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Role of Parenting Practices to Construct Gender Roles Attitude among Children: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Parenting is a strong institution of socialization and parents have an essential role in transmitting gender roles and attitudes among children. Therefore, the present research aimed to explore gender differences in parenting practices among parents and their effect on children's gender roles attitudes. The positivist approach was followed in the present study and a cross-sectional design was applied to conduct surveys. The sample comprised both parents (n=250 mothers, n=250 fathers) and children (n=250 girls, n=250 boys) from families of Lahore, the most populous city and district of Punjab, Pakistan through a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique. The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire and Gender Roles Attitude Scale were used with the prior permission of the authors to collect data. The statistical techniques MANOVA, ANOVA, and frequencies/ percentages were applied to analyze data. The findings revealed that mothers used 'involvement', and 'positive parenting' to socialize children as compared to fathers. Therefore, parents can influence their children's gender development through involvement and positive parenting to construct egalitarian gender roles attitudes, and behaviors among sons and daughters.

Keywords: Gender, Parenting Practices, Gender Roles Attitude, Egalitarian, Traditional Gender Role

Introduction

The current family is a family living in novel socio-economic conditions and is one of the most flexible and changeable societal groups (Smirnova, 2005). Although many factors can be taken into account in children's social behavior, interests, and inclinations in general, parents are considered to be the most important to influence them (Maccoby, 2002). Children's motivation changes with the involvement of parents and peers (Kindermann, 2007). Family context is therefore vital to gender development and provides the early gender-related experiences that are embedded among teenagers in their ideas about gender (Bem, 1981). Parenting practices comprise several important

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parenting paradigms, such as parental potentials and beliefs (Jeynes, 2010). The parenting practices also include explicit discipline practices (use of punishment), use of positive parenting approaches (rewarding pro-social behaviors), and consistency in parenting, appropriate management, and monitoring of the child's behavior (Spera, 2005). Parenting practices are thought to play an important role in child development and encompass a few basic categories; positive parenting, involvement, inconsistent discipline, and poor supervision (Harvey, Stoessel, & Herbert, 2011).

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, sexual, and intellectual growth, as well as the intensification of gender beliefs and attitudes that can have long-term implications (Kågesten et al., 2016). Similarly, children are influenced by how they are treated and expected to behave, as well as the responsibilities of their male and female family members. Studies have traced the influence of parents and families on the process of gender socialization at several levels in early childhood, beginning with children's play and participation in sports, family division of labor, media interactions, knowledge/engagement with social media norms, gender stereotypes, and other socio-structural factors (Leaper & Farkas, 2014).

Children first learn what it means to be a male or female through parental influence, and these concepts generally persist throughout life (Howard, 2000). It has been found that educated fathers, working mothers, and fathers who show egalitarian gender role attitudes in the division of housework and decision-making are decisive factors for egalitarian gender role attitudes in children (Kulik, 2005). Following the modeling principle of social learning theories, it is reasonable to assume that a child's experience of a non-traditional, non-gendered parenting relationship could result in a child with fewer gender stereotypes (i.e., possessing gender-neutral attitudes) and more egalitarian gender roles than a child's experience of a traditional gendered parenting relationship. Taking it a step further, it can be said that the more gender-equal the parental relationship, represented by the nature and division of housework, child care, employment, decision-making powers, and the gender role attitudes the family will be, the more egalitarian the children will be (McHale et al., 2003). Focusing on the concept of parenting practices and gender roles attitudes among children the present study was designed to analyze parenting practices and their effect on children' gender roles attitude among Pakistani families.

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the present research:

1. To analyze differences in parenting socialization practices between fathers and mothers.

2. To find out how parenting practices contribute to different gender roles and attitudes adopted by children.
3. To investigate the effect of parenting socialization practices on gender roles attitudes among children.

