

ROLE CONFLICT IN SINGLE- AND DUAL-EARNER COUPLES AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH GENDER IDEOLOGY AND GENDER ROLE SWAPPING

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Abstract *In the recent past, society has confronted a vivid transformation in the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the workplace and home. The study aimed to assess the role conflict in single- and dual-earner couples and its relationship with gender ideology and gender role swapping. Participants for this research included 48 single-earning couples and 46 dual-earning couples from Agra city. Thus, the total sample consisted of 188 adults between the age range of 25–45 years. Self-constructed tools like Gender Ideology Questionnaire (GIQ), Gender Role Swapping Questionnaire (GRSQ), and Role Conflict Questionnaire (RCQ) were used to get the required data. Results showed that the level of role conflict was high in dual-earning families and especially females were more found in the category of a high level of role conflict than males. The couples who were involved in gender role swapping showed a low level of role conflict and couples having egalitarian gender ideology showed a high level of role conflict. Thus, the perception of gender ideology is not helping in reducing role conflict but it is the actual gender-role swapping, which was found negatively correlated with role conflict.*

Keywords: *Role Conflict, Single-Earner Couples, Dual-Earner Couples, Gender Ideology, Gender-Role Swapping*

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, society has confronted a vivid transformation in the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the workplace and home. The aforementioned change has been fueled due to the women's career orientation and steady fall in the wages of men, which strongly supported gender equality, making women's vocation an obligation for many families (Blanco & Feldman, 2000). In the 1960s, the traditional norm of the male as the breadwinner in the middle-class families began to change and gave way to the dual-earner couples in which both husband and wife work for pay (Davis & Greenstein, 2009).

An increase in dual-earner couples has been the most significant social transformation in developing societies. Dual-earner couple term is referred to the case where both the woman and the man work in the labour market, and differs from *male-breadwinner couples*, in which the man works in the labour market and the woman is a full-time homemaker (Boye, 2014). Today, dual-earner couples are widely seen in a society where gender roles are continuously

shifting. The term gender role denotes a set of behavioural norms. Socialization is the process by which these norms are imposed on an individual by the society. During the socialization process, an individual generally come to know about these social norms, accepts them, develops a gender identity and starts performing gender roles according to them. To what extent an individual follows these standards in his or her actions and behaviour varies extensively from one person to another.

With the changing gender roles, the family complexity has also increased which is creating new challenges in family life. In many countries, the transformation in the male's gender role has been observed. However, changes in females' role have been more extensive. Women and men do not perform certain domestic tasks at the same frequency (Sayer & Bianchi, 2000; Batool et al., 2007; Bianchi et al., 2012; Fernández et al., 2016; NSFH data sources, 2018; Olah et al., 2018).

The attitude of the person regarding the appropriate rights, roles and responsibilities of men and women in society is termed gender ideology. Traditional gender ideologies lay

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emphasis on the significance of separate roles for men and women. According to a traditional gender ideology for family, breadwinning activities should be performed by men only as it is their major responsibility and the role of child-rearing, nurturing, and homemaker should be performed by women only. However, people with egalitarian gender ideology do not support and comply with the expected disparity in roles for men and women. Egalitarian gender ideologies emphasize equal sharing of work and family responsibilities by men and women (Blanco & Feldman, 2000; Marks et al., 2009). When a man adopts woman's role and a woman adopts man's role in the family then it is known as gender-role swapping between couples.

However, when a person has to fulfill the demands of two or more roles which are incompatible with each other, the situation of role conflict may arise. For example, work-family conflict may arise when a parent has to leave the office to attend his sick child, or when a person brings office work at home to complete during family time. Dual-earning couples experience higher levels of stress, work-family conflict and overload than single-career couples. Over the years, men's level of work-family conflict has risen more dramatically due to increased childcare and household chores responsibilities in dual-earner families (Elloy & Smith, 2003; Carr et al., 2008; Ochsner, 2012; Kuo et al., 2018). Some gender differences have been also observed in role conflicts as in dual-career couples, women experienced more work to personal life conflict than men. Women have to balance their work-life with family-life which results mostly in conflict. There is a conflict between the household responsibilities and the job responsibilities for dual-earning couples (Panda, 2011; Mäkelä et al., 2017).

