

## The Burden of Being a Man in a Patriarchal Society

Farah Adil\*, Sarah Shahed\*\*, Hana Arshad\*\*\*

### Abstract

Gender role strain is the stress and pressure caused by societal expectations from individuals to behave and perform according to the role expectation attached with each gender. The study aimed to investigate Pakistani men's gender role strain; its influence on their physical, psychological health and overall wellbeing using survey method. The study was conducted on a purposive sample of 100 working men from various workplaces of Lahore, Pakistan. The instruments used were Gender Role Strain Questionnaire (self-constructed) and WarwickEdinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Warwick & Edinburgh, 2006). Results confirmed that role strain existed among the working men and reported many physical, emotional and psychological symptoms. Head of family and being breadwinner were paramount roles that caused extreme strain in Pakistani men. Physical strength was found to be prime masculine stereotype. This study revealed average well-being score of men. Significant differences were found in the role strain among men with different age, income and educational levels. The researcher appeals religious scholars and government to play their part to reduce role strain and improve well-being among men.

*Key words:* gender role strain, masculinity, well-being

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### Introduction

Gender roles are the expected behaviors associated with the gender of a person. These roles and responsibilities are developed by society or culture and can be changed over times. These roles are society distinct behaviors, attitudes and standards about masculinity and

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\* Farah Adil Lecturer department of Gender study, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore. farahadil\_lcwu@yahoo.com

\*\* Sarah Shehed Head of the Department Gender study/Director Women Institute of Leadership & Learning Lahore College for Women University, Lahore sarahshahed@yahoo.com

\*\*\* Hana Arshad PhD Scholar Department of Applied Psychology Lahore College for Women University, Lahore hana\_arshad@hotmail.com

femininity. Mostly individuals are expected to stick to these roles and perform these stereotypical behaviors on all times and occasions. However, for many individuals, living their lives within the boundaries of these associated behaviors may cause discomfort, difficulty, and stress on them.

Gender role strain is the pressure, burden, or stress experienced by individuals while trying to meet the expected standard of behaviors associated with their gender (Pleck, 1981). For instance, males being inferior to females, appearing physically deficient, and cannot openly express feelings are understood as primarily stressful for males (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). The concept of gender role strain can be explained by stress and cognitive appraisal theory (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). It indicates that people are aware of gender philosophies due to cultural motivations that they learn to judge, circumstances which are strongly connected with schemata of gender, and how an individual should respond in these situations. Researchers have focused on positive aspects related to cultural notions of masculinity. Kiselica and Englar-Carlson (2010) presented a framework that focuses on “strengths” of masculinity. Furthermore, Meek (2011) has proposed an integrative model of masculinity including present/past influences, positive reinforcement, and motivation to cope and change in individual’s male masculinity.

Pakistan is a patriarchal society. Preference for a son is a social demand. Once a boy grows, his habits of dressing, eating, attitudes, and relationships are all socialized constantly with the thought of masculinity. Political instability, unemployment and poverty are the social measures that influenced social, physical, and emotional well-being of Pakistani men. Young men have pressure to get education, achieve success, build confidence and acquire skill. It was determined that following were gender roles of Pakistani men: Head and guardian of the family, Authoritative to resolve issues, Responsible for doing hard physical tasks at home and workplace, Main or sole breadwinner, a sensible manager, supporter and provider of the family, and regulates important affairs in and outside the family.

Kimmel (2005) expressed that manhood have qualities of headship, authority, value of temperament, power, courageousness, liberation, and problem solver. Adolescent boys learned through socialization to adopt these stereotypes as characteristics and traits of masculinity in their lives. A study found that men experienced numerous consequences of severe pressure due to society made roles i.e., anger, sentimental issues, financial problems, low appreciation, violence against women and sexism (Moore, & Stuart, 2004). Men expressed different

expectations to adhere gender roles for their survival in a society. Some men are strong, others are not. Some are intelligent, some are not. All traits of a purely masculine stereotype are rarely found in a single man. The researchers additionally distinguished that men have suffered different health issues as heart attack, diabetes and pressure due to severity of gender role strain. Furthermore, severity of role strain causes negative effects on men's physical and psychological well-being (Griffith, Gunter, & Allen, 2011).

