



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

Study-Family Balance in Married Undergraduate Female Students of FCCU

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of married females who are undergraduate students maintaining a balance between studies and family responsibilities. It also aims to identify the specific challenges that women face and the coping strategies they use to overcome them. The current literature offers ample evidence regarding the difficulties and challenges female students must struggle with while managing household responsibilities along with their studies. This study also explores the role of the family in supporting female education. This study uses the gender role theory and the gender conflict theory, also known as the role strain theory, to understand the role dynamics and how they affect the study-family balance. The research design employed was qualitative, and the sample was collected from married female students only. This research includes multiple experiences and challenges faced by married females through 9 in-depth semi-structured interviews using semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews were conducted using online interviewing tools and techniques (zoom call, WhatsApp video call). Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis was used to identify recurring themes related to gender roles, family support, and the challenges of juggling family responsibilities with academic pursuits. The results found that traditional gender roles and expectations for both men and women, particularly in marital and familial contexts. Women experience more limitations in personal and social aspects of life compared to men as interpreted in the findings. The findings also include coping mechanisms, how participants overcome difficulties, by reaching out to family and mentors for external support, taking time out for themselves, or confronting the psychological strain on self when unable to handle two duties at once, which are evidence of attempts to deal with role pressure proposed by Goode.

Keywords: Marital females, Familial obligations, gender roles

Introduction

In Pakistan, women face numerous challenges when it comes to managing their academic pursuits and family responsibilities. In particular, female married students are faced with a unique set of difficulties when trying to balance their education and family relationships.

These difficulties can include traditional gender roles, cultural norms, and lack of support from family and society. Married women are expected to prioritize their family obligations over their academic pursuits, and this often leads to limited opportunities for them to excel in their studies. Additionally, the expectation for women to be the primary caregivers for their children can make it difficult for them to find time to focus on their education. Cultural expectations, domestic responsibilities, financial constraints, lack of support, gender discrimination, and social stigma can make it difficult for female married students to manage their academic and family responsibilities in Pakistan.

Despite these challenges, many women are determined to pursue their academic goals and find ways to balance their family responsibilities. However, the lack of support from their spouses and families can make it challenging to achieve success in both areas. The reason is that women in Pakistan's environment would handle both domestic and professional responsibilities, which could lead to social pressures and imbalances in personal health.

Working women, particularly married women, and mothers in Pakistan, must always strike a balance between their work and household responsibilities. The work-life balance of women who work or study has already been extensively studied in Pakistan.

The purpose of this study is to explore the difficulties that female married students face while managing their academics and family relationships in Pakistan. The study aims to identify the

specific challenges that these women face and the strategies they use to overcome them.

Additionally, the study will explore the role of family and society in supporting these women and promoting gender equality.

By examining the experiences of female married students in Pakistan, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on social pressure, gender, and education in the country. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide insights into the challenges that women face and inform strategies for supporting them in their pursuit of higher education.

Ultimately, the study seeks to promote greater gender equality and empower women to pursue their academic and personal goals.

Literature review

A study conducted by Salman Shaikh (Salman Shaikh et al.) on the factors affecting the work-life balance emphasizes the numerous barriers women in Pakistan must overcome to strike a balance between their personal and professional lives, especially those who work for NGOs. Due to the social norms and cultural expectations in Pakistan, women are expected to put their family responsibilities ahead of their jobs. Women are expected to take care of their families and households according to the country's standard gender roles. Women are likely to discover it challenging to manage work and family obligations as a result. Discrimination against women in the job can make it challenging for them to maintain their personal and professional lives. This involves being sexually harassed, having opportunities compromised, and having not enough exposure to develop one's career.

Another study conducted by the International University of Bahrain (Akram et al., 2018) highlights that women in dual-working couples in Pakistan spend an average of 4.8 hours per day on household chores, compared to men's average of 2.3 hours. This inequality in the distribution of household responsibilities often leads to women feeling overwhelmed and unable to balance their work and personal lives effectively. Women in Pakistan face various societal expectations and cultural norms that make it difficult for them to balance their work and personal lives. The study found that females in Pakistan are expected to prioritize their family obligations over their work responsibilities, which can make it challenging for them to excel in their careers. The societal expectations of women's roles as primary caregivers and nurturers also add to their burden, making it harder for them to prioritize their professional development and personal well-being.

Gender role stereotypes have historically contributed to power imbalances in society by attributing to masculine characteristics such as dominance and authority and feminine features such as submission and fragility (Koenig, 2018). Men are typically expected to be

the family's provider and decision-maker in many nations, particularly those in Eastern and Southeast Asia, while women are expected to take on the position of mother and play a supporting role. When these gendered internalizations are applied to intimate relationships and marriage, they can influence expectations of what it means for a spouse to work, make decisions, take care of the home, and make decisions (Ogletree, 2014).

The study suggests that the lack of supportive workplace policies and work cultures that accommodate the needs of women can further contribute to their difficulties in achieving work-life balance. The absence of flexible working arrangements, such as telecommuting or flexible work hours, makes it difficult for women to balance their work and family responsibilities. Similarly, the lack of supportive workplace cultures that recognize and accommodate the unique needs of working mothers can also add to their stress and affect their well-being.

Another study conducted (Noori & Orfan, 2021) highlights several challenges faced by married female students in higher education such as limited access to education, financial constraints, lack of support, and gender-based discrimination. Married female students face limited access to education due to societal norms and expectations that prioritize household duties and family responsibilities over education. They also face financial constraints due to the additional responsibilities and expenses that come with marriage and starting a family. They may have to rely on their husband's income, which may not be enough to cover the cost of education and other expenses. They lack support from their families and communities, who may view their pursuit of education as a threat to traditional gender roles and norms. This lack of support can lead to feelings of isolation and discouragement. Married female students face gender-based discrimination and bias from their peers, professors, and other members of the academic community. This can lead to feelings of insecurity and a lack of confidence in their abilities.

