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Gender Social Roles: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

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Abstract
Social role beliefs are important to study as they shape individuals’ patterns of thinking about their own and others’ gendered behaviour. The present study investigated these beliefs using the Social Roles Questionnaire (SRQ). Analyses were designed to explore cross-cultural variations in gender role beliefs in an individualistic culture with more egalitarian gender role beliefs and a collectivist culture with less egalitarian beliefs. The underlying dimensions of the SRQ were also explored. The study was based on two independent samples of university students: 355 in the UK, and 756 in Pakistan. Cross-cultural variations and the underlying dimensions of the scale were investigated by establishing measurement invariance through a series of hierarchically nested confirmatory factor analyses models by increasing levels of cross-group equality constraints. Results confirmed original two factor model of the SRQ with good internal consistency. Measurement invariance results showed invariance on the gender-transcendent beliefs subscale, but non-invariance for measurement and structural models for the gender-linked beliefs subscale. The results reveal that the SRQ is a brief and psychometrically sensitive questionnaire that may be useful in studies of stability and change in gender role beliefs in different cultures.

**Keywords:** gender; young adult, cross-cultural
Gender Social Roles: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

Individuals’ beliefs and attitudes about gender social roles are important for the researchers who study role egalitarian in individualistic Western cultures or binary categorized roles in collectivist Eastern cultures (Baber & Tucker, 2006). Studies revealed that individuals’ beliefs and attitudes about gender social roles change concomitantly with the changes occur within the society. Gender role literature opens up that even in collectivist cultures, when women receive higher education or get more power within the family, they become more egalitarian (van de Vijver, 2007). Many researchers i.e., Khalid (2011) attribute the changes in gender role attitude to the rapid changes through education, advancement in technologies, industrialization, urbanization etc. Attitude change towards gender roles is also referred to migration and repatriation of people from egalitarian Western societies (Khalid, 2011) with special reference to the UK. In comparison with the rest of Western countries, the UK accommodates more than 1.17 million Pakistanis (Census, 2011) as British Pakistani residents besides students and professionals. Additionally, British Pakistanis are the second largest ethnic group and sub-group of British Asians. Major Pakistani universities and education agencies prefer the UK universities for higher studies of their students and professional training by establishing Pak-UK Education Gateway (HEC, Pakistan, 2018) to promote higher education ties between Pakistan and the UK in varied significant areas i.e., higher education leadership, collaborative and innovative research, quality assurance, international mobility and transnational education. The present study, believing in that both the UK and Pakistan are fundamentally patriarchal societies in which power, wealth, honour and decisions concentrated in the hands of men, UK culture is more egalitarian, less gender stratified and believe in gender equality (Visser, Mushtaq & Naz, 2020) comparing with Pakistani culture, the young adults from both countries i.e., the UK and Pakistan, should be studied regarding gender role egalitarian or categorized binary roles as defined by social
constructivists. Keeping this view in consideration, the present study aimed to explore cross-cultural similarities or differences measuring attitudes towards gender social roles in young adults of the UK and Pakistan using Social Role Questionnaire (SRQ: Baber & Tucker, 2006). As the SRQ consisted in measuring sub-scales i.e., Gender Transcendent (to be employed in individualistic culture) and Gender linked (to be employed in collectivist culture), the present study used the SRQ to understand underlying factor structure and psychometric properties of the SRQ in both Western (the individualistic) and Eastern cultures (the collectivist). This will also widen the construct validity and psychometric quality of the instrument to be used in egalitarian as well as in conservative traditional culture with less egalitarian society.

To understand attitudes and believes regarding gender social roles in relation to diversified cultural contexts, social constructivists’ perspective has defined attitudes toward gender-specific social roles explaining that attitudes towards social roles are based on cultural and social situations (Stets & Burke, 2000). Social constructivist perspective emphasizes the development of assessment measure that measure both the gender equality i.e., role egalitarian and binary categorized roles.

