Article QR

Title:	**Evolving Gender Dynamics: Insights from Pakistani Professional Couples**
Author (s):	Sadaf Awan[1], Raja Muhammad Shoaib[2], Rana Malik[1]
Affiliation (s):	[1]University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan [2]Independent Researcher, Lahore, Pakistan
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.32350/sri.11.04
History:	Received: November 28, 2022, Revised: April 13, 2023, Accepted: May 09, 2023, Published: June 23, 2023
Citation:	Awan, S., Shoaib, R. M., & Malik, R. (2023). Evolving gender dynamics: Insights from Pakistani professional couples. *Sociological Research and Innovation*, *1*(1), 70–93. https://doi.org/10.32350/sri.11.04
Copyright:	© The Authors
Licensing:	This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
Conflict of Interest:	Author(s) declared no conflict of interest

UMT

A publication of
Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Management and Technology Lahore, Pakistan

Evolving Gender Dynamics: Insights from Pakistani Professional Couples

Sadaf Awan[1], Raja Muhammad Shoaib[2*] and Raana Malik[1]

[1]Department of Gender Studies, University of the Punjab Lahore, Pakistan
[2]Independent Researcher, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the evolving gender roles of professional couples, examining the unequal division of labor, men's attitudes toward changing gender roles, and societal reactions. Participants in the present study were recruited through purposive sampling, including, four women lecturers from the University of the Punjab Lahore New Campus and their spouses, three lecturers were recruited from Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, along with their husbands, and three lecturers from the University of Management and Technology Lahore, along with their husbands. All the couples had the same working hours, and were interviewed individually. Thematic analysis of participants' narratives revealed dual impacts of changing gender roles, both positive and negative. In addition, this paper also highlights the coping strategies employed by professional women such as balancing roles, finding financial independence empowering, stress-reducing tactics, and effective time management. Changes in gender roles of professional couples benefit husbands more as they are supported both morally and financially by their spouses. On the contrary, a professional woman faces tough times as she takes on multiple roles and contends with an unequal division of labor. This study has implications for balancing gender roles for sociologists and psychologists; these changing gender roles should foster freedom among professional couples in Pakistani society.

Keywords: changing gender roles, coping strategies, dual careers, gender socialization, inequality, professional couples, societal reactions, work-life balance

Introduction

A significant change in gender relations is evident in the early years of the 21st century. These changes are prominent as some of the old institutions and roles are being adapted, and in other cases, new roles and

---

responsibilities are being generated. Hence, even in developing countries, societies remarkably shifted toward relatively more egalitarian gender relations. As women became aware of their rights, the number of female students exceeded in educational institutes, and females started working in professional fields (Silverstone & Ward, 2022). Contemporary studies of economics, demography, and gender studies have long recognized links between changes in family patterns and gender roles. The substantial growth in female labor force participation has led to a decline in birth and marriage rates, fostering short-term relationships among couples (Smock & Schwartz, 2020)

Increase in women's financial independence has been a leading cause of family changes in economic theorizing, which identified gender role specialization as one of its main paradigms (Raybould & Sear, 2021). Along with this change in aspiration for paid work are the main lashing factors behind the delay in forming permanent relationships in marriage and childbearing and the increasing crumbliness of couple relations in societies (Lesthaeghe, 2010). While aspirations for paid work have shifted, factors such as declining male wages, reduced labor force activity among men, and increased labor market uncertainty have received less attention (Mills et al., 2005), and the importance of risking factors and family patterns supporting gender equity has been worked out (McDonald, 2000, 2006). The capability approach discussed the role of social factors as an interplay of gender and family changes. The primary focus of this approach is to direct gendered agency and abilities to form and maintain long-lasting relationships, have children, and provide care (Hobson, 2011).

Along with the focus on theoretical considerations, this study highlights the transition within family life and their relationship with the changes in gender roles. Another significant topic of attention is the organization of family life. Studies in this area indicate the division of labor within families, such as how household members perform their gender-related tasks or the tasks related to home tasks and childcare. Based on defined roles, partners act in the same line as they construct, validate, and recreate characteristics in relation to jointly agreed-upon definitions. The two essential and polar gender identities are possible to establish and manage through performativity, simultaneously driving reforms in gender roles. There is another approach, the 'doing gender' approach, which highlights that individuals are scrutinized and held accountable for nearly every aspect of

their actions based on their gender. Hence, this check and balance process holds husband and wife accountable in their role of motherhood and fatherhood. Hence, it is concluded that at the root of the concept of doing gender, the 'doing family' approach lies (Kaufman & Grönlund, 2021). However, it is established that social habits are reproduced through daily interactions. It argues that family life is another name for social construction, as families are defined as the internal daily procedures, practices, and out-of-the-home social activities about changes in gender roles and family relationships (Goody, 2021).

The division of work between men and women dramatically changes across the transition to parenthood. Only a few studies identified explicit change in the division of responsibilities across the transition to parenthood among employed mothers. In the case of dual-earner households, the transition to parenthood becomes more traditional. It means that women often bear significant share of household responsibilities than men, and this difference becomes even more pronounced after the birth of a child (Nylin et al., 2021).

