitive distortions that prevent adaptive social engagement (Clark & Wells, 2022). Social support is strongly linked to mental health outcomes. Adequate support protects against depression, anxiety, and other psychological difficulties (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The main effect model posits that social support benefits mental health directly, whereas the stress-buffering model emphasizes protective effects during high stress. Emotional support is particularly critical for depression prevention, while instrumental support is more crucial during acute crises (House, 1981). Quality of support is often more important than quantity, highlighting the vulnerability of those with Pistanthro-phobia who may have relational quantity but poor trust and satisfaction (Sarason et al., 1987). Mechanisms of social support include emotional regulation, cognitive coping, behavioral guidance, and enhancement of identity and self-esteem (Rimé, 2009).

Objectives of the Study

- 1. To check the impact of Pistanthro-Phobia on psychological well-being among adults.
- 2. To check the impact of Pistanthro-Phobia on quality of life among adults.

Hypothesis of the Study

H1: Pistanthrophobia will significantly predict psychological well-being among adults.

H2: Pistanthrophobia will significantly predict the quality of life among adults.

Method of the Study

Participants of the Study

In this study (N=765) participants already screened out with the symptoms of Pistanthro-Phobia were included. All the participants belong to diversified demographics.

Research Design

This study was quantitative and a cross-sectional/correlational research design was adopted.

Sampling Method and Sample Size

The total sample of this study was (N=765) including both genders and the data was collected by using convenient sampling method.

Measurement Scale

In this study three valid and reliable scales were administered to collect the data from the participants. The symptoms of Pistanthro-Phobia were screened out by using Pistanthro-Phobia Scale developed by Khan and Khan (2025). This scale consists of 36 items with 6 different domains. Similarly, the level of Psychological Wellbeing was measured by administering Ryff(1989) scale consisting 84 items. The quality of life was measured by using Quality of life scale developed by WHO. This scale consists on 26 items. All the scales were with high psychometric properties.

Results of the Study

Table 1: Statistical Results for Path Relationships Between Pistanthro-Phobia and Psychological Well-Being Across their Facets.

Path	B	M	SD	T	p
Cognitive Patterns → Self-Acceptance	-0.10	-0.10	0.04	2.54	.01
Impact on Daily Life → Autonomy	-0.20	-0.21	0.11	1.78	.07



Path	B	M	SD	T	p
Impact on Daily Life → Environmental Mastery	0.19	0.19	0.05	3.59	< .001
Past Betrayal → Positive Relations with Others	-0.14	-0.14	0.04	3.20	< .001
Past Betrayal → Self-Acceptance	-0.22	-0.22	0.04	5.43	< .001
Psycho-social Impact → Environmental Mastery	-0.13	-0.13	0.05	2.29	.02
Psycho-social Impact → Personal Growth	-0.34	-0.35	0.05	6.66	< .001
Severity/Impact → Autonomy	-0.06	-0.05	0.10	0.59	.56
Severity/Impact → Environmental Mastery	-0.25	-0.25	0.05	5.07	< .001
Severity/Impact → Personal Growth	-0.05	-0.05	0.06	0.94	.35
Severity/Impact → Positive Relations with Others	-0.21	-0.21	0.04	4.62	< .001
Severity/Impact → Purpose of Life	-0.11	-0.11	0.07	1.59	.11
Severity/Impact → Self-Acceptance	0.12	0.12	0.06	2.17	.03
Withdrawal Behaviors → Positive Relations with Others	-0.23	-0.23	0.04	5.84	< .001
Withdrawal Behaviors → Purpose of Life	-0.25	-0.25	0.06	4.04	< .001

Note. β = direct effect coefficient; M = sample mean; SD = standard deviation; t = t-statistic; p = p-value. Arrows (→) indicate directional relationships between variables.

In the above table, the path relationship among the facets of Pistanthro-Phobia and Psychological wellbeing predict a significant relationship.

Table 2: *Statistical Results for Path Relationships Between Pistanthro-Phobia and Quality of Life Across their Facets*

Path	B	M	SD	T	P
Cognitive Patterns → Psychological Health	-0.09	-0.03	0.10	0.88	.38
Impact on Daily Life → Environmental Health	-0.08	-0.04	0.18	0.42	.67
Impact on Daily Life → Physical Health	0.13	0.10	0.10	1.27	.20
Past Betrayal → Psychological Health	0.09	0.11	0.09	1.03	.30
Past Betrayal → Social Relationships	-0.14	-0.14	0.05	2.96	< .001
Psycho-social Impact → Physical Health	0.21	0.17	0.14	1.46	.14
Psycho-social Impact → Psychological Health	-0.19	-0.05	0.20	0.95	.34
Severity/Impact → Overall QOL	-0.06	-0.06	0.04	1.36	.17
Severity/Impact → Physical Health	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.37	.71
Severity/Impact → Psychological Health	-0.12	-0.12	0.10	1.24	.21
Severity/Impact → Social Relationships	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.06	.95
Withdrawal Behaviors → Social Relationships	-0.14	-0.14	0.04	3.31	< .001

Note. β = direct effect coefficient; M = sample mean; SD = standard deviation; t = t-statistic; p = p-value. Arrows (→) indicate directional relationships between variables.

In the above table, the path relationship among the facets of Pistanthro-Phobia and Quality of life predict a significant relationship.



