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Gender Roles and Psychological Wellbeing: Difference in Contemporary Groups

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This study was conducted with the aim to investigate the generational changes in gender roles and the association of gender roles and psychological wellbeing in adults. Cross sectional research design was used for which 300 participants men ($n= 150$) and women ($n= 150$) were purposefully selected. Significant difference in the gender roles on the basis of age was observed showing groups of young adult participants having modern roles compared to groups of middle and old adult participants. Results also revealed significant positive relationship between gender roles, psychological wellbeing, and its subscales of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Introduction

Gender roles can be defined as the society's assigned roles and tasks to men and women. Interchangeably terms for gender roles are gender role attitudes and gender role beliefs (Sweeting, Bhaskar, Benzeval, Popham, & Hunt, 2014). According to Khalid (2011), gender roles are constructed by society. Since gender roles are the society-based standards so there can be cultural differences in them and sometimes, these can become problematic for men and women because they are unable to confine to social norms (Burke, 2000).

The way society assigns roles to people can have its roots in Social Role theory (Eagly, 1987) authenticated by Eagly and Steffen (1986) and establishes the relationship between people and social system. Using a structural viewpoint, theory stressed that family, environment and the society in which people live, assign certain roles to men and women which they perform. Different societies have different roles for men and women, which forms certain male gender roles and female gender roles

respectively. The main reason for the categorization of tasks was the work division between men and women. Individuals observe the exhibited roles of men and women from their childhood and they adapt the same observed roles to live a successful adult life (Eagly, 1987).

Currently two concepts of gender roles exist in the society, liberal roles and conservative roles. Conservative roles are generally beneficent for men because these assign men the role of breadwinner and employment while women are assigned housework, child rearing, and looking after the family. On the other hand, liberal roles encourage equal gender roles for men and women (Mickelson, Claffey, & Williams, 2006; Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2007).

Every society differentiates between gender roles of men and women. Consequently, the concept of discrimination on the bases of gender arises in workplace and household tasks. (Cohen, 2004). Working women are playing dual roles which may affect their health because they are serving their family and also doing their jobs. Within the house, there is a distribution of roles which are to be performed by men and women separately. Men's household roles are flexible and include gardening and outside work. Men tasks can be planned on convenience and they are usually not urgent. There is another category of roles that can be performed by either men or women. There are no boundaries as to who should perform those roles. An example of these tasks includes paying the bills. As a housewife, women perform most of the household tasks than men and their roles are more difficult and rigid. Their tasks are performed on daily basis which can be boring and difficult. Even in liberal society, like America, stereotypical behavior and gender discrimination exist (Roothman, Kirsten, & Wissing, 2003; & Kan, Sullivan, & Gershuny, 2011). Household tasks and childcare are mostly allocated to women and they are not appreciated for their house hold roles (Hori, 2010). Housewife and working women both themselves perform more household tasks than men and they find it fair (Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009). The ratio of household tasks which are being performed by women are 80%, although, there may be some variation in this ratio. According to Carriero (2011), 85% routine tasks are women responsibility. These tasks include cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, and other household tasks for example daily preparing the meal and cleaning the house.

There are ongoing debates from the end of 20th century and the start of 21st century over the changes in gender roles and conservative view is changing to liberal view (Crompton & Lyonette, 2008). Men and women are supporting egalitarianism and sharing their tasks. Men's house roles are also changing because they are taking some responsibilities at home like child rearing. They are supporting women employment and encouraging them to contribute in family finance instead of staying home. Women are also the breadwinners of family along with men. In the families where men support conservative roles and their wives support liberal roles, men are at higher risk of psychological stress (Sweeting, Bhaskar, Benzeval, Popham, & Hunt, 2014).The significant impact of these changes on the overall life has not been understood. However, these changes can affect individual's psychological health.

According to Ryff (1989) Psychological Wellbeing is the individual's ability to maintain positive functioning in life and level of relatedness with surroundings. PWB is the combination of six factors that include the ability to maintain good relationship with society (Positive relationship with others), accepting one's life as a whole (self-acceptance), having some aims and goal in life (purpose in life), ability to tackle different situation (environmental mastery), ability to develop and grow oneself as a complete person (personal growth), and determined to achieve one's goals (Autonomy).

In previous researches, there are contradictory findings regarding gender difference and psychological wellbeing. Hori (2010) stated that women's daily tasks include looking after children and home have negative impact on their PWB. On the other hand, men's role as breadwinner and finance provider might have negative impact on their PWB. Moreover, it cannot be said that women living in countries where liberal approach exists will have higher PWB than those women who were living in societies where conservative approach exist.

