

## Gender Role Stress and Eudaimonic Well-being in Young Adults

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Gender roles refer to the behaviors, attitudes, and actions individuals exhibit to express their identity as male or female in society. These roles go beyond biological aspects including general mannerisms, body language, and how individuals present themselves. They are reflected in casual conversation and the topics people naturally discuss (Money, 1973). In traditional societies like Pakistan, one's role is significantly associated with his or her gender. Such societies exhibit immense gender-based expectations from men and women. Expectations are often shaped by social norms, which define what behaviors are considered appropriate. These norms create a guide that people use when interacting with others. However, these norms can also lead to stereotypes, which affect how people understand and interact with others and influence what they expect others to think about them (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Quinn et al., 2003).

Gendered roles and expectations associated with men are often regarded as men encompassing traits like confidence, self-assurance, taking on responsibilities, avoiding behaviors considered feminine in the face of society, and being the sole breadwinner of the family (Harris, 2010). Additionally, Edwards and Jones (2009) found responses that linked manhood to qualities such as competitiveness, emotional control (or being unemotional), aggression, responsibility, holding authority, rationality, strength, success, and toughness. A similar view of masculinity was also found in a study by Harris, Palmer, and Struve (2011) that focused on Black men. In Pakistan, traditional patriarchal values heavily shape gender roles. Men are typically expected to act as providers and authority figures, emphasizing traits like stoicism, dominance, and emotional control. Men are often viewed as the primary breadwinners, and their upbringing emphasizes the expectation that they will support their families financially. For men, societal expectations often discourage emotional vulnerability,

emphasizing financial stability and emotional isolation. Hegemonic masculinity, as described by Connel (1995), refers to the dominant and socially accepted idea of what it means to "be a man." This concept is deeply tied to maintaining male dominance over women and reflects a fear of or rejection of anything associated with femininity. It is not just about individual behavior but also a collective societal expectation. Hegemonic masculinity is centered around roles like being the main provider (breadwinner) and upholding traditional ideas of manhood, such as toughness and emotional restraint. It creates a sense of exclusivity and pressure, as not all men can meet these standards, leading to anxiety and competition among men. This form of masculinity is often aggressive, hierarchical, and reinforced through social systems like families, workplaces, and media. Sons are frequently perceived as assets who will contribute to the family's well-being in the future, reflecting the cultural preference for sons over daughters in many cases. Moreover, the societal stigma against men expressing emotions is a significant issue. Emotional vulnerability in men is often equated with weakness or being "unmanly," which can result in their suppressing emotions to conform to societal expectations. This suppression not only impacts their mental health but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes, limiting men from seeking emotional support or professional help when needed.

Women, in contrast, are primarily valued for their roles as caregivers and maintainers of family honor. Cultural norms prioritize a woman's role in maintaining the household and family honor, often undermining personal aspirations. This aligns with objectification theory, (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), which suggests that women are frequently judged based on appearance and caregiving abilities. Especially in Pakistan, women face so many burdens as expectations to meet, women are raised and brought up with the teachings that their primary role as women would be focused on their home. Their primary responsibilities lie in getting married, living with and taking care of their in-laws, child rearing, their upbringing, and

taking care of the whole household single-handedly. Women are expected to keep their professional goals as second priority or not even a priority, even nowadays if they are educated, women are not allowed to pursue their careers and are expected to depend on a man for their financial needs, be it in the face of a father or husband. Marriage is often considered a significant milestone, with women being judged on their ability to conform to the roles of an obedient wife and devoted mother. Women enduring abusive marriages are frequently pressured to tolerate their circumstances in the name of compromise, rather than seek help or leave, as the dissolution of a marriage is seen as bringing shame to the family. This stigma often discourages victims from speaking out or seeking legal help, as they fear social rejection, economic insecurity, or the loss of their children. Women are seen as more communal (selfless and caring for others) and less agentic (assertive and driven to succeed) compared to men. These beliefs are thought to arise from how people observe women and men in different social roles, women are more often in lower-status and authority positions than men, and, women are more likely to be homemakers and less likely to be part of the paid workforce (Eagly & Steffen, 1984).

