

Attitudes of High School Students towards Egalitarian and Traditional Gender Roles

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Abstract

The present study analyzes magnitude of attitudes towards egalitarian and traditional gender roles in 9th and 10th grade high school male and female students, aged 14-18 years. Urdu version of an adapted scale was used to collect data on attitudes towards gender roles with the prior permission of the author. A three-way mixed factorial design and Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were used for data analysis. The results showed main effect for gender roles, gender and age. Attitudes towards egalitarian gender roles were stronger than traditional gender roles. Female students expressed significantly stronger attitudes towards gender roles over male students. And though a main effect of age was revealed, post-hoc test only showed a stronger attitudes towards traditional gender role in 16-year over 18-year old participants. No other differences in attitudes across age groups were found. The authors indicate that young students (32%) had stronger attitudes towards egalitarian over traditional gender roles, and female students (8.5%) have stronger attitudes towards gender roles are based on education, familial influences and media.

Keywords: high secondary schools, traditional, egalitarian, gender roles.

Gender is socialized¹ establishing many roles that are gender-specific.² These roles are shaped through interaction with other people and environment.³ Gender roles include a set of behaviors, attitudes,

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¹ S.J. Bartley, P.W. Blanton & J.L. 'Gilliard, Husbands and Wives in Dual-earner Marriages: Decision-making, Gender Role Attitudes, Division of Household Labour and Equity' (Marriage & Family Review, 2005), 69-94.

² B. Öngen & S. Aytac, 'Attitudes of University Students Regarding to Gender Roles and Relationship with Life Values' (Sosyoloji Konferansi, 2013), 1-18.

³ L. Lindsey, *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* (Abingdon Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2015).

responsibilities, rights and obligations learnt by a ‘girl or woman’, and ‘boy or man’.⁴ A convenient sample of 250 male and 250 female students was selected from government high schools, Lahore and Gender Roles Attitude Scale,⁵ Attitudes towards gender roles refer to beliefs or ways of thinking about how a woman or a man should behave in society; these attitudes are self-directed too, where an individual thinks or assesses personal behaviors and roles and compares it to known gender roles in their social milieu. At times such assessment is aligned with gender roles and at other times acrimonious to their world view. Such disagreements are one reason that change attitudes about gender roles.

Traditional gender roles support division of labor where men work away from home and women that work inside it; these roles for men are generally subsumed under ‘bread-winners’ and women as ‘care-giving’. Advent of industrialization has changed these gender roles under more equitable *egalitarian gender roles*.⁶ Generally attitudes towards traditional and egalitarian gender roles are divided over the globe, people living in societies that less industrial tend to follow traditional gender roles and people that live in more developed ones more egalitarian roles.⁷ Children from a very young age observe their parents, other members of their family and society and learn these gender roles;⁸ and develop strong attitudes towards them than older generations.⁹ Attitudes towards gender roles do change over time and contexts.¹⁰

Pakistan, a developing country stands somewhere in the middle where traditional and egalitarian gender roles co-exist and are

⁴ H. Bee & D. Boyd, *Child Development Psychology* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2009).

⁵ S. Zeynelogu & F. Terzioğlu, Development and Psychometric Properties Gender Roles Attitude Scale. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi (H. U. Journal of Education, 2011), 409-20.

⁶ M.C. McHugh., I.H. Frieze, ‘The Measurement of Gender-role Attitudes: A Review and Commentary’, *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (1997).

⁷ C.I. Bolzendahl, D.J. Myers, ‘Feminist Attitudes and Support for Gender Equality: Opinion Change in Women and Men 1974-1998’, *Social Forces*, 2004, 759-90.

⁸ S.D. Witt, ‘Parental Influence on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles’ *Adolescence*, 1997, 253-59.

⁹ T. Tinklin, L. Croxford, A. Ducklin & B. Frame, ‘Gender and Attitudes to Work and Family Roles: The View of Young People at the Millennium’, *Gender and Education*, 2005, 129-42.

¹⁰ G.M. Dotti Sani & M. Quaranta, ‘The best is yet to Come? Attitudes toward Gender Roles among Adolescents in 36 Countries’, *Sex Roles*, 2017, 30-45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0698-7>.

transitioning from one to the other, e.g. rural landscape harbors traditional gender roles and urbanized cities more egalitarian roles. Adolescent girls that grow up in a more protective rural or small town environments and receive more parental attention, stay home and spend most of their time with family than boys who spend more time with their friends end up developing traditional gender roles.¹¹ With the changing economic and developmental scene in Pakistan it is no wonder that younger people have started to express greater egalitarian gender roles than older people.¹² Not all follow this path, studies report family influence on individual affiliations towards particular gender roles e.g. religious families instill traditional gender roles.¹³ In Pakistan, as women are getting jobs working away from homes gender roles are also transitioning from traditional to egalitarian ones, but slowly. The purpose of this study is to take a snapshot of attitudes about gender roles in today's adolescents in Pakistan.

