

Exploring Perceptions of Gender Roles in Marital Relationships: A Qualitative Study on Single Young Adults

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Abstract

This study focuses on how it progresses or change the perceptions of gender roles in marital relationship in the context of young adults in Pakistan, particularly how it bothers the traditional-modern binary. The methodological framework of this research is based on qualitative approaches, especially semi-structured interviews of university students who are in the age bracket of 18 to 26. Convenience sampling was used to select participants. The study investigates how various factors—such as education, occupation, family influences, and social media—shape individuals' expectations and understandings of marital roles. The findings reveal a complex interplay where traditional gender roles, in which men are expected to be the primary earners and women the primary caregivers, are still prevalent. However, Young, educated people are increasingly coming to terms with advocating customs reform-marriage traditions towards more equalized relationships. Yet, there exist heavy restraints on actualizing gender equality in marriage, such as deep-rooted social and cultural norms that are within the household and the community. These findings mark the rise in importance of educational qualification as well as career aspiration in tandem with the evolving influence of social media in interrogating and redefining such roles. It carries pivotal consequences for policy designing, educational programs, as well as counseling practices with missions such as strengthening equality in marriage in Pakistani society.

Keywords: *Gender roles, Marital relationships, Cultural norms, Young adults, Social media*

1. Introduction

Gender roles in marriage are heavily intertwined culturally, socially, religiously, and historically. They indicate the expected behavior and responsibility of men and women within a family sphere and clearly specify the differentiated roles and responsibilities of husbands as well as wife. In Pakistan and many other traditional societies, these roles have historically been defined on gender lines: men are seen to perform the roles of breadwinners and chief decision-makers, while women take care of children's needs and home chores. This division of labor permeated by cultural norms and religious values has often continued to be perpetuated by them to be seen as worthy of perpetuating gender inequalities and limiting agency in either individual, especially of women (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Corrigan & Konrad, 2007).

On the contrary, gender roles are dynamic; changing perceptions related to the different connotations of these roles among the younger generations have been witnessed on growing scales for the last few decades. Social changes such as education for women, increasing dual-income households, and globalized awareness of social media have challenged conventional gender roles in the society of Pakistan (Farooq & Tabassum, 2022; Khan & Javed, 2021). Because of these changes, awareness and demand for egalitarian relationships are increasing, where both partners share responsibility in decision-making, household chores, and financial provisions. Even so, cultural and social expectations continue to be dominant influences- often preserving the traditional framework of marital roles.

Traditional gender roles still prevail in Pakistan because of the strong influence that close-knit family structures and religious values have exercised in it. The joint family system, which thrives like a vine in many areas in Pakistan, subjects' power and decision-making capacities to older male members of a joint family, thereby, adding meshed patriarchal norms.

This family structure can restrain the movement of men and women alike. Younger couples are always mostly obliged to continue with the rest of their family concerning all matters related to gender roles; that is, what is true for all rather than a personal conviction that it should be otherwise within a supposed equal marriage (Desai & Banerji, 2008). The religious teachings show that certain assignments are expected of different genders, especially regarding marriage, in which a husband and wife have functions divinely assigned to them.

With the increase in the window of opportunity to education and exposure to global media, a change in perception regarding gender roles has also taken place among young adults in Pakistan. There is a newly developing perception of young adults towards gender roles in marriage due to increasing entry of women in higher education and the job market and increasing accessibility of a global discourse on gender equality through digital platforms. "Those who want such traditional roles to save the marriage, according to some former researchers, are run counter to other people's views and expectations, much more evenly shared responsibilities in terms of housework, as well as finances and decision-making" (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). This evolution is not uniform, however. Older generations and traditional family structures resist the very evolution which is leaving an intricate landscape in the cohabitation of traditional and modernistic views of gender roles.

This tension is most apparent between the traditional and modernity of marital relationships in Pakistan. Ever since women became involved in education and employment, they have been bringing the past gender norms under scrutiny. The family dynamics and culture still dominate and make these gender norms formidable. For instance, many women in the cities have taken on professional lives in the hope of working out a coexistence of domestic responsibilities with them. In reality, however, their family members have conditioned them to be confined by the previous expectations: more importantly, society puts its own additional demands on mothers. Domineering patriarchy within family and society often creates very unhealthy environments to work for achieving real equality in marriage in terms of both household labor and decision-making privilege.

The roles of social media cannot be underestimated at this point in time, and neither can the world exposure. It is because of the growth of digital platforms that feminist movements and gender equality debates are even possible for many Pakistani youths to access, especially in cities. It has also opened the doors to the accompanying dissemination of dissenting opinions about marital roles while using it as a tool for questioning conventional gender definitions. It is not a progressive line that becomes quite diversified at times. Yet, there will always be an allegiance to the virtue of gender equality to some, while others contend with culture and say modern perception of marriage does not square with cultural or religious values. All of these become angrier with how traditional gender expectations collide with the recent notion of equal marriage and, most sharp-edged, tension of many young adults who are facing this today in Pakistan.

So, the young adults have to understand how they interpret marriage through the lens of gender roles, how it is democratized by education, kin structure, society, and how the participants navigate dissonance between the old and emerging. All these add about the growing socio-cultural changes and increasingly demand an awareness of these understandings with regard to the young adults. Some research has been conducted on gender roles in marriage, particularly in Western contexts, but there has been little qualitative research on the South Asian context, especially with regard to Pakistan. Overall, this emerges as a better understanding of how the youth understand marital roles in Pakistan, while indicating the shifting dimensions of personal relationships between people with regard to experience of gender and satisfaction in marriage concerning tradition-modernity.

This study aims to take the debate to the sophisticated level of literature and explore evidence for gender roles in marriage, stopping the debate only in Pakistan. In this case, it will carry the inquiry more into factors that construct young people's understandings of marital roles and broaden it to see how far education, exposure to global norms, and family structures shape perceptions. These conditions, how they work together, provide the steeper insight into the flexible gender dynamics of marriages in Pakistan and indeed provide insight into the changing social transformations happening in a country.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This research offers some interdisciplinary theoretical framework combining Social Role Theory, Intersectionality and Feminist Theory for analyzing young adults' perception of the gender roles in their marital relationships in Pakistan.

Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) offers explanation on persistence of traditional gender roles as constructed through societal expectations and differentiation of household work. According to this theory, men and women are socialized to fulfill certain roles, men as providers and decision-makers, and women as caregivers-reinforced by cultural and institutional norms.

This theory provides an explanation for the non-vanishing character of traditional gender roles, even as they face changing societal attitudes regarding gender equality. Such observations have been made by Corrigan and Konrad (2007), who argue that socially constructed roles contribute towards marital inequalities.

Intersectionality, as defined by Crenshaw (1991), is about the interaction of various identities, for example, gender and culture, that compound the experience and viewpoint of individuals. Within Pakistan's geography, this perspective enables an understanding of how elements like educational background, social class and religions shape expectations regarding roles in marriage. These intersecting identities eventually illustrate how they can affect perceptions concerning gender roles such as that of women who encounter unique challenges due to their background, as illustrated by and Farooq Tabassum (2022).

The Feminist Theory critiques traditional marital roles with regard to gender inequality with a deep sense of focus on most of the power dynamics that render women disadvantaged. For instance, feminist scholars like Tong, who presented their work in 2009, argued that unequal burdens coven the women under traditional marital roles, especially with household labor division. Thus, it is from the fact that this theory inspires the research on participants' desire to have their relationships less unequal that this particular paragraph is written. The work by Hochschild and Machung (2012) entitled 'second shift' also illustrates the lasting impact of labor division on inability to derive satisfaction from marriage for women.

Together, these theories give a firm grasp on how rigid traditional gender roles hold by and large, the effect and experience of intersecting identities, and, thus, the craving to have more egalitarian partnerships in terms of marriage.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research is guided by three main objectives:

- To explore how young adults perceive gender roles in marital relationships in Pakistan.
- To analyze how individuals' perceptions are shaped by cultural, familial, and societal influences.
- To examine how traditional roles are challenged and reinforced by education, occupation, and social media.

1.3 Research Question

How do young adults in Pakistan perceive and navigate traditional and evolving gender roles within marital relationships, and how are these perceptions influenced by cultural norms, family structures, education, occupation, and social media?

1.4 Rationale of the study

In Pakistan, traditional gender roles have been strongly reinforced by religious teachings and cultural norms, which position men as providers and women as caregivers. These roles, deeply

embedded in societal values, shape expectations within marital relationships and are often considered essential for marital harmony. Previous research indicates that traditional gender roles are often seen as crucial for maintaining stability and order within marriages, particularly in patriarchal societies (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In many cases, religious interpretations and cultural norms continue to perpetuate these roles, influencing both men and women's behavior and expectations (Farooq & Tabassum, 2022). While such roles provide clarity within marital dynamics, they often restrict individual agency and contribute to the unequal division of labor and power within the family.