These socially constructed gender roles are now widely recognized as key factors that influence the development, mental health, and relationships of both men and women (Gilbert, 1992). According to Pleck (1981, 1995), everyone occasionally feels like they don't meet societal expectations for their gender, which can lead to negative psychological effects. One example of this is gender role stress (Eisler, 1995), which is the emotional discomfort or distress people feel when they think they are not living up to traditional gender role norms. Eisler (1995) describes Bem's (1987) idea that gender role schemas which are the mental frameworks shaped by society's gender expectations, affect how men and women see themselves and the world. These schemas act like "gender-tinted lenses," shaping how people evaluate situations. When someone does something that goes against traditional gender roles,

these lenses can make the situation seem more threatening, leading to feelings of stress and discomfort. Failure to meet societal expectations can lead to social stigmatization and a diminished sense of self-worth, highlighting the intense pressure on men to conform to these traditional gender roles. The societal scrutiny faced by women in South Asian cultures exacerbates their stress, particularly when they deviate from expected roles. Gender role conflict theory by O'Neil et al., (1986), explains that gender role stress arises when individuals experience conflict between their values, attitudes, and behaviors and societal expectations of gender roles. This conflict can cause psychological strain and negatively impact mental health, self-esteem, and well-being. In particular, GRC focuses on the emotional and psychological distress that occurs when individuals perceive they are failing to meet socially defined expectations based on their gender.

Subjective well-being was the first concept to be explored on theoretical and conceptual foundations. Subjective well-being is defined as the quality of an individual's life, considering both the presence and relative frequency of positive and negative emotions over time, as well as their overall level of life satisfaction (Diener, 2000; Diener, Sapyta, & Suh, 1998; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). The words hedonic well-being (HWB) and eudaimonic well-being (EWB), which reflect different viewpoints on overall quality of life, were introduced by Ryan and Deci (2001) using the distinction between hedonia and eudaimonia, two philosophical notions of happiness. Hedonistic experience is the subjective perception of pleasure, independent of the sources of that pleasure. Unlike hedonia, eudaimonia, as defined by Aristotle (4th Century BCE), was centered on enacting a number of particular attributes that reflected how one "ought" to live rather than on the degree of subjective pleasure experienced. These attributes were self-realization, virtue, and the quest for greatness (Ackrill, 1973; Annas, 2004; McDowell, 1980).

Eudaimonic well-being can be understood as living in harmony with your true self, or "daimon," which means recognizing and embracing your potential and strengths (Norton, 1976). The idea is that engaging in activities that enhance a person's skills and talents supports personal growth and self-realization, which in turn promotes eudaimonic well-being (Waterman, 1993).

One of the most well-known theories about eudaimonic well-being comes from Ryff, who identified six key areas that contribute to a person's well-being. These are: autonomy (living according to your beliefs), purpose in life (having direction and meaning), environmental mastery (handling life's challenges), personal growth (realizing your full potential), positive relationships (building meaningful connections with others), and self-acceptance (accepting and understanding yourself, including your flaws) (Ryff, 2013). According to this theory, eudaimonic well-being depends on how well these aspects are fulfilled. Waterman introduced a subjective and individualistic interpretation of eudaimonic well-being, which he argued was more applicable to psychological science than Aristotle's original concepts (Schraw & Dennison, 1994). Similar to Norton (1976), Waterman suggested that the realization of one's potential and becoming the best version of oneself, unique to each individual, represents the ultimate good (Lacour-Gayet et al., 2004; Norton, 1976). Eudaimonic well-being refers to the presence of positive psychological functioning and a sense of flourishing, encompassing aspects such as meaningful relationships, personal growth, life purpose, and self-acceptance (Keyes, 2002).