Review of the Literature

Local and transnational literature was analyzed to understand parenting practices and their effect on children's gender roles and attitude formation. The cross-sectional study was conducted in Lahore, Pakistan, the second-largest city and has socio-economically diverse educational centers. The sample included 816 motivated young male students. According to the findings, apparent parental rejection explains 40.3% of the variance in the outcome of violent behavior, whereas warm parenting actions account for 48.2% of the variance in student certainty. According to the study, the need is to encourage positive parenting like improving awareness, knowledge, and attitudes among parents. Parent-child interactions and parental attitude can lead to an improvement in current parenting socialization practices and a reduction in the risk of developmental factors outcomes among children (Raza, Abbasi, & Habib, 2020).

Hussain et al. (2015) conducted a study to investigate the function of the family in transferring gender stereotypes into Pakistani society and its influence on the progress of gender roles. Gender stereotypes and the establishment of gender roles are socio-cultural and relational constructions that develop and are introduced in the organized framework and social interactions, particularly in the family. The study showed that gender roles are the result of gender socialization, different family environments, and the different roles of parents with children.

Similarly, a study included mothers, fathers, and first two children from 358 working and middle-class white families in the United States. The findings of the cluster analysis found three gender-related attitude patterns including traditional parents and children, egalitarian parents and children, and a diverging array of parents who have both traditional and egalitarian children. According to ANOVA results, these family patterns were associated with socio-economic position, parents' time spent on home tasks by gender, and time spent with children. Traditional households were reported to have the most family conflicts (Marks et al., 2009).

Kilsby (2014) found that girls and boys were socialized as women and men with limited and culturally prescribed gender roles. Men were observed as leaders and fathers with protective and decision-making obligations, whilst women were largely characterized as spouses and mothers, with attendant care and home activities; in general, they were also of lesser status. In some cases, mothers were held accountable for both sons and

daughters in their childhood, whereas fathers were only liable for children when they reached early adolescence.

Similarly, a study looks at how parental background characteristics affect parent-child variations in gender and employment in a sample of Israeli parents and their adolescent children (n=134 in each group). Mothers were typically more open with their children, whilst males looked to be the more traditional. Mothers' and fathers' education, as well as mothers' employment status, had a significant impact on parents and children's attitudes toward gender roles. Fathers with higher levels of education and households with full-time working mothers tended to be more liberal. The mother's birthplace, the family's level of religiosity, and the number of children influenced parental opinions (Kulik, 2002).

In terms of socioeconomic engagement, a study found that girls and boys have very diverse perspectives on gender roles, with girls being significantly more egalitarian than boys (58 vs. 19%). According to the results of the multivariate linear probability model, girls, and boys who finished at least grade 10 were 31% and 15% more likely, respectively, to have egalitarian views on gender roles than girls and boys with elementary or lower education. Individual attitudes of adolescent girls and boys toward gender roles are closely tied to their community peers' perspectives. Egalitarian beliefs were also 5% higher in females and 6% higher in boys who belonged to social groups versus those who did not. Television viewing influenced females' egalitarian attitudes but not boys'. Both males and females must adopt enlightened gender roles to establish an equal society (Streatfield et al., 2023).

Cordero-Coma and Esping-Andersen (2018) argue that sons can learn egalitarian gender views and practices not only by copying egalitarian parents but also by interpreting their parents' beliefs and attitudes toward egalitarian activities. This is especially true for males whose mothers have more education. It was asserted that more gender egalitarian parenting practices and ideas could help to close the gender gap in housework, particularly for boys. The research on children's gender socialization by their parents yields conflicting results on a parent's multidimensional gender schema about a child's conceptualization of gender and development of their gender schema. These conflicting findings necessitate a more in-depth study of how a parent's multidimensional gender schema operates and how it is performed for their children's socialization.

Fulcher (2010) discovered that when middle-class mothers held more traditional views on their children's gender roles, their children (ages 7 to 12) reported higher gender-stereotyped job goals. Specifically, when mothers expected their children to be interested in typically gendered occupations, the children indicated a greater interest in careers that reinforced gender stereotypes. Gender identity is a conscious and significant formative

process for children that necessitate family teaching and the effect of societal goodwill. It is commonly known that the family is a child's first educational environment and has a significant impact on their early identification with the world, including their gender identity. Following in-depth investigation and comparison, it is found that diverse patterns of family formation, parents' emotional states, and gender identity influence children's attitudes toward gender and gender choices. Children's gender identity is built on the foundation of their parents' education, and they require parental supervision and understanding (Chen, 2021).