Early studies by anthropologists suggest that observed differences in social roles of individuals in women and men about masculine or feminine behaviours were not a part of their organic variations, rather were derived from the socialization and traditional cultural expectations believed for both genders (Mead, 1934). Later researchers endorsed Mead (1934) that social roles categorized as masculine or feminine are implanted deep during early socialization rather by biological causes (Spence, 1993; Burke, Stets & Pirog-Good, 1988). Being a male may mean dominating and brave, and being a female may mean passive and emotional; making, men perceive themselves as masculine and women labels themselves as feminine. Eagly and Wood (1991) agreed that perceived gender roles are socially constructed
standards and these specific gender-related roles might vary within one culture or across cultures. Attitudes towards gender roles have universally changed over recent years mostly due to movement or immigration of individuals from developing countries like Pakistan (Khalid, 2011) to the developed countries like the UK. Residing in Western countries have socialized people of other cultures having stern beliefs in gender-inequalities in changing their conventional gender behaviours, making men engage in household chores (a feminine role) and women in outdoor activities (a masculine role). Some researchers (Haddad, 1994) have found men’s education level was significantly positively associated with their involvement in household tasks. Leaper and Valin (1996) argue that beliefs about traditional gender role have changed over time (see also Rosenthal, Rainieri & Klimdis, 1996); and many researchers agree that dichotomous gender-specific social roles are not being driven by gender specifically. However, Hofstede (1980) has reported different societies and cultures share similar gender roles. To assess socialization of gender roles across cultures, to determine similarities and differences across them, cross-cultural studies should be carried out with standardized instruments and tools that are validated amongst these cultures (Hanson, 2010). Pakistani culture follows a traditional patricentric system, in which men are dominant, main providers (wage-earners) for the household and have authority to make decisions at home; women follow male authority, work as homemakers and have lower levels of autonomy and power (Sather & Kazi, 1997). Within this patricentric system, a wide range of variations do exist in these gender roles, for example women’s autonomy and power, in urban locales is higher than women who live in rural places (Sather & Kazi). Other studies e.g., Khalid (2011) reported changes in attitudes towards gender-roles in Pakistanis returning back to their homeland e.g., women’s views about traditional gender-roles did not remain as traditional and they developed moderate egalitarian beliefs. Khalid (2011) proposed acculturation as a process as the heart of this change; Pakistani immigrants adapted to the
new life in UK that affected their attitudes and beliefs, and when they came back, they brought those attitudes and beliefs with them. Furthermore, globalization, internet access, urbanization, and education have influenced attitudes and beliefs of Pakistani people in big metropolitan cities like Lahore; this has led to reduction in conservative attitudes and beliefs about gender roles of men and women.

Comparing attitudes and beliefs about gender-roles across cultures is important (Baber & Tucker, 2006). Any similarities and differences could be assessed as a process of socialization. In this context, it is assumed that though, the UK and Pakistan both have patriarchal societies with acceptance of male dominancy primarily but UK culture is not twined in societal norms, maintains individualistic culture and is less gender stratified than Pakistani society. It would also be more benefiting for researchers to make a comparison about the attitudes towards gender roles to understand the culture specific and culture independence impacts in university students of both cultures (Visser et al. 2020). Baber & Tucker (2006) constructed The Social Roles Questionnaire (SRQ) to measure attitude towards gender in contemporary societies. The SRQ was based on a review and updation of different psychological measures to construct a new scale which should transcend the binary categories, the belief that fundamental differences between the particular social roles of men and women is often related to the beliefs that there are different social roles for which men and women are best suited (Ruble & Martin, 1998). While developing the SRQ, Baber and Tucker (2006) wanted to develop a parsimonious measure that would change the attitudes about gender roles and would not restrict to measure the stereotypical roles for men and women only but the items of the measure should go beyond the particular approach which describes gender roles as dichotomized social roles (de Visser & McDonnell, 2013). The dialectic to develop the SRQ was that the researchers wanted to provide such a measure which suitably measures people on both socially learned categorized dichotomous roles
performed by men or women and go beyond this particular approach and measure the transcendent gender roles. So, the SRQ measures social roles attitudes on two factors i.e., Gender Transcendent and Gender Linked. The first factor Gender Transcendent measures attitudes which go beyond the learned social roles of men and women while the second factor measures attitudes which go in line with the socially categorized roles of men and women (Baber & Tucker, 2006). Nevertheless, the psychometric properties were explored by original author using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) but the sample was limited to only one culture i.e., Greek. The present study aimed to explore cross-cultural differences associated to attitudes towards gender social roles in young adults i.e., university students of the UK and Pakistan by using the Social Roles Questionnaire. The psychometric properties of the SRQ were determined by employing CFA on the sample collected from two diverse cultures.