Another study conducted by Nayab and Ali highlighted the challenges faced by early-married female students who are pursuing higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

(Nayab & Ali, 2022) Through multiple case studies, the authors identify several difficulties that these students face which are domestic responsibilities, limited mobility, lack of time, and gender discrimination. Early married female students have a burden of domestic responsibilities. These responsibilities can include cooking, cleaning, childcare, and other household tasks, and require significant amounts of time and energy. The study also found that early-married female students often do not receive adequate support from their husbands or other family members. Not any kind of emotional support, financial support, or help with domestic tasks, can make it difficult for these students to balance their domestic responsibilities with their academic work. Students have limited mobility, which can make it difficult for them to attend classes, participate in extracurricular activities, or access resources like libraries or computer labs. Certain social norms exist in our society that restrict women's mobility, as well as practical factors like transportation and childcare. Female students struggle to find enough time to devote to their studies. They have to tolerate stereotypes about women's abilities, expectations that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities over academic work, or overt sexism and harassment.

A study conducted by Qurra-tul-ain examined the impact of women's education, employment, and decision-making power on gender equality and socio-economic development in Pakistan. The research finds that gender inequality is a significant obstacle to socio-economic development in Pakistan. It was argued that women's empowerment, particularly through education and employment, can help reduce gender inequality and promote socio-economic development. The study concludes that policies that promote women's empowerment can contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in Pakistan. (Meraj & Sadaqat, 2016)

The research article "Gender Inequality: Problems and Its Solutions in Pakistan" by Ahmed Hussain Shah Bukhari, Ghulam Mustafa Gaho, and Khalid Hussain Soomro discusses forms of gender inequality prevalent in Pakistan. The authors suggest that to address gender inequality, there needs to be an intricate approach that involves legal and policy reforms, cultural transformation, and the active involvement of civil society and the media. They recommend that the government needs to strengthen its legal framework and implement policies that promote gender equality, such as increasing women's representation in decision-making positions and ensuring equal pay for equal work. It is found that patriarchal societal norms and values perpetuate gender inequality in the country, leading to discrimination against women and girls in education, employment, politics, and social life. Cultural norms that promote gender inequality need to be challenged through awareness-raising campaigns, and education systems need to promote gender equality from an early age. (Bukhari et al., 2019)

Significance of Study

This study aims to understand the experiences and challenges of female married students. It also contributes to the existing literature on gender and education in Pakistan and informs policies and interventions that promote supportive regimes for married female students. The purpose of this study is to explore the difficulties that female married students face while managing their academics and family relationships in Pakistan. Additionally, the study explores the role of family and society in supporting these women and believing in gender equality. The study examines how gender roles and societal expectations influence married female students' decisions to pursue higher education and their experiences of balancing family responsibilities with academic pursuits.

Research Questions

- 1) How do married female students in FC perceive their experiences of juggling family responsibilities with academic pursuits, and what recommendations do they have for other women in similar situations?
- 2) How do societal norms and cultural expectations regarding gender roles affect the academic progress of married female students?
- 3) What role do educational institutions play in supporting married female students, and what changes can be made to improve this support?

Theoretical Framework

Gender Role Theory

The gender role theory offered by Eagly and Wood (2012) presents a framework for identifying how gender roles are created and upheld in society. This theory emphasizes the complex interaction between individuals and society in forming and maintaining gendered behavior and expectations by highlighting the importance of socialization, gender stereotypes, situational circumstances, and the effects of gender roles. Greater gender equality and social change can be promoted by recognizing and opposing certain gender roles. In Pakistan, gender roles are highly differentiated and are deeply rooted in cultural traditions and religious beliefs (Yousaf, Asghar, & Ali, 2021). The Gender Role Theory suggests that society, through cultural expectations and norms, shapes gender roles that affect individuals' behavior, attitudes, and life outcomes, including their educational attainment. According to this theory, gender roles are not biologically determined but socially constructed, and they vary across cultures and historical periods.

Role Conflict Theory

The Role Conflict Theory, developed by William J. Goode in 1960, is a sociological framework that provides useful insight for understanding how societal norms and cultural expectations regarding gender roles affect the educational attainment of married female students in Pakistan. According to this theory, adults are expected to perform a wide variety of roles, each with its expectations and obligations, including those relating to their career, family, and community. When the expectations and responsibilities of various positions are inconsistent or conflicting, role conflict emerges, which causes stressful situations for individuals. Individuals may experience conflict between different roles they occupy in society, such as the role of a wife and the role of a student. This conflict can arise when societal expectations regarding these roles are in opposition or when the demands of one role interfere with the demands of another (Goode, 1960). Conflicts between these roles opposing value systems, expectations of behavior, and time obligations may be the cause of these issues. In the context of Pakistan, gender roles are deeply entrenched in societal norms and cultural expectations.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is used for this study because it is well-suited for understanding the context in which individuals navigate their roles. It allows researchers to explore the specific circumstances, and challenges, and explore cultural experiences that may influence married female student's perceptions. This is considered inductive (Bryman, 2006). In-depth interviews were conducted with the participants by a semi-structured questionnaire.

Sampling Design

The selection criterion is married females of FCCU, who are enrolled in undergraduate programs. The participants are required to be living with their spouses separately or in-law's house for at least 1 year. Through a purposive sampling approach, the participants were selected based on their characteristics. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique where the researcher selects participants based on specific criteria that are relevant to the research question. In the case of study-family incompatibility of a married female student. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to specifically target individuals who are experiencing family incompatibility and collect data from them.

- The population of this research consists of female married students who are enrolled in undergraduate programs.
- The population is married female students who have been living with their in-laws or separated for 1.5 years.

This targeted approach is crucial when the research is focused on a particular group with unique characteristics, such as married female students.