Family structures also play a significant role in shaping perceptions of gender roles in marriage. Studies have shown that parental relationships often serve as templates for younger generations, influencing their views on marital roles (Desai & Banerji, 2008). In Pakistan, the joint family system is a prevalent structure that both fosters shared responsibilities and reinforces paternal hierarchies. Research by Khan and Javed (2021) suggests that joint families can perpetuate traditional power structures, with older male members exerting authority over household decisions. Conversely, nuclear families offer greater autonomy but concentrate domestic responsibilities on individual partners, particularly on women, leading to an unequal division of labor (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

Furthermore, social media and changing societal norms complicate the dynamics of gender roles within marriage. While social media platforms expose individuals to progressive ideals of gender equality and shared responsibilities, they also propagate unrealistic portrayals of marital relationships. Jenkins and Shifman (2020) argue that social media can both challenge and reinforce traditional gender norms, often presenting idealized and unattainable versions of relationships. These dual influences create challenges for individuals attempting to reconcile personal aspirations with social pressures and expectations (Farooq & Tabassum, 2022).

Given these complexities, this study aims to explore how young adults in Pakistan perceive and navigate traditional and evolving gender roles within marital relationships. By examining the impact of cultural norms, familial structures, and digital influences, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that shape gender expectations in a rapidly changing societal context. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on gender roles and marital satisfaction, particularly in societies where traditional norms are gradually being challenged by modern values and external influences.

1.5 Study Scope

This is the research concerning young adults 18-26 years in particular the university students from multiple academic backgrounds giving a better understanding of how education, occupation, and family structures intertwine with cultural and societal expectations in people's sense of gender roles concerning marital relationships. This research includes urban educated persons representing a category that is living on the edge of traditional norms and of modern aspirations for gender equality.

Hence a very pertinent contextualization of study outcomes in the Pakistani context, where intersectionalities between tradition and newism regarding role allocations can most aptly be discussed in terms of culture, religion, and society. By basing the study on young adults, the same establishes the context of gender roles still being molded as the subjects either prepare or live in marital relationships. While specific to this demographic—urban, educated, and at the

formative stages of marriage—the implications of findings are much broader as they relate to societal frameworks for dealing with issues and opportunities in achieving gender equity in marital dynamics in Pakistan.

This study contributes to advance a more sophisticated comprehension of how people transact their traditional expectations against modern values, thereby bringing to the fore pluralities of gender roles in marriage. The gap established between theoretical frames, and lived experiences is filled and preconceptions shaping gender roles brought to light, to give application recommendations for counseling-educational initiatives and policy-making towards engendering equitable partnerships. It is concerned with an understanding, contestation, and reinforcement of gender roles in marriage, through an individual's voice and theoretical lens, thus reflecting the interconnectedness of tradition, modernity, and personal agency.

2. Literature Review

Cultural, societal, and religious constraints have, in many instances, defined the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the family, marriage included. As in Pakistan, this norm goes as far as prescribing income earners and managers of business decisions as being males, while women are expected to manage houses and caregiving activities (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Khan & Javed, 2021). Culture and religious teachings also counsel such things. For example, Islamic rulings in Pakistan would often say that men are supposed to earn the money while women are more attached to family (Khan & Javed, 2021). This kind of stratification is also supported from the basis of Social Role Theory, which claims that gender roles are shaped by societal expectations and become institutionalized through family structures, cultural practices, and religious beliefs (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Despite this, the picture is changing as far as education is concerned, as one moves toward the rural-urban divide, industrialization has changed the occupational faces and social media influences as well. & Tabassum Farooq (2022) note that education is responsible for changing perceptions about the roles of gender since those who want better education and are willing to support gender equality both in public and private spheres are those having higher education. The research by Pew Research Center (2020) also shows that higher education helps to promote progressive attitudes towards gender roles, particularly among women, who increasingly demand shared responsibilities in marriage. The evolving aspect also manifests in societies that have begun questioning traditional gender roles, but mostly to still retain their status quo (McGovern, 2022).

These subtle changes, however, do not entirely do away with normal gender ideas since the family has its role together with societal pressures. Desai and Banerji (2008) explain how joint family systems still maintain the traditional gender expectation, where all the decisions are made by men belonging to senior classes. This was meant for maintaining a man-dominated authority structure in which even women work outside but bear the primary responsibility for domestic work (Desai & Banerji, 2008). Unlike the nuclear family providing more autonomy, it is burdensome for women who, according to Hochschild and Machung's (2012) study on "second shift", have to work outside as well as do housework. Indeed, they had to face an issue of role conflict and marital dissatisfaction (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010) while trying to balance

professional success and domestic demands that usually befall dual-income couples in the household.

These effects of education and occupation upon the gender role are substantiated further by McGovern (2022), who points out that now, with the gradual entrance of women into the workplace in Pakistan, the traditional orientation regarding gender roles becomes blurred. But as Hochschild and Machung (2012) illuminate, although the boundaries of women's professionalism were stretched, they authenticate the assertion that most house-wives remain responsible for the bulk load of household obligations, which would indeed intervene in their marital satisfaction. Farooq and Tabassum (2022) argued that women from Pakistan are slowly but surely attempting higher education and professional careers; yet the deep-rooted cultural expectation has stipulated such women as the most-important caregivers and renders a void between individual aspirations and societal expectations.

The family plays a great part in formulating an individual's perception regarding gender roles in marriage. Seraj, Nourani and Shakeri (2023) conducted a research according to which many people base their hopeful marriage model on their observations of their parents' marriages. In such cases, youth tend to reproduce what they have learned from their parents into their own marriages. Nielsen (1999) revealed from the studies of settings family, such as in the family joint or the nuclear, matters greatly in the perception of one's marriage expectations and roles for gender. Such marriage expectations and such gender roles serve a template to an individual through observation that is often encouraged to see. Thus, parental relationships offer templates that reinforce traditional gender expectations or promote more egalitarian roles according to what individuals observe within the household (Seraj et al., 2023).

Based on their thoughts family is an important one to cast mold for the individual in making them a better ideal for a gender role in marriage. As researched by Seraj, Nourani, and Shakeri (2023), Generally, for many people, their truth and parameters about getting married were developed through the perceptions of their parents. Such scenarios present situations where younger people reproduce their parents' marriages in their own. Parents influence perceptions and marriage conflicts between partners (Kamran et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2024). Intergenerational trauma leads to disturbances in young adults (Javaid et al., 2024). According to Nielsen (1999), it was revealed from the studies of settings of family, such as joint and nuclear, matters a lot when it comes to perception to one's marriage expectation and roles of gender. These marriage expectations and gender roles serve as a template wherein an individual learns a lot through observation usually encouraged to see. Thus, parental relationships give templates that either enforce traditional gender expectations or promote more egalitarian roles, depending upon what individuals see at home (Seraj et al., 2023).

The role of social media is yet another very potent factor toward changing ideas on gender roles. Jenkins and Shifman (2020) note that social media challenges as well as legitimates traditional gender roles; it develops avant-garde gender norms even as it purveys idealized and sometimes utopian images of relationships. Social media sensitization impacts perception on gender roles (Iqbal et al., 2024). According to Farooq et al. (2023), social media extends a multi-nation window for the young adult in Pakistan with feminist movements around gender and equality. To a certain extent, these principles do not match with local societies and cultures,

creating much tension between individual wants and societal expectations. Social persuasion plays role in impacts of social media on adults and their decisions (Ramzan et al., 2023). Most ambivalence comes out from such dual influence in many participants' lived experiences in their expression of battle with personal aspirations toward gender equality in a world that continues to have extremely drawn social values that prevail in their community (Farooq et al., 2023).

Studies have also been conducted on the relationship between gender role and marital satisfaction. Basically traditional gender roles lead to lower scores of satisfaction among couples in matrimony, according to Stanik and Bryant (2010), most noticeably among women who seem to be more overburdened with an unequal division of labor in the house. Studies on the subject have towards focusing since a long time ago. It has always been proved that egalitarian marital relations, which require both partners to have input in both the domestic sphere and decision-making responsibilities, tend to find individuals satisfied and well-being (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Feminist theory argues that inequities in traditional gender roles contribute to unqualified inequalities and that equality within marriage enhances satisfaction since it would lessen the psychological distress attributable to role strain and unequal expectations (Tong, 2009). Women who expect their roles to be shared in marriage, according to McGovern (2022), are more likely to report greater satisfaction and fulfillment, adding that egalitarian marriages do contribute to greater happiness in general. Women need to be mindful to balance work-family life (Javaid et al., 2023).

The discourse on the most recent gender roles in marriage relations advocates continuous discord between the traditional and modern views regarding gender roles. It happens especially in a country like Pakistan. Despite preserving most traditional roles, evolution is taking place towards more equality expectations in marriage due to other factors like education, social media, and family structure. Nonetheless, the same societal norms, cultural expectations, and family norms continue reinforcing traditional gender roles with respect to housework. Therefore, this paper suggests a need for further research as to how to negotiate these changing relationships toward more egalitarianism in marriage within the Pakistani context. So this research, will add to that debate by examining how the newest and young emerging adults in Pakistan view and negotiate gender roles in their society, thereby reflecting the level of changes experienced going through the much broader picture of what the entire society faces.