As two independent individuals husband and wife are likely to develop inflated egos resulting in more clashes giving rise to psycho-emotional problems (Shimazu et al., 2013). Thus, it becomes imperative to study the relation of gender ideology and gender-role swapping with role conflict.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study

- To study the level of role conflict in single- and dual-earner couples.
- To study the difference in role conflict of single- and dual-earner couples.
- To study the relationship between gender ideology and role conflict.
- To study the relationship between gender-role swapping and role conflict.

Selection of the Sample

Agra was selected as the locale of study conveniently. The sample for the research work consisted of 48 couples from single-earning families and 46 were from dual-earning families. Thus, the total sample consisted of 94 couples. The sample was selected by using a random sampling method as Agra city has 90 wards out of which 4 wards were selected randomly by using fishbowl method. Then, the purposive selection of single- and dual-earner couples was done as the criteria for sample selection was that only those couples were selected for the study who were in the age range of 25-45 belonged to nuclear families and had children.

Variables of the Study

Independent variables for the study included gender, gender ideology, and gender-role swapping, type of family, and the dependent variable was role conflict.

RESEARCH TOOLS

Gender Ideology Questionnaire (GIQ)

“Gender Ideology Questionnaire” was self-constructed to assess the perception of husband and wife for gender roles. Questions in the tool have the emphasis “Who should be responsible for particular roles and responsibilities according to them?” This questionnaire was filled up by the husband and wife separately. A total of 38 items were designed to achieve the objectives. A score of 0 was assigned when male respondents responded to the male options for male stereotypes and 1 was given for responding to female or either male or female for male stereotypes. Similarly, 0 was given to female respondents when she responded to the female option for female stereotypes and 1 was assigned for responding to male or either option for female stereotypes. Thus, a low score on the tool showed traditional gender ideology and a high score on the tool showed egalitarian gender ideology.

Table 1: Male Gender Role Ideology

Male Gender Role Ideology	
As a provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides food ● Provides shelter ● Provides cloths ● Paying bills and taxes
As a Protector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gives physical security ● Gives financial security ● Gives mental security

Male Gender Role Ideology	
As a leader (Head)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taking major decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Related to the medical care ● Related to the children’s education ● Related to the purchase of equipment ● Where to spend holidays ● Where to invest money ● Selecting children’s life partner/career ● Adopting parenting style ● Pass instruction on to others ● Permitting wife/children to adopt/not adopt a career
As a purchaser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Purchasing home/property ● Purchasing equipment ● Purchasing vehicles ● Purchasing jewellery
As an organizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organizing ceremonies ● Mow the lawn ● Changing light bulbs ● Make repairs

Table 2: Female Gender Role Ideology

Female Gender Role Ideology	
As a home maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cleaning of the house ● Decoration of the house ● Placing things in a systematic manner
As a child rearer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giving food to the child ● Helping in completing homework of the child ● Dropping and taking the child from the school ● Care about child’s dress/clothes ● Bathing, feeding, and toileting of the child (If infant)
As a family caretaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Care of husband ● Care of parents ● Taking care of the emotional needs of family members ● Take care of an ill family member ● Take care of ‘Shagun’ and ‘Rasm’
As a home manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Management of resources according to the husband will ● Management of household minor purchases ● Making and maintaining of home budget ● Taking minor decisions
As a nurturer & supporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing comfort, warmth, and reassurance to family members ● Providing meals

Gender-Role Swapping Questionnaire (GRSQ)

A self-constructed tool ‘Gender-role swapping questionnaire’ was used to assess the division of domestic

roles and responsibilities among couples. A total of 31 items were designed to achieve the objective. Questions in the tool have the emphasis “Who is actually performing particular roles and responsibilities in their family?” This tool consisted of items based on activities traditionally performed by men (provider, protector, decision-maker, head and organizer) and activities traditionally performed by women (home manager, child rearer, nurturer, supporter and family caretaker). This questionnaire was filled out by couples together. A score of 0 was assigned when the couple responded to the male option for male stereotypes and the female option for female stereotypes. A score of 1 was given for responding to female or either for male stereotypes and male or either option for female stereotypes.