The present study would help us understanding the underlying factor structure and psychometric properties of the SRQ in both Western (the individualistic) and Eastern cultures (the collectivist) which will enable us to widen the construct validity and psychometric quality of the instrument in an egalitarian society in comparison with the conservative traditional culture with less egalitarian society.

To achieve the main objective of the present study i.e., to compare reported social roles i.e., gender-transcendent and gender-linked in young students in the UK and Pakistan, the substantive between-group comparisons were made through employing independent, configural and hierarchically constrained models through metric and scalar equivalence of the SRQ. In line with the extensive literature, the present research focused on to explore whether Pakistani population would be strict in defining the dichotomous gender-specific roles to conform the cultural norms than the people living in individualistic culture? Based on this, we hypothesized measurement invariance regarding the social role i.e., gender-transcendent and non-invariance regarding the social role i.e., gender-linked, elaborating that Pakistani
young students would report that they believe more in binary categorized roles of men and women more than UK young students.

Method

Participants

The present study included two independent samples i.e., students from United Kingdom and students from Pakistan. The students were contacted through email from the sample already recruited for a broader research project naming “Masculinity and Men’s Help-Seeking Behavior in the United Kingdom and Pakistan” (Visser et al., 2020). Out of 1141 total students, 511 (44.78%) responded and filled the online questionnaire. 100 students were approached on campus from main library, University of Sussex, UK who filled in the questionnaire. 500 students were approached from different universities of Lahore, Pakistan. The students were approached during their computer-lab classes so that they find the link of online survey easily and fill the questionnaire. The students took average 10-15 minutes to complete the online questionnaire. Thus, we could recruit 1111 (355 students from UK & 756 students from Pakistan) total participant for the study over the period of ten months. Out of total, 108 men with the mean age = 23.98 years (SD=7.66) and 247 women with the mean age =22.40 (SD=6.15) were from UK whereas 552 men with the mean age = 23.98 years (SD=3.27) and 204 women with the mean age = 23.96 years (SD=3.27) were from Pakistan.

Ethnicity: From UK sample, 75.2% (267) of the students were British-White, 1.1% (4) were British-Black, 6.5% (23) were British-Asian, 17.2% (61) marked the category of British-other. From Pakistani sample, 91.3% (690) of the students were Pakistani-Punjabi, .3% (2) were British-Asian and 8.4% (64) indicated the category of Pakistani-others.

Religion: For religion, we mentioned seven categories to be responded i.e., no religion, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish and other
From UK sample, 67.3% (239) mentioned having no religion, 24.2% (86) were Christian, 4.2% (15) were Muslims, 1.1% (4) were Hindus, 0.8% (3) were Buddhist, 0.8% (3) were Jewish, and 1.5% (5) others. For Pakistani sample, 98.8% (747) were Muslims whereas only 0.1% (1) reported having no religion, 0.8% (6) were Christians while 0.3% (2) were Hindus.

The Social Roles Questionnaire (SRQ; Baber & Tucker, 2006)

The SRQ consists in thirteen items with two factors i.e., gender-transcendent (five items) and gender-linked (eight items). Items from gender-transcendent need reverse scoring. The items are rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale which was scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The higher the global score is the more positive the respondent’s attitude toward social roles. The items from gender-transcendent sub-scale measures responses on the domains of sex-egalitarian roles whereas the items from gender-linked sub-scale measures culturally specific binary roles of men and women. The sub-scales of SRQ had good internal consistency reliabilities e.g., for gender-transcendent = .65, and for gender-linked = .77 accounting for 41% of the variance (Baber & Tucker).