In Pakistani society, distinctive from Western countries, there is a preference for living under one roof in multi-generational households. In Pakistan, at least tri-generations live together: grandparents, adult children, and their grandchildren. In multi-generational households, the family orientation includes the person, his sibling and parents while the person also has a wife and children. This is the opposite of how Western households usually function. In traditional Asian families, the older man decides the spouse of their children. The daughter-in-law is often expected to be passive and submissive to her mother-in-law, who rules the family. The role flexibility concept among Pakistani families can include the parental role assumed by grandfather, grandmother, aunts, and cousins (Patel, 2021). Since discrimination and gender inequality are widespread (Farooq, 2020), some modernization can be seen in urban areas, but gender patterns are the same in rural areas. As women increasingly pursue education, they become more aware of their rights, independence, autonomy, and freedom. These changes in women's status are substantial setbacks for traditional gender-specific roles. The following study examines whether there is a gender role change among professional couples within the domestic sphere due to Pakistani women joining professional careers and how couples navigate and respond to this change.

Literature Review

Bejanyan ([2017](#)) found that increasing conformity to gender-specific roles means rejecting individualistic approach. Modern men and women do not want to be trapped in one role. Instead, both sexes want to pursue personal dreams and aspirations for the future, seeking career achievement and personal enhancement, freedom, and satisfaction from life. In the same way Unger ([2001](#)) investigated the perceptions and reactions of women and men in non-typical gender roles due to the influence of the gender belief system (Stiawa et al., [2020](#)). Studies of nonconformity towards gender roles and masculine ideology work highlight how fighting against men into gender roles can have negative consequences. Research on women in nontraditional gender roles highlights multiple challenges women face while breaking new ground. As gender roles change over time, beliefs associated with gender become less traditional (Lagaert et al., [2017](#)). Another study discovered that couples' migration to a longer distance requires joint decision-making within the family. The unequal power division between men and women and typical gender behavior has given rise to the ideas of 'tied stayer' and 'tied mover' reflecting changes in economic strength and altered gender roles. Women, becoming economically empowered, often exerted their influence to resist migration, leading to a more equitable power distribution within couples. Results of this study showed classic patterns of family migration, i.e., compared to females, males' human capital counted more, and a male age advantage led to more migration. It is found that women appeared to use their power mostly to stop migration. The results indicated a new pattern in which power will be more equally divided within couples (Clara & Hooimeijer, [2016](#)).

Amos ([2019](#)) discovered that an open and educated society smoothens the way for role-switching, gaining strength in a highly demanding developmental society. It is observed that domestic life has become almost non-considerable for inflexibility towards gender roles, moreover gender-specific roles have shifted exceptionally in the last thirty or forty years. It is noticed that gender roles for a man and a woman are now nearly unbound. Thomaea and Houston ([2016](#)), along with (Alba et al., [2023](#)), demonstrated that there is some link between benevolent sexism and a preference for a traditional partner. Rizvi et al. ([2014](#)) explained that society has defined a 'Model' for women. The society also 'objectified' women without rights and autonomy. Women's submissiveness is a prerequisite to ensure compliance

with the defined societal model. Then, this model is maintained by allocating fewer resources, limiting mobility, conservative norms, and even harm in cases of resistance. There is a strong association between women's independence, rights, and health. This demands a gender-specific and right-based approach toward health. The model determines women's characteristics and responsibilities and establishes rules and boundaries for what is legitimate for women. These findings affected their personality, lifestyle, and health, including their reproductive behaviors.

Another study conducted explored perceptions and expectations of young males and females related to their life prospects and gender roles, with resulting implications for health gender behavior. Results of this study showed that the central emerging theme was "Psychosocial and gender equality constraints hamper young adults' prospects in life." Inequality towards women and no respect for women in society were explained as significant barriers to prosperity and development. It was further shown that the younger generation was more favorable to the modernization and development of gender-specific roles than the older generation. The unbalanced gender roles were perceived as static and enforced by structures embedded in society. Women routinely faced severe restrictions and boundaries of autonomy. However, higher levels of education, both for men and women, emerged as agents of change (Hasnain et al., 2012)

Theoretical Framework

The study employs various theoretical frameworks to examine the intricate dynamic of gender roles changing among professional couples within Pakistani society. These frameworks offer a lens through which to examine the experiences of participants as well as put the findings into a larger perspective.

The Gender Role Theory

This framework examines the societal and cultural expectations associated with femininity and masculinity. It aids in understanding the traditional division of family roles and the issues couples face when transitioning to more equal roles.

Specific theories that are part of this framework, like symbolic interactionism and social learning theory, can be employed to study how people perceive and act according to gender roles and how these roles are renegotiated in relationships (West & Zimmerman, 2007).

Feminist Theories

Feminist perspectives provide crucial insights into the power dynamic entwined within gender relationships. They focus on the long-standing and ongoing struggle to ensure women's equality and the difficulties professional women face in balancing work and family.

Specific theories, like Liberal Feminism and Ecofeminism, can be applied to study the uneven distribution of labor, the interplay of gender and various forms of oppression, and the possibility of women empowerment through economic independence (Lorde, 2018).