The preceding literature reviewed and identified parenting methods in terms of positive parenting, engagement in encouraging children's gender roles, attitudes, and other beneficial behaviors. Similarly, the literature emphasized parental gender roles attitude, the role of mothers, parents' socioeconomic backgrounds, and the function of media in shaping children's gender roles attitude. Keeping the preceding literature in mind, the current study seeks to examine the role of parental techniques in shaping children's gender roles and views. Children in two-parent families had their own gendered identity rearing from an early age, and they learned individual gender role information from their parents about the proper behaviors and activities of males and females (Chen & Zou, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical background of the present study is based on the following theories:

Social Learning Theory

It sees children as passive learners in the educational process, who more or less acquire their gender in response to external stimuli such as rewards and punishments by their parents and others around them. There are many gender-related materials that children can watch and practice in the family environment. For example, parents model gender behavior through their occupations, occupations, and hobbies. Children can learn male and female behavior by observing the difference between mother and father. Although gender roles have become more balanced in recent decades, the traditional separation between housewife and breadwinner is still visible in families today. Learning about gender roles and gender-responsive behaviors is influenced by modeling, enactive experience, and direct instruction (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). According to this perspective, children are both positively and negatively reinforced for gender-specific and inappropriate behavior (Burn, 1996; Wharton, 2005). Therefore, they started learning what society expects of their gender, and most of them chose to act according to society's views on gender.

Gender Schema Theory

Another important theory for understanding the formation of gender role attitudes in children is gender schema theory, which focuses on the age of gender formation in children and examines how gender identity develops through gender schemas. Schema refers to a mental structure that contains expectations and knowledge about the world. These schemas can include expectations and perceptions about people, social roles, events, and behavior in a situation (Bem, 1981). According to Bem's gender scheme theory, men and women act according to their respective learned cultural definitions of gender. Parents expect sons to be the main breadwinners and daughters to be caregivers. Mothers and fathers can encourage different behaviors in their sons and daughters according to their gender schema (Eckes & Trautner, 2012). Parents with egalitarian gender role attitudes strive to avoid passing on gender stereotypes to their children by creating a non-stereotypic environment (Bem 1981), and egalitarian parents are more equitable in sharing housework and treating sons and daughters similarly than traditional parents (Updegraff et al., 1996).

The role of the family and in particular the fulfillment of the parents' role as role models in the child's life affects the development of the child's character and personality, especially concerning the perception of gender. The role of the family in introducing children to gender identity is therefore very important as a first step so that children can be properly aware of gender identity and thus be able to develop and optimize their potential appropriately in the future. Furthermore, social learning theory believes that children acquire many of their gender roles by imitating the conduct of adults and older children, forming notions about what behaviors are suitable for each gender. According to gender schema theory, once children have established their core gender identity, they begin to construct gender schemas. Gender schemas are formed through children's interactions with others, observations of their surroundings, and cultural influences. Keeping in view the lenses of the above-mentioned theories, the present conducted to analyze parenting practices and their impact on gender roles attitude formation among children. According to social learning theory, children learn gender roles through rewards and punishment, as well as observation and imitation of adult models; on the other hand, gender schema theory claims that children learn gender roles through social learning and active cognitive processing of gender-roe information, which leads to gender development.