3. Research Methodology

The method used for this thematic analysis study incorporates the critical procedures of; research design, participant selection, data gathering, data analysis and ethical issues. This section offers a brief of every phase of the study alongside the steps taken to enhance validity and reliability of the study.

3.1. Research Design

This research uses a quantitative, descriptive research approach to assess how Pakistani young adults understand gender roles within marriages. Educational qualitative research approach in exposing multifaceted phenomenon of social reality that enables to comprehensively analyze

participants' life realities (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This method allows the participants to express how the social, cultural and family affects the perception of roles of marriage.

Exploratory in nature enables the researchers to find out new categories without restriction and is important especially when studying something as vibrant and complicated as gender roles (Stebbins, 2001). Such work enhances willingness to consider new perspective and more detailed interpretations which makes the framework suitable for thematic analysis.

3.2. Data Collection Process:

Consequently, semi-structured interviews were embraced as the main data gathering approach, since they combine familiarity with fluctuation (Kallio et al., 2016). This method proves more useful when the researcher is either unsure of what general information is expected or where there is admitted sensitivity of areas under study like the roles of husband and wife in a marriage.

Framework Development: Kallio et al (2016) specify that there are five steps to follow when designing a qualitative, semi-structured interview guide. First one is identifying preconditions by considering the role of this study as well as checking whether the posed research question is adequate to qualitative approach. Next is retrieving and using prior knowledge: To some extent there is purpose in using materials and frameworks to create interview questions based on literature reviews. Then preliminary questions are formulated by using the retrieved knowledge. It comes up with questions that are open-ended and exploratory in nature. After that, it is prepared the pilot testing the guide. The choice of questions, their clarity, relevance and coherence are the concerned of pilot study. At the end final guide is presented and relevance and finalization of the guide incorporating the feedback and theoretical development of the concept, are completed. The questions of pilot testing are carved out as the main phase through which researchers are able to test questions, as well as establish the ease of using the guide and other ethical issues that may arise. There is flexibility in semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews provide more flexibility in terms of how a specific interview unfolds based on the responses of the participant as well as focusing on both breadth and depth of the information collected

The topics discussed in the interview guide include, definitions of gender roles, views towards equality in decision-making and other household chores, education, culture and family, and social media. Interview questions and answers did not aim at using close-ended and forced-choice questions which limited open responses from participants and enabled them to offer examples instead of hypothetical responses.

In total, every interview took around 30 minutes, and could be in either English or Urdu, depending to the preference of the participant to avoid any discomfort while answering the questions. Interviews conducted were orally and informed consent was obtained. All interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Such a method allowed filtering and validating information without losing participants' perspective and fills in gaps and shares valuable insights in the process.

3.3. Participant of the Research:

Convenience sampling was used to identify members with, different but reasonable opinions about gender roles in marital relationships. This method was used intentionally because of its feasibility and the possibility of reaching precisely the intended group of young adults in transition life Phases. This approach was helpful in order to include within the study as many different perspectives as possible that would encompass the socio-cultural characteristics of Pakistan society.

The participants selected for the study were ten in number, both male and female, aged between 18-26 years. This demographic means young adults either beginning or thinking about marital relationships; thus, applicable to the study of conservative and liberal concepts about gender norms. No individual had any prior research experience with gender roles; therefore, the participants' views were not influenced by prior research findings.

Sources were selected from a pool of students from diverse academic backgrounds such as applied psychology, applied linguistics, political science as well as environmental science. This diversity enriched the pool of view points and made it clear how different education and different cultural background affect the perception of gender roles.

3.4. Tools and Software:

Microsoft Word was utilized as a tool for pulling and editing the transcripts in order to maintain focus on data organization and cohesiveness. Turbo Transcribe was used to carry out fast and accurate transcription of all the audio recordings; the playback controls can be used to capture what the participants are saying word by word.

ChatGPT was used in initial processes of data analysis like theme extraction and fine-tuning of the format of results presentation. The use of these tools helped in the flow of research by addressing structural methods of data collection, transcription, and analysis.

3.5. Ethical Consideration:

The ethical considerations required informing consent from all the participants and ethical integrity was upheld in this study. Informants were given clear information on the aims of the study, the techniques that would be required in the study, the possible hazards involved in the study, and their right to leave the study at any one time without any explanation. They promoted accountability and created confidence.

To control for the participants' anonymity all participants received pseudonyms while identifying demographic data were eliminated from the final dataset. Self-data was managed appropriately and omitted from the study to eliminate the identification of the participants.

4. Findings

This section contains results of the study based upon the analyzing the interview transcripts. Coding is done as P1 , P2 , P3, and etc. (with M or F for gender), in the chronological order of the interviews, conducted. These findings are grouped under six of the major theme categories identified while analyzing data.

These findings suggest that gender role perception is complex in young adults' lives in Pakistan. However, themes also highlight the deep impact of old as well as modern expectations concerning marriage dynamics, which reflect a continuous juggling between the cultural definitions and the emerging definitions of gender equality as viewed by the enlightened youth.

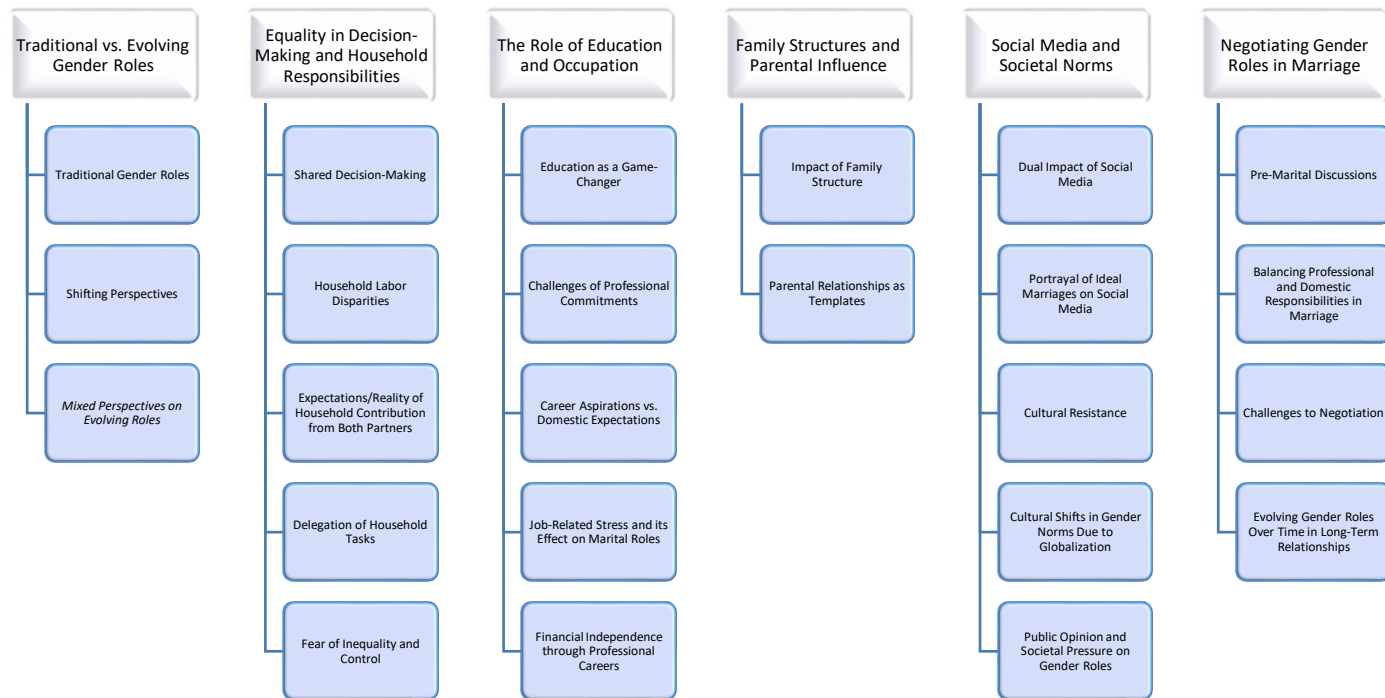


Figure 1. Flowchart of themes and sub-themes

i. Traditional vs. Evolving Gender Roles

The theme of Traditional versus Emerging Gender Roles illustrates the ever-existing tension between a strong cultural aspect of past gender roles and the changing pictures in terms of gender roles among the younger generation. Although traditional gender roles dominate, all participants mentioned that attitudes are evolving, thanks to education, global exposure, and social media in transforming such dynamics. While some focus on societal and cultural expectation in relation to marital roles, others have come a long way in seeing a more progressive approach where the younger generation is concerned. As P3 commented, "When we divide our work and do not

specify gender roles, it has a good impact on our relationship." of cultural learning and expectations. However, this shift, or at least its promotion through religious or cultural learning, was not universal.

a. Traditional Gender Roles

The most common traditional roles assigned for women and men still exist, even as every participant recognized the amount of patriarchal expectations brought into the marriage. Their primary breadwinner was the male household and house holding was said to be the female one. The example offered by P1 was: *"In our culture, most of housewives didn't work and mainly the men do work or job."* Indeed, it further reinforces the culture-peened idea that men should maintain the financial base of the family while women take care of domestic duties.