An individual with healthy well-being realized his/her potential, manage stresses of life, work fruitfully and is able to create a contribution to community. Well-being is about individual's physical and psychological health, personal norms and beliefs as well as social interaction with others. Gender role strain and gender role conflict have negative influence on the well-being of men (Sharpe, Heppner, & Dixon, 1995). The realization that one has been successful in matching the societal standards may add to one's psychological well-being. There is growing evidence that gender role strain may be a contributory variable in cases of psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, anger, and drug abuse (Copenhaver, Lash, & Eisler, 2000; Hunt, Lewars, Emslie, & Batty, 2007). Such men suffered from mood swings, negative thoughts, and anger due to strict adherence of gender roles in a society.

The work on gender related issues has scarcely been carried out in Pakistan. It has been considered taboo to be inquisitive about private matters or personal life of people. Moreover, due to gender stereotypes, both male and female preferred to keep their feelings to themselves. A concept generally prevails in the modern/western world, progressive elite and human rights organizations that only women are facing difficulties due to gender stereotypes of eastern societies like Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan etc.

The existing foreign scales on gender role strain, like Masculine Gender Role Stress (MGRS) assesses the extent to which certain gender role related situations are stressful. Other scales, for example, Male Role Attitude Scale and Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) evaluate personality characteristics more appropriate for a particular gender. Furthermore, these scales were not appropriate for Pakistani population due to society norms and language barriers. Therefore, there is an essential demand to promote awareness that masculinity is damaged by gender role stress and stereotypes. The present study is a step in this particular area and aims to measure severity of gender role strain among men by self-constructed scale due to society made roles and responsibilities in Pakistani culture especially those of working class. In this study, the physical, psychological and emotional symptoms along with social and economic problems due

to severity of gender role strain have also been analyzed. In addition, well-being of men has been investigated.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To investigate the phenomena of role strain among working men and its relationship with their psychological well-being.
- To search the link of role strain with demographic variables like age, educational level, marital status, professions and family structures.
- To identify the indicators and manifestation of gender roles strain among men
- To find out the well-being of Pakistani working men. **Research Hypotheses**
- There is a significant difference in gender role strain experienced by Pakistani men within various age groups.
- There is a significant difference in overall severity of symptoms of role strain within different professions.
- There is a significant difference in expected gender roles experienced by Pakistani men within different educational levels.
- There is a significant difference in well-being of men with various professions and family structures.

### **Method**

#### **Sample**

The sample comprised of one hundred men from various age groups, professions and educational background, taken from different work places of Lahore. Individuals of age ranging from 25 to 44 years were the part of this study. Sample of 20 individuals was drawn from each category of profession. The following professions were selected so as to cover most of the male gender stereotypes existing in the society. One can see at a glance, the different stereotypes, professional roles and responsibilities attached with these professions: a) Police b) Marketing c) Banking d) Teaching and e) Office Assistant

#### **Research Design**

Survey method was adopted to collect the data.

#### **Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling technique was used to choose participants.

## **Instruments**

Following instruments were used in the present study

- a) **Gender Role Strain Questionnaire (GRSQ)**. It was designed after thorough study of relevant literature and consultation with specialist in gender studies. A focus group discussion with 10 men was additionally organized to gather the new concepts and ideas to develop and improve gender role strain questionnaire. The GRSQ consisted of three sections:
1. Gender stereotypes
  2. Gender roles and corresponding role strains
  3. Signs and symptoms of the role strain.
- b) **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)**. It was used to measure participant's mental well-being. The WEMWBS form for well-being was developed by researchers at the Warwick and Edinburgh universities (2006). Prior to data collection, permission was sought to use the scale from relevant authority through email. This scale contained 14 questions about thoughts, positive and negative feelings regarding one's well-being. Translated version of WEMWBS was used to ease the participants.

## **Procedure**

After taking consent from specific professions' men, the GSRQ and WEMWBS questionnaires along with demographic sheet were administered. Proper guidance was also provided to help the participants comprehend the questionnaire, its purpose and importance. The filled questionnaires were collected on a daily basis. The researcher thanked the participants for their time and cooperation.

## **Results**

The data was calculated by SPSS (version 16). Means, standard deviations and frequencies of sample were examined. Additionally, one-way ANOVA were performed to look into different age groups, various professions and educational levels on gender role strain, overall severity of symptoms of role strain and expected gender roles. Furthermore, one-way ANOVA on wellbeing with various professions and family structures were also explored.