Procedure

The study was approved by IRB of the University of Sussex. We approached sample through e-mails as the students were already involved in a cross-country/cross-gender project. The students had to click on an online link to open the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire required some demographic information related to gender, age, day of birth, ethnicity, country, religion, employment status.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics included calculation of means and standard deviations for 13 items (5 items for gender-transcendent & 8 items for gender-linked) for both UK and
Pakistani samples separately. The assumption of normality of sample data was tested by calculating skewness (measure of asymmetry in the probability distribution) and kurtosis (measure of peakedness of normal distribution) for both samples separately. The results showed that these values fall in the range from 0.01 to -2.42. These values indicated that no item was considered to have a severe normality problem as the recommended values of problematic items fall in the range of greater than -7 and less than 7 (Byrne, 2010; Bandalos & Finney, 2010).

Please insert table 1 here

Before assessing measurement invariance, a two-factor model was tested separately for two samples i.e., the UK and Pakistani young students. The factor loadings range from 0.42 to 0.91 (gender-transcendent; $\alpha = 0.81$) and from 0.44 to 0.70 (gender-linked; $\alpha = 0.82$) for UK data and from 0.42 to 0.90 (gender-transcendent; $\alpha = 0.83$) and 0.61 to 0.82 (gender-linked; $\alpha = 0.89$). The Cronbach’s alpha if item deleted was good for both sub-scales (Stevens, 1996).

Please insert table 2 here

**Measurement Invariance of the Social Roles Questionnaire**

Test of measurement invariance is a procedure, used to find out equivalence (invariant) across specific groups of interest (Byrne, 2010). Testing measurement invariance helps in establishing invariance of parameters of a measurement model and/or structural model across two groups. Invariance testing for the measurement model shows that the items in a test measures same constructs in the respondents from variant groups (Gorden & Roger, 2009). To test multi-group equivalences across two groups, factor loadings, factor covariances along with the equality of error variances and structural regression paths with
and without constraints were tested in a logically ordered as suggested by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1996).

The sample data fit was compared with the proposed model through the prescribed cut-off values of model fit indices as criteria (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2005). Using this criterion, the ratio of CMIN/DF<5, the RMSEA<0.05, the CFI>0.9 indicates a well and acceptable model fit. The invariance tests are supported if chi-square difference test (Δχ²) is non-significant and the change CFI<0.01 (Byrne, 2010; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002, Chen, 2007). Measurement invariance tests are used to determine whether scale’s items means the same thing to subjects of different groups (Cheung & Rensvold). Testing of measurement invariance comprised of a series of hierarchical steps that started with the establishment of a baseline model for different groups separately until the model represents the best fit of data (Steiger, 1990).

The present study established the baseline model across two samples i.e., the UK and Pakistan samples to assess whether the SRQ can represent the same number of common factors across two divergent groups before undertaking the measurement invariance (Gregorich, 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Findings were consistent across groups indicating exceptionally large error covariances showing substantial misspecifications between error 3 and 4 (i.e., for Pakistani sample MI = 119.74, EPC = .078; for UK sample MI = 46.79 with EPC = .066) and between 10 and 12 (i.e., for Pakistani sample MI = 206.95, EPC = .72; for UK sample: MI = 128; EPC = .87). Analyses of the items 3 and 4 revealed that these items may be investigating overlapping content i.e., item number 3 that is “The freedom that children are given should be determined by their age and maturity level and not by their sex” (Baber & Tuker, 2006) and item number 4 “tasks around the house should not be assigned by sex”. It is clear that both the items are designed to gauge almost similar underlying content. Analysing item numbers 10 and 12 revealed that these items also assess
almost the same constructs i.e., item number 10 i.e., mothers should work only if necessary and the item 12 i.e., only some types of work are appropriate for both men and women makes similar type of queries from readers, so we considered modifications appropriate and re-specified model 2 with error covariance between item 3 and 4 which yielded appropriate fit for both samples (see table 3a). Model 2 was re-specified with error covariance of items 10 and 12 in model 3 for both samples which emerged with a good fitting model. The results are presented in table3a.