Data Collection

The data was collected selected from 9 in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews lasted up to 35-40 minutes each. The sample included 10 participants who were interviewed. Coding was done until saturation was reached. The collected data was recorded and transcribed after the approval from the participants. Each participant signed a consent form before the interview. The study is limited to FCCU students only which means it will not be completely applicable to other undergraduate students. This is why the collection of samples may require a few undergraduate students outside of FCCU for accurate and reliable results. This will help to generalize the findings to other female married students as well.

Data Analysis

The data analysis is done using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis. It was used to identify recurring themes related to gender roles, family support, and the challenges of juggling family responsibilities with academic pursuits. The steps that were followed to identify themes:

1. Familiarization with the Data:
2. Generating Initial Codes
3. Searching for Themes
4. Reviewing Themes
5. Defining and Naming Themes
6. Reviewing and Defining Themes
7. Writing the Analysis
8. Reflexivity

Coding and identifying themes were done under the guidance of the supervisor. To shed light on the various facets of study-family incompatibility in Pakistan and its significant effects on the family and educational domains, this thesis will investigate the issue's implications.

Ethical considerations

This study is done according to the ethical guidelines for research due to human subjects being involved. Participants were given the option to participate online, or in person and they preferred online. The responses of the participants were recorded to help the researcher during the data analysis, after obtaining permission that was granted by the participants. An informed consent was also obtained from all the participants before their participation. Online interviews are conducted through WhatsApp or Zoom calls. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point and their choice to participate was completely voluntary. During the call, participants were ensured again that their names, phone numbers, and recordings would not be shared with anyone else. Their confidentiality and anonymity were ensured in this study. Clearance from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be obtained before the study is conducted.

Results and Analysis of Findings

Dealing with study-family incompatibility:

The family is the primary social unit in Pakistan, including a wide variety of interpersonal relationships. Ongoing relationships with extended family are crucial to maintain in an Asian household. Relationships among new families are built through marriage. The family gets to know one another and builds a relationship through the married couple. When a female student is married into a new family, she is expected to adopt that role suddenly. It is expected that she to start adjusting according to the new family and prioritize the family over everything else.

Transition and Adjustment to Married Life:

The relationship between education and family responsibilities is an essential component in understanding the complex dynamic of societal development in this study, that influences both people and societies. In Pakistan, a country with a rich cultural legacy, striking a careful balance between academic endeavors and family obligations may be a difficult task for a newly married female student to handle. Pakistani women may experience significant life changes when entering marriage as they must adapt to new responsibilities, duties, and cultural norms. Often married females experience themselves comparing their new home and living style with their parent's house or the way they used to live before marriage. A participant struggling to finish up the academic assignments mentioned.

“My parent’s house environment was quite different, if I was studying from morning till night or even when I was up the whole night finishing my assignments and research papers, I had the leverage to do so without any disturbance. My parents gave me that environment so I could solely focus on my studies. There weren’t any house conflicts or joint family fights as well, which is why the environment was good for me.”

The participant discusses the shift in responsibilities and duties after marriage, particularly in terms of having some time to herself without any disturbance.

Gender roles, Familial obligations, and autonomy

Pakistan, a nation infused with a wealth of cultural diversity and a dynamic past, has long been known for its traditional rules and beliefs that dictate certain duties for men and women in the home. Gender norms have traditionally attributed to males the job of major providers and family guardians, while women have been given the task of nurturing and maintaining the home. Pressure to conform to societal norms during family events while compromising educational responsibilities. The participant's sense of obligation to engage in housework due

to societal and familial expectations after 2 months of getting married and attending university.

"Whoever came to the house for the first time, it was expected from me that I have to go sit with them and spend time with them and it was important to get involved in house chores especially at those times to show others that I work around the house."

The adjustment and compromise period are highlighted, including the need to adapt to new tasks such as laundry and cleaning with other academic responsibilities as well. For a newly married woman, family responsibilities can be seen as an imposing factor that could greatly limit her independence and self-determination. Despite the great importance that Pakistani society places on family values, newly married women often face harsh and constricting demands. The role of a woman to solely provide and nurture the family is deeply rooted in people's minds according to the participant who says,

"In our male-dominated society, generally it is expected from the females that they have to take care of the house related duties if I am speaking from a cultural and religious perspective."

The conventional gender role imposed on women in the family unit is one of the main problems because backing up the problem with religious context, a female believes that she has signed all her rights to her husband after getting married. Newlyweds are often expected to put their in-law's wishes and demands before their own; a participant's husband sometimes supports his wife's educational pursuit when his or his family's needs are not compromised. Gender roles influence decisions, such as the participant's husband insisting on traditional cooking practices before her exams were challenging to both her roles as a student and a wife.

“I had my final exams and could not focus on studying because my husband said that he wants all his meals to be cooked by my hands.”

This often results in a loss of personal autonomy as they seek a careful balance between fulfilling family obligations and pursuing their own goals. The focus on sustaining social stability might also be a factor in the suppression of individual goals which also leads to negative outcomes such as low self-esteem and lack of decision-making power. Women are frequently expected to put their responsibilities as wives and daughters-in-law above all else due to traditional gender norms. This social expectation might prevent them from pursuing further education, professional prospects, and personal development because of the challenges they must face after marriage. This eventually repeats the cycle of reliance on acceptance and approval from their families. The impact of stereotypical gender roles extends beyond marriage and affects overall societal expectations. The majority of participants experienced a lack of support from their husband's families as they always expected their daughters-in-law to deprioritize educational pursuits.

“After getting married there were instances when I had to go to a dinner or a relative's place, I was expected that I should take a day or two off from my university just for preparation.”

Prioritizing the household: Cultural expectations, education, and role conflict

Cultural expectations, especially after marriage, conflict with educational pursuits.