I have always thought there is division between gender in duties, especially when it comes to marriage. For instance, *"if a man is working, then he should fulfill the responsibilities of the family... But if a woman is not going to earn, then she should be sensible and take care of her family."* Indicating in some way or the other that for a woman, her role is almost exclusively with house responsibilities, regardless of whether she is working outside.

P2 also stated how the roles are gendered through everyday actions saying, *"Men even didn't go for water, women have to bring them water."* This quote brings out how shorn gender expectations have the shape of behavior in both private and public spheres.

b. Evolving Gender Roles

As one of the subjects talked about, participants recognized evolving gender roles due to one's education and social media. P1 mentioned the contribution of social media to younger generations: *"Social media is changing the mindset of the younger generation. It shows girls their ideals in movies and reels. You can also get yourself into your own career. There can be mutual understanding and communication in both."* In other words, it signifies the move 'the movement towards gender equality. It is thus a source where both partners can pursue their careers while sharing work in the domestic sphere without necessarily dividing it by gender.

P3 thought for a moment about how their parents got married and how that was constructed into their understanding of what men and women are like: *"My father used to cook... he used to clean... my father didn't allow cleaners. He used to say, 'No, you don't have to come.'"* This example of a more equal division of labor in their family affected how P3 thought, leading him to believe that *"When we divide our work and do not specify gender roles, it has a good impact on our relationship."*

Changes in family attitudes were increasingly evident, according to P7, who believed that ideally both partners should be involved in all aspects of their marriage: *"In a marriage, ideally both should share responsibilities; it depends on the house. If both are working, they share, if not, it varies."*

c. Mixed Perspectives on Evolving Roles

Some people embraced new ideas about gender roles, and some other still held their old views. One example was P8 that stressed on the social and religious norms by saying that, before, women used to stay at home. But now, with both partners working and family dynamics changing, that idea of their supposed role is being thwarted. *"In the past, women were expected*

to stay home, but nowadays both partners working is challenging that notion," P8 said. On the other hand, P9 said that the society has its waves of change, but the foot of tradition is firm. P9 said, *"I have this belief that both men and women should contribute evenly in a relationship, but, in truth, reality does not cohere with this much often in our communities."* Above all, P4 agreed in that gender roles are indeed changing because of the increased participation of men in household chores as opposed to when women had a monopoly over domestic work. P4 steered, *"I have seen that men are now doing more household chores, a shift from the past where it was mostly women doing these tasks."* This was considered change in the positive direction as more men were taking the responsibility in the homes as much as it was still a culture that expected men to primarily provide financially.

ii. Equality in Decision-Making and Household Responsibilities

Equality in decision-making and household responsibilities highlights a shared desire among participants for a fair distribution of chores and mutual involvement in significant decisions within marriage. This emphasizes cooperation, mutual understanding, and respect between partners, with many expressing that household responsibilities should ideally not follow rigid gender roles. Instead, participants prefer shared responsibilities, reflecting a desire for collaboration rather than one-sided obligations. However, these aspirations often clash with cultural and religious influences, where traditional ideas shape expectations. Some participants expressed concerns about cultural norms imposing authority and control in relationships, potentially creating conflicts in decision-making and role assignments.

The interviews revealed varying perspectives, initially conservative but evolving toward shared responsibilities in wage work, labor, and decision-making. While some participants supported equal separation of labor and decision-making, others maintained that men should remain the primary decision-makers and women the caregivers. Many were concerned about unequal household contributions and the potential for power imbalances, which could lead to one partner controlling the other's decisions and actions. The findings suggest that gendered expectations and cultural norms continue to influence how responsibilities are approached. Nonetheless, there is growing advocacy for more balanced roles in household tasks and decision-making to foster equality and minimize conflict.

a. Shared Decision-Making

Regarding Shared Decision-Making, there was a noticeable division between participants who advocated for an equal say in marital decisions and those who still adhered to more traditional views. *"The partner should be understanding and committed and hardworking,"* said P1, for example, remarking that in so-called ideal marriage relations, pertaining decisions between partners should have equal grounds. P3 acceded: *"We don't specify you have to do this... we gotta do everything together, right?"* This puts forward a clear picture of equality in making decisions where both parties contribute to the molding of their shared life. However, other study participants said decisions were often traditional. By way of example, P6 referred to, *There seem to be expectations set beforehand with marriage; "My husband should be working well with me... just so I do not have any misunderstandings."*

b. Household Labor Disparities

The sub-theme of Household Labor Disparities indicated differences regarding the division of household chores. Most of the participants agreed that the chores need to be shared divided; however, some participants pointed out that traditional gender roles persisted where women were housewives. As P1 put it, they want balance by saying in the future marriage means if the wife is sick, *"the husband should help her."* P4 admitted that tradition still looms over people: *"women will take care of the children and men will take care of the husband"* in the context of a joint family system. Even today, most people still think that housework is done by women. As indicated by P8, in their view, *"a woman's job was to run the house."* This shows that despite having changed mindsets, there still remains a wide gap in expectations that women have to take very much weight of house running especially from traditional backgrounds.

c. Expectations/Reality of Household Contribution from Both Partners

This sub-theme concerning Expectations/Reality for Household Contribution by Both Partners brings to notice the gaps expected by the participants from their partners for themselves and the harsh realities that follow it. Many respondents wanted the equal contribution but were rather doubtful about having their dreams fulfilled. For example, P1 had the idea of her partner not having to work too much because she pictured the husband being able to help when the wife needs rest, saying, *"if the wife is ill, the husband should help her."* In contrast, P9 would have been a person more egalitarian by saying, *"we're both equal... if he doesn't do it, then I'll do it."* This implies a rather progressive thinking about home duties. On the other hand, for P10, it is very much a question of practical realities versus an ideal: *"Well, it depends if both are working at that time, and then I would expect both of us to be working at home as well."* Thus, one would share common expectations between people in the kind of household where there would actually be equal contribution to it-but reality does vary according to situational factors-mostly the work and health of members of the family.

d. Delegation of Household Tasks

Several participants in terms of the Delegation of Household Tasks expressed that both partners should have clear communication with each other. Some, however, acknowledged that traditional norms usually dominate household tasks. P4 said, *"If a woman wants help, then she should do it, and if a man wants to work, then part of the discussion should be household responsibilities,"* suggesting that clarity about partners' roles is necessary. This implies that delegation is mutual for some participants but often lies heavily on the traditional gender expectations. But P8 put forth a more flexible argument, one that asserted that should the wife work, the husband should also chip in, *"If she can do the rest of the housework, then it's good; if not, then keep a maid."* This perspective suggests that while important, delegation may depend on both parties' work situations for having some leverage on household work.

e. Fear of Inequality and Control

Finally, Fear of Difference and Domination came out as the real concern manifested in most of the participants regarding the domination of one partner in managing the family matters or the decision-making. P1 voiced such fear: *"I fear that the partner should not be judgmental or rude,"* mentioning the fact that women generally are controlled according to traditional norms, a sentiment echoed by others. P3 shares similar fears by mentioning how culture may affect their relationship: *"Men are often told... you have to control the woman."* Such fears reflect a larger concern that reflects on the structure of the marriage itself, in which there are gendered

expectations that often cause someone in a couple, often a woman, to shoulder unequal burdens of responsibility or submission. P9 emphasized the value of honesty and transparency in that relationship by saying, *"if someone lies to me, then that person is out of my life,"* denoting that, like any other member, she wanted equal communication and decision-making ratios without manipulation or control.

iii. The Role of Education and Occupation

Education and employment became significant themes in the responses wherein the participants discussed the critical nature education and career choices have on marriage, gender relations, and personal aspirations. Overall, the participants emphasized how education liberates individuals, particularly women, and what employment-related barriers practitioners have to the age long housewife status. Education and occupation were seen as pivotal in shaping one's identity and role in the family, as well as influencing financial independence and the balance of power in marital relationships. However, these elements also come with challenges, as professional aspirations frequently conflict with traditional domestic roles, and the stress related to job commitments often affects the overall balance within the marriage. The participants' narratives reflect the ongoing negotiation between personal ambitions and the expectations rooted in societal and familial structures, illustrating the dynamic tension that exists between career and family life

a. Education as a Game-Changer

It was generally accepted that education would work wonders in transforming the roles and expectations of individuals with regard to marriage. *"He should be educated,"* stated P1, adding to the bunch, *"Education is necessary,"* fitting well within the broad shooting purpose of the piece as just one of the spines of marital expectations setup in society. By contrast, P2 said that education was important, but not before mutual understanding, thus exposing the fallacy that education alone makes for a good marriage. Most participants attested to the fact that, talking about common understanding, respect, and more fair division of responsibilities, having an educated partner makes all these feasible. P4 put it down to, *"Education is necessary,"* indicating that it is related to one's ability to manage work and home responsibilities quite effectively. In the main, education was understood as a chief prop that would have helped to dismantle heuristically defined gender stereotypes and would provide further avenues for women to balance family and work life; some of the interviewees mentioned how their aspirations were influenced or transformed by their educational backgrounds.

