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Research Article

Development and Validation of Gender Role Strain Scale for Women

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Abstract

Objective. Our society expects specific behaviors, and performance from women associated with their gender. Sometimes to act upon and to fulfil these expectations becomes the cause of pressure and strain in a person. This research purported to develop as well as validate an indigenous measure to gauge Gender Role Strain experienced by women (GRSS-W).

Method. The study comprised three phases. In the first phase, phenomenology of gender role strain was identified through review of literature, semi structured interviews with mental health professionals (N=4), and conducting a focus group with women (N=7), thus generating a list of items. Experts' ratings (N=10) were used for establishing content validity of the GRSS-W. Piloting (N=35) was carried out. For establishing construct validity, factor analysis was carried out using varimax rotation method. A sample of 399 women participated in the second phase. Psychometric indices of GRSS-W were determined in the third phase (N=100).

Result. Three factors emerged including Pressures of Marital Life , Familial and Social Pressures, and Workplace Pressures, yielding alpha coefficients .88, .84, and .77 respectively. The overall reliability of the scale was .89. For assessing discriminant validity, Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al, 1985) was used and a value of r= -.27, p <.01 was obtained.

Conclusion. GRSS-W can be used as a reliable and valid instrument for measuring gender role strain in Pakistani women.

Keywords. *Gender role strain,women, development, validation.*

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Introduction

Gender role strain (GRS) refers to the stress, burden, or pressure that people experience while trying to match the socially expected standards of behaving associated with their respective genders (Pleck, 1981, 1995). There are societal expectations attached with each social role including gender role. People might undergo uneasiness while struggling to fulfil social expectations which may result in role strain. For some people it may be smooth sailing, for some there may be manageable strain, while some may experience serious negative fallouts.

The feeling and realization of one's inability to meet the expectations attached with a role and the accompanying stress can become troublesome for the individual. The frustration and stress experienced by individuals may in turn negatively affect the society. According to Levant (2011) GRS has roots in social constructionism. Gender is socially developed and is ever changing. As described by Ellsberg and Heise (2005), gender discrimination's origin is from social institutions. At these institutions, already recognized theories of women's subordination and gender differences are formed. Both, men and women are socialized to conform to gender-stereotyped roles. Stereotypical role expectations may get affected by changing social conditions. It has been reported that changes have taken place in women's role as employees but not in their role as home makers and in child care. Under the predominant societal view, women are expected to indulge in care provision to their families and to be devoted to their role as a mother (Chasteen & Kissman, 2000). One can experience a similar scenario in the Pakistani society.

Some scales are accessible to measure gender roles and conflicts that arise from enacting them out. For example, Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) evaluates masculinity-femininity, and gauges how individuals recognise their gender psychologically. Gender Role Beliefs Scale (Kerr & Holden, 1996), a self-report scale evaluates gender role ideology, i.e. beliefs about appropriate behavior for men and women. Gender Role Conflict Scale (O' Neil et al., 1986) gauges masculine gender role conflict, and Women's Role Strain Inventory (Lengacher, 1997) measures role strain in women who have multiple roles. The above cited foreign measures do not assess the degree of gender role strain in women. It is important to understand the perceptions of gender role strain held by Pakistani women. Therefore, the construction of local scale of gender role strain among women is need of the hour.

Literature Review

Gender role strain rests on the idea that men and women follow societal roles based on masculinity and femininity principles. Societal expectations, social approval and social conformity are the major sources which contribute in role strain. There are quite a few theories of gender role strain whose focus is on men. Gender role strain is looked at from the sociological perspective (Turner, 1970). Gender role strain paradigm (Pleck, 1981), masculine stress (Eisler, & Skidmore, 1987), and the integrative model of masculinity (Meek, 2011) are significant such perspectives. Gillespie and Eisler (1992) took a different perspective and examined Feminine Gender Role Stress (FGRS) as a cognitive tendency in women to appraise specific situations as highly stressful. Those women who have a lot of FGRS probably encounter more daily stress by perceiving more events as threatening to their femininity such as fear of victimization, being in an unemotional relationship or not being nurturant. Typically, women go through role strain more (e.g., performing multiple role playing and overloaded responsibilities) than men (Kazmierczak, 2010).