Modernization Theory

The theory suggests that societies experience a shift from traditional values to modern ones due to an increase in urbanization, education, and economic involvement. In the case of Pakistan, this theory helps explain the rising number of professional couples and evolving expectations regarding gender roles (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Significance of the Study

This study investigates the complex and shifting gender roles within Pakistani professional couples, making essential contributions on multiple fronts:

Filling Knowledge Gap

Studies conducted regarding gender-related roles within Pakistan typically focus on traditional family structures. This research also explores the unique experiences of professional couples as a growing population that faces unique obstacles and opportunities.

Revealing Dualities

This research goes beyond simplistic reports by exploring both positive and negative consequences of changing gender roles in the workplace. Increased male involvement can have positive results, while women often suffer under an unbalanced workload due to a male-dominated workplace culture.

Highlighting Coping Strategies

By identifying the coping strategies employed by professional women, this study assists couples and individuals in similar situations. Strategies

like balancing roles, stress management, financial independence, and time management provide helpful insights to navigate changing gender interactions more successfully.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this research are practical for psychologists and sociologists in terms of developing strategies and interventions to promote gender equality and well-being among professional couples.

Gendered Roles Revamp

By emphasizing gender role shifts as a potential source of liberation and empowerment for both spouses, this study challenges traditional views, advocating for more equal and satisfying family structures.

Research Questions

These research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Is there a change in the gender roles of professional couples within the domestic sphere due to Pakistani women joining professional careers?

2. How do professional couples experience the change of gender roles in their domestic life?

3. How do professional couples cope with the changes in their gender roles?

Research Methodology

A sample of $N = 10$ working couples teaching at the University of Punjab, Lahore, were recruited through purposive sampling. Couples were chosen from the middle socioeconomic class status with shared working hours and titles, and they varied in the number of children.

In-depth interviews served as the primary qualitative research method. *In-depth interviewing* is a qualitative research technique involving detailed personal interviews with a few participants to understand their perspectives on ideas, programs, phenomena or situations. Multiple authors described in depth, the way present research interrogated (Kvale, 1996).

Ethical Consideration

To protect the anonymity of participants, names and titles were changed into pseudonyms; personal details, such as addresses, were quickly erased

after collecting data. Participants could only be identified through codes (Neuman, 2000). A strict guarantee of confidentiality extended not only for the current research but also for any potential future publications based on it. Other precautions included immediate transfer of data from recording devices to laptop with password protection, swift removal of original recordings from recorders, and locking/unlocking them when not in use.

Results

All respondents, with the exception of one, belonged to middle-class families. The children of the participants were of different age groups, but all children were school-going. A thematic analysis was used for data collected from participants. Responses by respondents displayed both opposing and similar ideas about literature being written about this issue, making up different responses and opinions compared with what literature stated about it. The table below depicts the Domain, Core Ideas, and Categories as determined from the information gathered. As shown in table 1

Table 1

Domains, Ideas and Categories

Domains	Ideas	Categories
Change of gender roles in domestic life	• Division of tasks • Power Division within Couple	• Car Maintenance • Shopping • Grocery • Looking after Kids • Decision Making Process
Societal Acceptance towards change	• Family Pressure • Peer Pressure	• Serving in Family gatherings • Entertaining guests at home
Coping with changes in their gender roles	• Time Management • Seeking Help	• Having maid at home • Follow a plan schedule everyday
Difference by living in nuclear or joint family system	• Problems by living in joints family or	• Husbands are lazy and less supportive

Domains	Ideas	Categories
	nuclear family systems	in joint family systems • Male contribute in home related tasks, while living in Nuclear Family system
Benefits from changing gender roles	• Males had more advantages	• Male no long sole earner within family • Females maintaining their sense of achievements
Disadvantages of changing gender roles	• Females are more burden off	• Females are doing more work than males.

Change of Gender Roles in Domestic Life

Participants detailed their daily responsibilities, emphasizing that the nature of their professions, job descriptions, and working hours significantly influenced the division of tasks within the household. Participants were asked about various routine tasks, such as grocery shopping, home maintenance, and rearing children. Job descriptions and working hours played an integral part in defining both couples' roles within the home. Despite engaging in professional work, female participants commonly expressed being predominantly responsible for home-related tasks, attributing this to societal expectations regarding women's dual roles. - one respondent describes reality:

> Women's roles are more changed than men's. Man's tasks are defined in nature, and he should earn some masculine tasks like doing outside work. Women's roles are totally changed. First, they stay at home. Now, if she is still doing a job, then she is trained in a way that it is all her responsibility to do household tasks along with jobs.

Change in Attitude of Husbands

Over time, husbands displayed an evolving attitude, taking on more household responsibilities and providing support to their wives. Women began contributing their talents at work while men started engaging in traditionally female-oriented tasks. One of the husbands among the participants reported that:

> Our household activities are flexible. In particular, I support her in changing our children's diapers. At the same time, I also help in the kitchen - all without feeling bad or intimidated about doing these acts since we are both professionals as well as parents.