## **Literature Review**

Javaid et al., (2024) explored the eudemonic well among senior citizens of Pakistan. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants in the study. The study focused on understanding how gender influences eudaimonic well-being and identifying strategies that could enhance the eudaimonic well-being of the elderly population, ultimately

contributing to improved quality of life for senior citizens. The findings revealed that the overall eudaimonic well-being of senior citizens in Pakistan was low, with women, despite facing gender discrimination, scoring higher than men. The study concludes that implementing certain strategies could enhance the eudaimonic well-being of senior citizens and, by extension, the broader population.

Javaid et al., (2024) examined eudaimonic well-being in young adults through a systematic review approach. The academic research was sourced from platforms such as ResearchGate, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The research aims to examine factors influencing eudaimonic well-being in young adults, its impact on resilience and personal development, and the effectiveness of methods used to measure it. After aligning with the study's objectives, twelve research publications were selected for review. All of these studies were quantitative. This study highlights various factors that influence eudaimonic well-being in young adults. Positive relationships, self-acceptance, personal growth, passion, word-of-mouth behavior, intimate relationships, goal pursuit, and coping flexibility all contribute positively to eudaimonic well-being. On the other hand, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism negatively impact eudaimonic well-being in young adults.

A study by Mommersteeg et al., (2024) explored the relationship between gender roles, gender norms, and psychological distress in both women and men. The researchers used a sample of 678 Dutch individuals, with 54% women, to investigate whether distress levels varied by gender. The results showed that women generally reported higher levels of psychological distress than men. Interestingly, individuals who scored higher on masculine traits experienced lower levels of distress, while those with higher scores for gender norms showed more depressive symptoms and stress. However, this link was only observed in men, and health-related factors seemed to explain this relationship.



Pérez and Matud (2022) investigated the role of gender in the relationship between stress and well-being in adults. It focuses on the association between stress (including chronic stress, life events, and daily hassles) and various measures of well-being (eudaimonic well-being and life satisfaction) among adults aged 30-59 in Spain. A total of 3,085 participants from the general population were assessed through self-reports on stress, coping styles, social support, and well-being. The findings of the study show that stress impacts men and women differently. For women, stress did not have a direct effect on their eudaimonic well-being, but a greater number of life events and daily hassles were linked to lower life satisfaction. In contrast, for men, higher levels of chronic stress were associated with both lower eudaimonic well-being and life satisfaction. Additionally, a higher number of life events also contributed to lower life satisfaction in men. These results suggest that stress affects well-being in gender-specific ways.

Horrell et al., (2022) examined how gender role beliefs are linked to marital happiness and overall well-being among Evangelical Christian women, also considering the impact of locus of control. Three hundred sixty-three women completed a survey measuring their gender role beliefs, marital satisfaction, eudaimonic well-being, and locus of control. The results showed that gender role beliefs were not directly related to marital satisfaction. However, the effect was stronger for women with an external locus of control—those who believe outside factors influence their lives. For these women, having more egalitarian beliefs about gender roles was connected to higher marital satisfaction. Additionally, egalitarian gender role ideologies were positively correlated with eudaimonic well-being.

Kelmendi and Jemini-Gashi (2022) explored the relationship between gender role stress and psychological distress in women in Kosovo. The study aimed to explore the relationship between gender role stress and psychological distress in women in Kosovo. Using a sample of 656 women, the study validated the five-factor model of the Feminine

Gender Role Stress scale. Results showed that stress related to fears of victimization and assertiveness was associated with higher psychological distress. This study highlights the importance of considering gender role stress and its impact on mental health, particularly in post-conflict societies.

