

Burden of One's Gender: Perception of Gender Role Strain in Educated Men and Women

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Abstract

Both men and women may experience gender role strain in their daily lives. It is a little explored phenomenon in Pakistan. This study looked into the perceptions of Gender Role Strain in educated Pakistani men and women. Two semi-structured focus groups were conducted in 2016 at Gender Studies Department of Lahore College of Women University, Lahore. Fourteen participants (7 men and 7 women) were recruited through purposive sampling technique, having age range from 30 to 45 years. The participants were married government employees. Manifest content analysis revealed four major themes: a) Burden of Responsibility as a source of Gender Role Strain b) Physical and Psychological manifestations of Gender Role Strain c) Societal norms and expectations leading to Gender Role Strain d) Coping with Gender Role Strain. The findings indicated that the responsibilities allocated according to a persons' gender can turn out to be a major source of Gender Role Strain. This strain may be reflected in psychological and physical complaints that people experience. Societal standards and beliefs add to role strain not only to the daily lives of women, but of men as well. The coping strategies used mostly by the participants included religious coping, time management, outlet and displacement of anger, and others.

Keywords: gender role strain, semi-structured focus group, manifest content analysis

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Introduction

Pakistani society is primarily a male dominated society. Men generally are the heads of family and women have a secondary position in authority (Ali et al., 2011). Mostly, women are financially dependent on men and therefore, have to obey men and act upon their wishes (Kazmi, 2005). Young girls and women have to face many hurdles in their psychosocial growth due to their subservient position and stereotypical gender role. However, both genders continue to carry out the cultural roles i.e., breadwinner roles are performed by men whereas nurturing roles are carried out by women. Still women place a burden on their shoulders to uphold these stereotypical principles at the same time as becoming professionals (Franks, Schurink, & Fourie, 2006).

Gender Role Strain (GRS) is a negative psychological and social consequence of violating gender roles (Pleck, 1981). It is a pressure, burden or stress experienced by individuals while trying to meet the expected standard of behaviours associated with their gender. Furthermore, role strain is a theoretical framework explaining how people avail personal and social approaches of coping to manage societal discrimination. According to Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann (2000), gender is an awareness of being male or female and commonly distinguishing gender roles they accomplish, for example, bread winners against homemakers. In addition, socialization is associated to the understanding and process of stress, along with the health of individuals predominantly by roles and traits of gender (Mayor, 2015).

The knowledge and familiarity of GRS is dependent on age, and cultural definitions of gender role stereotypes and masculinity standards (Kahn, 2009). In the social constructionist perspective of gender, cultures have divergent expectations with different norms about masculinity and femininity. Gender discrimination engrains from social organizations where established concepts of gender differences and women's subordinates are shaped (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). There are studies on psychological health of men when they are under societal pressure to perform their obligatory responsibilities and roles. Multiple factors add to the leading mental health risks of men i.e., low socioeconomic status, male gender socialization, and adverse working settings. (Williams, 2003; Watkins, Walker, & Griffith, 2010). In addition, researchers have started paying attention to the burden of independence and authority that a man may have to carry. The autonomy, power and position that a man enjoys may have negative fall outs too.

In Pakistan, one of the major causes that restrict women's independence and empowerment is men's perception of women's role (Isran, & Isran, 2012). A number of studies have identified women's responsibilities and role strain (Belza & Warms, 2004; Malpede, 2007; Segar, Eccles,

& Richardson, 2008; Malik, Saif, Gomez, Khan, & Hussain, 2010; Ali et al., 2011; Zaka, 2012). The study on role strain in men is in its infancy in Pakistan. Conceptual significance of men's role strain and its related aspects has not been given consideration that it requires. There have been barely one or two efforts at revealing this idea, its process, and its influence on men (Adil & Shahed, 2014). Cultural stereotypes are embedded among both genders and shape the basis for different life situations that men and women experience. Therefore, the present study is carried out to add to the empirical data on this notion, specifically focusing on men's as well as women's role strain with regard to Pakistani culture.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore the phenomenon of Gender Role Strain in educated Pakistani men and women
- To find out the experiences of Role Strain in men and women
- To look into how men and women cope with Role Strain

Literature Review

The concept of GRS can be explained by stress and cognitive appraisal theory (Lazarus, & 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. A study by Wentling (1998) revealed that people face divergences in the gender role expectations along with role strain through out home and work roles. Similarly, another study demonstrated that women felt strained as the second shift would begin as they arrived home after a day full of work (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). It was not the men, but women who were still expected to be the prime caretaker and maintain the household.

Bowman's theory of role strain (2006) characterizes masculinity as a stressor that was prominent in many phases of men's lives, economic conditions, besides associations with range of performances and behaviours. The theories and concepts of role strain were criticized for not considering the social and cultural views of gender roles (Robertson, 2009). In contrast, models, and masculinity measures have regarded male gender role strain as a stressor (Smiler, 2004). Furthermore, it has severe physical and mental effects on well-being. Young males have to apply abundant power to internalize self-view of masculinity and might face more experiences of isolation, violence, depression, and substance abuse (Forbes, 2003).