However, participants shared that husband's attitudes varied based on circumstances. When someone falls sick or gets tired, they become more cooperative and helpful. However, during daily routine, their focus shifts back towards work, with most wives reporting responsibility for cooking, serving, laundry, and general home maintenance tasks, along with taking care of children as wives' responsibilities, reflecting ingrained gender role socialization (Hogan & Liddell, 2023).

Women take care of performing traditional female-oriented tasks as well as grocery and car maintenance (if applicable). Husbands tend to focus more on work outside the home than helping out within it - many wives informed that their husbands' working hours exceeded that of their wives, making it impossible for them to contribute generously toward domestic tasks.

Societal Reaction towards Change

Analysis revealed that gender roles change significantly depending on family structure. Couples living in joint family systems were reported as more traditional than those living in nuclear family settings. Couples felt pressurized into following gender-specific roles, such as husbands fearing loss of authority within the household, faced societal scrutiny when deviating from traditional roles. The family and societal expectations enforced predefined roles, - thus leading to limited change of gender roles while living within such family environments.

Women make up to 50% of the population and possess tremendous untapped potential. Nevertheless, many female-identifying populations experience limitations due to inadequate professional training or cultural

prejudices that make life complicated for them. The research focus highlights intriguing gendered perceptions regarding childcare responsibilities across education levels and socioeconomic classes (Sibghatullah & Naiemah, 2023).

However, nuclear family systems had unique demands. In nuclear family systems, husbands showed more flexibility and willingness to assist their wives, given the absence of constant family monitoring. The absence of immediate family pressure allowed for a more adaptable approach. Alongside family pressures and peer group influencers, peer group dynamics also act as influential elements. Some participants reported that when attending gatherings, they tried to act out traditional roles more easily; guests might mention husbands being accommodating towards their wives; to reduce unnecessary explanation and justification, couples often adopt gender-defined roles, such as females being responsible for cooking or serving while males provided entertainment - an activity described by another participant of our study as gender roleplaying. As one of our study's participants reported,

> He is a typical man. He never helps me out with any task. He belongs to a rural background. To give respect to women is not in his dictionary (socialization). Now, we live in a nuclear family, and when we go to an extended family, he behaves differently. I cannot recognize him as he is my husband. He never expresses his love towards children. As the children grow, his attitude slightly changes.

Coping with Gender Role Changes

Working women stated that they multitask; they have to attend their children, do their domestic tasks, and complete their assignments from work. This multitasking is complex for them. This intricate balancing act requires diverse coping strategies to manage the demands on multiple fronts. For example, they tried to seek help when they felt too burdened. They hire maids to help them in routine domestic work. At the time, they wanted a break and reported having vacations from all types of work. However, not working for a period made them realize they had adjusted to their routine. They were happy with their busy routines, where they cared for their family, increased their productivity, and enhanced personal growth.

However, in some situations of urgency, females are expected to sacrifice. They had to take leave from work for their sick family members

and entertain their guests. To manage their home, females sometimes reported coping with circumstances by discussing them with their husbands (van der Vegt & Kleinberg, 2020). Participants communicated with their husbands about their conflicting thoughts and asked them to cooperate.

Limited Societal Change Amidst Emerging Gender Roles

Participants noted limited change in societal attitudes, especially in rural areas. People living in rural areas are more rigid towards change. Rather than sharing responsibilities, women in rural areas face increased burdens. Women have to look after their children and prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Discriminatory attitudes prevail, with women being told that their work outside the home is for personal pleasure, undermining the significance of their professional contributions. . One of the participants reported that:

> Women have to face these statements like if you are earning, then it's because of your personal pleasure. He took your responsibility he did not compel you to do job. You invest it on yourself. On the other side, it is not in that way you invest money on big goals like buying a house, a car, etc.

Females were initially not allowed to participate in decision-making because of gender role socialization (Khera et al., 2022). This rule is strictly under practice in rural areas, where females are still fighting for their fundamental rights and freedom. as one of the participants, shared:

> My own experience illustrates the long-lasting power of patriarchy within familial structures. My father-in-law was highly educated and employed, yet held onto traditional gender roles by silencing my mother-in-law who did not possess formal education. Once he had joined our family, he assumed I would conform without question to his requests and pronouncements. I challenged his assumption, emphasizing my upbringing compared to that of his parents' and emphasizing education and agency as indicators of modern womanhood. This refusal to uncritical submission proved initially shocking to him.

Bhan et al. (2020) reported that formal education may help moderate traditional gender roles within marriage. Husbands with higher levels of education in urban environments exhibit greater understanding and

acceptance of female autonomy, as evidenced by increased spousal cooperation and concession of domestic control.

Shifting Gender Roles: Opportunities and Challenges for Contemporary Households

Present research indicates that altering gender roles could benefit both men and women alike, including increasing female workforce participation and providing financial security for families while relieving some pressure off husbands. Men expressed assurances about having women support the household. However, the story remains complex. Some men reported feeling disempowered by changing gender roles; as one of the respondents noted aptly, the division of domestic duties and increased involvement of women in the public sphere could sometimes result in feelings of neglect in the home environment.