Arends-Toth and Van de Vijver (2007) conducted a study on Dutch, Caribbean, and Mediterranean people who migrated to Netherlands and explored that participant having conservative roles had poor wellbeing. Read and Grundy (2011) explored that UK women with conservative roles had poor wellbeing whereas for men no association was found between gender role and mental health. Moreover, highly educated couple adapts liberal approach towards gender roles and have more sharing in housework. Low wellbeing was observed in those people who preferred unequal housework responsibilities (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver 2007).

The factor that affected the psychological wellbeing of men was the work status of women. It was found that men whose wives were working had low PWB than those whose wives were nonworking (Sagara, Ito, & Ikeda, 2006). Reason was the contradiction between their conservative thinking about women employment and women's gender role assigned to them by the society which had affected their PWB. They perceived that wife's work had hindered and suppressed their dominated role. They were the bread winner of their family and women were dependent on them. Financial independency of working women caused low PWB of men. Consequently, stronger traditional gender roles lowered PWB.

On the basis of above contradictory evidence, current research explored the gender roles of men and women and association between the two variables, gender role and psychological wellbeing, in Pakistan. Khalid (2011) discovered two perspectives towards gender roles in Pakistan. One is liberal and other is conservative. Former group supports modern gender role approach which allows emancipation for women. Latter group supports traditional approach which set limits for women and does not allow them to transgress those limits.

Ali, Krantz, Gul, Asad, Johannson, and Mogren (2011) stated that Pakistani society is patriarchal. In Pakistan, men are the commanding figure and head of the

family. Men's education is considered important because they are responsible for financial matters, managing the house budget as well as advisors, and most decision about family matters are taken by men.

Women are submissive to men and there are certain expectations from women. They have low education level and they are expected to be lenient, submissive, obedient, sacrificing, and unselfish. Moreover, they are considered as homemaker and responsible for housework such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, and serving the family member for example looking after the in-laws. Previously, people had animals in their houses and it was women's responsibility to look after the animals. Moreover, there was a lack of energy and sources, women gathered food, brought water from the well, and performed these types of heavy roles that required a lot of physical work and these roles lowered women's health. Furthermore, they were not allowed to independently move in the market to shop for the household items because they had no access to financial matters and they were dependent on men's permission (Sadaf & Siegmann, 2004).

Working women play double role inside the home and outside the home because they are expected to provide finance to fulfill the family needs. Isran and Isran (2014) stated that women had limited access to field work. To contribute in family finance, women were allowed to do domestic jobs. Those included stitching, weaving, embroidery, and other skills which did not require women to go outside for the job. They were not allowed to work in organizations and in formal settings. Women working hour were higher than men working hour. On average in a week, women worked 50 hours and men worked 16 hours. These roles can have negative affect on women's psychological health and they might be suffering from depression, fatigue, and stress. However, these roles and trend of education are changing.

Khalid (2011) conducted a study in Pakistan by selecting UK returned Pakistanis and local Pakistanis to explore the effect of migration on sharing household roles. Gender difference in household roles was observed in both groups UK returned Pakistanis and local Pakistanis. Researcher found that UK returned Pakistanis both male and female had liberal views because migration played major role in changing their gender roles. Pakistani group supported conservative views for example men have the roles of bill payment and repairing the home.

Locally less work has been done on exploring gender roles and PWB related to different generations. This research also explored the relationship between changing roles and psychological health of participants. This can be a contribution to existing literature because it provides image of a society where mostly women have faced gender based discrimination.

Material and Method

Sample

Sample was selected purposefully and participants ($n=300$) within the age of 20 to 67 were contacted out of which men were ($n=150$) and women ($n=150$). They were divided into three categories on the bases of their age 20 to 35 years for young adults, 36 to 51 for middle adults, and 52 to 67 for old adults. Only married participants were contacted. Minimum education criteria for inclusion of participants were middle.

Instrument

Gender role attitude scale: This Urdu language scale contained 30-items and 5-point response format. Out of the 30-items, 15-items were based on traditional roles and other 15-items were based on modern roles. For traditional items, reverse scoring was done (Anila & Ansari, 1992). Higher score depicted modern roles. Scale was reliable with .81.

Psychological wellbeing scale: The scale had 54-items with 7-point response format (Ryff, 1995). Urdu translated version was used in this study (Malik & Khalid, 2010). This scale contained six aspects of psychological wellbeing named as Autonomy, Personal growth, Environmental mastery, Self acceptance, Purpose in life, and positive relationship. Reverse scoring was done for 27 items. Higher score depicted greater PWB. This scale was reliable with .86 alpha.