Significance of the Study

Gender-sensitive parenting has numerous challenges, but it ultimately contributes to the development of a more sympathetic and understanding society free of gender stereotypes and standards. The current study will be peculiar in that it will look at the disparities in parenting socialization strategies used by parents in Pakistani society. The study's

findings may assist gender specialists, family counselors, psychologists, and teachers in incorporating gender ideas into community-level practices, which can increase consideration for empowering people to accomplish equitable gender socialization among children and promote gender equality.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following were the hypotheses of the present research:

- **H_1:** There is a significant gender difference in parenting practice to socialize children.
- **H_2:** There is a significant gender difference in the traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitude among children.
- **H_3:** There is a significant difference in traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitudes of children with parenting practice of involvement.
- **H_4:** There is a significant difference in traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitudes of children with parenting practice of supervision.
- **H_5:** There is a significant difference in traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitudes of children with parenting practice of inconsistent discipline.
- **H_6:** There is a significant gender difference in traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitudes of children with parenting practice of corporal punishment.

Research Methodology

Following the positivist approach, the present study was quantitative and based on a cross-sectional survey design that compared outcomes and exposure at one time.

Population and Sample: The study population included families of the city of Lahore, the second largest, second most populous city, and the provincial capital of Punjab, Pakistan. The sample of the present study was estimated through Yamane's formula (1973) and a sample of N=250 families including N=500 parents and N=500 children was collected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling method from respondents both parents and children.

Sampling Procedure: In the first phase, six strata of the city of Lahore were identified, secondly, twelve schools were selected, and two schools from each stratum, one girls' higher secondary school, and one boys' higher secondary school were randomly selected from the list of Govt. higher secondary schools for boys and girls found at Department of Secondary Education of Lahore. In the last step, taking into account the inclusion criteria of the study, the sample of parents (mothers and fathers) with their children both son and daughter, similarly students both girls and boys from schools aged 14 to 18, those who

had a sibling (sister or brother) aged 13 to 18, and their parents were randomly selected as study participants.

Data Collection Instruments: The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (Frick, P., 1991) has been used as a data collection tool with the prior permission of the authors. Its items are based on the five subscales (APQ): involvement, positive parenting, supervision, inconsistent discipline, and corporal punishment. Parents completed each item with a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always) considering their children, both sons and daughters, aged 13 to 18 years. The internal consistency or average reliability of the APQ scale is Cronbach's α 0.68, showing that the overall reliability of the scale is acceptable.

Similarly, in the present study, the Gender Roles Attitude Scale (Zeyneloğlu &Terzioğlu, 2011) was used after obtaining approval from the authors. The two dimensions of the scale i.e. Egalitarian [A] and Traditional [D] gender roles were completed by high school students (M_{age} = 15.87, *SD* = .06). All statements of the two subscales above were translated into Urdu and were verified by English-Urdu language experts that had psychology and gender studies backgrounds. Egalitarian gender roles subscale had moderate internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .78) and so did traditional gender roles (Cronbach alpha = .78) however overall internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .92).

Procedure: Permission is obtained from the higher authorities of the schools to collect data from teachers and students. Respondents were also assured that they would maintain the confidentiality of the information they provided through questionnaires and were informed that the purpose of the data was educational perspective only. Ethical considerations were also taken into account in the daily collection of questionnaires, and respondents were appreciated for their timely participation and patience in providing family information. Male and female teachers from Govt. Higher Secondary Schools Lahore for boys and girls were selected having 13-18 years-old children and they were asked to complete the questionnaire from their son and daughter and spouse. Similarly, children from Govt. higher secondary schools for girls and boys attending matriculation were selected and asked to complete the questionnaire from their parents, and a sibling (13 to 18 years). The questionnaires were collected daily bases by visiting the schools and homes of the participants.

Data Analysis: Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was applied to test the mean differences of four dependent variables, with follow-up univariate ANOVA analysis. Similarly, one-way, three-way ANOVA, and simple percentages and frequencies were used to analyze data.

Descriptive of Demographics

Demographic characteristics in the examination of the parents included gender, age, family system, and family income level. It was determined the age of parents was in 45-

60 years. Family structure also influences parental socialization practices, hence family structure was selected as a variable in this study, which included 26.2% of families living in a nuclear family system, and 23.8% sharing a joint family system, while extended families were not selected in this sample as a limitation of the study. The sample was distributed into three family income levels and the majority in the sample (48.8%) earned more than PRs.50, 000/- per month, 22.8% sample comprised family income level PRs.25,000-50,000, and 28.4% had monthly family income level PRs. 76,000-100,000. Therefore, it is clear that the sample represented the working/middle class of Pakistan. It was also taken into account that 46% of the mothers participating in the present study were employed while 54% were housewives. Similarly, children 50% of boys and 50% of girls in the age range 13-18 participated in this study.