Review of literature

Among many factors that socialize gender roles, education and personal experiences play dominant roles.¹⁴ Education has had an immense impact on shaping gender roles in youth and attitudes about them, young male and (more so) female students are opting for egalitarian roles,¹⁵ when asked what do they think about traditional roles most of them have weak preferences for such roles. Data collected in the last century reports attitudes about the traditional gender role have decreased in 70 countries.¹⁶ Reasons authors believe are largely due to socio-economic

¹¹ R. Kausar, N. Safique, Gender differences in Perceived Parenting Styles and Socio Emotional Adjustment of Adolescents, *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 2008, 93-105.

¹² J. Carter, M. Corra & L. Holland, 'Changing Times and Changing Views: Assessing Race and Gender differences in Gender-role Attitudes over a three Decade Period', Conference Papers – *American Sociological Association*, 2007, 1-23.

¹³ M. Brajdić-Vuković, G.E. Birkelund, A. Štulhofer, 'Between Tradition and Modernization: Attitudes toward Women's Employment and Gender Roles in Croatia, *International Journal of Sociology*, 2007, 44.

¹⁴ S.N. Davis & N.G. Theodore, 'Gender Ideology: Components, Predictors, and Consequences', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2009, 87-105.

¹⁵ A. Bryant, 'Changes in Attitudes toward Women's Roles: Predicting Gender-role Traditionalism among College Students', *Sex Roles*, 2003, 131-42.

¹⁶ R. Inglehart & P. Norris, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

development, a transition that has moved societies from agrarian to industrial to post-industrial landscape. As a result of industrialization and modernization, the traditional family model has declined giving birth to an egalitarian family model.

A second factor that affects gender roles is parental attitudes. Parents, more than peers, affected attitudes about gender roles, as in one study children were 11 percent more likely to have the same attitude as their parents about gender roles; with mothers influencing more than the father.¹⁷ Parental influence trickles down to older siblings affecting gender role development in younger siblings. As a result, older brothers and sisters influence younger brother and sister gender role behavior.¹⁸

Culture, a third factor, affects gender roles e.g. families (in Pakhtun culture) that subscribe to traditional gender roles use institutional networks like the institution of family as it interacts and relates with other families to instill gender stereotypes by differentiating family environment, and differentiated parental roles in their children.¹⁹

Gender roles and stereotypes emerge in all forms of social and educational media. One indicator of these stereotypes can be observed in textbook content; in an earlier study greater negative stereotypes about females were depicted in the texts taught in Punjab, compared to males.²⁰ However, over a short period of four years in yet another study, content of primary school textbooks in Punjab changed dramatically and found female image had gone through a transition, females were depicted as active, good communicator, professional, wise, confident, supportive, energetic, and aware etc. but traditional male roles and their masculine attributes were still continued in parts of these textbooks.²¹

¹⁷ D. Dhar, T. Jain, S. Jayachandran, 'Intergenerational Transmission of Gender Attitudes: Evidence from India', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 2019, 2572-92.

¹⁸ S. Golombok, M. Hines, K. Johnson, J. Golding, 'The Role of Brothers and Sisters in the Gender Development of Preschool Children', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 2000, 292-303.

¹⁹ M. Hussain, A. Naz, W. Khan, U. Daraz & Q. Khan, *Gender Stereotyping in Family: An Institutionalized and Normative Mechanism in Pakhtun Society of Pakistan* (SAGE, 2015).

²⁰ S. Jabeen, A. Qayyum, S. Omar, 'Gender Discrimination in Curriculum: A Reflection' from Punjab Textbook Board, *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 2014.

²¹ F. Adil & S.A. Yasin, 'Exposition of Gender Awareness in Primary Textbooks of Punjab: A Gendered Content Analysis', *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 2018, 37-56.