On the other hand, a study found that GRS is associated more with femininity as women usually experienced role strain more (Kazmierczak, 2010). In research on psychological wellbeing and femininity, high levels of anxiety and depression were observed in women having role strain (Longest & Thoits, 2012). Gianakos (2002) revealed that the femininity role in active coping is not much clear; either it is positively or negatively linked to active coping. In addition, the health of strained women due to the demands of home and work is compromised as well as family relationships are suffering (Mostert, 2009; Mathur-Helm, 2006).

Upholding a certain level of a traditionally desired way of Masculinity-Femininity (gender role compliance) is the basis of abundant rewards as well as the cause of difficulties (gender role strain and conflict). Every culture has different gender role norms, which can be rejected in a different culture. Recognizing the societal influence experienced by men and women on stress can prevent strain related to one's gender. Men and women will come across many encounters as well as the battle for the promotion of equality in gender roles, unless there are considerable changes in their perceptions, attitudes, and practices (Ruxton, 2004). Therefore, it is important to understand the perceptions of gender role strain held by both genders.

Method

Participants

For both focus group discussions, ten participants were requested to participate in the study. However, seven participants turned up for each focus group. All participants were selected through purposive sampling technique. The ages of participants ranged from 30 to 45 years, all were married and were government employees. All participants were educated (B.A, MS, PhD) and had approximate monthly income ranging between Rs. 30,000 and 90,000. Six participants had a joint family system, whereas eight were living in nuclear family system.

Assessment Tool

Semi structured focus group discussions were conducted to explore the Role Strain experienced by men and women. Twelve open and close-ended questions in Urdu were included in the interview schedule. Some of these questions were: What kind of Gender Role Strain are you experiencing at the present stage of your life? What are the sources of Gender Role Strain in men/women? Do you think our society understands the gender role strain that men/women have to undergo? How do you manage to deal with Gender Role Strain you are undergoing?

Procedure

The purpose of study was explained to the participants at the stage of sample selection. Those who were willing to participate were included in the sample. Both focus group discussions lasted from 60 to 80 minutes individually and included refreshment at the end of the session. A facilitator was present there to take notes and make observations. Both discussions were audio taped with the participants' written consent. Each of the participants was assigned with unique identifiers to maintain confidentiality. After transcribing the recorded data verbatim, it was reviewed and verified by the second researcher.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used in the present study which involves careful insight of experiences of participants to look into emerging patterns or themes (Berg, 2004). Manifest content analysis was applied to understand what was said by the participants. It is a functional method for recognizing, classifying and identifying the experiences of participants regarding gender role strain. The transcriptions of each of the focus group sessions were read several times by the researcher to identify and recognise the themes, categories and sub-categories of Gender Role Strain in men and women separately.

Findings

Four primary themes emerged throughout the analysis: a) Burden of Responsibility as a source of Gender Role Strain b) Physical and Psychological manifestations of Gender Role Strain c) Societal norms and expectations leading to Gender Role Strain d) Coping with Gender Role Strain. The portrayal of categories and sub-categories of perceptions on role strain and expectations in men and women are presented separately in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Perceptions of Gender Role Strain by Men

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
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Burden of Responsibility as a source of Gender Role Strain	As a Son	Study hard, support through income, getting married
	As a Brother	Responsibilities and work load at sister's wedding
	As a Husband	Mother-wife conflict, issue of authority, not giving time to wife and children, need for financial stability after a child, Living in joint and nuclear family system
	As a Father	Stress of children's education and future, stress of failing in child's school admission interview
	As an Employee	Stress of working in female dominating institutes, stress of multiple/dual roles
Physical and Psychological Manifestations of Gender Role Strain	Physical Appearance	Stress on wedding day, looking good
	Mental Health	Stressful thoughts in illness, specific situation
Societal Norms and Expectations leading to Gender Role Strain	Perceptions of Women Role Strain by Men	Traditional customs, mutual stressors, concern about father-daughter relationship
	Social Hurdles	Corruption in Government offices, over protective about women
Coping with Gender Role Strain	Strategies for dealing with Role Strain	Self-contentment, outlet and displacement of anger, sleep, isolation, staying quiet, praying