Results

Study I: One-way between-groups multivariate analysis MANOVA was performed to examine gender differences in parenting practices. Dependent variables included 'Involvement', 'positive parenting',' inconsistent discipline', 'supervision', and 'corporal punishment', and the independent variable was gender. There was a statistically significant difference between scores of fathers and mothers on the collective dependent variables *F(5,491)=3.10,p=.009; Wilks' Lambda=.97; partial eta squared=.031.* When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, the differences to reach statistical significance were 'involvement' *p=.012* and 'positive parenting' *p=.032.* An analysis of mean score differences showed that mothers were more concerned about involvement and positive parenting to socialize their children as scores were reported for mothers *(M=37.8, SD=6.85)* for' involvement' and *(M=16.52, SD=2.88)* for 'positive parenting' than scores of fathers on 'involvement' *(M=36.35, SD=5.92),* 'positive parenting' *(M=16.52, SD=2.88)* respectively.

Study II: Significant main effect of gender collapsed over gender roles, $F(1, 498) = 2546.01$, $p < .000$, $\eta^2 = .84$ revealed girls ($M = 43.21$, $SD = 16.02$) had significantly higher attitudes than boys ($M = 22.41$, $SD = 6.78$). A significant main effect of gender roles collapsed over gender, was also found $F(1, 498) = 495.65$, $p < .000$, $\eta^2 = .50$; attitudes towards traditional gender roles ($M = 37.22$, $SD = 21.62$) were higher than egalitarian gender roles ($M = 28.40$, $SD = 3.62$). A significant interaction between gender and gender roles was also found $F(1, 498) = 2315.99$, $p < .000$, $\eta^2 = .82$. Post-hoc Tukey analysis revealed attitudes of girls ($M = 29.26$, $SD = 3.31$) was significantly ($p < .001$) higher than boys ($M = 27.53$, $SD = 3.72$) for egalitarian gender roles, and attitudes of girls ($M = 57.15$, $SD = 10.63$) was significantly ($p < .001$) higher than boys ($M = 17.28$, $SD = 5.06$) on traditional gender roles.

Table 1: One-Way ANOVA for traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitude of children with parenting practices

Variables I	Variables II	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Egalitarian	**Involvement**					
	"You help your child with his/her homework".					
	Between Groups	155.23	2	38.80	3.00	.02
	Within Groups	6371.99	494	12.89		
	Total	6527.22	498			
	"You ask your child what his/her plans are for the coming day".					
	Between Groups	251.25	4	62.81	4.91	.00
	Within Groups	6330.55	495	12.78		
	Total	6581.80	499			
Egalitarian	**Positive parenting**					
	"You reward or give something extra to your child for obeying you or behaving well".					
	Between Groups	259.26	4	64.81	5.07	.00
	Within Groups	6322.5	495	12.77		
	Total	6581.80	99			
	"You hug or kiss your child when he/she does something well".					
	Between Groups	223.81	4	55.95	4.37	.00
	Within Groups	6357.99	495	12.84		
	Total	6581.80	499			
Traditional	**Inconsistent Discipline**					
	"You threaten to punish your child and then do not actually punish him/her".					
	Between Groups	261.86	4	65.46	3.60	.01
	Within Groups	8982.14	495	18.15		
	Total	9244.00	499			

*$p<.05$

The cross-section of the variables was conducted through one-way ANOVA with traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitude of children and parenting practice 'involvement'. Was statistically significant difference was found in two factors of parenting socialization practice 'involvement' '*You help your child with his/her homework' F(4,495)=3.00, p=.018* and '*You ask your child what his/her plans are for the coming day*' *F(4,495)= 4.91, p=.001* with egalitarian gender roles attitude of children.

