



Relationship between Gender Norms, Gender Equality and Depression among Married Individuals

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine gender norms, gender equality and depression among young and old married individuals. The sample consisted of 60 old and 100 young married individuals. Convenient and snowball sampling technique was used to collect data. Beck Depression Inventory, Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and Gender Norms Attitude Scale were used. It was found that the old couples have a positive attitude towards gender norms. As compared to the young married couples, old scored low on depression and gender equality. Gender norms had a significantly positive correlation with depression which further showed that individuals who had positive attitude towards gender norms were also prone to depression. And young married females were found to be more depressed as compared to the young married males. Furthermore, they also had showed positive attitude towards both i.e., gender norms and equality.

Keywords: Gender Norms, Gender Equality, Married Couples, Depression

Article Details:

Received on 10 Nov, 2025

Accepted on 07 Dec, 2025

Published on 09 Dec 2025

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Introduction

Gender Norms or Roles are basically the socially assigned positions, or behaviors, activities and attributes that a society considers suitable for men and women. Gender norms are basically based on the philosophy of gender, defined as beliefs and values held about what is right for men and women, deciding the trends by which a society defines or measures a man's or a woman's proper conduct (Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006).

In Western cultures as well, the idea of the man working the house chores is quite strange even though the idea of woman doing jobs to help her husband with the expenses is valued quite a lot. This ideology of gender is also reflected in the social discourse / argument in which the essential features in which men and women differ are referred to. The argument states that the differences between men and women in relation to home and work are the result of personal decisions. The traditional role model of gender has a biosocial and cultural background. The role of men should be instrumental, according to it, and women should be expressive (Martínez-Pérez, & Osca, 2001; Kuo, Volling, & González, 2018; Parsons & Bales, 1955). When it comes to gender equality, the idea is basically to provide the same rights and respect for both sexes. The most complete definition refers to the discrimination of women, irrespective of their marital status, in accordance with the equality of men and women and their fundamental freedoms, and to the disregard of their political, economic and social rights, which is based on sex and the effect that they have of affecting or invalidating their recognition, enjoyment and exercising (United Nations General Assembly, 1979).

Women in Pakistan have been far behind men in terms of their economic participation and chances, education, health and survival, and political involvement: the nation ranks 143rd out of 144 countries on the Global Gender Gap index of 2016. A research done on Pakistani population provided whereas trends of gender inequality and gender norms are being practiced in Pakistan. According to a research done on the Middle East with regards to gender equality, we can see that great gender inequality persists in the Middle East. A range of issues still remain in the Middle East, such as negative practices, forced marriages and female genital mutilation, with regard to gender oppression, discrimination and violence (Ashfaq, & Sadiq, 2015; Ashfaq, Kamran & Niazi, 2018; Sarieddine, 2018).

Mostly depression is defined as feeling sad, unhappy or empty, but it is more than that, when you feel sad, unhappy or empty for longer period of time and are of more intensity, then it is called depression. Depression has also been defined as the normal cold of disorders of mind. Usually people are being affected by depression in their lives either due to direct or indirect reasons either due to family members or due to friends or others (Grohol, 2019; Rowe, 1991). Depression is the most common psychological illness in aging population; researches prove that older married couples tend to be more depressed as compared to the young couples also, a discouraged accomplice expands the danger of sorrow in the other (Sandberg, Miller, Harper, 2002). A research done on Gender norms concluded that they are recognized as one of the major social determinants of health and they can have implications for an individual's health behaviors (Fleming & Agnew, 2015). If we talk about depression with respect to gender norms and equality, different researches have concluded that women, due to confining to their gender norms suffer more body and mind problems in comparison to men (Green & Pope, 1999).

On the off chance that we consider the personal satisfaction among old and youthful wedded couples, looks into show that with every single other impact controlled, maturing doesn't impact personal satisfaction adversely; indeed, a significant stretch of good personal satisfaction is conceivable. Studies have indicated that personal satisfaction was seen as

fundamentally higher in more seasoned couples when contrasted with the more youthful ones by utilizing an Individual personal satisfaction measure. But if other factors such as health, home, financial conditions, children etc., are considered then a decline in the quality of life was seen (Netuveli & Blane, 2008).

Method

Sample

Convenient and snowball sampling technique was used for data collection from young and old married couples mainly living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad in Pakistan, from September 2019 to December 2019. Sample comprised of 160 married individuals. 60 married individuals (male=30, female=30) had more than 10 years of marriage duration, so they were labeled as “old married individuals. Whereas 100 married individuals (male=50 female=50) had less than 10 years of marriage duration, so they were identified as “young married individuals”.