It has been suggested by role theorists that the commitment with different roles is related with the magnitude of role strain. Strain is subject to commitment. There is one theory (Enrichment Hypothesis) that proposes that multiple roles can be buffer against stress (Rothbard, 2001). There can be a positive influence of the feelings of well-being produced in one role on the experiences in other roles (Barn, 2008). This may lead to adverse physical and psychological consequences such as depressive tendencies, anxiety and fatigue in women (Chrouser, & Ryff, 2006). Strain for men might have negative fall outs too like anger, negative thoughts, and mood swings (Hunt et al., 2007). There is some research evidence suggesting that living in the extended family system may further add responsibilities and more pressures on Pakistani men, not just because of their role as a bread-winner, but as a protector of the family too (Arshad & Shahed, 2019). Women, on the other hand, experience discrimination and have family responsibilities to carry out. Therefore, they may undergo greater strain than men (Muller & Volkov, 2009). It has been observed that the main cause of role strain among working women is high expectations for fulfilling a role (Longest & Thoits, 2012).

Gender role strain can be a major factor in effective socialization of an individual. There is a need to develop instruments to gauge the nature and magnitude of gender role strain experienced by women. Indigenous instrument to measure gender role strain in women, in Urdu language, are not available. Therefore, the present study was designed to develop an instrument to address this gap.

Method

The study was divided three phases, where Phase I developed indicators for gender role strain; Phase II is assessed construct validity of these items and lastly, in Phase III psychometric properties were established.

Phase I: Indicators for Gender Role Strain

The following steps were taken for generating the initial indicators of gender role strain.

Step I. Research literature regarding gender role strain, especially in women, was reviewed. Additionally, semi-structured interviews and focus group were conducted to attain a list of women's gender role strain indicators.

Review of Literature. Existing gender role strain related scales were looked into. Relevant literature including books and research journals pertaining to gender role strain was also reviewed. Significant indicators of women's role strain were recorded.

Focus group. A focus group comprising seven women participants was conducted. Purposive sampling was adopted for the selection of participants. These women were educated (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate), coming from various walks of life, married ones as well as unmarried, working, and aged 30-45 years. With the consent of the participants, audio recordings of the proceedings were made. Both open and fixed ended questions were used for initiating discussion on various aspects of gender role strain experienced by women. The contents of the discussion highlighted a number of significant aspects and helped in compiling inclusive lists of women's gender role strain indicators.

Semi structured interview with mental health professionals. A psychiatrist (man) and three clinical psychologists (one man and two women) were interviewed. They had more than six years of clinical expertise and were aged 32-45 years. All interviews were conducted separately.

Open ended as well as fixed ended questions were used to ascertain the nature of gender role strain either personally experienced by the interviewees themselves or having had observed in clients/patients. The interviews were audio recorded, later on transcribed, and then analysed.

Step II. A list of 33 items was finalized after converting the indicators (compiled from step I) into self-report statements. This list of items was screened for discrepancies and ambiguities. Twenty eight items were left in the initial pool of items after deleting five items (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 32, and 33) and rephrasing two items (18, 26).

Step III. The 28 items were validated by three female counselors and seven female clinical psychologists with more than 5 years of experience on the subject. The experts were asked to rate each item of the pool on 4-point scale from 1 (not relevant) to 4 (highly relevant) based on relevance to construct. The CVI (Content Validity Index) was computed and found to be high, $r = .82$. Five items (6, 7, 12, 13, and 16) were removed as experts consented less agreement on these items. The final list has 23 items and structured into five-point Likert-type scale. It was labelled as Gender Role Strain Scale for Women (GRSS-W).

Step IV. Pilot study includes 35 women from various professions such as house maids, female sweepers, lady security guards, nurses, doctors, lawyers and university teachers. The age range of sample was $M= 32.37$ and $SD = 6.06$. The participants were requested to complete the questionnaire by reading and responding it themselves. No ambiguity was pointed out by the participants. The GRSS-W included 23 items as final form.