After establishing base-line models for both samples, we tested measurement invariance through a series of hierarchically nested confirmatory factor analyses by increasing levels of cross-group equality constraints (Gregorich, 2006; Kuhn & Holling, 2009). The series included were:

(i) testing a simultaneous two-factors Configural CFA model, without equality constraints on parameter estimates, was employed in the UK and Pakistani samples independently. The configural model caters as a baseline for comparing rest of the subsequent hierarchical tests for invariance i.e., constrained measurement and structural models (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) and non-invariance is established if the $\chi^2$ difference ($\Delta \chi^2$) test is statistically significant (Byrne, 2010). For the present study, the configural model revealed freely estimated factor loadings i.e., regression paths, variances and covariances. Results revealed the goodness-of fit statistics for this first multi-group model testing for configural invariance. The configural model emerged with a good-fit as chi-square $= 443.38$ (df = 124); CMNI/DF = 3.57 (Byrne, 2010). The CFI was = .96; RMSEA = .048. From this information, we can calculate that the hypothesized multi-group configural model showed a reasonably good-fit across the two groups i.e., the UK and Pakistan. Having established goodness-of fit for the configural model, we proceeded in testing invariance and factorial measurement and structure across groups (Byrne, 2010).
(ii) testing metric invariance: metric invariance test is used to examine whether the two samples (groups) attribute the same meaning to the latent construct under investigation (Hong et al., 2003; Jang et al., 2012). The same two-factor model was tested simultaneously in both samples but first constraining the factor loading of to be equivalent for both factors across groups (see Model A table 3b). Results revealed a good model fit of data fulfilling all criteria as CMIN/DF = 3.59, RMSEA = .049, CFI = .95, $\Delta \chi^2 = 49.8$ (13), $p<0.01$ whereas Model B (table 3b) was restricted with equality constraints for all factor loading on the factor gender-transcendent. Model B also emerged with a good fit with RMSEA = .047, CFI = .95 but with non-significant chi-square difference i.e. $\Delta \chi^2 = 5.68$ (6), $p>0.05$ showing the sub-scale of gender-transcendent to be essentially invariant between the two groups.

(iii) testing scalar invariance at intercept level constraining the intercepts equal across groups was recommended (Jang et al, 2012). The results revealed model fit the data well as RMSEA = .050, CFI = .950, CMIN/DF = 3.72 whereas the $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}$ (14) = 50.19, $p < 0.01$ indicated non-invariance of the data between two groups.

Please insert table 3a here

Please insert table 3b here

Latent Mean Comparisons

Once measurement invariance tests were established, latent mean analysis was conducted to assess the group differences regarding both sub-scales i.e., gender-transcendent and gender-linked. Latent mean analysis was employed by constraining the latent means of the UK sample to be zero and regarded this group as the reference group while comparing the latent means with the other sample i.e., the Pakistani sample of young students. The latent mean estimates indicated that there exist significant differences with respect to gender-linked of the SRQ. Results indicated that the latent mean of UK sample on gender linked were
significantly lower than those of the Pakistani sample students by -3.97 ($p<0.001$) whereas the latent mean for gender-transcendent was 0.00 ($p<0.989$).

**Discussion**

Baber and Tucker (2006) claimed that their newly developed measure, the SRQ, would make considerable contribution in studying gender and social roles. Further, they stated that the SRQ will be the best tool to evaluate attitudes i.e., transcendent or dichotomized in young adults in any society. The SRQ is a brief questionnaire that has good face validity and well-established psychometric properties, so it was commended to conduct studies with varied populations belonging to different ethnic and racial backgrounds and with people belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds to comprehend the composite ways of thinking patterns of individuals about social roles and gender.