b. Challenges of Professional Commitments

Different people expressed various challenges related to professional commitments, stating that it was difficult to strike a balance between professional commitments and home responsibilities. P1 found it very difficult to balance work and home life, she said, *"If there is financial crisis in family he should be able to overcome this and not go into depression and stressed."* It implies that professional commitments demand not just time and effort but also add up to emotional and psychological layers, which would certainly affect the dynamism of marriage. P4 reflected on how the traditional mindset sometimes impacts on men, because *"if a man needs a woman in some work, he will definitely do it"*, which simply states that gender roles

are sometimes absolutely inflexible in work and hence create conflict due to unmet expectations. P10 narrated how professional duties affect personal ambitions, adding that *"sometimes the sun is shining but sometimes its rains"*, which captured rather well the ambiguity and emotional toll career-driven persons pay while trying to make the work and married life co-exist.

c. Career Aspirations vs. Domestic Expectations

The conflict between career aspirations and domestic expectations was a central point in the responses, with several participants noting that professional success often comes into direct conflict with traditional domestic roles. P1 and P3 both discussed how the expectation of women to maintain the household while also pursuing a career creates a difficult balancing act. P3 said, *"financially, neither I should depend on him nor he on me,"* signifying independence coupled with mutual respect as a way of relieving career-domestic tension. But with societal pressures edging them back to conform to gender roles, P4 punctuated it all by saying: *"if she is not going to earn, then she should be sensible,"* thus giving an impression that a woman may not always take the role of earning just because she has some professional aspirations, *"maintain balance."* Such disparity in expectations creates continual struggles for the trying family-juggling professional.

d. Job-Related Stress and its Effect on Marital Roles

Job-related stress was also given as another major factor affecting roles in marriage, as the participants related the stressors at work to their outside lives. For instance, P6 brought out the point that the stresses of professional life can affect relationships, while P1 demanded that *"a person should be hardworking and should not go into depression,"* emphasizing that a partner's ability to cope with job stress is mandatory in a healthy marriage. P4 confirmed this assertion and declared that the two partners require emotional capacity to stand by each other in the pains of the profession. On the other hand, P10 presented how most of the time an individual's career dictates how they see their position in the marriage, saying *"sometimes it does affect you"* when job-related stress makes a person feel 'lower than' or 'higher than' another in the marital context.

e. Financial Independence through Professional Careers

The whole aspect of financial independence through one's profession has been widely discussed in terms of empowerment for men and women alike, especially with regard to their roles in marriage. For instance, P3 longed for both partners to be financially independent, stipulating, *"We should try that we are both financially independent so that we are not dependent on each other"*. The statement above indicates a dying passion for an egalitarian financial input-independent relationship. In another case, P2 expected a perfect spouse who would be the one easily fulfilling the home expenses T. for. Both people, like P5, felt that a man is supposed to cater to the finances of the family, but P9 mentioned changing on this matter: *"I will never blame him that why he is giving me two meals a day,"* since there is now wider and common understanding toward the financial roles. Overall, this margin of modern-day relationships concerning financial independence aspects leaves room for an equal contribution from both partners while reducing the financial strain that could worsen conflict in gender roles.

iv. *Family Structures and Parental Influence*

The participants were more prominent when asked about themes of household and parental influence within the responses as per family impact on their perception about gender roles in marriage as well as on their aspiration to marry in the future. The outcomes suggested that forms of family structure, most specifically the family type, i.e. nuclear or joint families, significantly influenced gender expectation, marital responsibility, and relationship dynamics. In addition, the influence of parental relationships was cited as the big contributor to individual expectations toward marriage. Participants reflected on the way their parents' relationships, whether idealized or flawed, would serve as templates for their own future relationships. Family structure and parental influence thus come out as the intersections of issues of personal upbringing, societal norms and marital expectations, which put individuals on the road of shaping their own relationships.

a. *Impact of Family Structure*

Family structures affect gender roles and expectations in marriage that participants have explained based on their individual family experiences in comparison with different family structures. As stated by P1, *"If you live in a joint family, responsibilities are divided; however, if you have two or three brothers, then the work is divided, but if you are in a nuclear family, then all the burden is on one person. And usually, it is on women."* That is, the joint family creates a more balanced workload because it divides responsibilities into more individuals. On the contrary, because of the fewer family members involved in it, one partner, usually the woman is affected with a heavier burden as compared to the other. P2 also reiterated that there is nothing easy, necessarily, in a joint family: *"While living in the joint family things messed up. You didn't have time to focus on your own family."* Thus, the stress tends to be towards extended family involvement because it relatively complicates the management of domestic responsibilities.

P1 discussed how living in a joint family would influence one's gender role, where in a joint family household, *"the division of gender roles of women and men is also specified in the joint family. If we are living in a joint family, then women will take care of the children and men will take care of the husband."* Joint families seem to confirm stalwart traditional gender roles where primary concerns involve women taking the overall care of children while men take up a more conventional role of provision. However, the other participant P4 spoke on the merits of joint family life where he said, *"Any difficult task can be done in a joint family very easily,"* thus promoting the idea of shared responsibility. It suggests that the family structure is instrumental in molding both the gender expectations and the manner in which responsibilities are held and shared within the family.

b. *Parental Relationships as Templates*

The very important influence of parental relationships in shaping participants' expectations and views about marriage was quite clear. P1 explained how growing up affected her parents' relationship with these words: *"If you do not have a strong parental bond or if your parents fight, it is probably going to change the perception of the child."* This means that the relationships between the parents, particularly those which involve communication and respect, form

templates for how one imagines one's own relationships. Indeed, P4 also shared that since his parents were role models, he stated, *"My role model is my parents because their life is going well. There are ups and downs, sometimes there are fights, and sometimes there is no fight- but life is good."* Having observed that even functional relationships have their ups and downs, creates a good template for future expectations in marriage because any clashes are considered as normal within relationships, just as long as there is mutual understanding and respect.

P6 also spoke about how the relationship her parents had shaped her expectations about marriage, saying: *"My role model is my father. I want to see how my father treats my mother. I also want to see someone who treats me like my father treats my mother."* This reflects how parental relationships highly influence the qualities one looks for in one's partner. P9 states, *"My father respects my mother a lot. My mother is also a very good partner,"* which indicates how a father's approach to marriage influenced her. The view of her parents' relationship became an ideal model for her expectations of mutual respect in her future marriage, coupled with that.

Though not all of them agreed that their parents' ways were ideal types. P5 disclosed *"my personal experience is, my parents come from the same family. I am against that concept."* This more serious condemnation of parental relationships reflects that some participants rather questioned the traditional roles or even family arrangements seen by them. P10, in contrast, added that the dynamics between parents and children most often founded a person's views: *"People can observe how men and women perceive each other, and how these perspectives shape their interactions."* This highlighted the role of both direct and indirect observation of parental relationships in shaping personal values and beliefs concerning marriage.

v. Social Media and Societal Norms

Social media and societal norms play a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions of gender roles in marital relationships. People's views on the gender roles in marital relationships are strongly influenced by social media and cultural norms. The overall results show that social media can both challenge and strengthen the existing standards on genders, posing both positive and negative consequences. While social media provides an avenue for women to assert their independence and challenge traditional gender roles, it also creates unrealistic portrayals of marriage and family life. Societal pressures, in turn, influence individuals' behaviors, especially in contexts where public opinion and cultural expectations become the defining forces behind marital decisions. The tension between societal resistance to change and the gradual cultural shifts resulting from globalization is evident in the discussions on gender roles, making social media a double-edged sword when it comes to the evolution of marital dynamics.

a. Dual Impact of Social Media

In the responses, duality of impact of social media was manifested in the minds of participants who believe in the positive as well as negative effects it had on their perceptions about gender roles. P1 talked about social media in changing the perception of society, *where "It changed the way mind of younger generation occupies. I think for feminism it's mostly social media."* Thus, it indicates that the younger generation has had its views skewed on gender

equality and women rights due to social media. But P1 too recognized the ill effects, adding, *"To some extent, social media affects negatively and positively in both ways."* Such a territory is possessed as it is shown by the duality of its impact through which it works as a tool of empowerment as well as from the other side by it having unrealistic expectations from the users.