Participants expected that somehow, they would manage their studies and marriage side by side. This expectation was built because the treatment a daughter receives in her house is entirely different from the treatment she receives in her husband's house, according to the participant. There are multiple instances where the participants are pressured to prioritize family events over academic commitments. When a female gets married, she must take care

of the kitchen and the majority of the house chores. These duties can be divided fairly but they are not. The new daughter-in-law is given loads of responsibilities to manage. While juggling both roles as a student and a wife at first, believed in prioritizing marriage over studying eventually, the participant responded,

“I believe that there is only one role that you can entirely fulfill and if I wanted to be a good wife, I had to compromise my academic duties. Cultural expectations did conflict with my role as a student, I just could not ignore them because I wanted to.”

The patterns of conflicts between cultural expectations and the role of a student can be observed through the responses of participants. The clash between cultural expectations for married female students begins when she does not prioritize household duties over education.

Educational Environment:

The educational environment has a great impact on the behavior of their students and the results produced. Students and teachers must coordinate with each other, to produce great results according to the participants. There is a demanding routine of classes to be attended, tests, and study sessions that might not give the participants the liberty to indulge in this frequently. Married female students find it challenging to adjust to this lack of freedom their families do not allow it. The reason for not allowing revolves around family obligations and time commitments. A participant who was not able to manage her conveyance to the university every day said,

"In a university setting married females should have additional support in terms of supportive counselors that guide them and some scholarship programs. Facilities such as studying from home and taking important leaves should be allowed to the married females and certain conditions must be set for them to graduate.”

The participant was struggling financially to keep up because of completely dependent on her husband after marriage. Conveyance of the wife, monthly allowance, and shopping were solely managed by the husband. Handling the spouse's expectations and then assigning tasks accordingly requires efficient interaction with your partner and other family members. However, there might be a communication breakdown that results in miscommunication and further distress. Participant implies that a positive experience in the university setting where there is no discrimination based on marital status is very important with no financial issues. Due to the dependency on their husbands, married women have to struggle to bear the expense of their education while cutting down on expenses like new clothes and extra groceries. Participants had to manage financial budgeting and lean on their spouse's interest in choices. Participants need books, extra allowance, and fees to continue their education, for which few of the participants consulted their parents to sponsor their education. Few of the participant's husbands agreed to sponsor their education conditionally. They would also need to compromise their allowance for a housekeeper's salary and monthly allowance. One of the participants who is sponsored by her parents said:

“It is so embarrassing asking my father to transfer this and this amount to my account after 2 months, he must think so low of my husband.”

Another participant who was sponsored by her husband said:

"Nothing is worse than not being financially independent trust me. My husband asks me about the smallest grocery purchase on his bank card. Can you imagine I do those purchases for the house, not myself?"

The challenges of being financially dependent on anyone other than yourself are portrayed highly negatively in the lives of the participants. Moreover, Instructors in universities are not

accommodating towards the participant's situations and familial obligations. Participant responded,

"My instructor said that I was using being married as an excuse to not complete my work on deadline. There was an instructor who did not mark me well because I did not attend all the classes."

Unfair and biased behavior can be seen towards the participants who were not graded well because of not attending a couple of the classes. Accusing the participant of spiraling lies just to not attend class and give low grades is very upsetting to the participants. University is expected to be more accommodating because of the varied students of different backgrounds with different living styles studying there. A participant said.

"In a university setting married females should have additional support in terms of supportive teachers and counselors that guide them. Facilities such as working from home and taking important leaves should be allowed to the married females and certain conditions must be set for them to graduate."

Societal Expectations from Married Females:

In a few cases, participants were married because of social pressure felt by their families to blend in with social expectations, not thinking about the impact on female students, which would end their time in school. These kinds of marriages might interfere with a person's ability to pursue their academic and professional goals seriously and it prevents them from realizing their full potential. In Pakistani society, one of the main expectations placed on recently married female students is the conventional role of a committed wife who replaces her commitment to educational pursuits with her marital life. These are some deeply ingrained factors of cultural conventions. This position dictates that a woman's principal duties are to take care of her family, make her house, and attend to her husband's and in-laws'

needs and utmost priority. Nonetheless, a married female student must balance the expectations of the home and the classroom by continuing to achieve academic excellence. Multiple participants faced such comments after getting married.

“After getting married, all my relatives suggested I be a good wife because a female should nurture her home and think about the upbringing of the upcoming generation”.

The participant expressed how subtly people around her start vocalizing about the essential role of being a good wife. This should be the evolving role of females in society, breaking away from traditional gender roles but it is otherwise.

The need for a shift in societal thinking to support females in pursuing careers and personal growth is important for the growth of society. An early expectation by the mother-in-law to take on adult responsibilities. The participant did not have any experience in taking care of someone and after a week of getting married, she was given the majority of tasks of the household. Participant responded.

"I did not know how to iron clothes properly or set drawers. My husband's mother told me that I would make everyone's breakfast from now on and then handed me a list of chores that included cleaning kitchen cabinets and scrubbing the floor the same day."

Another participant responded,

"There are multiple responsibilities that married females must fulfill according to the society. That includes taking care to talk to your husband, your children, and in-laws all by yourself. This society has made getting married a burden for female students and majority of my university friends do not perceive marriage as a happy experience."

Similarly, another participant responded,

“Right after my marriage I did not know how to deal with kitchen duties so quickly and the expectations my in-laws had with me were more than above.”

The focus on sustaining social stability might also be a factor in the suppression of individual goals. Women are frequently expected to put their responsibilities as wives and daughters-in-law above all else due to traditional gender norms. Managing these heavy responsibilities is extremely unfair on the female's end. The conflict between traditional roles and the desire for independence is a constant struggle among married female students as perceived. Participants had to compromise studying because of the constant guests coming and working because of them.

“I did not have many responsibilities after being married but people around me expected me to always keep working. During family gatherings and get-togethers or when a new guest came over, I felt that I was not able to spend more time studying than I should”.

