



Prevalence of Gender Role Strain, and its Relationship with Aggression and Depression among Professional Adults

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Abstract

Background: This paper provides insight about expression of role strain among Pakistani men and women. It contributes to social and gender psychology which highlighted importance of psychological and emotional well-being rather than emphasizing on stress individually.

Objectives: To find out the frequency of Gender Role Strain (GRS) experienced by men and women and distinguish the potential associations between GRS, depression, and aggression.

Method: A sample of 600 participants was gathered through cross-sectional research design with age range of 21-60 years. Two Gender Role Strain Scales (GRSS-M and GRSS-W), Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale and Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire were used to collect data from different organizations of Lahore.

Results: The overall gender role strain was slightly high among men (57%) than women (55%). Both GRSS-M and GRSS-W subscales named Workplace Pressures have high frequencies (Men = 188 and women = 180). The results indicated that there was positive correlation between scores of gender role strain and depression in women ($r = .28, p < .01$) than men. The study also revealed positive correlation between scores of gender role strain and aggression in men ($r = .25, p < .01$) as compared to women.

Conclusion: Gender role strain is quite less understood as well as indefinite construct among Pakistani Society. However, it is quite prevalent among men and women in the present study. Embedded stereotypical gender beliefs might lead to psychological problems and worsens the well-being of individuals. Social implications of research are needed to be explored.

Keywords: Gender Role Strain; Depression; Aggression

Introduction

There is no doubt that both masculinity and femininity are damaged by gender stereotypes and gender role strain. Gender role strain (GRS) is a substantial aspect in the process of socialization. It is a pressure or stress experienced by individuals when trying to comply with the expected standard of behaviors associated with their gender [1]. Changes in gender-role norms may cause more

GRS as gender is shaped by sociocultural environment [2]. Such strained men and women have suffered from various problems in their psychosocial development due to their stereotypical gender roles. As a result, there is more risk of developing psychological problems (aggression and depression) and can have long-lasting effect on the well-being of individuals [3].

Depression adversely has emotional impact on how a person thinks, feels, and acts. It is frequently believed as a woman's disorder [4]. The incidence of depression is primarily high among Pakistani women due to lack of social support, relationship difficulties and socioeconomic conditions [5]. However, there is relevant data that put forward that men are prone to depression in the same way as women but it is undiagnosed and untreated [6]. Research looking into GRS and psychosomatic health points out that femininity is associated with high levels of depression in women [7]. However, masculinity is negatively linked to depression and anxiety and higher antisocial behavior such as anger, hostility, and rage [8].

On the other hand, aggression is more common among men. According to Baron and Richardson (1994) [9], aggression is a behavior that is intended to harm another person who does not wish to be harmed. The researches on gender and aggression have been observed comprehensively across different settings and populations, several methodologies, and on different kinds of aggressive behavior. The conclusions from developmental study and behavioural investigations have frequently pointed out that men exhibit direct physical aggression more than women [10]. This might in fact reflect a reaction to one's gender role because of the gender differences in aggressive behaviour.

With regard to femininity, there is mixed support of the literature with reference to aggression. Research by Walker, *et al.*, (2000) [11], and Kinney, *et al.*, (2001) [12] revealed a significant negative correlation between aggression and femininity. However, women who follow gender roles traditionally are practicing more anger after watching video representing female gender role violations [13].

There have been only one or two researches about gender role strain and its impact in Pakistan. It is less understood and explored area. Any kind of data available on this subject is grounded on foreign studies. In addition, the relationship of depression and aggression in relation to GRS has not been studied in reference to Pakistani context. The proposed study has been targeted by keeping in view the scarcity of empirical evidence in Pakistani society.

Hypotheses

- Participants would likely to score high on GRS Scales
- There would be positive correlation with depression in participants with respect to gender role strain.

- There would be positive correlation with aggression in participants with respect to gender role strain.

Methods

Purposive sampling technique and cross-sectional design was used on six hundred professional men and women ($n = 300$ each). The mean age of men sample was $M = 37.69$ ($SD = 9.74$) and for women was $M = 36.93$ ($SD = 9.97$). The data was collected from different professions. The detailed summary of demographic variables is presented in table 1.