Demographic sheet: In the demographic sheet participant's age, gender, marital status, occupation, and education were asked.

Procedure

Sample was difficult to find because non-working people had to be contacted at their residence and working people were contacted in their organizations therefore, snowball technique was used to contact the participants. Consent was obtained from willing participants and they were informed about the aim of the study. Confidentiality was assured to the participants. Questionnaires were administered and participants were requested to fill all the questions.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Descriptive of age, gender, and education

		<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	Young adults (20-35)	100	33.3		
	Middle adults (36-51)	100	33.3		
	Old adults (52-67)	100	33.3		
Total		300	100	2	.04

Gender	Men	150	50	1.5	.02
	Women	150	50		
Total		300	100		
Education	Middle	48	16	3.2	.08
	Matriculation	46	15.3		
	Intermediate	46	15.3		
	Graduation	90	30		
	Masters	70	23.3		
Total		300	100		

Table 1 showed descriptive statistics ($n=300$) of demographic variable age ($M= 2, SD= .04$), gender ($M= 1.5, SD= .02$), and education ($M= 3.2, SD= .08$).

Table 2
Analysis of Variance on gender roles and psychological wellbeing on age groups

	Source	Df	SS	MS	F	p
Gender roles	Between groups	2	289610.4	144805.2	823.5	.00*
	Within groups	297	52224.590	175.8		
	Total	299	341834.997			
Psychological wellbeing	Between groups	2	1719521.8	859760.9	812.2	.00*
	Within groups	297	314360.7	1058.4		
	Total	299	2033882.5			

Note.* $p<0.05$

Table 2 shows significant differences in gender roles of three age groups. It shows that group of young adults had modern roles ($M= 129, SD=9$). Group of middle adults ($M= 68.8, SD= 14.8$) and old adult ($M=58.5, SD= 58.5$) had traditional roles. Hypothesis was supported $F(2, 297) = 823.5, p=.00$. A significant difference was also explored in psychological wellbeing of young adults ($M= 270.9, SD=40.5$), middle adults ($M= 195.9, SD=32.4$), and old adults ($M= 86.5, SD=21.9$). It was reported that young adults had high PWB than middle adults and old adults. Hypothesis was supported $F(2, 297)= 812.2, p=.00$.

Table 3
Analysis of Variance on Gender Roles and Psychological Wellbeing on education

	Source	df	SS	MS	F	P
Gender roles	Between group	4	207570.1	51892.5	114	.00*
	Within group	295	134264.8	455.1		
	Total	299	341834.9			
Psychological wellbeing	Between group	4	717497.2	179374.3	40.19	.00*
	Within group	295	1316385.3	4462.3		
	Total	299	2033882.5			

Note.* $p<0.05$

Table 3 reports that education had significant effect on gender roles and psychological wellbeing. Participants with highest qualification had modern gender roles ($M= 122, SD= 23.7$) when compared to those who had lowest qualification ($M= 54.6, SD= 14.4$). Hypothesis was supported $F(4, 295)= 114, p=.00$. Participants with highest qualification had high PWB ($M=248, SD=53.4$) when compared to those who had lowest qualification ($M= 132.7, SD= 59.3$). Hypothesis was supported $F(4, 295)= 40.1, p=.00$.

Table 4

Relationship between gender roles and psychological wellbeing

Variables	Gender roles	Psychological wellbeing
1. Gender roles	-	.79*
2. Psychological wellbeing	-	-
<i>M</i>	85.5	184.4
<i>SD</i>	33.8	82.4

* $p<0.05$

Table 4 shows a strong positive significant relationship between gender roles ($M= 85.5, SD= 33.8$) and psychological wellbeing ($M= 184.4, SD= 82.4$). Hypothesis was supported $r = .79, p=.00$. Group of young adults who had modern gender roles also had high psychological wellbeing than middle and old group. Hypothesis was supported. It was reported that modern gender role were related to higher PWB.

Table 5
Gender difference between gender role and psychological wellbeing

	Gender				<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
	Men		Women					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Gender roles	80.4	35.5	90.5	31.2	.01*	-2.6	298	0.3
Psychological wellbeing	156.3	73.7	212.5	81.3	.00*	-6.2	298	0.7

* $p<0.05$

Table 5 explored significant differences between men ($M= 80.4, SD= 35.5$) and women ($M= 90.5, SD= 31.2$) on gender roles. Women had modern gender roles. Hypothesis was supported $t(298) = -2.6, p = 0.01, d = 0.3$. A significant difference was also observed in the psychological wellbeing of men ($M= 156.3, SD= 73.7$) and women ($M= 212.5, SD= 81.3$). Hypothesis was supported $t(298) = -6.2, p = 0.00, d = 0.7$. Women had higher PWB than men.