Phase II: Establishing Construct Validity

Sample. The sample consisted of 399 urban women selected through a purposive sample; with an age range of 21- 60 years ($M = 36.90$, $SD = 9.50$). Fifty-eight percent of women had 12 years or above level of education, 27% had less than primary educational level and 15% of women had primary (7.5%) and secondary (7.5%) level of education. Fifty-five percent of the participants were married and others were single. All women were employed, and worked as doctors (15%), nurses (15%), teachers (15 %), bank employees (7.5 %), lawyers (7.5%), lady security guards (7.5%), house maids (13.5 %) and sweepers (19 %).

Procedure

For data collection, permissions were sought from universities, banks and hospitals. Women were informed about the purpose of the research and written permission were sought individually. Information regarding GRSS-W was evident on the questionnaire and administered individually on women.

Phase III: Establishing Psychometric Properties

Sample. In this Phase, the reliability and validity of GRSS-W were explored by establishing discriminant validity, using purposive sample of 100 woman participants. Twenty women participants were preferred from each profession (lawyers, doctors, university teachers, house maids and female sweepers) respectively. The age range of these women participant was 26-50 years ($M = 31.61, SD = 5.39$).

Assessment Measures

a) Gender Role Strain Scale for Women (GRSS-W). The above scale with 22-items developed in the first two phases of this study was used. Each item was measured on a 5-point rating scale (0-4) with three subscales.

b) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). This scale's Urdu version by Butt et al., (2014) was gauged for establishing the discriminant validity of GRSS-W. The original version of SWLS has five items with seven anchors (Diener et al., 1985). The reliability of SWLS in Pakistani population was .90 (Barki, et al., 2020).

Procedure

The two scales were administered carefully in a packet after getting informed consent from women. They were requested not to skip any item on the scales.

Results

Factor Analysis

Principal component analysis was carried out to obtain initial factors from GRSS-W items through varimax rotation. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was .93 with significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .001$).
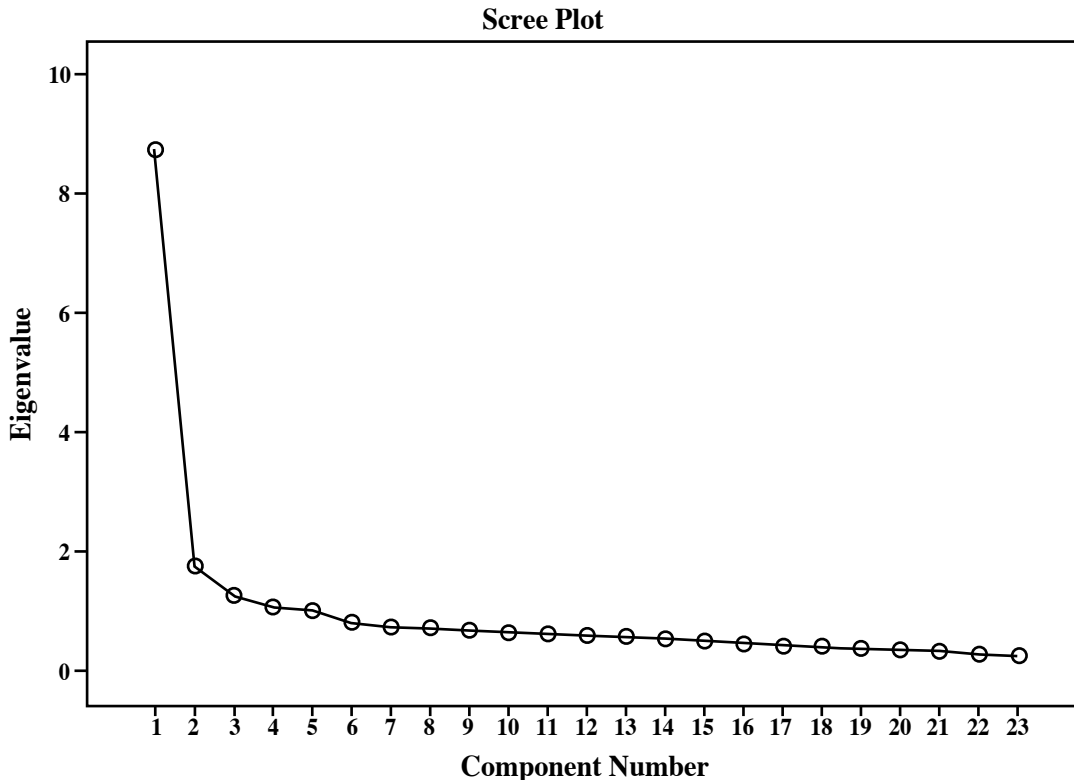
Scree Plot

Figure 1. Scree Plot for Gender Role Strain Scale for Women

Scree plot suggested a three factor solution covering the total item variance of 52%. The Cronbach Alpha values for the final 22 item GRSS-W were ranging from .35 to .77 (Table 1).

