

## **MEN'S SEX ROLE ATTITUDES AS RELATED TO THEIR AGE, MARITAL STATUS, OCCUPATION, AND EDUCATION\***

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*The study has examined the men's sex role attitudes. A sample of 73 men with age ranges from 14 to 65 years was taken. The sex role attitudes were measured with Anila and Ansari's (1992) Sex Role Attitude Scale (SRAS). The effect of different demographic variables, such as, age, marital status, occupation, and education of the respondents were also studied. The only significant difference was found among the variable of education. Those with professional and higher education indicate more modern sex role attitudes as compared to the other group. The variables of age, marital status, and occupation did not show any significant differences. The results have been discussed in the context of prevailing social values of the Pakistani society.*

Sex role is a set of attributes, including attitudes, personality traits, and behaviour, that a culture defines as appropriate for each sex. These beliefs generally are held at least to some extent, by a majority of the culture's members. According to Pleck (1981) at the most general level, a sex role may be defined as "the set of behaviours and characteristics widely viewed as (i) typical of women and men (sex role stereotype), and desirable for women and men (sex role norm)" (p. 10).

Historically, adult women and men have fulfilled somewhat different roles in all societies (Munroe & Munroe, 1975). In occupations, and outside the home certain jobs are traditionally considered as more appropriate for men, and others for women. In the area of home making women have customarily assumed the principal

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responsibility, only certain specific duties have been considered appropriate for men. In leisure activity, certain sports and hobbies are thought to be more appropriate for men, and others for women (Williams & Best, 1990).

The first researchers to operationalize the notion of "sex role attitude" were Spence and Helmreich (1972), who developed the Attitude Toward Women Scale (AWS). Its 55 items are categorized into six areas: (i) Vocational, educational, and intellectual roles; (ii) freedom and independence; (iii) dating, courtship, and etiquette; (iv) drinking, swearing, and dirty jokes; (v) sexual behaviour; and (vi) marital relationship and obligations. Another widely used measure of attitude toward women's roles is Kalin and Tilby's (1978) Sex Role Ideology Scale. It consists of 39 items pertaining to work roles, parental responsibilities, personal relationships, special roles of women, abortion, and homosexuality. Dreyer, Woods, and James' (1981) 19 items Index of Sex Role Orientation measures the factors of home-career conflict, male-female division of household responsibilities, and attitudes towards women's work roles outside the home. Finally, other measures include Lyson and Brown's (1982) 9 items measure including scales for role appropriateness (e.g., attitudes toward working after children are born), and social/marital equality between the sexes; Tetenbaun, Lighter, and Travis' (1984) 32 items Attitude Towards Working Mothers Scale; and Knaub and Eversoll's (1983) scale assessing attitudes toward the timing of parenthood. Beere, King, Beere, and King's (1984) Sex Role Egalitarian Scale assesses attitudes toward equality in marital roles, parental roles, employees roles, educational roles, and social-interpersonal-heterosexual roles.

In Pakistan, Anila and Ansari (1992) developed the first scale of its kind namely, Sex Role Attitudes Scale (SRAS). Its 32 items assesses attitudes regarding work roles of men and women; parental responsibilities of men and women; personal relations between men and women; level and type of academic achievements for men and women; occupational abilities of men and women; and marriage plan and vital life decisions.

Although sex role attitudes have been measured in a variety of ways, research to date has yielded a fairly consistent pattern of findings. The studies have shown that men's attitudes toward women's roles are more traditional than those of women (Anila, 1992a; Anila, Tariq, & Ansari, 1995; Beere et al., 1984; Furnham & Gunter, 1988;

Hare-Mustin, Bennett, & Broderick, 1983; Larsen & Long, 1988; Mckinney, 1987; Mezydlo & Betz, 1980; Rao & Rao, 1985; Spence & Helmreich, 1972; Zuckerman, 1981), and that younger respondents are more liberal than older respondents (Slevin & Wingrove, 1983; Stafford, 1984). Social class and occupation have less influence (American Institute of Public Opinion, 1975; Davidson & Davidson, 1977; Ferree, 1980). According to some studies the level of education is consistently related to gender roles, with people who have attended college express less traditional attitudes than those who have no college experience (Hall & Frederickson, 1979; Morgan & Walker, 1983; Schaninger & Buss, 1986).