Table 2: Perceptions of Gender Role Strain by Women

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
Burden of Responsibility	As a Daughter	

as a source of Gender Role Strain		Forced to learn appropriate manners and language, not allowed to get married with own choice
	As a Sister	Being dependent on brothers, doing brother's work
	As a Wife	Dependent on husband for making decisions, not having understanding husband, not receiving support from husband
	As a Daughter-in-law	Living life according to in laws
	As a Mother	Blaming mother for poor upbringing of children, Fear of being perceived as bad mother
Physical and Psychological Manifestations of Gender Role Strain	As an Employee	Performing dual roles
	Physical Appearance	Wearing new dress on special occasions, changing the appearance according to the spouse wishes, maintaining weight
	Mental Health	Developing and increasing negative illness, working mother's guilt
Societal Norms and Expectations leading to Gender Role Strain	Perceptions of Women Role Strain by Men	Traditional mind set, not acknowledging men
	Social Hurdles	Performing additional roles than men
Coping with Gender Role Strain	Strategies for dealing with Role Strain	Time management, expecting less from others, having sound relationship with Allah, positive thinking, help from support groups

Men's Perspective on Gender Role Strain

Burden of Responsibility as a source of Gender Role Strain. The first theme was developed through the participants' role expectations. Patriarchal system is followed in Pakistan where men are the head of family and owner of the house. He has to run and look after his family. All the participants in the present study described different role strain that they go throughout their life:

According to me, first of all, we have the stress of responsibility, if he is married or even if he is not married, he has tension about his parents, if you are not married then you have strain about your education and after that not getting a suitable job.

All of the participants agreed that financial instability is most important and biggest source of men role strain. Lack of money contributes to other stressors in individual's life. Stability in earning adds happiness in parents, in-laws', and wives faces. The person can afford luxuries, for example, he can buy a car or he can sleep in air condition peacefully. He can pay utility bills easily.

The categories and sub-categories of theme one are described below:

- a. As a son.** A son is responsible for satisfying his parent's wishes and desires. He is expected to be economically secure and study hard to get a good job.

I remember my parents used to force me to study hard and did not allow playing.

Almost all the participants agreed that they have to support their parents and family financially. Parents expect them to be a source of income for them.

When your family income is not enough then the parents started saying and explaining to their children when they are at FA or BA level to do a job. Now if he is willing to study, he has to find a way, either he starts tutoring or look for other source of income.

Both male and female have stress about marriage. It is a huge responsibility and to seek a right partner is difficult nowadays. When the man is financially stable, parents start looking for a suitable woman to get married.

When your income is good enough then your parents start forcing you to get married even you agree or not, you are forcefully married so that your parents remain happy.

- b. As a brother.** Whether the sister is elder or younger, brothers are always very protective and caring in nature towards them. It is a most cherished bond as they were brought up together and shared so many memories of their childhood. The role of a brother in his sister's marriage is stressful due to responsibilities and work load.

I remember I had a lot of responsibilities at my sister's wedding: dinner should be serve at time, it was also raining outside, so I had to see sitting arrangement inside the hall, to look after every relative and you should also look good, I was much tensed about these things.

c. As a husband. A husband is considered to be honest, supportive, composed, impartial and fair decision maker at home quarrels. This further adds stress as he has to maintain balance between his mother and wife.

When you are married then you have two more stressors at home, one is your mother and other one is your wife, when they have fight then a man is sandwiched between them and due to this he is in more tension.

In general, the perception of a man's aggressive and violent behaviours in the family is accepted by Pakistani society (Ali et al., 2011). Usually, men are in the power to make decisions for the wife. Although, some of them were likely to respect, obey, and show care for their parents and family. However, most of the participants of present study agreed that they give authority and power to their wives to maintain peace and satisfactory environment at home.

One of the participants also narrated a story on the authority of wife in which she handles the family issues more and husband do not interfere with her decisions.

I listen to my wife and I am happy with it.

In addition, sometimes doing part time job and coming home late as well as not giving time to your wife can contribute mental strain on husbands. Some wives do not understand their nature of work and create fuss and fight with them.

To meet the expenses of my family, I do a part time job but my wife at home expects from me to give time to her. When I came home at night, I am usually tired and go to sleep. My wife starts complaining and arguing with me that I have no time even at night for her. Due to these complains, I cannot concentrate at my work. She does not understand that I am earning and working hard for our future.

Another participant reported that

When you are financially strong then your wife and children are happy. When you have no child, some wives can compromise but after having a child, financial stability is important. Similarly, you have to give time to your wife and children. If you did not then there is no peace at home.

Furthermore, living in joint and nuclear family have different kinds of role strains in men. When living in a joint family, a man also has to satisfy his parents and siblings rather than only his wife and children. He has to entertain everyone living under one roof.

When you live together (joint), you have to look after your parents and siblings. You have to take care of all along with your wife and children. Often when a man came home tired, the

wife has some conflict or quarrel with someone at home. He has this tension and peeps into the matter to how to solve it.

Another participant reported

Living in joint family system, some wives think that they are doing more household chores than her elder or younger sister in law or sometimes this also happens that they had fight with each other because of their children. When you live together, you have to sacrifice more in every matter and husband has to be patient because he has to listen to his wife also and others too.

However, living in nuclear family, it has certain benefits but a man is stressed mentally. He thinks about his wife and children all the time in his office.