> Dual-earner families face more significant challenges than single-income families with a stay-at-home wife. When a wife manages home duties like childcare, errands, cooking, and cleaning, things run smoothly despite the husband's financial pressure. He can then focus solely on work. However, in dual-earner families, juggling work and responsibilities becomes demanding. For example, if I cannot drive, my husband must drop off and pick up Fatima (respondent's daughter) and me, adding to his already busy schedule. While the financial benefit is undeniable, the workload disproportionately affects the wife. If the husband takes on these tasks, it eases his financial burden, while for a working wife, it is like a double shift. Although homemakers avoid work stress, working wives endure job and household pressures.

Women navigating the contemporary work-family landscape face challenges due to the unequal distribution of domestic and caretaking responsibilities. This can manifest in financial burdens incurred for childcare costs, feelings of maternal guilt stemming from societal expectations, and limited personal and professional growth time. However, these women may also perceive advantages associated with paid work, such as an increased sense of productivity, agency, and personal achievement. This complex and multifaceted experience necessitates a nuanced understanding of the intersections of gender, motherhood, and employment within the context of evolving gender roles and expectations.

Discussion

This study aimed to critically explore the changing gender-role landscape within working couples. Through in-depth analyses, it assessed to what extent traditional masculine and feminine characteristics have been altered or redefined in dual-career households. Additionally, it also investigated potential benefits and drawbacks associated with such transformations and assessed societal acceptance toward such shifts.

This research examines the changing landscape of gender roles in Pakistan by investigating how female education and employment impact traditional social constructs. Pakistani women historically were constrained by patriarchal structures and religious misinterpretations. However, over recent decades, education has given women access to knowledge that empowers them with agency by challenging established norms and challenging established gender norms. Furthermore, female employment post-marriage acts as a catalyst in further shifting gender roles both within families and broader society. The analysis of this research will draw upon existing scholarship on gender studies, education policy in Pakistan and changing dynamics within Pakistani workforces (Barhate et al., 2021).

This study investigates the intricate relationship between traditional gender roles, professional aspirations among contemporary women, and gender assimilation. The results illustrate a nuanced picture, marked by both persistently held expectations and the formation of new paradigms.

Key observations demonstrate the transformative power of professional engagement on women's lived experiences. The participants of this research, represent diverse backgrounds spanning rural communities to urban centers, all expressed similar understandings regarding masculine and feminine roles heavily shaped by sociocultural norms. Furthermore, regardless of gaining education, all women described an ongoing process of gendered socialization within their families that culminated in fulfilling traditional responsibilities; such conformance perpetuated the submissive position wherein many women found themselves situated within extended family structures and cultural/religious beliefs often reinforced extended family structures perpetuating such dynamics that had women being in submissive positions within extended family structures where women played submissively rather than an empowered position.

However, this research also offers compelling counterpoints. Women from higher socioeconomic strata strongly resist relinquishing the right to pursue professional careers despite traditional power dynamics changing, while women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds prioritize paid employment as economic empowerment and social mobility; this underscores gender with class as an intersectional force and opportunity.

In conclusion, this study contributes to an ongoing dialogue about gender roles in the 21st century. While acknowledging long-standing influence of cultural expectations, an emerging complex reality with women increasingly navigating both professional ambition and familial responsibility simultaneously, is paving the way for potentially reconfigured social landscapes (Ruis, 2019)

Higher levels of education among recent generations correlate with a stronger emphasis on gender equality in roles and relationships. This is attributed to education's potential to reshape societal expectations surrounding women, enabling them to delay marriage, exercise greater autonomy in partner selection, and assume more prominent roles in public life (Ruis, 2019). Furthermore, the positive potential of mass media to influence women's empowerment and gender equality is undeniable. Acharya et al. (2010) propose that children raised by working mothers demonstrate better intellectual development, discipline, and awareness of equity and respect due to their mothers' active role in instilling these values.

Gender Disparities in Domestic Labor

Despite increasing participation in the workforce, many women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of domestic chores. Working wives may dedicate three or more hours daily to cooking, cleaning, and laundry. These studies further reveal that women often perceive themselves solely responsible for household work, even when employed full-time, with their male partners contributing comparatively less. On average, female respondents reported spending 17 hours per week on domestic tasks compared to less than six hours for male respondents, suggesting a significant gender disparity in labour distribution within the home. This observation holds even when husbands intend to share the burden through increased domestic involvement. Researchers argue that true gender equality in the home remains elusive until this imbalance in domestic labour

is addressed and men take on a more substantial share of household responsibilities.

Despite significant advancements in recent decades, the position of women in Pakistani society remains a complex and multifaceted issue. On the one hand, entrenched patriarchal norms and deeply ingrained social expectations continue to place women in a comparatively subordinate position (Rauf, 2022). This limits their freedom of choice regarding essential life decisions, including education, employment, marriage, and motherhood. These restrictions are often amplified in rural and conservative regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab (Abbasi et al., 2023).