Eisler and Blalock (1991) studied the masculine gender role stress and its impact on the mental health of men. They explored that strongly adhering and conforming to the masculine schema created by society and dealing with problems may cause stress among them and can also interfere with their ability to cope effectively with challenges. The study then examines how depending on masculine stereotypes can cause gender role stress and lead to unhealthy coping strategies. These strategies include suppressing emotions, relying on aggression, power, and control, and becoming overly focused on achievement and success.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Gender role stress and its psychological consequences are significant areas of concern for both men and women, particularly in traditional societies such as Pakistan. Gendered expectations, which are deeply ingrained in societal structures, contribute to stress, mental health issues, and overall well-being. Traditional gender roles, particularly in Pakistan, define men as the primary breadwinners and women as caregivers, which often places immense pressure on individuals to conform to these expectations. As highlighted by various scholars, the societal pressure to meet these expectations leads to emotional distress, social stigmatization, and suppressed mental health issues.

The current body of research has explored gender role stress in various contexts, particularly focusing on its effects on psychological distress. While studies like those by Mommersteeg et al., (2024) and Pérez and Matud (2022) have explored gender roles and their impact on distress and well-being respectively, however, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the relationship between gender role stress and eudaimonic well-being,

particularly in young adults. Moreover, although research has examined various aspects of well-being, including hedonic well-being, the impact of societal gender expectations on the intrinsic aspects of well-being, such as personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, remains underexplored. Despite the growing body of literature on gender role stress and well-being, a significant gap exists in understanding how gender role stress specifically affects eudaimonic well-being, particularly among young adults. This study is distinct in its focus on young adults, a critical group that is navigating societal expectations based on their gender and is vulnerable to mental health problems.

### **Objective of the Study**

- To explore how gender role stress relates to the eudaimonic well-being of young adults.

### **Hypothesis**

There is a relationship between gender role stress and eudaimonic well-being in young adults.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Method**

This study aims to investigate the relationship between gender role stress and eudaimonic well-being in young adults. This chapter outlines the research design, sampling strategy, sample characteristics, inclusion and exclusion criteria, assessment measures, and research procedure.

### **Research design**

A correlational research design will examine the relationship between gender role stress and eudaimonic well-being among young adult males and females. This design will facilitate exploring the relationship between gender role stress and eudaimonic well-being,

offering insight into the distinct impacts of stress based on gender roles on the eudaimonic well-being of young men and women.

### **Sampling Strategy**

A purposive sampling strategy will be employed to select participants for this study. This approach is suitable as it ensures the selection of individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria will focus on young adults aged 20 to 34 years, representing both genders. Participants will be selected from university campuses, workplaces, and communities to ensure diversity in educational and occupational backgrounds.

### **Sample**

The sample size will be determined using G Power, a statistical tool that calculates the minimum sample size needed to achieve sufficient power in hypothesis testing. Participants will be adults aged 20 to 34 years, recruited from universities and other relevant settings, such as workplaces or communities. This age range is chosen to focus on a demographic that is likely to experience significant societal and gendered expectations, as well as related stress, particularly during key stages of personal and professional development, and may have an impact on their eudaimonic well-being.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

- Adults aged between 20 and 34 years.
- Participants should be proficient in the language used in the study materials to ensure accurate comprehension of the questionnaires.
- Participants must reside in the country or region of interest to ensure relevance to the cultural context of gender role stress and eudaimonic well-being.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Individuals below 20 or above 34 years will not be included in the study.

- Individuals with diagnosed psychological disorders or physical disabilities who might be a source of stress in the study.
- Participants currently experiencing acute stress due to recent life events (e.g., bereavement, job loss) that may interfere with their responses to the study measures.

### **Assessment Measures**

The study will utilize the following validated assessment tool. In the present study, Urdu translation of the scales will be done after seeking permission from their respective authors.