Living in nuclear family system, you are save from home conflicts and quarrels but all the time you are worried about your wife and children, what are they doing at home alone? Who is looking after them behind me? These thoughts are in your mind until you reached home.

- d. As a father.** Fathers are always worried about their children's education and future. They support their education and professional work before their children's marriage. Some fathers are liberal and some force their children to study hard. This further builds strain in a father-child relationship.

Like I am a father, my one son is in Matric. When he does not study, I am in tension that he is not studying. In future, where he will go (in which college, he will get admission). He will choose which field and what will be his future?

Furthermore, now parents have stress of failing in child's school admission interview in well-known schools. They have fears about not passing an interview can destroy their child's future and can build inferiority complex in him/her.

I wish my children study in good school. Now in good schools, there is an interview of parents. If we do not passed the interview, then the child is dishearten and he will suffer from inferiority complex the rest of his life that due to his parents, he did not get admission in good school.

This type of strain is also faced by a man as he has to do something as both wife and child, cries and yells and their dreams are shattered. Here the influential players play their roles who are having strong family background and how powerful and authorized position you have. For example, if you belong to an army family and you have a strong back, then without any question your child can get admission. But what about the other

children who are not from such background? Such discrimination is common in Pakistan and it adds tension especially in males.

- e. **As an employee.** Role as an employee has different strains related to work. There is distinction in the behaviours of being male as a boss and being female as a boss. There is no element of respect for males in female dominating intuitions. Due to this, a man goes through inferiority complex and his ego is being hurt. As in Pakistani society, a man is considered superior than woman in all aspects. Most of the participants agreed that

Often we see that where male are bosses, there is given respect to females. But where female are bosses, there is no respect for males. He is not given a chair or space to sit down.

Another participant told his experience that

If females are the bosses then there is more pressure and tension of work. One student who is younger than you in age and experience, now she is in higher post and calls you with your name and scolds you in front of all and does not respect you.

Furthermore, higher education is compulsory for promotion in ranks. Being as a student and an employee at the same time creates more strain in a person. If dual roles are not handled properly, it creates further disturbance in the lives of individuals.

My PhD reports are here, I have to correct them and the issue is this that if I got time from job then I can correct them.

Physical and Psychological manifestations of Gender Role Strain. It includes the following sub themes.

- a. **Physical appearance.** People can judge an individual by the personality and presentation style. The demand to look good is not common in women but also in men nowadays. The participants have physical appearance strain especially on their wedding day when everyone is looking at them.

*I was very happy at my wedding day..... But I was tensed about my clothes....either they are according to the occasion.... Either I am complimenting with my bride. When the person looks good, he has no stress. He is carefree when clothes are suitable according to the situation. One of the participants reported that *When you are handsome and dress up well..... And it suits you..... then you have no stress.**

b. *Mental health.* Long term mental strain can lead to serious illnesses in people. When men are in mental strain, they think about their family first. This further adds psychological stress in men if he is the only bread winner of the family.

When I am ill...I think about.... What will happen to my parents, wife and children? ...who will look after them?

Mental strain can be triggered by any situation. It can be equally stressful for men as well as for women. For Example, stress is even when a person drives a car and he is late for office. However, one participant reported that *I am wearing glasses for a long time.... So when I go to swimming pool with my kids, I am worried about how I will swim with glasses? Or what happens if it fell?*

Societal norms and expectations leading to gender role strain. This theme involves two categories ‘Perceptions of Women Role Strain by Men’ and ‘Social Hurdles’. The first category of this theme draws attention to the positive signs in men about women i.e., men are concerned about the strains that women go through. On the other hand, the second category of this theme points to corruption in government offices and over protectiveness of men about women. Education and modernisation in society can change this thinking of men.

a. *Perceptions of women role strain by men.* Pakistan is an Islamic society where there are some customs and traditions which men and women have to follow. Furthermore, parents mostly reside with their sons and married daughters hardly meet their parents as they are busy in their own daily routines. It is generally considered that men have experienced deep stress and strain when they bury their loved ones. But the participants of present study reported that women experienced more strain as they stay at home and are not allowed to go to graveyard at the time of funeral.

My mother died... I buried her with my own hands... then I was contented.... But my sister could not go to graveyard...so that's why she was in griefthat she is at home and we took the burial in front of her.

According to the present study participants, men usually have economic strain and women have social communications related strains.

According to me, men mostly have financial responsibilities and women have interactions....social interactions and relations with each other...they have more stress of this.

On the other hand, there are some mutual stressors which both genders faced.

Both parents are stressed about their child's future...mother is also tensed about her child's future because she thinks and attached to her children more at home.

Furthermore, daughter child usually shares her feelings with her mother more than her father. Most daughters hesitate to even talk to their fathers directly.

Daughters usually interact with their mothers more... so they share their feelings with her mother before telling to their fathers...now the mother has some problem (stress) that how she will explain to her father.

b. Social hurdles. Social injustice is common in Pakistan which further contributes to men role strain. When a person moves away or breaks law of nature, he is ultimately in stress.