A meta-analysis of 64 studies on gender roles in radio and television advertisements suggested, advertising was dominated by stereotypical gender roles and did not report gender roles that were transitioning away from conventional roles.²² Compared to advertisement content of the above studies, gender roles in advertisements on Pakistan television express more egalitarian roles in men and women. Women in these advertisements were presented as independent, empowered, confident, active and content; and men were depicted as caring, liberal, tolerant, compassionate, and empathic towards women around them.²³ The above review factors that influence gender roles and points to a few studies that suggest gender roles are changing in Pakistan. This change is largely due to education, family, and media. Authors of this study believe that such change should be tested in school going adolescents that are getting modern education, live with parents who themselves are shifting into more egalitarian gender roles and that both children and parents are affected by Pakistani media.

Significance of the study

Young adults are the active members of a society to participate in social relationships. Thus, their egalitarian and traditional behaviors, beliefs, values, and social interactions influenced the social relationships of men and women in a society. Socializing actors, including parents, teachers, the peer group, the curriculum, and the media, develop adult gender awareness in accordance with cultural and social expectations that may directly or indirectly affect society. The present study will be a contribution to analyze the gender roles attitudes of adolescents aged 14 to 18 years. The study may provide a new dimension in understanding gender awareness and differences, which can incorporate knowledge of gender equality to improve teaching methods and hidden curriculum at secondary education.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses has been proposed.

- It is expected that attitudes of students towards egalitarian gender roles would be stronger than traditional gender roles.

²² M. Eisend, 'A Meta-analysis of Gender Roles in Advertising', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 2010, 418-40.

²³ F. Adil & S. Malik, 'Engender Media in Gender Roles Reforms: Ethnographic Content Analysis of Pakistan Television Advertisements', *Pakistan Perspectives*, 26:1 (January-June 2021), 60-85.

- Female students would express stronger attitudes towards gender roles than male students.
- It is also expected that younger students would have stronger attitudes towards traditional gender roles than older students; and younger students should have weaker attitudes towards egalitarian roles than older students, a crisscross interaction

Method

Sample

A convenient sample of 250 male and 250 female high school students studying in 9-10th grades were included in this study with an age range of 14-18 ($M_{boys} = 15.94$, $SD = 1.32$; $M_{girls} = 15.80$, $SD = 1.29$) years from government high secondary schools, Lahore. Five age groups of students 14 year (92, 18.4%), 15 years (117, 23.4%), 16 years (121, 14.2%), 17 years (102, 20.4%), and 18 years (68, 13.6%) were separated to study the developmental changes in attitudes towards gender roles.

Instrument

Gender Roles Attitude Scale (GRAS). This scale, GRAS measures attitudes of college going students ($M_{age} = 23.19$ years, $SD = 3.04$) towards gender roles.²⁴ The scale consists of five dimensions: [A] Egalitarian Gender Roles (8 items), [B] Female Gender Roles (8 items), [C] Marriage Gender Roles (8 items), [D] Traditional Gender Roles (8 items), and [E] Male Gender Roles (6 items). With 38 items, possible composite scores could range from 38-190 points; each item is measured on a 5-point Likert type. In the present study, after getting permission from the authors, two dimensions of the scale i.e. Egalitarian [A] and Traditional [D] gender roles were completed by high school students ($M_{age} = 15.87$, $SD = .06$) who were on average eight years younger than subjects on whom the scale was developed.²⁵ The attitudes about egalitarian gender roles were rated on, completely agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), and absolutely disagree (1); and the traditional gender roles were reversed scored, and were rated on completely agree (1), agree (2), undecided (3), disagree (4), and absolutely disagree (5) respectively.

All statements of the two subscales above were translated in Urdu and were verified by English-Urdu experts that had psychology and gender studies backgrounds (see Table 1). One item (item 1) from Egalitarian subscale was not used because principals of many schools

²⁴ B. Öngen & S. Aytac, *op.cit.*

²⁵ Ibid.

objected to this item as being tabooed for young students. The modified item read, 'A man and woman should decide on their own to get married [Table 1 shows original and modified item; translation shows modified item written in Urdu].' Egalitarian subscale had moderate internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .78) and so did traditional gender roles (Cronbach alpha = .78) however overall internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .92) was high with moderate to high ($r = .82$) construct validity.