Instruments

The measurement instrument is a questionnaire, which was constructed for this study by combining four research scales/tools measuring the target variables.

1. **Beck Depression Inventory.** Beck Depression Inventory is a multi-choice self-report inventory of 21 questions; one of the most commonly used psychometric tests to assess depression intensity. In its present form, the BDI-II is intended for individuals more than 13 years old and comprises of things identified with side effects of despondency, for example, sadness and touchiness, insights, for example, blame or sentiments of discipline, just as physical side effects, for example, weariness, weight reduction and absence of enthusiasm for sex. The alpha reliability of the scale is 0.92 (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961).
2. **Gender Norms Attitude Scale.** This scale is meant to assess gender equality (Waszak et al., 2000) and was used by the researchers in a study to evaluate the relationship between Egyptian women's gender equitable attitudes, depression, and anxiety. As a result, it was used only with women. The scale consists of two subscales assessing men / boys ' rights and privileges and women / girls ' equality. The subscale for the rights and privileges of men has alpha reliability as .70 and the one for equity for girls has .67 alpha reliability (Waszak, Severy, Kafafi, & Badawi, 2000).
3. **The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.** Glick and Fiske (1996) developed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. It is a 22-point self-report sexism test on which respondents show their level of agreement with different statements on a 6-point Likert scale. This consists of two sub-scales which can be measured separately for sub-scale scores or can be combined for an overall score of sexism. The alpha reliability of the scale is 0.85.

Procedure

To collect data, convenience and snowball sampling method was used. The research team applied these methods on couples individually and the data was collected from a sample of 160 people. Respondents, who were selected randomly from different communities were provided with the questionnaires conveniently. The research team went to their acquaintances as well as the respondents and provided both written and verbal information about the questionnaires. Then they requested them to find more referrals and provide them with the information. The respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire at homes and give another copy of it to their spouses. Data were also collected through emails and internet and it was also asked to respondents to complete questionnaires sincerely. The respondents were specifically asked to mention the time duration of their marriages and their genders at the start of the questionnaires. Each participant took at least 10 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. After

the participants collected their questionnaires, the researchers collected them and thanked the participants for their time and cooperation.

Data Analysis

In the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version (23.0) data are entered and evaluated.

Results

The present research was conducted to study the gender norms, gender equality and depression among old and young married individuals. Gender differences were also examined among old and young married individuals on study variables. Of the 160 married individuals 60(37.5%) were old married individuals and 100(62.5%) were young married individuals. Among old married individuals 30 (50%) were female and 30(50%) were male. And among young married individual 50(50%) were female and 50 (50%) were male.

All the scales were found reliable. Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Gender Norms Attitude Scale is .76, of The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory is .85 and of Beck Depression Inventory is .92. All reliabilities are quite satisfactory.

Relationship between Gender Norms, Gender Equality, and Depression among married individuals

The correlation among the study variables were examined, there is a significantly positive correlation between Gender Norms and Depression (.25**). Gender equality is significantly negative correlated with depression (-.20**).

Table-1: Correlation Matrix among Gender Norms, Gender Equality, and Depression (N:160)

Variables	1	2	3
1 Gender Norms	---	-.14	.25**
2 Gender equality	---	---	-.20*
3 Depression	---	---	---

Differences among Old and Young married individuals on gender norms, gender equality and depression.

Differences between old and young married individuals were examined through Independent Sample t-test. There were significant differences between old and young married individuals on gender norms, gender equality and depression. Old married individuals scored higher on gender norms (M=6.49, SD=.58) than young married individuals (M=2.56, SD=.68). Whereas young married individuals were higher on gender equality (M=5.52, SD=.16) and depression (M=3.58, SD=.38) than old married individuals (M=1.57, SD=.13, M=.46, SD=.31, respectively).

Table-2: Means, Standard Deviation, t test value of Old and Young married individuals on study variables. (N=160)

Variables	Old married individuals (n=60)		Young married individuals (n=100)				95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD	t (158)	P	LL	UL	
Gender Norms	6.49	.58	2.56	.68	.67	.03	-.28	-.13	.71
Gender Equality	1.57	.13	5.52	.16	1.8	.01	-.09	-.03	.74
Depression	.46	.31	3.58	.38	1.39	.01	-.40	-.26	.64

Note: LL= Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit

Gender Differences Among Young Married Individuals On Study Variables

Table 3 compares the gender differences on study variables among young married individuals. There were significant gender differences on gender norms, gender equality and depression among young married individuals. Female young married individuals scored higher on gender norms ($M=5.26$, $SD=.76$), gender equality ($M=6.43$, $SD=.26$) and depression ($M=4.53$, $SD=.63$) than male young married individuals ($M=1.89$, $SD=.62$; $M=2.29$, $SD=.21$; $M=.64$, $SD=.41$ respectively).