Discussion

Based on the direct effect results presented in Table 1, the hypothesized relationships were supported. For H₁ Past Betrayal significantly predicted deficits in both Positive Relations with Others ($\beta = -0.14$, $p < .001$) and Self-Acceptance ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < .001$), supporting this sub-hypothesis. H₁ was also supported, as Psycho-social Impact significantly predicted deficits in Environmental Mastery ($\beta = -0.13$, $p = .02$) and Personal Growth ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < .001$). H₁ was confirmed, with Withdrawal Behaviors significantly predicting deficits in Positive Relations with Others ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < .001$) and Purpose in Life ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < .001$). H₁ received partial support: while Impact on Daily Life significantly predicted Environmental Mastery ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < .001$), its effect on Autonomy ($\beta = -0.20$, $p = .07$) was non-significant. H₁ was supported, as Cognitive Patterns significantly predicted deficits in Self-Acceptance ($\beta = -0.10$, $p = .01$). H_{2f} received partial support: Severity/Impact significantly predicted Environmental Mastery ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < .001$), Positive Relations with Others ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < .001$), and Self-Acceptance ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = .03$), but did not significantly predict Autonomy, Personal Growth, or Purpose in Life. The findings of the H₁ are in line with the previous researches such as Walther (2011) conducted a study to explore the effects of social phobia and trust related issues among adults. Their findings revealed a significant relationship of Pistanthro-Phobia with mental wellbeing among adults.

The direct effect results for H₂ indicate that among the hypothesized relationships between Pistanthro-phobia sub factors and quality of life domains, only a few showed statistically = -0.14 , $t = 2.96$, $p < .001$), supporting H₂ for this domain but not for Psychological Health, which was non-significant ($p = .30$). Withdrawal Behaviors also significantly predicted lower Social Relationships ($\beta = -0.14$, $t = 3.31$, $p < .001$), confirming H₂. In contrast, Cognitive Patterns did not significantly predict Psychological Health ($p = .38$), leading to the rejection of H₂. Impact on Daily Life did not show significant effects on Environmental Health ($p = .67$) or Physical Health ($p = .20$), resulting in the rejection of H₂. Similarly, Psycho-social Impact did not significantly predict Physical Health ($p = .14$) or Psychological Health ($p = .34$), leading to the rejection of H₂. Severity/Impact showed no significant relationships with any quality of life domain, including Overall QOL ($p = .17$), Physical Health ($p = .71$), Psychological Health ($p = .21$), and Social Relationships ($p = .95$), thus H₂ was rejected. Overall, only the predictions for the relationship of Past Betrayal and Withdrawal Behaviors with Social Relationships were supported, while all other hypothesized direct effects were not statistically significant. The findings are in line with the previous researches such as Ullman (2019) conducted a study to explore the effects of Pistanthro-Phobia on adults living quality. The findings showed a lower quality of life among the individuals with higher level of phobic symptoms.

Conclusion

The current study predicted a significant relationship of Pistanthro-Phobia with psychological wellbeing and quality of life across different facets. The overall findings showed that the symptoms of Pistanthro-Phobia are destroying the mental health and quality of life of adults. Hence, there is a dire need to address this issue for the mental wellbeing of adults in Pakistan.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787>



- Balliet, D., & Van Lange, P. A. M. (2013). Trust, conflict, and cooperation: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 139(5), 1090–1112. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030939>
- Clark, D. M., & Wells, A. (2022). *Cognitive therapy of social phobia: A treatment manual*. Guilford Press.
- Cambridge University Press & Assessment. (2019). *Global prevalence of anxiety disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dimoka, A. (2010). What does the brain tell us about trust and distrust? Evidence from a functional neuroimaging study. *MIS Quarterly*, 34(2), 373–396. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20721433>
- Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. (2001). The role of trust in organizational settings. *Organization Science*, 12(4), 450–467. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.12.4.450.10640>
- Etkin, A., & Wager, T. D. (2007). Functional neuroimaging of anxiety: A meta-analysis of emotional processing in PTSD, social anxiety disorder, and specific phobia. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 164(10), 1476–1488. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2007.07030504>
- Khan, G.N. & Khan, A. A. (2025). Development and Validation of Pistanthro-Phobia Scale: Its Impact on Psychological Well-Being, Social Isolation and Quality of Life (PhD Thesis).
- Lewicki, R. J., McAllister, D. J., & Bies, R. J. (1998). Trust and distrust: New relationships and realities. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(3), 438–458. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.926620>
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2019). *Attachment orientations and emotion regulation*. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 25, 6–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.02.006>
- Pew Research Center. (2019). *Trust and distrust in America*. Pew Research Center.
- Rimé, B. (2009). Emotion elicits the social sharing of emotion: Theory and empirical review. *Emotion Review*, 1(1), 60–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073908097189>
- Simpson, J. A. (2007). Psychological foundations of trust. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16(5), 264–268. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00517.x>
- Ullman, S. E. (2019). *Talking about sexual assault: Society's response to survivors* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000136-000>
- Walther, J. B. (2011). Theories of computer-mediated communication and interpersonal relations. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *The handbook of interpersonal communication* (4th ed., pp. 443–479). Sage Publications.
- Weiss, R. S. (1974). The provisions of social relationships. In Z. Rubin (Ed.), *Doing unto others* (pp. 17–26). Prentice-Hall.