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Table 1

Factor Loadings of GRSS-W with Three-Factor Solution

		Factor Loadings		
Item	*I*	*II*	*III*	*h*
1	.15	.61	.29	.47
2	.25	.67	.07	.52
3	.35	.58	.22	.51
4	.18	.71	.17	.56
5	.24	.72	.19	.60
6	.30	.52	.35	.49
7	.33	.61	.03	.48
9	.59	.37	.10	.49
10	.09	.26	.59	.43
11	.58	.32	.27	.50
12	.68	.31	.08	.56
13	.03	.08	.77	.60
14	.26	.09	.76	.66
15	.43	.12	.52	.46
16	.27	.30	.60	.53
17	.53	.37	.20	.45
18	.56	.23	.28	.44
19	.54	.39	.19	.48
20	.61	.22	.34	.54
21	.70	.21	.11	.55
22	.69	.15	.23	.56
23	.62	.16	.41	.57
Eigen Value	4.59	3.79	3.07	
Variance	20.84	17.26	13.97	
Cum. Var.	20.84	38.12	52.08	

Note. Items with factor loadings .35 or greater are bolded; *h* = communalities; Cum. Var. = Cumulative Variance

Three subject-matter experts agreed with this three factor solution and labelled them as Pressures of Marital Life (10 items), Familial and Social Pressures (7 items), and Workplace Pressures (5 items).

Table 2

Reliability and Correlations among GRSS-W Subscales (*N*=399)

							Min-Max Range	
Subscale	α†	1	2	3	*M*	*SD*	Potential	Actual
Marital Life Pressures	.88	-	.72*	.57*	20.05	9.21	0-40	0-40
Familial & Social Pressures	.84		-	.53*	14.59	6.69	0-28	0-28
Workplace Pressures	.77			-	12.30	4.68	0-20	1-20

Note. †Reliability coefficient Cronbach alpha, *p* < .01

Discussion

Gender role pressures and stereotypes restrained femininity. Some western culture's feminine gender stereotypes are considered improper in Pakistani traditions. For instance, family bonds are strong and embedded deeply in Pakistani women while women are usually more socially detached in western culture. Women still understanding to gender role strain is typical and is transformed by cultural beliefs and values. Therefore, it is necessary to measure the extent and incidence of gender role strain particularly in Pakistani women in this present era. To achieve this goal, a self-constructing scale (GRSS-W) is developed with well-established psychometric properties. In the present study, the content of GRSS-W items emulate cultural practices and relevance and were generated after exploring the phenomenology with the help of indigenous samples. The scale has three factors and it can be evaluated on normal women facing gender role strain in their daily lives. These dimensions are discussed as follows:

Marital Life Pressures (first factor) comprised of items for example, 'seeking my husband's permission in every matter after getting married', 'having sexual relations with my husband without my consent', and 'reducing my body weight on repeated insistence of my husband'. Pakistani women's life after marriage move around responsibilities of domestic chores, satisfying husband needs and above all, taking care of off springs. This new role add pressure and strain on women. Generally, a woman adapt or reorganize to these new roles (daughter in law, wife, and mother) with her own pace and tries to conform to these roles. A study by Chowbey (2017) supported this view that women are front-runner of home and manages house chores including preparation of meal, looking after children and husbands. Before being married, women are dependent on their fathers and brothers for trivial permissions as Pakistani society is dominant by patriarchal system. This control is inevitably moved to husband and in-laws after woman is married. Ibrahim (2005) revealed that raising voice against Pakistani men (husbands, fathers, brothers, father or brother in law) is not permitted despite of women being married or not. Pakistani women most significant considered achievement is to take care of their husband's demands and marital satisfaction. One of the demand of husbands are insisting their wives to reduce body which contribute to women's strain. A study found that there is 50/50 ratio of anticipations regarding women's body image before and after marriage in Pakistani society (Zubair & Ali, 2019).