Today, I went to income tax office...my whole work (file) was okay...but then also I have to grease the palm (give bribe) so that my work is done soon... and I do not have to visit them again and again... I am helpless.

In our society, a man is over protective about his woman. He takes over stress of things which a woman can do for herself.

In our society, there is one more stress that a male has and female does not has...that is making ID card, passport and license in this era (time)...this job is done by men for women...we have to take them there and a whole day is spend there.

Coping with Gender Role Strain. It includes how to deal with role strain.

a. Strategies for dealing with role strain. There are many types of coping strategies to deal with the strain men experience. Men use both positive and negative strategies to deal with stress.

As much as you can earn money ...do whatever you do...you will be in stress...until you accept one thing fully...and that is self-contentment.

It is common practice of men (husbands) that they shout at their wives when they share their problems or beat them when frustrated. Furthermore, working men, when they arrived home, yell at their children or show bad temper with their wives. They project their office disputes or work pressure on their loved ones to cope with their strain.

Mostly men when comes back to their home from office are in tension... they scold their children or display their anger on their wives.

However, educated men mostly consider sleep to be useful to relief stress.

When I am in more stress, I go to sleep.

Two of the participants reported that when they confront stressful situations, they isolate themselves or remain silent. This helps them to reduce stress in them.

When I am in stress, I stay quiet and try to isolate (detach) myself.

One of the participants reported that

My one and only (stress), I prayer for it (about money) all the time as it is the main cause of stress in me.

Women's Perspective on Gender Role Strain

Burden of Responsibility as a source of Gender Role Strain. Women are expected to be a good daughter, sister, wife, daughter in law, mother, as well as act like a professional employee. These multiple roles add further strain in their lives.

- a. **As a daughter.** A daughter is considered blessing for her parents. From the very beginning, daughters are given the responsibilities of household chores and are not independent to take decisions of their lives. Mothers especially teach and force their daughters to learn appropriate manners and language. For example, one of the participant told

At times, if I speak an ill or bad word or call my elder brother loudly in front of my mother, she scolds me and says girls do not use such words, and they speak softly.

Another participant responded

My mother expects me to do sweeping, wash utensils, cook food for one time and then when I have holiday, she expects to cook food for two times (Lunch and dinner) this upsets me as I have other things to do in my list.

Another participant expressed that

A daughter is not allowed to get married with her own choice even after educating her. Even she is not allowed to express her own opinion on any matter. She has to stick by the opinion of her family which often disturbs me.

- b. **As a sister.** It is in a sister's nature that she cares a lot about her brothers. Mostly, brothers are protective against their sisters which causes strain as at times the matter is not as huge as it is considered by the brothers. They are dependent on brothers for their work. For instance,

My brother is over protective about me, he used to pick and drop me to college every day. He does not allow me to stay alone at late night functions.

Another participant said that

My brother even travel with me to other city. At times, this bothers me as he keeps on annoying me all the time.

On the other hand, most of the participants agreed on doing the work for their brothers too.

I remember I used to iron his clothes, polish his shoes and whenever he arrives home I offer him a water to drink and make fresh roti for my brother leaving all my work aside.

- c. **As a wife.** After marriage, a woman is dependent on her husband on making decisions. Sometimes confusing signals are received by the husbands that add further strain. One of the participant told

At times, we are dependent on our husbands to make decisions regarding to continue job or to study further. We are so dependent on our husbands for decision making that sometimes we have to use other means so that they accept our decision to study further. I have suffered from this and I think it is important to know before marriage that what is the status of women in your husband's family?

My husband said you do not want to do job then perhaps leave today... it's all right. You are free... who has bounded you to do, quit today... and then next he will say that this type of lifestyle we cannot maintain because I cannot affordit. Secondly, you have to work like a housewife, and we will have to manage other expenses too. I am free but I am helpless too because I have to meet financial needs. Perhaps, if my husband says that this career is my own choice, maybe he is right. It's my own decision. I choose to stay at home.

Furthermore, husbands' usually do not understand the wives emotional turmoil or problems they are facing. Another participant expressed that

I do not think my husband understands even when I feel like my world is falling apart. When I feel that I have too much pressure and my mind will explode or else... I do not think he understands that so much is happening. I feel compelled to go on and spouses mostly do not understand your strain.

In addition, husbands do not support on matters which is not favouring or benefiting them. For example,

I had a competitive exam of my PhD and I was expecting that I will get support on such time but I was scolded on such things that there is no cold water on cooler. I should have off from making breakfast in the morning. But I do not get that holiday.

On the other hand, another participant claimed that

When I have exam, my husband iron my clothes and smade breakfast for me. He wants me to study because he is fond of my studies. I think husbands are not manufactured to understand our emotional turmoil. However, they support in the matters of maternity leaves or in the issues of children. They make adjustments on matters which favours' them. However, he does not expect me to perform household chores. Even if I work, he says I do not want you to be a typical housewife who does all domestic chores.