Social expectations in Pakistani society can be extremely demanding and restrictive for a newlywed female student. Though many people view marriage as a happy event, there can be substantial obstacles when it comes to a woman balancing her academic goals with her new job as a wife. There is limited to no autonomy in making decisions. In Pakistan, social conventions frequently require a newlywed female student to put her responsibilities as a wife and daughter-in-law ahead of her academic goals. This expectation may limit her freedom to choose her path in her education and her profession. This kind of expectation might cause her to give up on her academic objectives eventually causing a lack of motivation. There is a constant burden on married females to balance work and household responsibilities. Another occasion where the participant was conditioned into attending a family gathering whilst compromising her attendance in university.

“I did not attend the classes in university because I was busy at some family events and my husband made it mandatory for me to attend.”

There can be seen multiple personal experiences of participants who compromised their academic responsibilities for the sake of meeting cultural expectations. Lack of understanding and support for educational pursuits. In Pakistani society, ambitious professional aspirations for a recently wed female student can be perceived unfavorably. It is socially accepted that she should prioritize her family and home even if she is studying. Any thought of pursuing a profession might be seen as a betrayal of her commitment to her spouse.

The struggle of balancing academic responsibilities with societal expectations is a challenge for the participants. They highly express the need for changes in societal attitudes to support female students in their educational pursuits because of the sacrifices they had to make.

Participant stated.

“Whenever I would come back from university, my younger sister-in-law would be sleeping in my bed, and I was told to avoid going in that room. I could not ask her to leave because my husband allowed her while he was at the office. I used to get so angry because I had to sit outside. The kind of focus I needed to study as soon as I came back was something I longed for very much after getting married.”

Participant expresses the frustration of not being entitled to her room because of her husband's lack of courtesy to ask the wife before allowing someone. The method of studying that was adopted by the participant had changed because of the circumstances of the house.

There was a gendered division of housework, with specific tasks assigned to the participant and the elder daughter-in-law and men not being assigned any house chores. There were some disparities in freedom and responsibilities between the participant and her sister-in-law.

“Sometimes my sister-in-law did help me to make the side dishes, but she had other commitments such as going to a friend's place to hang out or shopping. She was allowed to go out whenever she wanted to because she had been in the house for a longer period”.

The conflict between traditional expectations and the desire for independence among younger females is one of the key reasons listed why the husband's family is hesitant towards the participant's education. A participant shared how her father-in-law tried to persuade her,

"I still remember the day my father-in-law started to argue with me about why I was going to university that day for only 2 classes. He suddenly said that he would make sure my husband does not allow me to work in an office or earn for myself after graduation.”

The normalization of these kinds of biased behavior towards daughters-in-law is ignored by society because participants are told that they are expected to suffer through this like earlier generations. Another biased event is when the mother-in-law treats the daughter-in-law poorly. Participant said,

"My mother-in-law makes sure that I have minimum time to myself, and I get busy doing kitchen work or house cleaning. This kind of biased behavior towards the daughter-in-law is considered completely normal in our society."

The repetition of the cycle in subsequent generations can be analyzed through the experiences of the participants. Family relationships mostly are expected to be understanding and trusting. They are also expected to implement the education they have attained to enough aware. Parents must gain an understanding of not getting into the trap of marrying their daughter while studying, which is why a participant said:

“The family should understand that education is above marriage no matter what and they should make sure that the family that she's marrying into also realizes that. Marriage should not mean the end of studying, but it does mean the end of if parents get their daughter married in a conservative house.”

Mutual Division of Roles in Marriage:

The reason for the mutual division of roles is mentioned and compared under conditions where roles were divided mutually and where roles were not divided mutually. Advocacy for mutually dividing roles in marriage means rejecting pre-defined gender roles built from on-generations through certain traditions. The importance of challenging societal norms to strengthen relationships is a key factor in building or breaking a relationship. Emotional adjustment to a new environment, new relationships, and maybe a new home or place of employment can be challenging for a female who is newly married. Emotional support from the spouse and family is crucial at such times. Participant who firmly believes in dividing roles because that is the only way marriages last long and happy, says:

“A supportive and friendly environment in the house is created by mutually dividing your roles. There shouldn't be duties or certain roles strictly assigned.”

Few similar experiences of participants,

"My husband was very accommodating when it came to dividing chores like drying clothes or ironing them after I washed them."

"My husband always insisted on finishing the work chores on weekends so I can rest up and we can go out for dinner together."

"When I am busy doing my work and I am unable to attend to kitchen duties. Then my husband steps up and takes care of the kitchen work. Whenever he has taken care of kitchen or laundry responsibilities it only makes our relationship stronger."

There is a pattern of positive experiences when roles are shared and divided equally based on each other's capabilities. Where the roles were not divided mutually and marriage was perceived as an obligatory task, the participant said:

"I wish that I did not have to do the basic cleaning and cooking of my house and my husband would have hired me a maid or help me out himself on weekends."

"My biggest misconception before marriage was that husbands help their wives in the kitchen. I will be studying, and my husband will serve me in bed. Nothing like that ever happened."

Stereotypical gender roles pose challenges for married female students, affecting their personal growth, mental well-being, and educational journey in the long run.

Mental health and coping strategies

While maintaining stable mental health, it can be challenging for the participants. It is difficult to go from living as an independent student to being a married person with obligations. Stress levels also rise as a result of juggling domestic duties, exploring the dynamics of new relationships, adjusting to them, and academic obligations. Experiences of social isolation have also been experienced because of the shift from a student body to a more familial setting. Loneliness can be increased by the lack of regular social connections with classmates and friends after marriage. Due to the unfavorable conditions, a participant had to go through when she was being degraded to not be up to the mark of an ideal daughter-in-law. The thought of defending herself or the right to education was interrupted by another fear built by society. Participant stated.