Familial and Social pressures (second factor) include items for instance, 'going out at night all by myself', 'not being able to get married to the person of your choice', and 'in all circumstances, I have to stick to the opinion held by the rest of the family members even if I believe otherwise'. Women are also concerned about their family and social life to great extent. This also adds strain that they experienced in their everyday lives. At times these stresses are unnoticed but they play a crucial share in gender role strain found in women. Pakistani women' social life turn around family and relatives. It is the foundation of social association, offering both identity, honour and protection. A study by Markward et al., (2003) revealed that women demand more social support than men. Eventually, women freedom to make choices for themselves (i.e., to marry, get an education, having a baby or not, divorce, doing work) differs considerably reliant on the attitude of their life partners or closest male relative. For instance, traditional rural homes in regions of four provinces of Pakistan are mostly more conservative on the subject of social roles and community participation of women. These delicate issues were found in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa study (Jamal, 2014).

Workplace pressures (third factor) cover items like 'working at a workplace where the head of the organization and colleagues are men', 'mixing up more with my men colleagues', and 'not feeling healthy due to over work'. In present scenario of Pakistani society, a woman role keeps on summing in the responsibilities from home to work. A woman should have sense of balance to maintain the burdens and challenges of both domains (Sun, 2005). Another study by Mostert (2009) disclosed that the family relations and stressed women's health could suffer if needs were not met. Women's family commitments were more hindered with increasing duties at work than to men (Cha, 2013). Every employed woman has to deal with men at work place which is very difficult at times. For example, women can face sexual harassment and cannot discuss as it is considered a conservative taboo in Pakistani community. This is point of view is acknowledged by Kausar and Anwar (2015) study as Pakistan is a male dominated society.

Women may confront difficulties in their familial and professional life due to their secondary position and conventional expectations from their gender role in Pakistani society. Usually women are financially reliant on men and have to go along with men's wishes (Kazmi, 2005). Women encounter culturally held gender stereotypes rooted in the patriarchal system.

This experience may affect and shape their life and circumstances in many ways. For instance, the socially desired role of a woman is that of a home maker. Even when she is a professional as well, she expected to be a great home maker first.

Conclusion

The newly developed GRSS-W is a reliable measure with psychometric indices. Among Pakistani women, the effect and consequences of gender role strain is particularly given less consideration. Due to cultural and social restrictions, the statements or wordings of foreign measures related to gender role strain might not be understandable. Pakistani people's beliefs and standards for femininity should be reassessed and studied positively so that women be able to face less strain in their routine lives.

Suggestions and Limitations `

The sample was taken from Lahore only. In future, large sample sizes can be drawn from different cities of Pakistan for generalization of GRS. Rural and urban women can be included for comparative studies. In upcoming years, the study can be conducted on working and non-working women for screening of GRS. However, the extent of GRS in women is needed to be revealed in various marital statuses and professions. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis should be measured for more accurate psychometric indices.

Implications of Study

The construction of GRSS-W itself will gauge the gender role strain in Pakistani women irrespective of their level of education. It is mandatory for every woman to be screened for GRS because of increasing health concerns in women. The screening of GRS is also important for women's physical and mental well-being. The usage of GRSS-W will contribute to the body of indigenous literature in forthcoming researches as merely limited work is found on GRS (Adil, et al., 2017).

Declaration

Ethical Approval. The study was approved by the Board of Studies of the Department of Applied Psychology, Government College University Faisalabad.
Consent for Publications. Consent approved by the authors.
Availability of Data and Materials. Contact corresponding author.
Authors Contribution. All authors contributed to the study equally.

This model further asserts that feelings of trust and faith inculcated by seasoned organizational practices often lead to reduced counterproductive work behaviors such as turnover intentions, job related stress and cognitive failures. Armenio et al. (2004) also deliberated that fostering organizational virtuousness (e.g., through honesty, interpersonal respect, and compassion combining high standards of performance with a culture of forgiveness and learning from mistakes) is likely to promote a more committed workforce. In addition, organizational support in terms of good managerial practices and compassionate leadership styles enhances positive and desirable work-related behaviors such as job performance (Schwartz, 2002), job optimism (Ugwu, 2012), and institutional affiliation (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

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