- d. As a daughter-in-law.** This role is very demanding as well as very critical. A woman has to look after her husband and his family needs. She has to be a good daughter-inlaw. This increases the responsibilities of a woman.

After marriage, I have to live life according to my in-laws.

Another participant said,

In my husband's family, cooking responsibility is especially given to daughter-in-law even ifshe is a working woman. She is tired or ill, she has to manage it and this adds spice to it when food is not cooked well.

- e. As a mother.** A mother is responsible for her children upbringing and education. She tries her best to teach her child everything she could as a mother's life revolve arounds her children. If a child is ill, a mother has to look after him/her. One of the participant responded that

If a child misbehaves, the whole blame is on the mother. She has not taught him/her good manners. On the other hand, if a child behaves properly, it is the father's effort and no appreciation is given to a mother.

Similarly, some mothers have fear of being perceived as bad mothers in the eyes of their children. This usually happens when a third person constantly says things in front of the children which actually does not has meaning as mother is a most kind and loving creature on earth.

My elder sister in law keeps on saying in front of my children that you do not take care of your children because you spend half day in your office.... This adds strain as I as a mother feel that she should not say this in front of my children as they will perceive that being a working mother is a bad thing that is affecting our health.

- f. As an employee.** Working women experienced additional strains as they have to manage their personal and professional life. The strains may be related with working hours, competition

with colleagues, dispute with the head or subordinates and performing dual roles. Most of the participants agreed that

University teaching is a demanding job. I have to be a research supervisor, take classes, doing administrative work and publishing articles too. We are helpless if we want to remain in university service and want promotion, we have to complete PhD... this is an additional role that we are adopting and it is causing much strain.

Another participant reported that

At times because of my dual roles, many things are suffering.... When I am cooking at home and in my mind I am thinking about finishing my office work.

Physical and Psychological manifestations of Gender Role Strain. It includes the same categories but different sub categories than men.

a. Physical appearance. Changing the personality and physical appearance according to the spouse wishes also adds strain if the woman is totally from different background. In addition, maintaining weight is quite a task after marriage. Furthermore, fashion changes every year and to maintain a wardrobe especially for working women is quite a task as they have to keep in mind the budget on buying formal and informal clothes. Working women should look professionally groomed. In Pakistan, fashion varies from city to city. Taking time out from the busy schedule for shopping also adds strain in most women. Almost all of the participants agreed that

On special occasion wearing new dress is not always possible. But for family gatherings, a new dress is compulsory to look beautiful.

Two participants expressed that

When we are in professional environment, we must look professionally appropriate to the situation.

One of the participants pointed out that

Before marriage, I was a simple person. Now my husband wants me to wear stylish dresses, put on makeup and wear anklet at home. This is something that is totally different from my appearance. Even though, I make effort but I fail to do so as it does not come out naturally.

Another participant said that

My physical appearance has totally changed after marriage. I have gained a lot of weight. I am dieting and doing some exercises.

b. Mental health. Role strain can cause stress, anxiety, depression; all sorts of negative illnesses. All participants agreed that

Some people show more depression, some feel anxiety more, some people are stubborn, and whatever happens they try to avoid it... it varies from person to person.

One of the participants told that

I have learned with the passage of time that how to maintain good mental and physical health. I was suffering from migraine two or three years ago. I do not come to stable condition from major attack until I go to hospital and have drips. Then I realized that it was my circumstances, being in stressed all the time, diet, over weight, and lack of sleep that were contributing to this condition (migraine).

Another participant felt that

I feel that I neglect my children; I was not always there for them. I do not value their childhood, the way I should have. I was so task oriented in my office and household responsibilities in my routines that I am thinking and worried about what kind of mother I am or want to become?

Societal norms and expectations leading to gender role strain.

a. Perceptions of women role strain by men. The participants talked about the men's traditional mind sets and how this can be a hindrance in their future women's lives. Furthermore, the participants also admitted that men are not much appreciated for their hard work that they do for raising their families.

Men have certain mind set according to their family backgrounds. For example, from their childhood, they see women (mothers and sisters) as cleaning house, cooking food for them all the time. Therefore, they cannot accept their wives to do job or study further.

On the other hand, one of the participants expressed

We do not acknowledge men enough for working outside (everyone laughing). They also perform multiple roles and try to prove to be a good father, husband and son-in-law.

One of the women participants disagrees and said

It does not matter to men whether they are bad son-in-law. I think being a good daughter-in-law is more important as compared to being a bad son in law.

b. Social hurdles. In our society, men are not responsible for performing or helping in household chores. Rather, if any man does so, he is being taunted by people that he is a slave of her woman (wife). Almost all of the participants agreed that

Men are not responsible for and have no restrictions to perform household chores. They only do their job and rest at home. Whereas if a woman is working, she is working for herself and it is her duty to cook and do other chores after coming home.