P2 also identified the mixed impact of social media as it creates a "fantasy world" where things are not always as they appear. *"We spend most of our time on social media. Hence the kind of information available, we use it. In today's world, we have a fantasy world. But in reality, it is not like that."* This shows how social media distort people's expectations in reality especially gender roles and marriage which has an idealized but often unrealistic view of relationships and family life.

b. Portrayal of Ideal Marriages on Social Media

Ideal marriage portrayal on social media was a frequent theme among participants. As P1 said, *"Married girls on social media are told their ideals in reels or movies,"* which led them to think that it was not real and created fantasies where the pressure and issues from reality on relationships were completely forgotten. P9 added that unrealistic expectations resulted from just such a portrayal on social media: *"Social media is, according to me, a stupid thing. It has made everyone crazy. It has made both men and women crazy. For women, men are incapable of doing anything; for men, women are incapable of doing anything."* This gives a strong sense of acquaintance between what happens in reality and the idealized portrayals on social media as well as the real-life challenges that couples face in married life, specific with respect to gender roles in marriage.

P10 observed that while this kind of social media is passing by "ideal couples", it does not define the entire scope of marital life. And he said, *"We watch those ideal couples and you feel, 'yeah, that's how it's supposed to be, filling that gap, but, again, there's still a lot of news on the social media as well about those perfect families, and their real life isn't quite the same."* Hence, the contrast between a curated-perfect image of marriage on social media and real-life complexities ensue, including the negotiation of roles to perform.

c. Cultural Resistance

Cultural Resistance to Change Thousands of years of tradition can be heard in the cultural resistance against change in gender roles. New expectations are shaped by what society defines within marriage between individuals. P4 reflected on how the characteristics of traditional thinking still *"teach one to believe"* that it is only a man who earns while a woman carves the home. Though the dynamics have changed with some families, P4 states, *"Necessarily, women should not work; it's for men to take up. Our society teaches us that."* Very well, that is an illustration of cultural resistance against more egalitarian gender roles in marriage. However, the emergence of social media and modern ideas has not entirely succeeded in making cultural forces weaken; thus, they still limit how far can run these gender roles. P5 nursed the same reflection about this resistance, pointing out that most still haven't abandoned the old tradition. *"All these traditional cultural, societal, or modernity ideas are the cause of our gender roles having problems,"* P5 explained. Cultural resistance against new movements or above-all

changes makes the most significant hindrance to transforming gender norms in a society that has very decided expectations imposed on an individual's behavior and choices-transforming it into another evidence of a problem instead of a remedy.

d. Cultural Shifts in Gender Norms Due to Globalization

Globalization indeed talked about gender role-induced change in men and women in marital contexts. Modernism, thus, stated P5, especially regarding women's financial independence, changes the gender roles. *"When wife is independent financially, she will not depend on men. They will say I am independent, I don't need anyone."* This cultural shift is that money empowers women to flout traditional gender roles. Yet, according to P5, within the Pakistani context, this kind of change is problematic: *"people are going towards modernism; they don't want to go back to their traditions and Islam."* It, then, represents a kind of tension between globalization and traditional cultural values, as people and societies grapple with how to position themselves between modernism and cultural systems.

P10 also reflected the societal and cultural transitions in gender roles: while some adapt to globalized perceptions about equality, others may resist change. P10 said, *"We should have an open mind to that and we should not set, I would say, a pedestal, a set pedestal for that so that everybody is open to have a more comfortable partnership as they want without getting affected by the stereotypes."* This leaves a shift in marriage toward flexible gender roles, but it requires both society and individual openness for change.

e. Public Opinion and Societal Pressure on Gender Roles

Public opinion and societal pressure were key themes in how gender roles in marriage are understood and acted upon. P3 articulated how societal norms confine particular gender roles, focusing specifically on how men and women should behave by saying, *"My college was a co-education; I remember when I was in it, whenever I went with a few of my female friends, they used to say men don't sit with women, you should sit here."* This points to societal pressure to conform to gendered expectations, especially how men are supposed to behave with women when they are together in public and private spaces. This experience emphasizes the societal pressure restricting personal freedom and influencing how the individual acts on the basis of cultural norms tied to gender status.

P10 used to have a few things to say about the same issue, that is how outside opinions implied that public pressure had made them cave into such roles. *"We always look for a blame on the patriarchal for the male to force the women to do something not of their will,"* said P10. However, P10 further states that this is a blame also meted out to women on their part in the enforcement of such stereotypes in saying, *"we blame the other side more as we are also to blame."* Such recognition for shared responsibility in reinforcing gender norms makes complex the public opinion and social pressure involved in developing marriage roles and their relationships.

vi. Negotiating Gender Roles in Marriage

The theme of negotiating gender roles in marriage is centered around the dynamic interaction between individuals' personal values, societal expectations, and the evolving nature of

relationships. General findings indicate that pre-marital discussions on gender roles are important for forms of using the system to manage expectations. However, it is also highly colored by the traditions of one's cultural communities. The process of negotiation is complex by societal pressure and individual career aspirations when finding a juggle between professional and domestic responsibilities. With passage of time, there tends to be a shift in the gender roles in long-term relationships, especially since both partners have matured over time and learned to adapt to a change in life circumstances like career change and occurrence of offspring. However, negotiation is not without its challenges owing to ingrained expectations, power dynamics, and fuzzy communication. These roles evolve as the process of adapting continues to the values with which one views the world and even how the two undergo dynamics within their relationship.

a. Pre-Marital Discussions

Pre-marital discussions on gender roles have become a prerequisite for setting expectations in relationships. According to P1, even though the discourses related to marriage are culturally held to be predetermined, more so than ever, one is inclined to think that talking about gender role expectations is a necessity before going into marriage. P1 had mentioned, *"If you are in a love or arranged marriage, both partners should discuss how they want to live after marriage."* It means that clearly discussing the roles, whether traditional or modern, is one way of avoiding misunderstandings and misalignments later in the marriage.

In contrast, P4 contended that not everyone needs this, as there are implicit definitions of marriage roles among many couples in their society. P4 heard, *"It is mostly clear for both that what a man has to do and what a woman has to do. So, even if they don't do it, in our society, we have been told about the roles and responsibilities"* to indicate that while such premarital discussions may never be necessary, by and large, societal mores dictate the division of roles within marriage without giving it much talk. Ideals should be that both parties engage in such discussions to ensure clarity with mutual understanding.

b. Balancing Professional and Domestic Responsibilities in Marriage

One of the most difficult findings in the study was how to balance professional and domestic responsibilities in marriage. P3 was speaking of mutual understanding and flexibility in balancing those responsibilities: *"I mean, I just talked about the same thing that my expectations are positive. Good expectations because the partner understands well what their roles are."* This means that both partners understanding their roles and responsibilities makes it easier for them to negotiate the balance between professional and domestic obligations.

P1 has also underscored the importance of this balance, especially with regard to the male partner, saying: *"My expectation is that the partner should be less workaholic... if the wife is sick, then the husband should help her. If the wife is alone, then the husband should be willing to help."* This would bring to the fore the expectation that there should be some support and flexibility even within the labor-imposed division so that both partners do not feel overstressed trying to manage their professional and domestic obligations.

It is true that mutual support and communication are the best ingredients to find such balance in difficult times, said P6. *"If I have done my part in his life, he is also supposed to do*

hers in my life; if husband is really supportive, he will surely help me with domestic work." The very fact adds credence to collaboration and shared responsibility for the progression towards a healthy balance of professional and domestic responsibilities.

c. Challenges to Negotiation

Gender roles within marriage are not easy to negotiate, especially with expectations from cultural backgrounds and societal pressures. According to P4, the expectation of roles to be gendered may make the negotiation process complicated. "If a woman has to do housework, then she should do it," said P4, but, she added, "most of the time, men should do it." The statement points out the cultural-presumed obligations of men and women, which thus may give them the sense of conflict on the obligation to adhere to that.

P10 raised alarm on the intricacies of such negotiations, especially when there are differences in their perceptions regarding gender roles by both partners. *"There is a lot of stereotypes... we blame the male for being the patriarchal and for the male to be forcing the women to do something against their will,"* P10 stated. The issue here is to address these stereotypical views in the context of ever-emerging perspectives on gender equality in marriage. Differently shaped expectations of partners according to their upbringing and societal influences to quite a degree make negotiating gender roles difficult, making both compromise and open dialogue essential.

d. Evolving Gender Roles Over Time in Long-Term Relationships

In the course of a long-term relationship, gender roles change as each partner grows, circumstances alter, and challenges pile up in life. P3 believed, as long as partners define roles for themselves and communicate well about emerging roles, they will shift according to the circumstances. *"We don't have this that you have to do this, I have to do this,"* P3 explained. *"When those two things do not impact, we have to work at our own will. So that marital relationship will go very well."* By implication, as couples mature and their relationship continually progresses, they negotiate their roles new and shape it against their constant changes in life. P7 shared the very same sentiment; his view regarding this was like changing gender roles in a relationship. He said, *"If there is a lot of responsibility, then both can handle it. Both should be independent up to 75%. But if there's a lot of responsibility, a single man cannot handle because it cannot be done by a single female, while both be dependent."* Another contribution to the argument would be the way a married couple's roles evolve rather than remain static over time; and that social responsibilities must be factored into life stages toward which both partners are striding.