Table-3: Means, Standard Deviation, t test value of male and female young married individuals on study variables. (N=100)

Variables	Male young married individuals (n=50)		Female young married individuals (n=50)		t (98)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Gender Norms	1.89	.62	5.26	.76	1.62	.03	.89	6.90	.71
Gender Equality	2.29	.21	6.43	.26	1.94	.01	.78	7.00	.80
Depression	.64	.41	4.53	.63	1.73	.01	.37	7.20	.69

Gender Differences Among Old Married Individuals On Study Variables

Table 4 shows non-significant differences among male and female old married individuals on gender norms ($t(58)=1.72$, $p>.05$), gender equality ($t(58)=1.92$) and depression ($t(58)=1.98$, $p>.05$).

Table-4: Means, Standard Deviation, t test value of male and female old married individuals on study variables. (N=60)

Variables	Male old married individuals (n=30)		Female old married individuals (n=30)		t (58)	P	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Gender Norms	2.49	.58	2.56	.68	1.72	.30	-.28	3.13	.51
Gender Equality	1.52	.13	1.57	.16	1.92	.40	-.09	4.00	.47
Depression	.58	.51	1.46	.66	1.98	.10	-.40	2.6	.73

Discussion

In this research, the research gap that has been addressed is the role of gender norms and gender equality in promoting depression among old and young married couples. The main goal for this study was to see whether the change in perspectives about gender equality and gender norms has any effect on the level of depression in married couples; keeping in mind the duration of their marriage as well as spending time and going through the changes together may also influence the perspectives and level of depression. The four scales used in this study are Beck Depression Inventory, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Gender Norms Attitude Scale and The Ambivalent Sexism Scale. Their reliability coefficients were satisfactory.

At first, current research depicts a significant relationship between gender norms and depression. It shows that both variables have a significantly positive correlation with each other. Other than that, depression also has a significant correlation with gender equality, but it is negative. So, it was proved that the participants who scored low on depression had a positive attitude towards gender equality whereas the ones who had a higher tendency towards depression had a positive attitude towards gender norms. The results show that having positive attitude towards gender norms have a highly negative impact on mental health as it increases depression; especially in this time and age when the world is continuously and persistently violating them and trying to modify them. These results support findings of another result which proved conformity towards gender norms to be bad for mental health (Fleming & Agnew-Brune, 2015).

Furthermore, it was proven through our research that there are significant differences between old and young married couples when it comes to gender norms, gender equality and depression. Old married couples showed a positive attitude towards gender norms which shows that they are more confirmed towards the traditional rules that are supposed to be followed by both genders. This result coincides with the researches done by various researches on gender norms which explained the traditional thinking of human beings with respect to the roles that are supposed to be played by the men and the women of the house. According to these researches' men should be responsible of running the house whereas as the women should be responsible for the house chores (Martínez-Pérez & Osca, 2001; Kuo et al., 2018; Parsons & Bales, 1955). On the other hand, young married couples scored higher on depression and gender equality. A previous research done to study the level of quality of life in old married couples showed that they tend to be more satisfied as compared to young married couples (Netuveli & Blane, 2008). As it has been proven through psychological literature that depression and quality of life has a significantly negative correlation with each other. We can conclude that because of that old married couples will have a lower tendency towards depression as compared to young married couples. However, one of the previous researches shows that old married couples tend to be more depressed as compared to young (Sandberg, Miller, Harper, 2002). Young married couples scored higher on gender equality too.

Then we see that when gender differences were considered, there was a significant difference between females and males among young married couples with reference to the study variables. Females scored higher on all three of the variables. Wives scoring high on depression because of having a positive attitude towards gender norms, as compared to husbands has also been proven in previous researches (Green & Pope, 1999). On the other hand, there were no significant gender differences in old married couples with respect to the study variables.

Our result validates it, proving young and old married couples to be different in terms of depression, gender norms and gender equality.

Conclusions

It can be concluded by stating that marriage duration does have an effect on mental health and life satisfaction as with time comes endurance and maturity which helps in understanding one's limits and priorities such as family, relationships, physical health etc. which is a foreign concept for people when they are young because they believe that they can and have to achieve everything and have new goals to achieve every day.

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