Coping with Gender Role Strain. The healthier the woman is physically and mentally, the more she is able to deal with the role strain. If she is biologically healthy, then she is better able to cope with role strain. However, lifestyle is very important. For example, when a person does not take breakfast, she has a bad day; all things go wrong and she feels those things more mentally. Therefore, she has to take care of herself, including exercise in her daily routine and take rest. Physical fitness is good for women's psychological health.

- a. Strategies for dealing with role strain.** Women participants used positive coping strategies to deal with their role strains. Poor time management and lack of realistic expectations can lead to role strain. One of the participants talked about time management to avoid her strain.

When you are lacking time management skills as well as you are not disciplined and organized in managing your tasks, you will experience role strain. Furthermore, you try to be perfect in your tasks but fail repeatedly and not compromising on your standards can also cause role strain. Therefore, managing time is important. I try to manage and divide my time to avoid any kind of strain.

Another participant also added

At the beginning of my job, I have trouble in managing time at home and work. But, with the passage of time, I have learnt to prioritize my tasks and I feel less strain.

Some of the participants also agreed on expecting less from others and giving space is the best strategy as

I do not expect from others... every person has his/her circumstances, personality type, temperament and energy levels. What I can manage, others cannot... so I usually give them space and expect less from others to avoid strain.

I try to give space to myself and others. You need to determine that this is my space; I will not let anyone to intrude in it and take care of other person's space too.

I think you need to expect less from yourself too. You cannot score 100 on 100 on each task. You need to understand that you are a human being; you have flaws and there are some limitations as well to avoid strain.

One of the participants strongly practiced religious coping

I think developing a good sound relationship with Allah tala is the key thing. By improving the quality of this relationship, we will be strong and stable. We need to work on that to avoid our strains and problems. I think we are not trained enough; maybe we are not trusting Allah tala, we are not praying enough or we are not patient enough. I try to make my relationship strong with Allah tala as much as possible to deal with my role strains.

Another participant talked about positive thinking

I try to think positive; strain exists in my life but I think that with the passage of time and with the help of Allah it will be better, it will not be always in my nerves. If you let go yourself and think negatively about your stress, you will make your strain bigger and bigger. Therefore, think positive about your problems and deal with it in a positive way.

The last participant addressed that having good support groups also helps you to deal with the role strain you are experiencing in your life.

I have support groups to deal with my strains. Being around with positive people helps you. I have professional mentors with whom I can take help and they guide me well when I have any professional problem. When dealing with family matters, I took help from other people. For example, I took suggestion or advice from my relative (elder cousin) on family matters or conflicts.

Discussion

The present research revealed four major themes involving roles related strains that men and women go through: Both have burden of responsibilities and roles, physical and psychological manifestations of strains, duty of societal norms and expectations, and coping strategies to manage with gender role strain. In burden of responsibilities theme, almost all of the men participants' time was surrounded by the responsibilities particularly as a son, brother, husband, father and employee. The participants turned up to value the responsibilities of their traditional and social roles as a family and community members. In our society, fulfilling the role as a provider is the most important aspect in men's lives. Regardless of the changes and flexibility in gender roles with passage of time, the prominent part of man's identity is still maintained by the family provider role. A study conducted by Hammond and Mattis (2005) revealed that African American men, predominantly in their years of middle-adulthood, primary characteristics of their traits were assessments of how strongly they reflect they are satisfying the provider, husband, father, employee, and society member roles. The constant stressors of different roles in men have a primary influence on their mood, behaviour, well-being and mental health. Furthermore,

participants of the present study uninterruptedly undergo strain as their second shift begins upon approaching home from working an entire day at office. They have to listen to their wives about any conflict or problems among their mothers or sister in laws. On the other hand, engaging more in work than family might be reinforce learned behaviour through the society in which a man is raised.

Similarly, women participants' time was primarily spent in performing the roles and responsibilities as a daughter, sister, wife, daughter-in-law, mother and employee. The personality and behaviour of a woman should reflect the pride and status of her family as a whole. In Pakistani society, usually men (as a fathers or brothers) begin to influence a girl's life exercising authority concerns from education to choice of a spouse. This control is taken by husbands and in-laws after marriage. For example, the husbands or the in laws decide on matters like, the limits for the married women in looking for job or seeking education. Particularly, these are the sensitive concerns in the study conducted on Pashtun people as well (Jamal, 2014). Furthermore, the skewed perspective that a daughter is neither a protector' nor a 'provider' and plays no role in the family causes discrimination. In addition, Ibrahim (2005) found that women cannot raise their voices against abuse and violence before and after marriage by men (brothers, fathers, husbands). However, none of the women participants have reported any kind of physical and mental abuse. The women participants also talked about the strains caused by being daughter-in-law. The men participants did not talked about the strains that they experienced as being son-in-law. This might be because in Pakistani culture, son in laws are given prime importance.