Similarly, the one-way ANOVA was performed with traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitude of children and gender socialization practice 'positive parenting'. There was statistically significant difference was found in two factors of parenting socialization practice, "*You reward or give something extra to your child for obeying you or behaving well*" *F(4,495)=5.07, p=.001* and "*You hug or kiss your child when he/she does something well*" *F(4,495)=4.37, p=.002* with egalitarian gender roles attitude of children.

Additionally, the one-way ANOVA was performed with traditional and egalitarian gender roles attitude of children and gender socialization practice 'inconsistent discipline'. There was a statistically significant difference was found in one factor of parenting socialization practice "*You threaten to punish your child and then do not punish him/her*"*F(4,495)=3.60, p=.007* with traditional gender roles attitude of children.

Discussion

The current study showed differences in parenting socialization practices between mothers and fathers to socialize their children. The parenting practices in terms of 'involvement',' and 'positive parenting' were found to differ significantly from other parenting practices among parents. In addition, the findings reveal that mothers were more concerned about these parenting practices for socializing their children as compared to fathers. Furthermore, it was found that mothers in Pakistani culture were more concerned since they spent more time at home with their children. Hence, mothers have a significant influence on the formation of children's gender roles and attitudes. Moreover, the findings also support the study's conclusion that the familial structure provides considerable evidence that mothers have a distinct influence on the creation of daughters' and sons' gender ideas (Carlson & Knoester, 2011).

The study's findings revealed significant gender variations in high school students' opinions about egalitarian and traditional gender roles, with female students showing greater attitudes toward gender roles than male students. This finding implies that female students had stronger opinions toward egalitarian or traditional gender roles than male students. The reason for girls' egalitarian and traditional attitudes towards gender roles depends on their relationship with their parents since girls spend more time with their mothers at home; therefore, the role of parenting, especially the mother-daughter relationship, has a greater influence on the formation of attitudes towards gender roles. As shown in a previous study, mothers had a greater impact on gender attitudes among children as compared to fathers. Thus, when parents reported a specific gender attitude (discriminatory or egalitarian), their children were 11% more likely to have the same attitude (Dhar et al., 2018).

Egalitarian gender roles are based on positive pro-social behaviors. The above findings of the study were also supported by the previous literature that found positive parenting was associated with positive outcomes among children, such as warmth and being caring, and supportive parenting practices. Which were significantly predicted as positive or prosaically behavioral outcomes and were less likely to be associated with risky or negative behavioral outcomes in children (Nelson et al., 2001; Laible et al., 2017). Similarly, the parenting practice of 'inconsistent discipline' leads to traditional gender roles attitudes among children. Inconsistent interactions with parents may influence children's self-perceptions, leading to insecurity, self-doubt, and low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Luxton, 2008).

Conclusions and Suggestions

The current results of the research are interesting because they suggest certain types of parenting practices, such as 'involvement' and 'positive parenting', associated with children's egalitarian gender roles attitude. Similarly, certain types of parenting practices 'inconsistent discipline' associated with traditional child gender role attitudes. The findings may have an important social implication, as it is possible to encourage a reduction in the traditional gender role adjustment by providing parents and families with information and services that promote better parenting practices from a gender perspective to reduce traditional gender role attitudes among adolescents. Findings from various studies showed that parents are more persuasive in the process of gender socialization, therefore taking into account the findings of the present study following implications were put forward to promote positive parenting practices that affect gender roles attitude formation among adolescents. The majority of current research focuses on the perception of gender roles in family socialization, gender identity theory, and the social problems and parental attitudes of non-binary children, but few studies have looked at parental education and influence on children before they form a gender identity. Effective parental involvement and education throughout the child's gender awareness period can help steer his or her development and prevent family conflict.

- Encouraging fathers to participate in gender socialization is crucial at the household level.
- School-based group interventions can teach adolescent boys and girls about egalitarian gender roles.
- National collaboration between the government and private sector is crucial for implementing gender-responsive and family-friendly policies, social protection programs, and service delivery, including public childcare benefits, and parenting education.

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