Among other things the media also represent women and men in different ways. Despite the increase in women's employment, they are seldom shown working outside the home (Courtney & Whipple, 1983). An analysis by Peirce (1990) of seventeen magazines showed that only 7 per cent of the contents concerned career planning, independence, and other self-development topics about women. In contrast, 46 per cent of the contents concerned women's appearance. Peirce concludes, "A teenage girl, then, should be concerned with her appearance, with finding a man to take care of her, and with learning to take care of house" (p. 499). Studies have also found that in media the women are mostly shown as doing house work (Brabant & Mooney, 1986; Courtney & Whipple, 1983). Women are shown as inferior to men. They are passive, dependent and not very bright (Lott, 1989).

Despite all the media effect, Niles (1994) concluded that men and women are more egalitarian in the 1990s, although women seem to be much more egalitarian than men. The factors like age, level of education, marital status, number of children, and religious affiliation do not seem to significantly affect attitudes. Similarly, Ellman and Taggart (1993) reported that gender norms have been changing in the last 30 years. Women's employment outside the home is more accepted today as legitimate and even as providing a welcome source of additional income for the family (see also, Bernard, 1984). In the meantime, the care of the home and children is at the essence of the traditional wife-mother role. Even when women work outside the home, they remain primarily responsible for the care of both the children and the home. They spend more hours doing both than their spouses (Pleck & Staines, 1982).

The aim of the present study is to determine the men's sex role attitudes towards women. The study also explores the effect of different demographic variables of men on their sex role attitudes such as, their age, marital status, occupation, and education.

## METHOD

### Sample

A sample of 73 men with age ranges from 14 to 65 years ( $M = 32.27$ ,  $SD = 12.85$ ) was taken. Out of them 37 were married, and 36 were unmarried; 37 have education level from matric to graduate, and 36 hold the higher qualification like masters, engineering, medicine, and law. The occupation of the sample was also classified as 28 professionals (doctors, engineers, and lawyers), 26 non-professionals (business and service), and 19 students/unemployed.

### Instrument

#### *Sex Role Attitude Scale (SRAS)*

SRAS developed by Anila and Ansari (1992) is a well researched scale in Pakistan (see for example, Anila, 1992a; 1992b; Anila, Tariq, & Ansari, 1995). Its 32 items cover the areas like work roles of men and women, parental responsibilities, personal relationship, level and type of academic achievements, occupational abilities, marriage plan and vital life decisions of men and women. The 16 items are phrased in traditional and the other half in modern manner. The traditionally phrased items are those which have a connotation of women doing traditional work, e.g., household, child rearing, etc. The modern items are phrased in a way in which women are shown in egalitarian manner, e.g., business, engineering, etc. The modern items are scored as 5 to 1 from agreement to disagreement, while in the traditional items the scoring is reversed. The scores ranges from 32 to 160, and the high score on SRAS indicates modern views, whereas, a low score indicates traditional views.

## Procedure

The researchers approached each subject at their offices, hospitals, and homes in Islamabad. The scale was filled by the subjects themselves. They were asked to complete the scale according to their own personal opinions. There was no restriction of time for the completion of the scale. The SRAS was administered individually.

## RESULTS

First of all, in order to determine the internal consistency of the SRAS for the sample of the present study, alpha reliability coefficient was calculated. It was obtained as .71, which indicates that the scale has quite satisfactory internal consistency.

The *t*-test was applied for determining the significant differences between the subgroups in respect of age, marital status, and education. These are given in Table 1.

Table 1

*Means, standard deviations and t-values for the variables of age, marital status, and education*

Groups	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Age (in years)</i>					
14-30	37	103.97	12.76	0.05	.957
30-65	36	103.81	13.62		
<i>Marital status</i>					
Married	37	102.89	13.51	0.66	.513
Unmarried	36	104.92	12.77		
<i>Education</i>					
Matric-Graduate	37	99.62	13.33	2.98	.004
Masters/Professional	36	108.28	11.45		

*d.f.* = 71

The significant difference was found in the variable of education only [ $t(71) = 2.98, p < .004$ ]. The mean scores indicate that the men with higher education ( $M = 108.28$ ) have more modern sex role attitudes as compared to the less educated men ( $M = 99.62$ ). The variables of age and marital status do not seem to effect their sex role attitudes.