Regardless of ample of responsibilities, both men and women participants were also concerned about their physical appearance and talked about psychological strain. It seems that now Pakistani men are also worried about their looks and body image besides women. This further effect the performance of their present role as it leads to mental stress. A research found that those men who compare themselves with others would have high levels of body image dissatisfaction just as similar effect as on women (Hozba, Walker, Yakushko, &Peugh, 2007). Another study has monitored the role of appearance with social associations in men and found that men who are more observing their appearance are likely to have more body dissatisfaction (Goldenberg, McCoy, & Greenberg, 2000). Furthermore, Pearson (2008) found that role strain leads to negative mental health especially in working women. In the present study women also talked about psychological stress and problems they have experienced.

It seems that societal norms and expectations have shaped the men's perceptions of women role strain or vice versa. The views of the men participants concerning the emphasis on traditional customs, mutual stressors and how to communicate daughters message to father placed on women especially mothers were acknowledged by men. It reflects positive signs towards the modernization of society and a change of gender roles that so far is mainly embraced by educated men. Even though socializing and gender roles are multifaceted phenomena, men participants perceived women role strain more through social relationships as women indulged themselves in social gatherings more. A study by Markward, McMillan and Markward (2003) proposed that women desire and require social support more as compared to men and are acknowledging the need for support and help, thereby overtly fostering supportive relationships in a social context. On the other hand, women participants reported additional roles as social hurdles. A study observed that increasing responsibilities at work do not affect the family commitments of men as much as women because women have to maintain the majority of the domestic duties (Cha, 2013).

The men participants also talked about coping strategies they seek to relieve their role strain and exhaustion from satisfying their family needs. These were: self-contentment, outlet and displacement of anger, sleep, isolation, staying quiet and prayer. On the other hand, women participants talked about time management, expecting less from others, having a sound relationship with Allah, positive thinking and help from support group. Men participants also offer their prayers but women participants emphasize on developing a strong and stable relationship with Allah. A study by Lengua and Stormshak (2000) also supported that being as men traits and roles were positively linked with actively coping and negatively associated with avoidance coping. Praying, sleeping, staying silent and isolating for some time to avoid conflict are some of the positive stress coping strategies. On the other hand, violent behaviour and aggressive personality of a man directed towards his family particularly his wife is accepted by Pakistani society. With no fear of revenge or punishments from other members of family, a husband can easily outburst on his children or wife.

One interesting element which emerged from focus group discussion apart from the major themes developed was that educated men believed that illiterate people experience less strains and exhaustions. For example, they are not answerable to their bosses, receiving notifications, or replying to emails. Furthermore, social applications in cell phones have further added stress in their lives as they have to report any time after working hours are over. Another interesting factor that was pointed out was that men working in women dominated institutes will go through

different kinds of strains as compared to men dominated institutes. All the men and women participants of focus group discussions have mutual consensus that financial constrains is the root cause of strains in their lives. Even though, four men participants' spouses (wives) were also employed. They still experience problems in fulfilling their familial responsibilities. Furthermore, both focus group participants agreed that with age they faced different kinds of roles and strains that are attached with different roles they are performing.

Conclusion

The present study looked into the perceptions, experiences and how educated men and women cope with their gender role strain. The participants have depicted how they were managing multiple roles to fulfil their familial and societal needs. The stress and exhaustion of responsibilities as a family (son/daughter, brother/sister, husband/wife, daughter-in-law, father/mother) and employee roles key cause was financial insecurity. Both gender participants also noticed that gender role strain is also contributing to their physical and psychological health. Furthermore, societal norms and expectations were also leading to role strain in men and women primarily due to social hurdles and their perceptions about women/men role strains. It is a key step to societal integrity as men considering women's perceptions of role strain (Flood, 2001) or women begun to acknowledge men's perceptions of role strain. Furthermore, coping strategies were also practiced and suggested by both focus groups' participants. The present study is the initial step to recognize and acknowledge the role strains experienced by both genders equally.

Limitations

The sample size was small as it is a qualitative study and the exploration of construct itself i.e., gender role strain is new in Pakistani culture. In the present study, all the focus group participants were married. It would have different findings if unmarried or divorced participants would be included in the groups. Furthermore, the study was concluded with the views of educated men and women only. In future, other qualitative studies should be conducted to explore the perceptions of illiterate men and women about gender role strain in their lives.

Implications

Due to limited number of studies in the area of gender role strain on men and women, more studies should be conducted locally, both quantitative and qualitative in nature. In addition, the strain caused by the role as caregiver is yet to be explored in men and women. The results of the study would be beneficial for general citizens and might be transferable to same cultural settings. Urban

and rural culture in Pakistan, however, plays a significant role in the formation of gender roles. Therefore prospective researchers should consider both urban and rural participants' views about gender role strain in men and women.

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