Table 1

Two subscales of Gender Roles Attitude Scale in Urdu

| Gender Roles Attitude Scale | | پنٹی کرداروں کے بارے میں رویوں کا پیمانہ |
|---|----|---|
| Statement | رد | |
| Egalitarian Gender Roles | | مساوی پنٹی کردار |
| Decision to have a child should be made by both spouses in a marriage. [Modified: A man and woman should decide on their own to get married]. | A1 | شادی کا فیصلہ دونوں لڑکے لڑکی کو خود کرنا چاہیے۔ |
| Equal fee should be paid to the women and men in professional life. | A2 | پیشہ ورانہ زندگی میں خواتین اور مردوں کو مساوی تنخواہ دی جانی چاہیے۔ |
| Widowed woman should be able to live by herself. | A3 | بیوہ عورت خود سے زندگی گزارنے کے قابل ہو سکتی ہے۔ |
| Assets should be shared equally when spouses divorce. | A4 | میاں بیوی میں طلاق دینے وقت اثاثوں کو یکساں طور پر بانٹنا چاہیے۔ |
| Equal chances should be enabled to women and men for professional development. | A5 | پیشہ ورانہ کے خواتین اور مردوں کو یکساں مواقع فراہم کرنے چاہئیں۔ |
| Domestic work should be shared equally between spouses in the family. | A6 | گھر بیگم کو گھر میں شریک حلیت کے مابین برابر بانٹنا چاہیے۔ |
| Daughters and sons should be benefited equally from the family's economical means. | A7 | ٹیٹیوں اور بیٹوں کو خاندان کے معاشی ذرائع سے یکساں طور پر فائدہ اٹھانا چاہیے۔ |
| Spouses should decide together in the family. | A8 | میاں بیوی کو گھر کے فیصلے مل کر کرنے چاہیے۔ |
| Traditional Gender Roles | | روایتی پنٹی کردار |
| The head of the household is man. | D1 | گھر کا سربراہ آدمی ہوتا ہے۔ |
| A man's main task in the house is breadwinning. | D2 | گھر میں آدمی کا سب سے بڑا کام کمانا ہوتا ہے۔ |
| Woman should not work if the economical situation of the man is adequate. | D3 | مرد کی معاشی صورتحال مناسب ہو تو عورت کو کام نہیں کرنا چاہیے۔ |
| Profession implemented by woman and man should be different. | D4 | عورت اور مرد کا پیشہ مختلف ہونا چاہیے۔ |
| Men should be preferred in employment applications because of women's fertility. | D5 | مازمت کی درخواستوں میں مردوں کو ترجیح دی جانی چاہیے۔ |
| A girl should obey his father's wishes until she is married. | D6 | جب تک شادی نہیں ہوتی لڑکی کو اپنے والد کے احکامات کی تعمیل کرنی چاہیے۔ |
| Man should deal with tasks away from home such as shopping and paying the bills. | D7 | مردوں کو گھر سے دور کاموں سے نمٹنا چاہیے، جیسے خریداری اور بلوں کی ادائیگی۔ |
| Girls should be dressed in pink while boys should be dressed in blue. | D8 | لڑکیاں گلابی پتلیں جبکہ لڑکوں کو نیلے رنگ کا لباس پہننا چاہیے۔ |

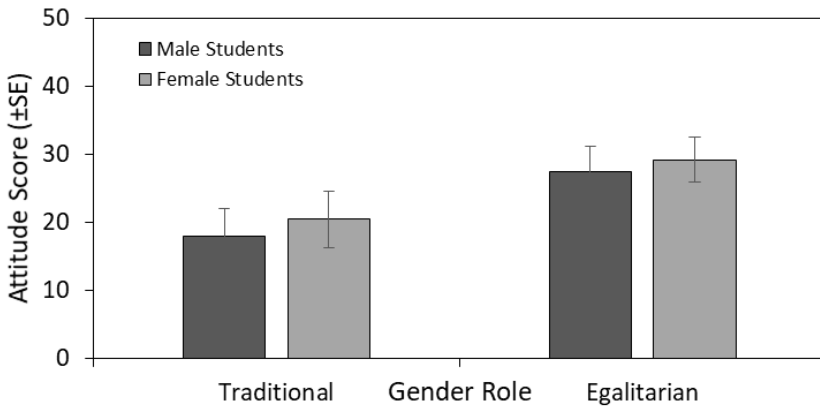
Design

A cross-sectional design of the study was used where gender roles (egalitarian and traditional) were tested as a within-subject independent variable, gender and age (5 levels) as between-subject independent variables; and attitude was measured as dependent variable. The data was analyzed with a 2 (Gender Roles X *S*) X 2 (Gender) X 5 (Age) mixed factorial three-way ANOVA. These analyses were followed by post-hoc Tukey tests for further analysis.