Men (N = 300)			Women (N = 300)		
	<i>f</i>	%		<i>f</i>	%
Age			Age		
21-40	179	59.7	21-40	194	64.7
41-60	121	40.3	41-60	106	35.3
Education			Education		
Under Matric	74	24.7	Under Matric	110	36.7
Above Matric	226	75.3	Above Matric	190	63.3
Occupation			Occupation		
Doctors	80	26.7	Doctors	80	26.7
Teachers	80	26.7	Teachers	80	26.7
Lawyers	60	20.0	Lawyers	40	13.3
Bank Em- ployees	40	13.3	Bank Employ- ees	40	13.3
Network Engineers	40	13.3	Nurses	60	20.0
Marital Status			Marital Status		
Married	190	63.3	Married	160	53.3
Unmarried	110	36.7	Unmarried	140	46.7
Monthly Income			Monthly In- come		
1000-40,000	125	41.6	1000-40,000	176	58.6
41,000- 80,000	173	57.6	41,000-80,000	97	32.4
81,000 +	2	.8	81,000 +	27	9.0

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Sample (N = 600).

Two GRS questionnaires [Gender Role Strain Scale for men (GRSS-M) and Gender Role Strain Scale for women (GRSS-W)] were used. The GRSS-M is a newly developed indigenous scale [14a]. It consists of 25 items and has four subscales namely Familial and Social Pressures, Pressures of Marital Life, Workplace Pressures and Financial Pressures. The GRSS-W is also self-report and indigenous scale with 22 items [14b]. It has same three subscales as GRSS-M excluding Financial Pressures subscale. In addition, for assessing depression and aggression in participants Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale (SSDS) and the Brief Aggression Questionnaire (BAQ) were administered along with demographic form. SDSS is a self-administered indigenous scale having 36 items [15]. BAQ is a short version of Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) designed by Webster, *et al.* (2014) [16]. It contains 12 items and

four subscales i.e., Verbal Aggression, Physical Aggression, Hostility, and Anger. For Urdu version of BAQ, Lexicon Equivalence Method was adopted for translation [17].

The study was first approved by departmental ethical review board and permissions were obtained from in-charge of different hospitals, universities, companies and banks of Lahore for data collection. Consent forms were signed by the participants who were the part of this study. The purpose of the study was briefed to all the participants. The data was analyzed by SPSS Version 20.

Results

Almost fifty seven percent of men and fifty five percent of women participants were above mean score which suggests high gender role strain. The frequencies, percentages and correlations of Gender Role Strain Scales and subscales are given in table 2.

Scale	Low (Below Mean)	High (Above Mean)	GRSS-M	a	b	c	d
GRSS-M (N = 300)	130 (43.3%)	170 (56.7%)	—	.75	.62	.79	.74
Familial and Social Pressures	130 (43.3%)	170 (56.7%)		—	.11	.44	.49
Marital Life Pressures	132 (44.0%)	168 (56.0%)			—	.47	.24
Financial Pressures	123 (41.0%)	177 (59.0%)				—	.51
Workplace Pressures	112 (37.3%)	188 (62.7%)					—
Scale	Low (Below Mean)	High (Above Mean)	GRSS-W	a	b	c	d
GRSS-W (N=300)	134 (44.7%)	166 (55.3%)	—	.89	.93	.76	
Familial and Social Pressures	130 (43.3%)	170 (56.7%)		—	.72	.55	
Marital Life Pressures	129 (43.0%)	171 (57.0%)			—	.57	
Workplace Pressures	120 (40.0%)	180 (60.0%)				—	

Table 2: Frequencies, Percentages and Correlations of Gender Role Strain and Subscales.

Note: GRSS-M: Gender Role Strain for Men; GRSS-W: Gender Role Strain for Women

All four scales (GRSS-M, GRSS-W, SSDS and BAQ) have good reliability coefficients in the present study. Bivariate correlation analysis was calculated to explore relationships between gender role strain, depression and aggression. These three variables were positively correlated. The correlation was significant at level $p < .01$ on GRS and aggression among men (Table 3). The relationship between GRSS-W and depression was significant among women (Table 4).

Scales	No. of Items	α	1	2	3	M	SD
GRSS-M	25	.85	—	.04	.25**	48.13	15.46
SSDS	36	.95		—	-.08	23.64	17.69
BAQ	12	.63			—	43.04	5.45

Table 3: Psychometric Properties and Correlations among Men (N = 300).