Table 1: Comparative Gender Role

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Findings (Female)	Findings (Male)
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Traditional vs. Evolving Gender Roles	Traditional Gender Roles	The expectation of men and women to fulfill fixed gender roles in marriage.	Females feel that traditional gender roles often define their role as caregivers and homemakers. They also express frustration with the limits placed on their autonomy.	Males acknowledge traditional roles, where men are expected to provide financially, and women are expected to manage the home. However, some express flexibility towards evolving roles.
	Evolving Gender Roles	The shift towards more flexible roles where both partners share responsibilities.	Females are generally supportive of evolving gender roles, advocating for a more equitable partnership where both work and share responsibilities equally.	Males express mixed views, with some supportive of shared roles but others believing in retaining traditional roles within marriage.
	Mixed Perspectives on Evolving Roles	Varied opinions on whether or not gender roles should evolve, influenced by cultural, societal, and personal beliefs.	Some females are cautious about evolving roles due to societal pressure and cultural expectations. Others are optimistic about more equal sharing of responsibilities.	Males are divided; some are supportive of equality, while others feel it disrupts the traditional family structure and responsibilities.
Equality in Decision-Making and Household Responsibilities	Shared Decision-Making	The extent to which both partners make decisions together regarding family matters.	Females desire a more equal say in decision-making, including financial and familial matters. They value partnership and collaboration in decision-making.	Males generally agree with shared decision-making but feel that certain decisions (e.g., finances, child-rearing) should be more aligned with traditional male responsibility.
	Household Labor	The unequal	Females express	Males

Disparities	distribution of household tasks, often due to traditional gender expectations.	frustration with unequal division of labor at home, often having to balance work and household chores.	acknowledge that household tasks are often delegated to females, but some show willingness to share responsibilities when prompted or required.
Expectations/Reality of Household Contribution from Both Partners	The ideal vs. actual contribution of each partner in managing household duties.	Females expect an equal share of household responsibilities, but often find the reality to be skewed, with the burden falling more on them.	Males acknowledge the unequal distribution but feel conflicted about sharing duties due to cultural conditioning.
Delegation of Household Tasks	How tasks are assigned within the household, often influenced by gender roles.	Females feel that household tasks should be equally shared, with both partners contributing equally to chores.	Males, in some cases, prefer to have certain tasks delegated to their partners, though some are open to helping with household duties.
Fear of Inequality and Control	The concern that gender roles might lead to control or inequality in the relationship.	Females fear being controlled or restricted by traditional gender roles, particularly in the areas of career and mobility.	Males worry about losing their authority or control within the family structure if traditional gender roles are not upheld.
The Role of Education as a Game-Changer Occupation	The impact of education on challenging traditional gender roles and empowering individuals.	Females see education as a key factor in achieving independence and challenging gender-based limitations.	Males acknowledge the transformative power of education in creating more opportunities for both genders, though some still see the traditional male role as

	Challenges of Professional Commitments	of	The balance between work, personal life, and gender roles within marriage.	Females struggle with balancing professional commitments and household responsibilities, feeling the pressure to excel at both.	central. Males also face challenges in balancing work and home life, with many feeling that work takes precedence over domestic roles.
	Career Aspirations vs. Domestic Expectations		The tension between career goals and the expectation of fulfilling domestic roles.	Females often feel the conflict between career aspirations and domestic expectations, with societal pressure to prioritize family over career.	Males expect their partners to manage domestic duties, leaving them to focus on career goals, though they may occasionally support their partner's career ambitions.
	Job-Related Stress and its Effect on Marital Roles		The stress caused by work commitments and its impact on marital dynamics.	Females report that job-related stress can affect their ability to manage household duties, leading to frustration and strained marital relationships.	Males also experience job-related stress, but they express a greater focus on providing financially, which may take precedence over household responsibilities.
	Financial Independence through Professional Careers		The degree to which professional work leads to financial independence for women.	Females view financial independence as empowering, as it allows them to challenge traditional dependence on their partner.	Males support their partner's financial independence, though some view it as potentially disrupting traditional family dynamics.
Family Structures and Parental Influence	Impact of Family Structure		The influence of family structure (nuclear, joint)	Females from nuclear families express a desire for more shared responsibilities, while	Males from joint families believe in shared responsibilities,

		on gender roles and responsibilities within the marriage.	those from joint families often have traditional expectations.	but also expect traditional roles to be followed. Those from nuclear families expect more equality in household roles.
	Parental Relationships as Templates	The role of parental relationships as models for how gender roles should be approached in marriage.	Females view their parents' relationships as important templates, often seeking equality and understanding as exemplified by their mothers.	Males see their parents' relationships as templates, though some feel that certain traditional gender roles (e.g., father as breadwinner) should be maintained in their own marriage.
Social Media and Societal Norms	Dual Impact of Social Media	The effect of social media on perceptions of gender roles and relationships.	Females feel that social media both positively influences their understanding of gender equality, but also reinforces unrealistic expectations.	Males are often influenced by social media portrayals of gender norms but feel conflicted about the expectations they see, sometimes struggling with the idea of non-traditional roles.
	Portrayal of Ideal Marriages on Social Media	The depiction of ideal relationships on social media and its effect on real-life expectations.	Females are influenced by the idealized portrayals on social media, but some express frustration with how unrealistic these portrayals are.	Males acknowledge the idealized portrayals of marriage on social media but sometimes feel that these portrayals put pressure on men to meet unrealistic standards.

	Cultural Resistance	Resistance to change in gender roles due to cultural norms.	Females acknowledge resistance from older generations or conservative societal views that prevent the full realization of gender equality.	Males recognize cultural resistance but sometimes feel pressured by traditional values that prioritize male dominance and authority in marriage.
	Cultural Shifts in Gender Norms Due to Globalization	The impact of globalization on gender role expectations in marriage.	Females are hopeful about the positive changes brought by globalization, particularly in terms of education and professional opportunities.	Males are both hopeful and cautious about cultural shifts, balancing the benefits of globalization with concerns about losing traditional structures.
	Public Opinion and Societal Pressure on Gender Roles	The effect of public opinion and societal pressure on gender roles in relationships.	Females express frustration with the societal pressure to conform to traditional roles, but also see public opinion as a source of support for gender equality.	Males recognize the societal pressures but sometimes feel that public opinion creates confusion about what their role should be in the marriage.
Negotiating Gender Roles in Marriage	Pre-Marital Discussions	The importance of discussing gender roles before marriage.	Females emphasize the need for pre-marital discussions to define roles and expectations, especially regarding career and household duties.	Males agree with the need for discussions but often feel these roles are understood implicitly, and formal discussions are less common in traditional contexts.
	Balancing Professional and Domestic Responsibilities	The struggle to balance work and home life responsibilities in marriage.	Females report a constant struggle to balance professional aspirations and domestic duties, often feeling overwhelmed.	Males feel the pressure of balancing work and home life as well, but typically

Challenges Negotiation	to	The difficulty in negotiating and sharing responsibilities within marriage.	Females face challenges in negotiating equal responsibility due to ingrained cultural expectations.	feel that their professional commitments take precedence. Males recognize the challenge of negotiating responsibilities but often feel it is complicated by the traditional gender roles that still persist in their families.
Evolving Gender Roles Over Time in Long-Term Relationships		The way gender roles evolve in long-term marriages and relationships.	Females note that while there	

5. Discussion

The present research is undertaken to investigate young adults in Pakistan towards an understanding of gender roles within marriage, besides looking into the representation of values such cultural, paternal, and social, influencing perceptions. The goals further include probing into how conventional gender roles are contested or at their most, reaffirmed through education, as well as the occupation and its publicizing through social media. It is expected that the finding will yield a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay informing young adults' attitudes to gender roles: a blend of residual and emergent values prompted by modern education, career aspiration, and globalization.

These findings indicate that culture and society are very relevant to an individual's perceptions of gender roles in marriages, but at the same time, there is great movement between questioning and redefining these roles. Particular reference will be made to the university students, who by virtue of education and exposure to new global ideas have increasingly aimed for equal partnerships. The perception and the practice of a husband and wife in a marriage are still influenced by the traditional family system, societal expectations, and, sometimes, religious belief. Consequently, the findings establish a parallelism with existing literature, which reflects that in changing socio-cultural contexts, gender roles are rather very fluid and negotiable (Gerson, 2010; Chaudhry & Jabeen, 2016).