“It was easy for everyone to treat me poorly. I used to be badly affected by how my in-laws humiliated my aspiration to study. And I never replied to anyone because I kept thinking ‘Log kya kahaingay’ (what will others think). This was stuck in my mind”.

The internalization of societal norms, such as "Log kya kahaingay" (what will others think), affects the ability to defend oneself.

There is an unwavering expectation from the participant to perform well irrespective of the contributing factor. A recently married female student faces additional pressure to satisfy many duties, including supporting her spouse in every way, doing well in university, and taking care of the home, due to societal expectations and established gender roles. Participant says that at such times when feeling low, it is important to seek external support. Participant responded,

“I was bombarded with so many responsibilities at my husband’s little sister's wedding and I felt so overwhelmed handling everything on my own, so I kept my mother on voice call with me throughout for moral support.”

The participant being attached to her mother the most knew no matter what the circumstances were, her mother could be depended on for emotional support and courage. Another instance where the participant is close to her sister says:

“Whenever I was affected by the stress of not being able to manage my studies well along with my house chores, I called my sister and would talk to her for hours.”

Supportive family members have a great impact on the mental well-being of participants experiences. Their coping mechanisms are returning to their family members so they can communicate and feel at ease. Supportive mentors in the university environment also have a positive impact on the participant's academic stress. Participant responded,

“My professors were very kind, supportive, and cooperative with me. After marriage, whenever I was upset while managing my academic stress I used to go to my advisor.”

Another method of coping with the rising stress of responsibilities of dual roles, participants preferred being alone and undisturbed for some time. Participant said,

“Whenever I am tired at the end of the day, I just hide in my space sit alone for 2 hours, and use my mobile.”

Being alone is one of the ways participants try to restore their strength for the next day and make sure that the time spent alone to put to good use. Some participants could not manage the dual responsibilities which resulted in compromised motivation for academic studies due to the overwhelming response. Participant said,

“These things caused me psychological stress and I wish they did not happen.”

Another participant stated,

“Sometimes I used to have a mental breakdown because I did not know how to manage things.”

Upon asking the participants about the role of friendships in their lives and how helpful they have been to help them relax. Participant responded,

“I felt there was no space for new friendships anymore. The workload from both sides, academics and housework was a lot to manage on my own.”

Making new friends or taking time out especially to talk to a friend is perceived as another chore that the participant is not interested in. The feeling of being obligated to conform to society's customs and follow traditional practices may be burdensome for a woman who is

entering a new stage of life. Their relationships may be strained by the burden of familial responsibilities, which is upsetting emotionally and perhaps makes them feel alone even when they are surrounded by people. The notion that a woman has to blend in perfectly with her husband's family and adhere to their morals eventually takes precedence over her desire for autonomy and self-expression. A participant whose ability was constantly compared to the elder daughter-in-law of the house said,

"I lost my confidence during this time and constantly suffered through low self-esteem. My parent-in-laws already compared me to their elder daughter-in-law who was doing PhD from abroad."

The participant suffered from low self-esteem because of the unjust treatment. The participant was unable to communicate openly and felt as if nobody listened, this also caused great feelings of sadness. Participant said,

"My motivation was compromised because it was quite overwhelming to manage my sleep and my routine, I was going into depression when I realized that my grades were dropping."

The participants struggle with depression because of the pressure to balance marriage, housework, and education. There was no source of communicating the problem to the spouse or any family members because of a lack of understanding towards the mutual division of gender roles. The majority of participants highlighted the role of spouse and family support in their achievements. They believe family support is a key factor in shaping the participant's ability to manage and cope with education and the stress of managing household tasks effectively. The participant who had the opportunity to get good grades and manage academic pursuits while being married said,

“I think it's because of his support that I am about to graduate now. Even during my difficult time, my husband helped me through everything.”

Academic achievement of recently married female students is positively impacted by emotional support from family members. A supportive family setting offers emotional comfort and stability, which enhances a positive learning environment. The participant is better able to concentrate on their studies, attend courses regularly, and participate more actively in her academic endeavors when she feels understood and encouraged at home, especially by her spouse. It also serves as an assurance against the possible stresses that come with having dual roles in addition to being an undergraduate and a partner at the same time.

Discussion

According to Eagly and Wood's theory of social roles, individual gendered responsibilities are shaped by cultural norms and expectations. This idea is especially significant to the data that was analyzed after interviewing the participants, which highlights the difficulties newly married Pakistani female students have juggling their academic goals with their familial obligations. According to Eagly and Wood, social roles are shaped by cultural traditions and have an impact on people's attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. According to the findings, men and women in Pakistan have different responsibilities inside the household based on conventional gender norms. Participants experienced unjust behavior such as a lack of financial and emotional support. It is believed that women are supposed to care for and maintain the home, while males have the responsibility to be the primary breadwinners and family protectors. However, education is widely acknowledged as a vital component for both individual and community development, it is working as a driving force behind improvement and a source of betterment of our society. But achieving academic success should be separated from the complex network of cultural norms, familial bonds, and socioeconomic

realities that make up the Pakistani environment, whereas it is not. The analysis of the interviews further showed that participants' experiences also highlight how obligations and responsibilities shift after marriage. The participant had nurturing surroundings at her parents' house before marriage, which allowed her to concentrate only on her academics without interruptions. She does, however, feel that her tasks and commitments shift after marriage. Because of the expectations set by her family and society, she feels pressured to take care of the house, which interferes with her ability to focus on her academic assignments. The participant's attempt to reconcile home responsibilities with academic pursuits illustrates the impact of the expectations of societal roles from a female. Gender stereotypes and the pursuit of academic achievement are at odds in Pakistan due to the expectations that society and families place on married women. By highlighting the distinct obstacles encountered by individuals traversing the landscape of education while upholding their household responsibilities, this research aims to close the gap in the body of current knowledge. In Pakistan, the society follows a patriarchal structure where there is a strong focus on traditional gender roles and expectations for both men and women, particularly in terms of marital and familial contexts. Women generally experience more limitations in both personal and social aspects of life compared to men as interpreted in the findings. The norm is for marriages to be arranged by family members, and a significant portion of the population lives in joint family systems that play a major role in limiting the chances to accept change. The significance of the family unit is highly emphasized, and falling short of societal role expectations can lead to criticism from family, community, and society at large. Opposition to Women's Freedom: The data highlights the tension between younger women's desire for freedom and traditional expectations, which is consistent with Eagly and Wood's theory that social roles shape such behavior and expectations from it. The participant's father-in-law's objection to her desire for education and his attempt to dictate her future choices are