Table 6
Gender difference between psychological wellbeing subscales

	Gender				<i>P</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
	Men (150)		Women (150)					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Autonomy	26.0	12.7	35.5	13.5	.00*	-6.2	298	0.7

Environmental mastery	25.9	12.2	35.4	13.7	.00*	-6.3	298	0.7
Personal growth	26.1	12.2	35.2	13.5	.00*	-6.1	298	0.7
Positive relations with others	26.1	12.6	35.4	13.8	.00*	-6.0	298	0.7
Purpose in life	26.1	12.0	35.5	13.6	.00*	-6.3	298	0.7
Self-acceptance	25.9	12.4	35.3	13.4	.00*	-6.2	298	0.7

Note. N=sample, M=mean, SD= standard deviation, df= degree of freedom, *p<0.05

Table 6 explored the gender difference on psychological wellbeing subscales. Significant mean difference was found in psychological wellbeing subscales. Women (M=35.5, SD= 31.5) had higher psychological wellbeing than men (M= 26.0, SD= 12.7) on autonomy $t(298) = -6.2, p = 0.00, d = 0.7$. Women (M=25.4, SD= 13.7) had higher scores than men (M= 25.9, SD= 12.2) on environmental mastery $t(298) = -6.3, p = 0.00, d = 0.7$. Women (M=35.2, SD= 13.5) got higher scores than men (M= 26.1, SD= 12.2) on personal growth $t(298) = -6.1, p = 0.00, d = 0.7$. Women (M=35.4, SD= 13.8) got higher scores than men (M= 26.1, SD= 12.6) on positive relations with others $t(298) = -6.0, p = 0.00, d = 0.7$. Women (M=35.5, SD= 13.6) obtained higher scores than men (M= 26.1, SD= 12.0) on purpose in life $t(298) = -6.3, p = 0.00, d = 0.7$. Women (M=35.3, SD= 13.4) got higher scores than men (M= 25.9, SD= 12.4) on self-acceptance $t(298) = -6.2, p = 0.00, d = 0.7$.

Table 7
Analysis of variance on psychological wellbeing subscales across age groups

	Source	Df	SS	MS	F	P
Autonomy	Between groups	2	48466.8	24233.4	751.0	.00*
	Within groups	297	9582.5	32.2		
	Total	299	58049.3			
Environmental mastery	Between groups	2	467998.7	23999.3	765.6	.00*
	Within groups	297	9309.2	31.3		
	Total	299	57308.0			
Personal growth	Between groups	2	46280.8	23140.4	716.6	.00*
	Within groups	297	9590.4	32.2		
	Total	299	55871.2			
Positive relations with others	Between groups	2	49544.8	24772.4	792.1	.00*
	Within groups	297	9287.7	31.2		
	Total	299	58832.5			
Purpose in life	Between groups	2	47284.9	23642.4	786.2	.00*
	Within groups	297	8931.1	30.0		
	Total	299	56216.1			
Self-acceptance	Between groups	2	47078.3	23539.1	720.0	.00*
	Within groups	297	9709.9	32.6		
	Total	299	56788.2			

Note. Df= degree of freedom, SS= sum of squares, MS= mean squares, *p<0.05

Table 7 explored difference in psychological wellbeing subscale across three age groups. First age group participants had higher scores on psychological wellbeing subscales than second and third age group participants. Significant difference was found with autonomy $F(2,297)=751.0, p=.00$, environmental mastery $F(2,297)=765.6, p=.00$, personal growth $F(2,297)=716.6, p=.00$, positive relations with other $F(2,297)=792.1, p=.00$, purpose in life $F(2,297)=786.2, p=.00$, and self acceptance $F(2,297)=720.0, p=.00$.

First age group participants had higher scores on autonomy ($M=45.4, SD=7.07$), environmental mastery ($M=45.0, SD=6.9$), personal growth ($M=44.6, SD=7.1$), positive relations with others ($M=45.5, SD=7.1$), purpose in life ($M=45.1, SD=6.5$), and self acceptance ($M=45.0, SD=7.0$).