#### ***Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRSS)***

The Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRS; Gillespie & Eisler, 1992) will be used to assess the cognitive appraisal of stress related to stereotypical feminine gender role expectations. This 39-item scale measured on a 5-point Likert scale, was developed based on interviews that identified situations women find particularly stressful due to societal expectations. Factor analysis of the scale has identified five key areas of gender role stress for women: (a) Fear of Unemotional Relationships (e.g. Having an intimate relationship without any romance), (b) Fear of Physical Unattractiveness (e.g. Feeling less attractive than you once were), (c) Fear of Victimization (e.g. Feeling that you are being followed by someone) (d) Fear of Behaving Assertively (e.g. Negotiating the price of car repairs), and (e) Fear of Not Being Nurturant (e.g. Not being able to meet family members' emotional needs). These categories help assess the challenges women face in fulfilling traditional feminine roles and the stress these expectations create. The FGRSS has demonstrated robust reliability and validity, making it a suitable tool for evaluating stress related to feminine gender expectations.

### ***Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRS)***

The Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRS; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) is a 40-item tool designed to assess how men perceive certain situations as stressful or threatening. Participants respond to each item using a 7-point scale. The analysis identified five factors subscales Physical Inadequacy (9 items), (e.g. Feeling that you are not in good physical condition Emotional Inexpressiveness (7 items) (e.g. Telling your spouse that you love her/him), Subordination to Women (9 items) (e.g. Having a female boss), Intellectual Inferiority (7 items) (e.g. Having to ask for directions when you are lost), and Performance Failure (8 items) (e.g. Finding you lack the occupational skills to succeed). The MGRS is widely recognized for its sound psychometric properties, including high reliability and validity, ensuring its suitability for this study.

### ***The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being***

The QEWB (Waterman et al., 2010) consists of 21 items and measures Eudaimonic Well-Being (EWB) as conceptualized by Waterman et al., (2010). It is a seven-point Likert-type scale for responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The initial item pool for the QEWB was derived from six interrelated categories, each with strong philosophical and psychological connections: (1) self-discovery (e.g. I believe I have discovered who I really am.), (2) perceived development of one's fullest potential (e.g. I believe I know what my best potentials are and I try to develop them whenever possible), (3) a sense of purpose and meaning in life (e.g. I can say that I have found my purpose in life), (4) significant effort invested in the pursuit of excellence (e.g. 'I feel best when I am doing something worth investing a great deal of effort in), (5) deep involvement in activities (e.g. I find I get intensely involved in many of the things I do each day), and (6) enjoyment of activities that are personally expressive (e.g. It is more important that I really enjoy what I do than that others are impressed by it). The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being has found

to have sound psychometric properties making it appropriate for its use to evaluate the eudaimonic well-being of individuals.

### **Procedure**

The research procedure will be conducted in several stages to ensure ethical standards and clarity throughout the study. First, approval will be sought from the relevant academic department and ethical review board. In addition, permission will be obtained from the developers of the relevant scales to use these assessment tools in the study. The letters of permission will detail the purpose and intended use of these scales. Once approvals are in place, participants will be provided with an informed consent form that outlines the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, potential risks, and benefits. The form will also explain the voluntary nature of participation and assure participants of the confidentiality of their data. Participants will be encouraged to ask any questions before providing written consent. Data collection will be done using self-administered questionnaires, which will be distributed physically to the participants. Before completing the questionnaires, participants will be briefed on the study's objectives and the importance of providing honest responses. Throughout the study, confidentiality will be maintained by removing personal identifiers from the data, ensuring that all responses are anonymous. The collected data will be securely stored for future analysis and follow-up, with careful attention given to maintaining the confidentiality of all participants.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations will be rigorously followed to ensure the integrity of the study. In addition to obtaining informed consent, participants will be briefed on their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. The copyright for the FGRSS, MGRS, and QEWB will be respected, with proper permissions obtained prior to their use. All data will be securely stored and handled in compliance with ethical guidelines. The study will also ensure

transparency in reporting results, avoiding bias or misrepresentation of findings. By following this comprehensive methodology, the study aims to provide meaningful insights about the relationship between gender role stress and eudaimonic well being.



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