Contesting Subordination

However, amidst these constraints, a countervailing narrative of evolving gender agency is also emerging. Rising education levels are crucial in challenging traditional gender roles and empowering women to make more autonomous choices (Jabeen et al., 2020). Higher education rates, particularly in urban areas, correlate with increased female employment and a growing acceptance of shared marital responsibilities, including dual-income households. Notably, Pakistani women have also gained significant visibility in leadership positions, with prominent figures in politics, journalism, and various professional fields (Benazir et al., 2021).

Negotiating Marriage

The institution of marriage in Pakistan further exemplifies this duality. While arranged marriages brokered by family elders remain the norm (Ahmed, 2022) the rise of the nuclear family, especially in urban settings, is gradually opening avenues for individual choice in partner selection. However, complete autonomy remains to be elusive in these scenarios, with parental approval often a critical hurdle. This dynamic highlight the ongoing negotiation between tradition and personal agency in intimate relationships.

This study's findings highlight the limited role flexibility experienced by professional women when living with male partners, which aligns with prior research revealing how transgressions of traditional masculinity may lead to stress in men, which in turn results in hostile and domineering attitudes toward women (Mansell & Gatto, 2023). From a feminist sociocultural viewpoint, male discriminatory behavior towards women

stems from socialization pressures to conform to idealized masculine ideals and gendered roles (Murnen et al., 2002).

Shifting gender roles offers multiple advantages to families and individuals alike. Financial security stands out among them; women's employment increases household income (Eagly et al., 2020). Financial responsibility shared between partners can ease the pressure off one partner while cultivating respect. Furthermore, research indicates an increasing trend where men share household chores after their partners return from work (Reddy, 2017). Paternal involvement in domestic tasks is an exemplary role model for children, potentially encouraging empathy and cooperative behavior within the family unit. Studies support these conclusions by showing maternal employment's positive influence on family finances (Eagly et al., 2020). Women contribute financially and become valued members of their households while affording their children more excellent stability and resources. Increased living standards and opportunities for children often coincide with more significant family income, leading to improved quality of life for everyone involved. Families without working mothers may face economic constraints in providing amenities to their children, while financial independence gained through employment empowers women, giving them greater autonomy in decision-making (Eagly et al., 2020; Reddy, 2017).

While female labor force participation offers economic benefits, research highlights potential drawbacks that affect family life. long working hours as one factor leading to fatigue and exhaustion among working women (Eagly et al., 2020), leaving enduring fatigue for women when returning home, which can have adverse consequences regarding negligence of children or strain relationships between spouses (Viertiö et al., 2021). At once further contributes to stress and health problems that compound family burdens further.

As childcare centers may not always offer adequate alternative arrangements, working mothers who rely on them often feel guilty and inadequate, associating it with forgoing quality time with their children in favor of professional advancement. Emotional trauma caused by unequally distributed domestic labor between partners can further undermine familial bonds. Women managing paid work and household duties without support from their partner can experience a 24/7 workload, making them feel tired while endangering marital harmony and the well-being of all family

members, particularly children. Reddy contends that this compounding effect destabilizes family structures and negatively influences children's prospects (Reddy, 2017).

Conclusion

The position of women in Pakistan is an intricate tapestry woven from threads of both subordination and agency. While patriarchal structures continue to cast long shadows, the winds of change are undeniably blowing. As education levels rise, economic opportunities expand, and social attitudes evolve, Pakistani women increasingly claim their voices and reshape their destinies. Further research is crucial to illuminate the nuances of this ongoing transformation and its implications for gender equality in Pakistani society.

Hence, it is concluded that with time, there is a change in women's condition. They can preserve their right to work in the field even after marriage. Somehow, husbands also acknowledge them for their work and try to help them. Nevertheless, home is ultimately a female responsibility, and despite the shift in their role, she has to manage this responsibility too. Both men and women are expected to maintain their traditional gender roles in front of their friends and family, as they are somewhat non-understanding towards their situations. Working women face a lot of challenges. Due to inflation and other socioeconomic problems, making more effort to earn better has become necessary. Therefore, a woman has to earn and also fulfill the responsibilities of her family. Keeping aside the disadvantages of being a working mother, one should be positive and strive to see the advantages it offers a family. Working mothers should feel proud to be mothers; they have the power to give their best for their family without forgetting their obligations. Women must remember not to get upset over children as it could result in anger and irritation for both her and them. Rather, she should tackle kids with love, affection and patience. As far as men are concerned, they also need to shift their gender roles in response to changes in the role of women, so promoting androgynous characteristics can be helpful in balancing these roles.

Limitation and Suggestion

This study had some limitations which are following;

- The sample size was small. It is suggested to have more interviews to increase generalizability of results.

- Along with in-depth interviews, the future researchers should also consider other quantitative research methods to improve findings.

- All the participants belonged to urban areas, limiting the study's applicability to rural contexts. To provide a more holistic view, future research should include perspectives from couples in rural areas.