Table 2

*One-way analysis of variance: Occupations-wise*

Occupations	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Professionals	28	107.96	11.48		
Non-professionals	26	101.27	14.80	2.28	.1102
Students/Unemployed	19	101.47	11.94		

*d.f.*=2, 70

The one-way analysis of variance was applied on the variable of occupation which was categorize as professionals (doctors, engineers, lawyers), non-professional (business, service), and students/unemployed. No significant difference was found among the three groups as shown in Table 2. Although the mean scores of those with professional occupations are high as compared to the other group indicating more modern attitudes of the men with professional occupations.

## DISCUSSION

While conducting this research, it was expected that men will be having traditional attitude toward female sex role as proved by various studies already done in this context (e.g., Anila, 1992a; Anila, Tariq, & Ansari, 1995; Beere et al., 1984; Furnham & Gunter, 1988; Hare-Mustin, Bennett, & Broderick, 1983; Larsen & Long, 1988; Mckinney, 1987; Rao & Rao, 1985; Zuckerman, 1981). As Pakistani society is basically an orthodox one, members of our society do not change their attitudes and behaviours quite easily, especially those who are illiterate,

conservative, and are rigid in their views. These people are not only the members of a closed society but also live with some typical social prejudices. Thus they were expected to have traditional sex role attitudes. Social values and culture are visible in the behaviour of individuals of every society. Actually, worldwide women are discriminated against. They are not given equal rights and opportunities as to men. Centuries old traditional attitudes hamper women's progress toward equality.

But, surprisingly, the present study gives us different results. It shows that men are having modern sex role attitudes. It is in accordance with the change in attitude all over the world (see for example, Ellman & Taggart, 1993; Niles, 1994). It was also found in the present study as in West, that those with professional and higher education show more modern attitude as compared to the other group (e.g., Hall & Frederickson, 1979; Morgan & Walker, 1983; Schaninger & Buss, 1986). Education plays a very important role in formation of one's ideas, attitudes, and behaviour. The famous Greek Philosopher Plato, while emphasizing the need and importance of education said, "Education brings light to human mind and eye". There is no denial of the fact that less educated or uneducated and illiterate people can not have the same attitudes and beliefs as do the educated ones. Education leads one to have a broader view of all the worldly affairs. Education makes one think first in terms of human beings and then in terms of male or female.

One might think that while living in such a closed society as Pakistan, how can men have modern sex role attitudes? Actually, the relation between individual and culture is not a one way affair, rather it works both ways. Culture influences the person and the person influences his culture, and educated people have always played a vital role in changing the culture and social values of a society. The educated members of every society, while being confident about their own ideas, and also the ones they have acquired due to exposure and their vast experiences are successful in forming modern attitudes and discarding the orthodox and traditional ones.

Our culture is going through a change not only because of the educated and well aware members of its society but also due to the electronic media which is also playing an important role. Those who

have never been to foreign, especially Western countries, watch their television programmes, and thus get to know easily what is going on around the world. Slowly and gradually this compels them to change their previous attitudes and give them a more wider and broader view. So, now the men of our society are deviating from their social prejudices and are conforming to a global culture.

Another reason could be that men who get higher education, get the opportunity to interact with women because in Pakistan there is co-education in the educational institutions at higher levels. Thus those men who get chance to study in co-education change their attitudes towards women as compared to those who never get the chance of co-education or higher education (see also, Anila, 1992a). When they come into practical life, for example, male doctors, they get a chance to deal with women as lady doctors and nurses; lawyers compete with lady advocates to prove their points, etc. So, when they observe women in practical fields, they accept women in that role, and their attitudes towards women turn modern instead of traditional. In the meantime, education itself helps the person to think, and view in broader perspective. The highly educated man will use his mind to decide any matter instead of following the rigid stereotypes.

The other demographic factors which are studied in the present study are age, marital status, and occupation. But these do not seem to have any significant effect on men's sex role attitudes. Although the studies carried out in West have found that age do have an effect on the sex role attitudes with younger ones showing more modern attitude as compared to olders (e.g., Slevin & Wingrove, 1983; Stafford, 1984). But, the results of the present study are similar to the other studies carried out in Pakistan (Anila, 1992a, 1992b), and in West (Niles, 1994), who also found the same results about age, marital status, and occupation (see also, American Institute of Public Opinion, 1975; Davidson & Davidson, 1977; Ferree, 1990). Thus, the trends have been changing in the 90s.

To conclude, it can be said that the age, marital status, and occupation can not have any effect on our attitudes until and unless we have increased exposure and awareness and get higher education. If we are never ready to sit and think about our own attitudes and do not have the flexibility and capacity to adapt to a new and modern culture, we can never change either our own attitudes or of others.



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