Second age group participants had low scores on autonomy ($M=32.5, SD=5.4$), environmental mastery ($M=32.7, SD=5.6$), personal growth ($M=32.9, SD=5.6$), positive relations with others ($M=32.5, SD=5.3$), purpose in life ($M=32.7, SD=5.8$), and self acceptance ($M=32.3, SD=5.6$).

Third age group participants had lowest scores on autonomy ($M=14.4, SD=4.1$), environmental mastery ($M=14.3, SD=3.7$), personal growth ($M=14.4, SD=3.7$), positive relations with others ($M=14.2, SD=3.7$), purpose in life ($M=14.5, SD=3.6$), and self acceptance ($M=14.5, SD=3.9$).

Discussion

Psychological wellbeing is a process of continuous growth and development. It is the individual's ability to overcome life's challenging situations. Along with maintaining mental and physical health, it is individual's ability to balance between personal objectives and environmental circumstances as well as to adjust with changing social situations (Ryff, 1989). This study was conducted on gender roles and PWB with the aims to explore the differences in gender roles and PWB in three different generations and the association between them.

A significant difference was seen in the gender roles of three age groups. Group of young adult had liberal views about gender roles while groups of middle and old adult participants had conservative views on gender roles. Sweeting, Bhaskar, Benzeval, Popham, and Hunt (2014) in their research also explored the difference in gender role on the basis of participant's age. He found that conservative gender roles are associated with age. Old age participants had conservative views on gender roles. Furthermore, old age women were also found to have more conservative gender roles than young age women. Some other researches explored that the participant's marital status, education, and employment (Arends-Toth, & van de Vijver, 2007; Lynott & Mc Candless, 2000) family background (Moors, 2003), and household tasks were found to be the major factor behind the change in gender roles. Sweeting, Bhaskar, Benzeval, Popham, and Hunt (2014) concluded age difference in the levels of PWB. It was seen that group of young adults participants

who had liberal views about gender roles also had higher level of PWB than other two group participants who had conservative views about gender roles. Results also showed association between gender role and PWB on the basis of age.

It was also analyzed that education played significant role in changing gender roles and higher psychological wellbeing. Highly qualified people had modern gender roles when compared to less qualified people and same results were found for PWB. Education has strong association with gender roles and PWB (Arends-Toth, & van de Vijver, 2007); (Lynott & McCandless, 2000); and (Ali, Krantz, Gul, Asad, Johansson, & Mogren, 2011). Moreover, women have surpassed men with regard to their higher education level. Among women higher education is negatively associated with the traditionalism and it increases women's participation in employment sector (Hek, Kraaykamp, & Wolbers, 2016). Educational attainment reduces the concept of traditionalism and maximizes liberal views mostly among female participants (Du, Xiao, & Zhao, 2020). Furthermore, low education level reduces psychological health (Maliqi, Borinca, & Maliqi, 2015). Higher education level is positively associated with higher PWB (Gabel, 2017).

A strong positive association between gender role and psychological wellbeing was seen. Sweeting, Bhaskar, Benzeval, Popham, and Hunt (2014) concluded psychological distress among middle age women and old age women who had more conservative views on gender roles. The present study also supported above finding in which middle and old adult participants with conservative view also have lower PWB.

With regard to gender difference, women had modern roles and high PWB. Finding was consistent with the literature. Women with modern and changing roles had low psychological distress. Among men, traditional gender roles were associated with high psychological distress (Sweeting, Bhaskar, Benzeval, Popham, & Hunt (2014).

On the psychological wellbeing subscales, women obtained higher scores. With reference to the research conducted by Matud, Lopez-Curbelo, and Fortes (2019), current study has authenticated the finding. Women have more control over their life situations and more able to handle their lives than men. Moreover, liberalism among women and advancement in education sector in recent years might have positive implications in women's lives. With regard to age groups, third age group participants have lower scores on PWB subscale than first and second age group participants. Possible cause for this finding might be the cultural and social context. The study was conducted in the culture where older people depend on their children for taking care of themselves, for health issues, and visiting to doctors, therefore, this dependency can cause lower PWB among third age group participants (Ilyas, 2019).

Over the years, young men and women in Pakistan are adopting liberal gender roles and women are quickly moving toward the change in society more than men. Worldwide, these changing trends are mostly associated with young men and

women because these changing gender roles are implementing positive effects on the lives of people. Results suggested that young women with liberal gender roles had higher levels of PWB than other two groups.

This study is a significant contribution in the literature of changing trends and also to the association between gender roles and PWB. It has highlighted the new and constructive change in society and identified the positive impact of education.

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