Table 1 shows the demographic variables of the sample. High frequency (53) of sample in early thirties either demonstrates the behavioral changes with the growing age or can be attributed towards changing social norms/stereotypes with the passage of time. 25% were graduates, while 57% were post graduates participants. This made the study more reliable because educated sample is likely to understand and respond to the gender related issues and thus the GRSQ better. On the basis of the primary data, the sample was divided into four income groups. Majority of the sample (84%) was found to earn less than Rs.50, 000/- per month ( $\geq$ US\$500/-), while the average monthly income was calculated to be Rs.33700/- (US\$316.4) or US\$3797/- per annum. Therefore, it is established that sample represented the middle/working class of Pakistan. The gender role strain of married and unmarried individuals is different. In Pakistani society, the expenditures raise dramatically after marriage due to social demands of the new relation. Therefore, the present study has tried to collect the opinions of both married and single men. The nature of family system in which one is living also exerts peculiar sort of role strains on men. Most of the men prefer to live in joint family system. There may be several social, economic and religious reasons to live in this set up. For example, men may have religious thoughts to look after parents and to be mutually benefited by the presence of many people in the home in many ways etc.

The descriptive statistics and alpha coefficients of GRSQ were presented in Table 2. The Cronbach's Alpha of overall GRSQ was high i.e., .80. The overall means of gender roles and corresponding role strain, and signs and symptoms of the role strain were 66.41 (SD = 10.92) and 60.66 (SD = 11.25) respectively. With average of 54, the minimum and maximum male role strain was 18 and 90 respectively. The calculated mean role strain of sample was 66.41, which falls on above average.

Table 3 indicates the results of one-way ANOVA of gender role strain due to strict adherence of gender role with various age groups. Statistically significant difference was observed with the role as boys/men are decision maker of the family with different age groups,  $F(3,95)=3.93$ ,  $p=.01$ ,  $\eta^2=0.11$ . However, the follow up results with Tukey Post hoc test showed that mean difference between age group 25-29 ( $M=4.06$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ) and 40-44 ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ) were statistically significant from the other groups. This indicates that participants of former group suffered severe gender role strain than the latter one.

**Table 1: Demographic Variables of Men Participants (n = 100)**

Demographic variables	F	M	SD
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<b>Age (years)</b>		30.77	2.12
25-29	53		
30-34	30		
35-39	8		
40-44	9		
<b>Education</b>			
Matriculation and below ( $\leq 10$ yrs)	13		
Intermediate (12 yrs)	5		
Graduation (14 yrs)	25		
Post-Graduation ( $\geq 16$ yrs)	57		
<b>Profession</b>			
Police	20		
Marketing	20		
Banking	20		
Teaching	20		
Office Assistant	20		
<b>Family Structure</b>			
Joint	77		
Nuclear	14		
Living alone	9		

**Table 1: Demographic Variables of Men Participants (continued)**

Demographic variables	F	M	SD
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	44		
Married	56		
<b>Monthly Income (Rs.)</b>			
10,000 to 30,000	50		
30,000 to 50,000	34		
50,000 to 70,000	11		
Above 70,000	5		

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Coefficients of Gender Role Strain Questionnaire (GRSQ)**

Scale	M	SD	No. of items	
GRSQ (complete)	155.65	16.32	57	.80
Gender roles & corresponding role strain	66.41	10.92	18	.84

Signs & symptoms (complete)	60.66	11.25	30	.85
Physical	11.28	2.76	6	.62
Emotional	12.66	2.88	6	.79
Psychological	10.94	2.86	6	.76
Occupational	13.76	3.54	6	.38
Social	12.02	3.03	6	.69

**Table 3: One way Analysis of Variance across Age Groups and Gender Role Strain (n=100)**

	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
I have grown up knowing that boys/men are the decision maker of the family						
Between groups	12.74	3	4.25	3.93	.01	.11
Within groups	102.56	95	1.08			
Total	115.29	98				

Table 4 demonstrates the results of one way ANOVA of various professions with overall severity of symptoms. It was observed that statistically significant difference found in various professions and overall severity of symptoms,  $F(4, 95) = 4.24$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.15$ . However, the follow up results with Tukey Post hoc test showed that the professional groups as marketing ( $M = 65.40$ ,  $SD = 10.56$ ) and office attendants ( $M = 53.15$ ,  $SD = 7.88$ ) were significantly different groups from the others. It showed that marketing professionals suffered overall severity of symptoms due to strict adherence of society roles.

Similarly, a statistical significant difference was found in severity of emotional and physical symptoms with various professions,  $F(4, 95) = 5.87$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.19$  and  $F(4, 95) = 3.48$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.13$  respectively. However, Tukey Post hoc test revealed that the groups of marketing participants ( $M = 14.25$ ,  $SD = 2.88$  and  $M = 13.05$ ,  $SD = 2.35$ ) and office attendants ( $M = 10.75$ ,  $SD = 1.62$  and  $M = 10.20$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ) were significantly different as compared to others on emotional and physical symptoms respectively. Therefore, the results indicated that participants working in marketing suffered more emotional and physical severity of symptoms.