The author should interview more couples from diverse backgrounds to ensure that findings can apply to an expanded population. To gain targeted insights for research on couples of specific demographics (age group or income level), recruit participants from these sectors. Submit exclusively qualitative data: Relying solely on qualitative interviews may limit findings in scope and depth; however, quantitative methods like surveys or questionnaires can provide broader data. Collecting information from larger samples offers more representative pictures. Use survey results to confirm or explore themes identified during interviews and add weight to their conclusions. Suggest integrating quantitative methods, combine interviews and surveys or questionnaires to gain qualitative and quantitative insights. Confining research exclusively to urban couples' risks leaving out critical perspectives from rural ones, which could uncover differences in experiences and attitudes that could inform better results for the study. It is suggested to include rural couples in research. Seeking participants from rural locations will allow the research to encompass broader experiences and viewpoints, making its conclusions more conclusive.

References

Abbasi, M. U. R., Khan, N. R., Sabir, M., Awan, T. A., & Quadri, S. S. A. (2023). Reclaiming political and religious authority: a critical study of women's participation in mainstream politics in Pakistan. *Russian Law Journal*, *11*(10S), 129–149.

Acharya, D. R., Bell, J. S., Simkhada, P., van Teijlingen, E. R., Regmi, P. R. (2010). Women's autonomy in household decision-making: a demographic study in Nepal. *Reprod Health*, *7*, 15–27. https://doi.org/10.1186/1742-4755-7-15

Ahmed, Z. (2022). Evolution of Pakistani marriages. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, *14*(2), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy29760

Alba, B., Hammond, M. D., & Cross, E. J. (2023). Women's endorsement of heteronormative dating scripts is predicted by sexism, feminist Identity, a preference for dominant men, and a preference against short-term relationships. *Sex Roles*, *89*(7-8), 442–457. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-023-01405-6

Ali, T., Krantz, G., Gul, R., Asad, N., Johansson, E., & Mogren, I. (2011). Gender roles and their influence on life prospects for women in urban Karachi, Pakistan: a qualitative study. *Global Health Action*, *4*(1), Article e7448. https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v4i0.7448

Amos, J.-A. (2019, November 26). *Changing gender roles*. Body Language Expert. https://www.bodylanguageexpert.co.uk/changinggenderroles.html

Bejanyan, K. (2017, May 13). *The rules have changed: Gender roles in modern society*. The Huffington Post. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/kathrine bejanyan/gender-roles-in-modern-society_b_9934970.html

Benazir, B., Bashir, S., Zarar, R., Ahmed, M., & Farooq, K. (2021). A sociological Analysis of the Attitude of Working Females towards Joint Family System: A case study of Quetta city. *Indian Journal of Economics and Business*, *20*(2), 1179–1791.

Bhan, N., Rao, N., & Raj, A. (2020). Gender differences in the associations between informal caregiving and wellbeing in low-and middle-income countries. *Journal of Women's Health*, 29(10), 1328–1338. https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2019.7769

Barhate, B., Hirudayaraj, M., Dirani, K., Barhate, R., & Abadi, M. (2021). Career disruptions of married women in India: An exploratory investigation. *Human Resource Development International*, *24*(4), 401–424. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2021.1904352

Clara, J. S., & Hooimeijer M. P. (2016). Changing gender roles, shifting power balance and long-distance migration of couples. *Urban Studies*, *40*(3), 603–613. https://doi.org/10.1080/004209803200005394

Eagly, A. H., Nater, C., Miller, D. I., Kaufmann, M., & Sczesny, S. (2020). Gender stereotypes have changed: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of U.S. public opinion polls from 1946 to 2018. *American Psychologist*, *75*(3), 301–315. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000494

Farooq, A. (2020). Gendered perceptions in Punjab, Pakistan: Structural inequity, oppression and emergence. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *29*(4), 386–402. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2019.1635876

Goody, E. N. (2021). Parenthood and social reproduction. In E. Alber & T. Thelen (Eds.), *Politics and Kinship* (pp. 236–251). Routledge

Hasnain, S., Johansson, E., Mogren, I., & Krantz, G. (2012). Young adults' perceptions on life prospects and gender roles as important factors to influence health behaviour: A qualitative study from Karachi, Pakistan. *Global Journal of Health Science*, *4*(3), 87–97. https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v4n3p87

Hobson, B. (2011). The agency gap in work-life balance: Applying Sen's capabilities framework within European contexts. *Social Politics*, *18*(2), 147–167. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxr012

Hogan, H., & Liddell, J. L. (2023). "I had a mother that i could always go to": gender role development and the intergenerational socialization of Indigenous women. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *32*(6), 525–538. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2023.2213661

Inglehart, R., & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values. *American Sociological Review*, *65*(1), 19–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122400065001

Jabeen, S., Haq, S., Jameel, A., Hussain, A., Asif, M., Hwang, J., & Jabeen, A. (2020). Impacts of rural women's traditional economic activities on household economy: Changing economic contributions through empowered women in rural Pakistan. *Sustainability*, *12*(7), Article e2731. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072731

Kaufman, G., & Grönlund, A. (2021). Displaying parenthood, (un) doing gender: parental leave, daycare and working-time adjustments in Sweden and the UK. *Families, Relationships and Societies*, *10*(2), 213–229. https://doi.org/10.1332/204674319X15683716957916

Khera, D., Champion, A., Walton, K., & Pedersen, C. (2022). Why men don't say no: sexual compliance and gender socialization in heterosexual men. *Psychology & Sexuality*, *13*(5), 1336–1349. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2022.2031263

Unger, R. K. (Ed). (2001). *Handbook of the psychology of women and gender*. John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Sage Publications.