Note: GRSS-M: Gender Role Strain for Men; SSDS: Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale; BAQ: Brief Aggression Questionnaire, ** $p < .01$.

Scales	No. of Items	α	1	2	3	M	SD
GRSS-W	22	.92	—	.28**	.10	44.02	18.35
SSDS	36	.93		—	.20**	28.58	15.57
BAQ	12	.71			—	35.47	8.42

Table 4: Psychometric Properties and Correlations among Women (N = 300)

Note: GRSS-W: Gender Role Strain for Women; SSDS: Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale; BAQ: Brief Aggression Questionnaire, ** p < .01

Discussion

The prevalence of gender role strain among professional men and women is noticeable in this contemporary study. Pakistani cultural norms and beliefs might be the leading cause of role strain among them particularly because of social difficulties and their awareness about women/men role strains. Workplace pressures were high among professional men and women. Usually, men suffered from several consequences of severe burden. A study on Pakistani working men revealed that occupational role problems (i.e., long working hours, heavy workload, and less satisfied job) are triggered as a result of gender role strain [18]. In addition, financial pressure was also observed in men as they are the breadwinners and heads of family. These are society made roles and duties in Pakistani culture.

On the other hand, high role expectations from the working women are the primary sources of role strain [19]. Pakistani women carry this weight on their shoulders to keep this stereotypical belief simultaneously which increases their gender role strain. In the present study, women also experienced familial and social as well as marital life pressures almost at the same level (57%). A study supported this findings and showed that middle-aged women take on a critical subordinate role in both familial and social circumstances in various different cultures [20]. Pakistani women also take secondary position to cope with numerous hurdles in their family and occupational life conditions.

There is increasing data that suggest that gender role strain might be an influential factor in regard to psychological illnesses for instance, depression, anxiety, anger, self-esteem and drug abuse

[7,21]. With regard to depression, it overall positively related to GRS among men and women in this study. It was slightly higher in women than men. Various studies of women’s role strain have confirmed a close link between depression and role strain [22,23]. On the other hand, men are disposed to depression in a different way. This illness is emotionally surrounded with women and not to men. In addition, men usually do not look for professional help and are supposed to mask their feelings of depression because of the shame and stigma attached to it [24].

Aggression, on the other hand, was overall slightly higher in men than women in this contemporary study. According to Noar (2002) [25], men are more likely to exhibit aggression, resentment, and antisocial behaviors frequently. On the contrary, a study revealed that by nature, men are not aggressive but hostility and anger are the indicators of gender role strain [18]. The present study indicated a positive relationship with subscales of BAQ i.e., Physical aggression (r = .18) and Verbal aggression (r = .12) with gender role strain for men. However, a negative correlation was found between gender role strain for women with Verbal Aggression subscale (r = -.02) of BAQ and a positive correlation with Physical Aggression subscale (r = .04). Literature on gender differences of physical aggression in women is sparsely considered as compared to men [26,27]. The findings of verbal aggression were consistent with the study by Kinney, Smith, and Donzella (2001) [12]. They found that femininity was negatively associated with expression of anger and verbal aggressiveness and masculinity was positively associated with both.

Conclusion

This study highlights the prevalence of gender role strain among Pakistani professional men and women. It acknowledges that both genders have confronted the role strains. However, the analysis revealed that Pakistani men are experiencing more gender role strain than the counterparts. It also points out the significance of gender role conformity on manifestation of depression and aggression. Both men and women are distressed from negative thoughts, mood swings and aggression caused by firm adherence to gender stereotypes and preferred to hold onto their feelings to themselves. Therefore, the psychological consequences of gender role strain cannot be ignored regardless of gender. These factors should be addressed and examined carefully to create a contribution to Pakistani community.

Limitations and Suggestions

The effects of demographic characteristics were hard to study on GRS and psychological problems as it requires fundamental and in depth examination of these variables. This study only included the views of professional men and women on GRS. Different results would have been found if comparative study was carried out among professional and non-professional groups. In addition, different ethnic Pakistani groups or rural and urban cities' people can be included to understand and acknowledge GRS more evidently. In future physical and emotional consequences of GRS should be included.

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