In addition, a statistical significant difference was observed between severity of occupational problems and various professions,  $F(4, 95) = 3.88, p = .01, \eta^2 = 0.14$ . The Tukey Post hoc test showed that police ( $M=14.65, SD=2.64$ ) and office attendants ( $M=11.35, SD=2.83$ ) were significantly different than other groups. So, the results indicated that participants working in police were suffering from severity of occupational problems more than other professional counterparts.

**Table 4: One way ANOVA of Overall Severity of Symptoms with Different Professions (n=100)**

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Overall severity of symptoms						
Between groups	1933.76	4	483.44	4.24	.00	.15
Within groups	10831.55	95	114.02			
Total	12765.31	99				
Severity of Emotional Symptoms						
Between groups	171.54	4	42.89	5.87	.00	.19
Within groups	694.25	95	7.31			
Total	865.79	99				
Severity of Physical Symptoms						
Between groups	95.96	4	23.99	3.48	.01	.13
Within groups	654.15	95	6.89			
Total	750.11	99				
Severity of Occupational Symptoms						
Between groups	133.30	4	33.33	3.88	.01	.14
Within groups	816.70	95	8.59			

Total 950.00 99

\*  $p < .05$

Table 5 displays statistically significant difference with educational groups and gender role as “**to adopt a profession and skill in a society**” i.e.,  $F(4, 95)=3.58, p=.01, \eta^2=0.13$ .

However, the Tukey Post hoc result showed that mean difference between M.phil ( $M=4.50, SD=0.755$ ) and intermediate ( $M=2.20, SD=0.84$ ) educational groups was statistically different from the rest of groups. Therefore, the results indicated that participants with M.phil suffered severe gender role strain than the other group participants.

Similarly, the statistically significant difference was also observed between the role as “**a decision maker in the family**” and various educational levels,  $F(4, 95)=3.85, p=.01, \eta^2=0.14$ . However, the follow up results with Tukey Post hoc test showed that mean difference between educational levels, graduation ( $M=4.20, SD=1.88$ ) and matriculation ( $M=2.92, SD=1.32$ ) was statistically different from the rest of groups. Therefore, the results indicated that participants with graduation suffered from severe gender role strain as a decision maker in family.

**Table 5: One way Analysis of Variance across Educational Levels with Expected Gender Roles (n=100)**

	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
I have grown up knowing that I have to learn some skill and adopt profession						
Between groups	15.11	4	3.78	3.58	.01	.13
Within groups	100.20	95	1.06			
Total	115.31	99				
I have grown up knowing that boys/ men are decision maker in family						
Between groups	17.42	4	4.35	3.85	.01	.14
Within groups	107.33	95	1.03			
Total	124.75	99				

Table 6 reveals the results of one-way variance (ANOVA) of well-being with various professions and family structures. The statistically significant difference found in well-being and professions,  $F(4, 95)=2.68, p=.04, \eta^2=0.10$ . However, the results with Tukey post hoc test showed that mean difference between profession as office attendants ( $M=44.25, SD=5.47$ ) and police ( $M=50.80, SD=7.11$ ) was statistically significant which indicated that office attendants showed healthier well-being.

Similarly, the statistically significant difference was also observed in well-being and family structures,  $F(2, 97)=3.26, p=.04, \eta^2=0.06$ . However, again the Tukey post hoc test showed that mean difference between nuclear ( $M=52.85, SD=5.77$ ) and joint ( $M=47.42, SD=7.805$ ) family structure was statistically significant which indicated that participants living in nuclear family system showed better well-being.