After seeking permission from government high school principals, and consent from participants, the scale was administered to 9th and 10th grade students separated into five age groups 14-18 years. The principal, parents and the students were assured that personal and data information would be kept confidential and anonymous. After each experimental session principal, students and parents were thanked and debriefed about the study. If participants or their caregiver had any questions about the study they were answered during the debriefing or afterwards.

Results

A significant main effect for gender roles collapsed over gender and age $F(1, 490) = 1280.45, p < .000, \eta^2 = .72$, revealed attitudes towards egalitarian gender roles ($M = 28.38, SD = 3.63$) were significantly stronger than traditional gender roles ($M = 19.20, SD = 4.30$). A significant main effect for gender collapsed over gender roles and age $F(1, 490) = 76.58, p < .000, \eta^2 = .14$, revealed female students ($M = 24.84, SD = 3.73$) had significantly higher attitudes than male students ($M = 22.72, SD = 3.93$). And a significant main effect of age collapsed over gender and gender roles was also revealed $F(4, 490) = 2.53, p < .04, \eta^2 = .02$. A post-hoc Tukey test for age revealed 16-year ($M = 24.19, SD = 4.09$) had significantly ($p < .03$) stronger attitudes towards traditional gender roles than 18-year ($M = 23.02, SD = 3.97$). All other ages did not significantly differ in attitudes for traditional or egalitarian roles. All two-way and three-way interactions were not significant, for a graph of means for gender roles and gender, see Figure 1.

Figure 1.*Shows Interaction between Gender and Gender Roles.*

Note. Attitudes towards egalitarian gender roles were stronger than traditional gender roles, and female students had significantly stronger attitudes towards gender roles than male students. Error bars represent ± 1 standard deviation.

Discussion

The first hypothesis was accepted, attitudes towards egalitarian gender roles were significantly stronger (32%) than traditional gender roles. The instrument, GRAS measured attitudes towards egalitarian and traditional gender roles, where attitudes could range between 5-40 points. Average attitudes towards egalitarian gender roles were about 28 on this range, whereas average attitudes towards traditional gender roles were midway (about 19) on this range. This difference is striking and suggests, young people subscribe to egalitarian gender roles a third more than traditional roles. The researcher believe stronger attitudes towards egalitarian roles are largely due to education, changing socioeconomics conditions, family and media. Demand for education is an indicator of ensuing development in any country, including Pakistan. Education fuels jobs, and reduces preference for gender-specific jobs, men and women can work for same or similar jobs. Educated younger men and women look forward to many gender neutral jobs, which would affect their adult gender roles. Attitudes towards egalitarian gender roles are stronger at younger age congeal in adult life. Families that favor egalitarian roles pass on such roles to their children,²⁶ and media influences people

²⁶ D. Dhar, T. Jain, S. Jayachandran, *op.cit.*

towards such equitable gender roles.²⁷ The data however does not indicate that traditional roles become nonexistent they have just reduced in the presence of egalitarian roles, and as expected signal industrialization and development in our culture.

The second hypothesis was also confirmed, attitudes towards gender roles were stronger (8.5%) in females than male students (see Figure 1), and since gender roles by gender interaction was not significant, the authors suggest, egalitarian and traditional gender roles were not differentially affected by gender of the participants. This result suggests that female students held stronger attitudes whether they adhered to egalitarian or traditional gender roles than male students.

The third hypothesis was weakly confirmed, results showed a significant main effect of age, however the difference between attitudes for egalitarian and traditional gender roles in younger and older students was not prominent, only one significant difference was revealed for attitudes towards traditional roles between 16-year and 18-year old students, all others were not significant.

Conclusion

The study concludes young teenagers in Pakistan hold stronger attitudes towards egalitarian than traditional gender roles which is common in industrially developing countries. Traditional roles have not ceased to exist but co-occur with egalitarian roles. Whichever the gender role, young women hold stronger attitudes than young men. Age has little or no effect on attitudes about either form of gender roles. Some equity in gender roles is inevitable; such roles and behaviors would be necessary for men and women to coexist as family, in the workplace and society at large.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study was it could not assess development of gender roles, the researcher tried to address this issue by using a cross-sectional design with multiple age groups hoping that a developmental profile of attitudes towards gender roles could shed some light on the matter. It is suggested a longitudinal study can address this issue, which realistically would take much longer time to run but would be immensely useful to document not just the attitudes but gender roles as well among adolescents in Pakistani society.

²⁷ F. Adil & S. Malik, *op.cit.*