consistent with traditional gender norms, which may place a higher priority on women's household duties than on their own personal and professional growth. Men are considered to be outgoing and social which is why the father-in-law raged on the participant for not only abiding by the social role of a wife that is assigned after the contract of marriage. The participant expresses concern about how society accepts biased behavior towards daughters-in-law, such as setting time limits and giving them home duties. This normalization of biased behaviors supports the claim made by Eagly and Wood that social roles are frequently regarded as the norm and ingrained in people's minds because of constantly meeting those societal expectations. William J. Goode's theory of role strain concentrates on the difficulties participants have while attempting to play multiple roles within a societal structure. The experiences of participants reveal the role strain that women manage through the demands of serving as both a spouse and a student in the context of the data findings that have been offered. In essence, those who support roles that are mutually divided in marriage are expressing a wish to reduce role stress and a manageable balance that can be maintained. Goode claims that people experience role strain when they have to deal with contradictory expectations and demands in their positions. Participant's favorable experiences with evenly split and shared responsibilities point to a decrease in role strain. This follows Goode's theory that the difficulties arising from playing several roles may be minimized via interaction and mutual agreement in role division. The supportive experiences that spouses share while offering emotional support during trying times are consistent with Goode's theory which claims that emotional support plays a critical role in helping individuals manage role strain. This data talks about the pressures married female students suffer from societal expectations, stress, and social isolation about their mental health. According to Goode's idea, psychological tension and stress can result from role pressure and the constant fear of not being sufficient in the current role. The coping mechanisms, how participants overcome

difficulties, were highlighted by the participants, including going to family and mentors for external support, taking time out for themselves, or confronting the psychological strain on self when unable to handle two duties at once, are evidence of attempts to deal with role pressure. According to the statistics, a participant's mental health is positively impacted by mentors and supportive family members who understood and helped change the circumstances that were affecting the participant's well-being. This is consistent with Goode's theory that social ties can either worsen role strain or lessen it. The participants' resistance to forming new friendships and their sense of social pressure to conform to the existing norms stresses even more how important social ties are to their perceptions of role strain. In general, men and women are gradually shifting towards more egalitarian gender expectations (Ogletree, 2014), where social, economic, and domestic duties are shared by both partners (Katz-Wise et al., 2010; Koenig, 2018; Rogers & Amato, 2000). This shift in gender role expectations is also evident in marriage and intimate relationships. An additional major component of the experience of study-family incompatibility is the function of social support. When people don't receive enough support from their social networks, role strain frequently gets worse (Goode, 1960). Increased stress and trouble juggling the demands of both education and home responsibilities are caused by a lack of understanding or support from friends, classmates, family, or the institution itself (Daly, 2010; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Recommendation

Future researchers could consider broadening the scope of the study by including participants from various educational institutions and even different regions to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of married female students. This could help identify potential variations in challenges and support systems and compare the ways of different methods of the kind of support that is appreciated by female married students. For a

better understanding, it is recommended to include diverse perspectives in their study. This can be done to enhance the richness of the findings, researchers should aim to include a diverse range of participants, considering factors such as socioeconomic background, cultural differences, and the specific academic programs that they are enrolled in to have a better understanding of how much practical or fieldwork is required in their program. It is important to learn about the extracurricular activities in which married female students are participating and how their family reacts to it. This will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intersectionality of their experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this qualitative study provides insight into the intricate relationships that exist between gender norms, societal expectations, and newlywed Pakistani female students' aspirations to continue their education. The results highlight the continuing impact of conventional gender norms on the roles that are defined by men and women in the domestic setting. Eagly and Wood's hypothesis effectively presents the participants' experiences and highlights the difficulties they have in balancing their academic goals with their domestic responsibilities. The results of this study may suggest that the difficulties these students face have a big impact on both their academic achievement and their overall health. In Pakistan, married women who are in university sometimes struggle to strike a balance between their household and academic work duties. Due to the widespread traditional gender roles in Pakistani society, women frequently bear the whole weight of domestic duties and childcare, which leaves females with limited free time and energy to devote to their studies. Women's education is crucial, and families and communities need to be made aware of the advantages it offers to individuals as well as society. The experiences of the participants show the role strain that results from attempting to play several roles while complying with social norms. However, the study also shows situations in which a couple's emotional support and shared

duties help to reduce role strain, which is consistent with Goode's theory that cooperation and mutual understanding in role division can help to reduce these kinds of problems. The study also explores the effects of social support on people who are experiencing role strain, underlining the critical function family, friends, and mentors play in reducing stress and improving mental health. The coping strategies used by the participants, which included requesting outside assistance and scheduling self-care activities, highlight how crucial a strong support network is for assisting with the difficulties of juggling several responsibilities.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet and Consent Form

Information Sheet

Title of Research: Study-Family Balance in married Undergraduate female students of FCCU.

Researcher: Farheen Nadeem

Institution: Forman Christian College (A Chartered University)

Researcher Contact: 231467082@formanite.fccollege.edu.pk

Supervisor: Dr Jawad Tariq

Supervisor Contact: jawadtariq@fccollege.edu.pk

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide to take part in the study, it is important to understand the purpose of this research and what is expected of you. Please take time to read this information sheet carefully and discuss it with the researcher or others if you wish for further clarity. Please feel free to ask if anything is not clear or if you would like more information. You may take your time to decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the project's purpose?