The primary objective of the present research was to compare reported social roles regarding two factors i.e., the gender-transcendent and gender-linked of the SRQ between young students in the UK and Pakistan through measurement invariance employing hierarchically successive CFA models. Initially, model-fit was established by employing CFA on independent samples of two groups without putting any equality constraints on any factor loadings succeeding the configural model as a baseline model for two groups. The subsequent models were then compared with the baseline configural model to establish measurement invariance. The results indicated evidences of invariance on the factor gender-transcendent with equality constraints ($\Delta \chi^2 = 5.68 (6), P>0.05$). But the results exhibited evidences of non-invariance when equality constraints were put on all factor leadings including gender-linked ($\Delta \chi^2 = 49.6813, p<0.01$) and on intercepts ($\Delta \chi^2 = 50.19 (14), p<0.01$). These results were also supported by the latent mean analysis as there was significant difference on gender-linked indicating that Pakistani young adults reported believing more on the defined traditional gender roles. These findings are in accordance with the findings by
Visser et al. (2017) who confirmed that Pakistani group consisted in men only exhibited more traditional gender role beliefs on Sex Role Egalitarian Scale as compared to UK men. Pakistani men belong to a sternly male dominated traditional society and the child rearing practices trained men to dominate.

The present research applied the SRQ on two distinct populations belonging to different socio-cultural, ethnic, racial and religious societies i.e., young adults from UK and Pakistan. UK and Pakistan have completely different cultural and religious values as supported in the comparison of the demographic information variables. Whereas, 67.3% of the UK young adults reported “no religion”, 98.8% of the Pakistani sample reported being “Muslims”. Majority of the Muslims follow religious values for direction in life chores. Due to cultural influences, they prefer living in joint family structure following collectivist culture but individuals residing in UK follow individualistic family structure and they believe in less gender stratifications in performing routine tasks as compared to Pakistani individuals (UNICEF, 2016). In contrast to the reported gender-stratified roles in collectivist culture, the present study found invariance in the measurement of gender-transcendent and also supported by no significant differences in latent mean analysis that essentially shows that the young adults in Pakistani sample also believe in egalitarian roles. These findings suggest the changing attitudes of young adults about traditional gender role beliefs as in a research, Khalid (2011) found the migrant young women from UK as more egalitarian and less conservative as compared to the group who never visited any Western individualistic culture. Khalid believed that staying in an individualistic culture might help in diluting the traditional gender role beliefs. In the present research, the sample from Pakistan consisted in young adults from different universities in metropolitan city of Lahore and it can be expected that young adults in this group may practically be involved in less gender stratified activities due to busy schedule and routine hassles which may sap the strengthening influences of believing
in traditional gender roles. One possibility is also that living in a modern city, usage of internet and global media might have induced changes in the traditional gender role beliefs of young adults from Pakistan. These findings may contribute a lot in the existing literature that the new generation in a patriarchal society is tending to be less traditional in performing gender roles.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the current study would be paramount in the execution of measurement invariance and latent mean analysis on a newly developed SRQ and assessed cultural differences on gender or social role beliefs that can be helpful in spelling out the changes in traditionally defined binary roles of men and women in diverse societies. The present study established the significance of measurement invariance tests to analyse possible differences in cross-cultural comparisons studies. The findings concluded that group differences no longer formally exist in believing in traditional gender roles as indicated by non-significant chi-square and latent mean differences. However, the results are needed to be verified in studies that compare rural urban population regarding traditional social role believes. It is also concluded that the SRQ is essentially invariant across-cultures which showed reasonably acceptable values of psychometric properties overall (Cortina, 1993; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The SRQ is a brief and psychometrically sensitive questionnaire to assess changes in gender role related attitudes in different cultures. It can be predicted optimistically that the SRQ will come up with valuable information for studies of stability and change in while studying attitudes towards gender and can boost gender-theory and literature. Based on the findings, we recommend that the SRQ should be employed in cross-sectional samples based on migrant versus local population, rural versus urban population, professional women versus housekeeping women simultaneously to measure changes in gender related attitudes especially in conservative societies like Pakistan.
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