This section goes ahead to explain the objectives of the study and further illustrate how various factors influence the shaping and challenging of young adults' perception of gender roles. Objective 1 of the study was to explore how young adults perceive gender roles in marital

relationships in Pakistan. The findings reveal that the perceptions among young adults of Pakistan about marriage gender roles are both traditional and emerging. The majority of the subjects would prefer the husband providing the benefits to the household, while the wife's primary responsibility would lie in caring for children and being a "homemaker". For example, some such participants like P4, mentioned that in the family, it would be the husband's duty to go out and earn, whereas the wife would be left to managing the household chores. But they also see the need for more balanced partnerships especially among educated youth for instance, P1 stated that in a future marriage, both parties should share the burden of household responsibilities, or rather, *"The husband should be caring and understanding, and help his wife if she is unwell"*. This indicates that although traditional practices of course exist, the shifting perspective is becoming wider in perceiving the importance of mutual support and also shared responsibilities in a marriage. These findings are congruent with research of Gager and Yabiku (2009), who stated that more pooled roles in house and finances lead to more satisfaction in marriage relationships.

Furthermore, many people have very well brought up is that they wanted an evolving relationship where some gender roles would be decided on by mutual respect and understanding, rather than rigid adherence to societal norms. The findings go hand in hand with earlier studies which asserted that the younger generation is seeking increasingly equal relations, although they are mostly in contradiction with the wider culture (Kabeer, 2012; Arnot, 2017). P3, for instance, asserted the need to balance independence and interdependence by saying, *"There is not this that you must do this; I must do this. Rather, we have to work at our own will."* This is consistent with the increasing trend in redefining the traditional gender roles as was found in Sweeney (2006), which revealed that successful marriages are more often characterized by partners willing to adapt to their changing roles.

Objective 2 of the study was to analyze how individuals' perceptions are shaped by cultural, familial, and societal influences. Cultural, familial and societal values are found to be core determinants of conceptualization of gender roles by young adults in Pakistan. The findings also indicate that perceptions are largely affected by the traditions and values that have found their way into the family setup and society as a whole. Many participants like P4, referred to the fact that women were expected to look after homes while men should earn a living. This clearly depicts the very strong and deep-rooted gender norms that continue to influence marriage roles, especially in rural areas or more conservative households. P9 gave an example from her own family where her father forbade her siblings to think about higher studies initially because for him women were supposed to make a house. This continued to give rise to social pressures to bring women again within the gender norms, not in favor of educational and professional aspirations.

Religious teachings were often cited by participants as one of the factors contributing to their understanding of gender roles. P5, for instance, noted that religious teachings needed to be followed while negotiating the roles within a marriage. He said, *"In Islam, a man is the one who runs the society and a woman is the one who makes it."* This is consistent with previous research that clearly states religious beliefs as being significantly linked to the understanding of individuals regarding their gender role expectations in marriage (Khan, 2018). The findings go beyond suggesting that religion may provide a framework for understanding marital roles to

indicate that interpretation and enactment of these roles could vary according to individual beliefs, education, and access to different ideas.

At the same time, education has also been made increasingly available with the introduction of social media and modern communication technology to expose the world view. P1 further states that *"if I am not well, I expect him to help me."* In an apparent departure from traditional views, it means contribution from both spouses in the upkeep of the family, that is, financial and domestic duties. Such attitudes are increasingly gaining ground as studies reveal that education, particularly higher education, is associated with an egalitarian view of gender roles (Cha & Hwang, 2018).

Objective 3 of the study was to examine how traditional roles are challenged and reinforced by education, occupation, and social media. Education, occupations, and media have been important sources in constructing and challenging typical gender roles in marriage. Data suggest that education has an edge in redefining the way individuals see gender roles, above all in university students. Influences of higher education in creating just relationships can be seen in participants like P10 who said, *"I think it's both of us supporting each other in our responsibilities in marriage."* P1 also added, *"There are responsibilities in managing household duties."* This transition is also noticed in the younger transitions, where people adapt progressive views toward the concept of roles through education compared to traditions confining women to home duties.

Occupational aspirations still challenge the stereotype of traditional roles, especially for women. Most of those interviewed stated that they wanted to be employed in a good profession or on their own such as they would want to be self-sufficient yet still put one into the spotlight which their profession and domestic expectation sparks. For P8, he said, *"If my partner works and I'm not, I wouldn't expect him to keep house, but if I do, it's a nice thing."* This indicates how men and women possess different cultural expectations, whereby men are expected to conduct most domestic roles while women are expected to view work as a privilege. Previous findings showed that women's employment increased leading to the house being somehow fluid and negotiated for women. Though much resistance still exists, especially in conservative societies, this change is gradually penetrating (Cha & Hwang, 2018).

On the one hand, social media, too much of the positive impact of discarding the negative, actually mainly creates one's perception of the gender roles model and the actual practice of the roles in marriage. For example, one can refer to such words as in P1 comments that told, Social media have opened up for younger generation the possibility of equality between a man and a woman in marriage: *"Social media shows you that you dont just have to be at home; you can work and have a career too."* On the other side, there is a reality where social media really reinstate expectancies in terms of picturing ideal, fantasy marriages and relations. Participants such as P9 and P2 pointed out that social media often presents a distorted image of relationships, where men and women are expected to conform to stereotypical roles. This duality of impact on gender roles is comparable to the research that highlighted that it can either empower or dis-empower through the use of digital media upon principles of gender perception (Primack et al., 2017).

6.Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretical and practical implications of this research study are evident. As the author clearly points out, from such a standpoint, the research supports the view that roles are not static but continuously negotiated in specific social and cultural contexts (Gerson, 2010). This has further added to the understanding of the emerging tension found among young adults in Pakistan regarding traditional yet modern ideals. In addition, the study indicates the need for making gender roles required to be rationalized but while doing so, it points to religious, cultural, educational, and digital settings as directly influencing gender roles.

With regard to practice, the involvement of higher education institutions in Pakistan as promoters of gender discourse in their curricula would thus lead to a heightened awareness of the perceptions of gender role among apprentices. They could include marriage-counseling programs that promote open communication on what is expected of whom to help the couple navigate these roles within modern definitions.

7.Conclusion

It contributes to advance the understanding of the process and emerging changes in gender roles with regard to married relationships among single young adults in Pakistan. Patriarchal roles in marital relationships remain the key means of organizing and interpreting them, although new forms of gender inequality and the redistribution of power in the marriage are gradually emerging. This change is demonstrated more so with the educated youth who are more in contact with the global society and therefore the global emancipate ideas.

Education therefore comes out very strongly as having the potential to transform these perceptions. Young educated people are likely to disagree with common traditional beliefs and norms, this is because education increase critical thinking hence embracing the equality of the roles of couple. Consequently, career goals, especially among females, have also transformed the conventional roles of marriage contracts and brought an extra dimension to the struggle of role arrangement in marital organizations. Climbing the career ladder, people have to ask questions about gendered roles and divides, for example, who will cook and who will pay bills.

Technology and especially social media cannot be left out when explaining this change process. Social networking sites are flexible means that convey global messages, act against cultural imperialism, and create discourses about feminism and gender equity. These platforms offer opportunity to young adults to learn from various pitchers, to be inspired and be able to advocate for equitable roles of men/women in marriage.

But the process is not linear and smooth in achieving equity: sometimes it faces certain obstacles. As is indicated, continued social and cultural influences pose a very mighty force that remains unfazed in the achievement of the much-needed change. Gendered norms and culture, family pressures, and tradition exert a lot of influence over young adults who seem to be constrained in the extent to which they can renegotiate new roles in marriage. These results show a continuity of the thesis present in previous research: though utilitarian and progressive attitudes can be observed among young adults, traditional culture still influences their views on marriage.

It would be beneficial for future studies to investigate changes in gender role perceptions over time, and how and in what ways such changes occur and to what extent of rates of change across the distinct various socio-economic settings. Furthermore, it can be argued that inspecting the more toned-down changes education and digital media make could allow for a deeper understanding of the change-makers. Research could also be oriented to the exploration of agency mechanisms with the focus on how young people navigate between the options providing for traditional gender roles and more equal partnership experienced in new type marital relationships.

Therefore, the information, gathered in the framework of the current study, points to a slow but steady shift in attitudes to gender roles among single young people from Pakistan. Although the preprogrammed norms have a way of shaping expectations of marriage, education, career, and use of media technology is leading to rather liberal and equal models. This evolution is a turning point in the social vision of marriage as a given model for relations and can become the hope for developing more equal relationships in the future.

8. Recommendations

Based on these findings, it was recommended that education institutes and marriage counseling centers start integrating discourses on gender roles into their programs. Alternatively, such amazing and attitudinal change can also be brought through public awareness campaigns targeting obsolete gender notions and advocating equality. Longitudinal studies about the transitions of gender roles over time within the marital relationship would also give insights into these roles during educational and other changes from society. Finally, cross-cultural investigations could offer a better understanding of the global common constituents influencing the negotiation of gender roles in marriage.

9. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are some limitations in the study, including poor sample size and demographic limitation to include only university students residing in urban areas through which limited generalization could be drawn. Future studies, therefore, should focus on increasing the sample size in such a way that it will include participants from various socioeconomic statuses and regions of Pakistan. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how gender roles evolve in long-term marriages. Besides, comparative studies to the effects of tradition, modernity, and digital media on gender perceptions across multiple cultures and religions would deepen insight.

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