The purpose is to find out the experiences and challenges that are faced by female married students who want to pursue their education after marriage. It is to study if any social norms exist in our society that restrict women's mobility. This project will use interviews with at least 8-10 university students aged between 18 and 25 who have been married for at least 1 year.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you fit the participant criteria.

Do I have to take part?

It is completely your choice. Even if you decide to participate, this information sheet and the signed copy of your consent form will be provided to you. You will also be able to withdraw from the study at any time without any reason.

What will happen if I take part?

You will only be interviewed once, and this will take 60-80 minutes of your time. This interview will be recorded. A series of questions will be asked regarding your previous experiences while juggling family responsibilities side by side. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that this work will contribute to existing literature on gender and education in Pakistan and make new policies and interventions that promote gender equality.

Will my information be kept confidential?

All the information will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

Who is organizing the research?

The research is organized by the Department of Sociology, Forman Christian College.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This research project has been ethically reviewed by the Internal Review Board (IRB), at Forman Christian College.

Consent Form

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the purpose of the research.
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw from the study at any given point without specifying any reason. I am free to decline or not respond to questions I do not wish to answer.
4. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, and my name will not be used in the research materials. I will not be identifiable in any information in the research report.
5. I permit the researcher to access my anonymized responses.
6. I agree that the data collected from me may be used in future studies after identifiable information has been removed.
7. I agree to take part in the above research.
8. I understand that a copy of all signed sheets including the consent form and the information sheet will be provided to me and will also be kept in the researcher's main project record.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____


Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Study-Family Balance: A detailed study to understand the challenges faced to maintain balance being a married undergraduate female student.

1. Were you and you and your husband related before marriage? If yes, how?
2. Do you think you got any sort of advantage in your relationship with your husband because the families somewhat knew each other?
3. Before marriage, were you enrolled in a university?
4. What sort of reaction did you receive from your side of the family when you decided to continue your educational journey before marriage?
5. What motivated you to continue your education after marriage? Were you self-motivated or were you influenced by someone else?
6. How did your parents-in-law and other family members feel about your decision to continue your education? Any reaction or comment that you remember?
7. How did your husband react initially when he got to know about your educational pursuit?
8. How was your experience while managing academic stress(assignments, exams, etc.) living with your in-laws? Were they accommodating?
9. How did your husband react initially when he got to know about your decision?
10. Were there any instances when you desired your husband's support during your educational journey? If yes, can you give an example?
11. Did you communicate your concerns or any issues to your husband or your Parent in-laws like you could in your own family?
12. How was the housework divided while living with your in-laws before you started studying?
13. Who used to mainly manage the house help?
14. Who makes important financial decisions related to house matters?
15. If you had a choice, would you prefer completing your studies before marriage or after?
16. How did you manage your academic work with your house duties? Any instances you would like to share?
17. Did you ever feel obligated to do the housework directly or indirectly?
18. Was your motivation to study compromised in any way after marriage?
19. What are the few things you wish you did not have to go through because of your decision?
20. Have you encountered any sort of discrimination or biased behavior from your classmates or friends as a female married student?
21. Did you notice any changes in how your close friends treated you after you got married?
22. Do you think you treated them the same way as you used to, or something changed?
23. What were some difficulties you went through and how did you manage it?
24. While interacting with your instructors have you noticed any differences in how married female students are perceived as compared to unmarried female students? What made you feel that way?
25. According to you, what is expected from a married female in our society?

26. Have you encountered any instances where cultural expectations have conflicted with your role as a student?
27. Can you describe the role of cultural values and traditions in shaping the responsibilities of a married female in Pakistan?
28. Are there any cultural practices that should be reevaluated or modified to support married females in their educational journey?
29. What does the term 'gender role' mean to you?
30. Do you believe the stereotypical gender roles in Pakistani society can have an impact on the experiences of female married students? If so, what changes would you like to see?
31. What additional support or resources do you believe married female students need from their educational institutions that may not be currently available?
32. Have you sought out any external support or resources outside of the institution to help you balance your roles as a student and a spouse?
33. Is there anything else you would like to share about your journey as a married female student that we haven't covered in these questions?

Appendix C-IRB Approval Certificate



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

IRB Ref: IRB-496/6-2023

Date: 22-06-2023

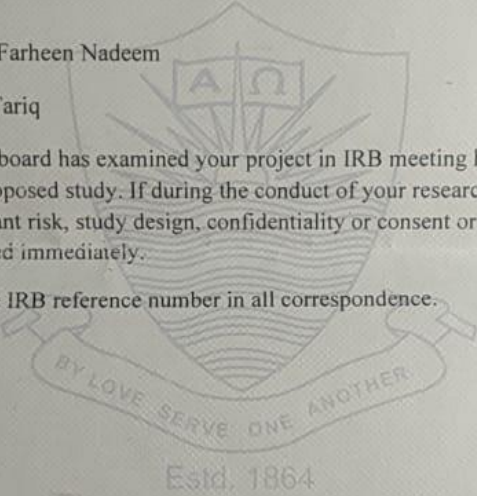
Project Title: Study-Family balance in married undergraduate female students in Lahore, Pakistan.

Principal Investigator: Farheen Nadeem

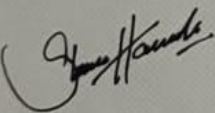
Supervisor: Dr. Jawad Tariq

The Institutional review board has examined your project in IRB meeting held on 22-06-2023 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include IRB reference number in all correspondence.



BY LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER
Estd. 1864



Dr. Sharoon Hanook
Convener - IRB
Chairperson, Department of Statistics
Forman Christian College
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