Lagaert, S., Van Houtte, M., & Roose, H. (2017). Engendering culture: The relationship of gender identity and pressure for gender conformity with adolescents' interests in the arts and literature. *Sex Roles*, *77*, 482–495. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0738-y

Lesthaeghe, R. (2010). The unfolding story of the second demographic transition. *Population and Development Review, 36*(2), 211–251. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2010.00328.x

Lorde, A. (2018). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Ten Speed Press.

Mansell, J., & Gatto, M. A. (2023). Insecurity and self-esteem: Elucidating the psychological foundations of negative attitudes toward women. *Politics & Gender*, *19*(2), 401–426. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X22000083

McDonald, P. (2000). Gender equity, social institutions and the future of fertility. *Journal of Population Research, 17*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03029445

McDonald, P. (2006). Low fertility and the state: The efficacy of policy. *Population and Development Review*, *32*(3), 485–510.

Mills, M., Blossfeld, H. P., & Klijzing, E. (2006). Becoming an adult in uncertain times: A 14-country comparison of the losers of globalization. In H.-P. Blossfeld, E. Klijzing, M. Mills & K. Kurz (Eds.), *Globalization, uncertainty and youth in society* (pp. 438–458). Routledge.

Murnen, S. K., Wright, C., & Kaluzny, G. (2002). If "boys will be boys," then girls will be victims? A meta-analytic review of the research that relates masculine ideology to sexual aggression. *Sex Roles, 46*, 359–375. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020488928736

Neuman, W. L. 2000. *Social research methodologies with quantitative and qualitative methods* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Nylin, A. K., Musick, K., Billingsley, S., Duvander, A. Z., & Evertsson, M. (2021). Trends in women's relative earnings within couples across the transition to parenthood in Sweden, 1987–2007. *European Sociological Review*, *37*(3), 349–364. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaa056

Ou, C., Sandel, T., & Lin, Z. (2023). Mediated (Un) doing family: Cross-border parenting in Chinese families. *Social Media+ Society*, *9*(4),1–11. https://doi.org/0.1177/20563051231211941

Patel, D. (2021). *Experience of gender role expectations and negotiation in second generation desi couples* [Doctoral dissertation, Antioch University]. Antioch University Full-Text Dissertations & Theses. https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/753/

Rauf, S. (2022). Women's empowerment in Pakistan: Dissection of paradoxical depth. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, *24*(1), Article e30.

Reddy, C. (2017). *Advantages and Disadvantages of working women*. Wise Step. https://content.wisestep.com/top-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-working-mothers/

Rizvi, N., S Khan, K., & Shaikh, B. (2014). Gender: Shaping personality, lives and health of women in Pakistan. *BMC Women's Health*, *14*, Article e53. https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6874-14-53

Ruis, A. (2019). Building a new life and (re) making a family: Young Syrian refugee women in the Netherlands navigating between family and career. *Journal of Family Research*, *31*(3), 287–302.

Sibghatullah, A., & Naiemah, S. U. (2023, April). Gender equality towards education, employment, family and house management among societies in Karachi, Pakistan. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, *2544*, Article e 050002. https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0117478

Silverstone, R., & Ward, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Careers of professional women*. Taylor & Francis.

Smock, P. J., & Schwartz, C. R. (2020). The demography of families: A review of patterns and change. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *82*(1), 9–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12612

Stiawa, M., Müller-Stierlin, A. S., Staiger, T., Kilian, R., Becker, T., Gündel, H., Beschoner, P., Grinschgl, A., Frasch, K., Schmauß, M.,

Panzirsch, M., Mayer, L., Sittenberger, E., & Krumm, S. (2020). Mental health professionals view about the impact of male gender for the treatment of men with depression-a qualitative study. *BMC Psychiatry*, *20*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02686-x

Raybould, A., & Sear, R. (2021). Children of the (gender) revolution: A theoretical and empirical synthesis of how gendered division of labour influences fertility. *Population Studies*, *75*(2), 169–190. https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2020.1851748

Thomaea, M., & Houstonc, D. M. (2016). The impact of gender ideologies on men's and women's desire for a traditional or non-traditional partner. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *95*, 152–158.

van der Vegt, I., & Kleinberg, B. (2020, October 6–9). *Women worry about family, men about the economy: Gender differences in emotional responses to COVID-19* (Paper presentation). 12th International Conference Social Informatics, Pisa, Italy.

Viertiö, S., Kiviruusu, O., Piirtola, M., Kaprio, J., Korhonen, T., Marttunen, M., & Suvisaari, J. (2021). Factors contributing to psychological distress in the working population, with a special reference to gender difference. *BMC Public Health*, *21*, Article e611. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10560-y

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (2007). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, *1*(2), 125–151.