**Table 6: One way ANOVA for Various Professions and Family Structures with Well-Being (n=100)**

	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
Professions						
Between groups	562.06	4	140.52	2.68	.04	.10
Within groups	4988.10	95	52.51			
Total	5550.16	99				
Family Structures						
Between groups	349.37	2	174.68	3.23	.04	.06
Within groups	5200.79	97	56.62			
Total	5550.16	99				

## Discussion

The present study has been conducted in order to measure gender role strain and its consequences on working men in Pakistani society. The findings concerning stereotypes and attributes associated with manhood obvious that “bread winner”, “confidence”, and “physical strength” are the paramount stereotypes of Pakistani men. Moreover, it helped in understanding the prevailing stereotypes among the working class. The education may be a factor to say “No” to aggression and violence. Sample also considered inexpressiveness to be least important. Here

too, education might have played role because an educated individual better knows how to precisely communicate and therefore is more expressive. However, the prime importance of physical strength is a positive feature because men ought to be strong to protect family and to perform daily chores of life. This is very healthy thinking because interestingly physical strength is a source of many other masculine traits/stereotypes. Yet next to strength is the breadwinner which indicates the responsible nature of Pakistani men. A common man feels his responsibility to feed his family but to what extent he is able to fulfil it, is another issue. Confident and decision maker go side by side and almost 50% of the individuals took it to be the most important traits. Only 40% gave prime importance to bravery, which in old days was thought to be one of the main stereotype of masculinity. At the same time, least importance to aggression and violence demonstrates that men are not by nature aggressive but aggression and violence are the symptoms of gender role strain.

The findings concerning level of gender role strain among men showed that working men experienced severe gender role strain because of the roles as a head of the family, to adopt a profession and to act as a gentle man in a society. Another aspect of this research was to study various symptoms and problems that are caused due to gender role strain among working men. The researcher has selected some dimensions as physical, emotional, psychosocial, occupational and social sphere of men's status in Pakistani society. It was found that the participants felt fatigue, sleeplessness and change in appetite as a physical symptom attributable to severe stress of expected roles in society. The findings of emotional stress symptoms showed that most of the participants expressed anger, anxiety and sadness in their lives because of stress of strict adherence of society created roles in Pakistani society. Similar findings were observed in a research conducted by Jun in 2009, who demonstrated that the majority of Korean males (12 out of 15) suffered from anger, humiliation, anxiety, weakness, responsibility and health problems as related to man gender role strain. The psychological symptoms were confusing thoughts, doubts and lack of decision making power that majority of the participants felt while following the strict society made roles. The findings of occupational role problems were heavy work, long working hours and less satisfied job. Social problems were lack of trust, financial problems and social conflicts due to society made roles among men in Pakistani society.

The present study has proved the hypothesis as the age group 35-39 faced severity of occupational role strain and participants with 14 years of education suffered from overall severity of symptoms, severity of social and occupational problems. Similarity, it has been

confirmed that participants working as marketing suffered overall severity of symptoms, severity of physical and emotional symptoms while participants working as police experienced severity of occupational problems.

Furthermore, the study has observed that the overall gender role strain of eighteen outlined roles failed to show significant difference with various age groups. A similar finding was observed in a study on 97 participants concerning gender role strain by Cohn and Zeichner in 2006. However, the results of present study indicated that participants with graduation faced severe gender role strain related to gender role as **decision maker in a family** while participants with post graduation suffered severe gender role strain related to gender role as **“to adopt a profession or skill”**.

Another aspect of this study was the well-being of Pakistani men. However, the finding proved that well-being of Pakistani men was average experiencing gender role strain. Moreover, the findings also confirmed that participants living in nuclear family system showed significant well-being than living in joint family system. Similarly, the participants working as office attendants showed better well being along with gender role strain.

In sum, the results of the present study will be used to address the growing health issues of men in Pakistani society. It is clear from previous studies that strict adherence to ancient masculinity incorporates a negative impact on men's health and social status. The socialization method and standards for masculinity ought to be regularly re-examined and addressed positively in a society.

## **Conclusion**

The study was perennial to male behavior under gender role stresses. The method adopted for research was public opinion survey, which remained fairly successful because individuals up to the age of 44 years responded well. The instrument GRSQ was highly reliable. However, in the light of results and analysis, the researchers can say that Pakistani men are facing extreme gender role strain as decision maker and breadwinner. Data also demonstrates that aggressiveness and violence are not inherent in men but are the symptoms of gender role strain. Furthermore, the age and education are the variables which significantly affect the gender role strain.

## Suggestions and Limitations

In future more extensive studies with larger sample size and different ethnic groups are required to evaluate gender role strain among Pakistani men. It is potential that words or phrases within the GRSQ might not be understandable to people whose English language is not proficient. The stakeholders of the society should device such reforms to reduce gender role strain of men. Furthermore, education can play a leading role in this context. Therefore, the government should prepare a complete and result oriented educational policy. In addition, the researchers suggest to male members of the society to take support and help from their spouses, so that, strain of ‘decision maker’ can be reduced. Educating and empowering women would also reduce burden on men that effect men’s wellbeing positively.

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