Role Conflict Questionnaire (RCQ)

A self-constructed tool “Role Conflict Questionnaire” was used, in which two incompatible situations were given. It consisted of total of 10 items to assess the role conflict in couples. This questionnaire was filled up by the husband and wife separately. The scoring for the ‘Yes’ option, which showed the presence of conflict was scored 1 and 0 for the ‘No’ option, which represented the absence of conflict. Thus, the total scores were calculated. Obtained scores were divided into low, moderate, and high levels of role conflict by using the quartile deviation method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3: The Level of Role Conflict in Single- and Dual-Earner Couples

Level of Conflict	Single-Earner Couples				Dual-Earner Couples				Total			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low (0–4)	11	22.92	8	16.67	8	17.39	1	2.17	19	20.21	9	9.57
Moderate (5–7)	34	70.83	32	66.67	31	67.39	12	26.09	65	69.15	44	46.81
High (8–10)	3	6.25	8	16.67	7	15.22	33	71.74	10	10.64	41	43.62

Table 3 shows the level of role conflict in males and females of single- and dual-earner families. It was found that the majority of males (70.83%) and females (66.67%) were found in the category of moderate level of role conflict in single-earning families. However, 22.92% males of single-earning families were having the low level of role conflict and only 6.25% males of single-earning families were

having the high level of role conflict. Among dual-earning families, 17.39% males were having the low level of role conflict and 15.22% males of dual-earning families were having the high level of role conflict. It was important to note that females (71.74%) of dual-earning families were found more on high level of role, rather than on low (2.17%) and moderate (26.09%) levels of role conflict. In the total sample, males were falling mostly in the category of low to moderate levels of role conflict, while females were falling in the category of moderate to high level of role conflicts. Problems in balancing work–family interface among employed women are more common, because women are still primarily responsible for the home and children and therefore they have to balance the demands arising from family and work roles.

Among dual-earner couples, the level of work-family conflict is high as no support is readily available to fulfill the needs of the family. Females having young children in the home particularly perceived a higher level of role conflict than males. In a research conducted by Friedman and Greenhouse (2000), various factors like heavy workload, family conflicts, poor working environment, low support of heads, and high levels of job involvement were found linked with increased role conflict among the couples.

Working females are over dedicated and get stressed while combining work and family. The main cause of women’s role conflict is the lack of time to complete all the tasks and obligations supposed to do by them. The situation becomes even more critical particularly when their job requires inflexible and long working hours. In the 1990s, a book entitled “*The Second Shift*” highlighted increasing gender inequality by the assessment of gender division of roles in the home. Males were reluctant to share the burden of household responsibilities in the home and therefore working females has to do “second shift”, which includes childcare and housework chores (Milkie et al., 2009).

Table 4: Assessment of the Significance of Difference in Role Conflict of Single- and Dual-Earner Couples Clustered via Gender

Group Statistics					
Gender		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard. Error Mean
Male	Single-earning Families	48	3.680	2.630	0.7160
	Dual-earning Families	46	7.310	2.190	0.3691
Fe- male	Single-earning Families	48	5.740	2.450	0.4890
	Dual-earning Families	46	9.390	2.630	0.4427

Independent Samples Test						
Gender		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	Equal variances assumed	1.391	0.080	7.280	92	0.000
	Equal variances not assumed	1.396	0.081	7.286	91.36	0.000
Female	Equal variances assumed	1.166	0.093	6.950	92	0.002
	Equal variances not assumed	1.167	0.094	6.953	91.33	0.001

As depicted in Table 4, males of dual-earning families showed a high level of role conflict (7.310) in comparison to males of single-earning families (3.680) as evidenced by the mean scores. The *t*-value (7.280) also shows that there is a significant difference in role conflict of males of single- and dual-earning families. Similarly, Females of dual-earning families showed a high level of role conflict (9.390) in comparison to females of single-earning families (5.740) as obtained *t*-value (6.950) also shows that there is a significant difference in role conflict of females of single- and dual-earning families.

Table 5: Assessment of Significance of Difference in Role Conflict of Males and Females Clustered via Type of Family

Group Statistics					
Type of Family		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Single-earning families	Male	48	3.680	2.630	0.7160
	Female	48	5.740	2.450	0.4890
Dual-earning families	Male	46	7.310	2.190	0.3691
	Female	46	9.390	2.630	0.4427

Independent Samples Test						
Type of Family		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)

Single-earning families	Equal variances assumed	0.723	0.136	3.970	92	0.009
	Equal variances not assumed	0.721	0.139	3.968	91.36	0.008
Dual-earning families	Equal variances assumed	0.836	0.116	4.120	92	0.006
	Equal variances not assumed	0.831	0.119	4.116	91.33	0.005

It can be seen in Table 5 that males of single-earning families showed a low level of role conflict (3.680) in comparison to the females (5.740), as evidenced by the mean scores. The *t*-value (3.970) shows that there is a significant difference in the role conflict of single-earner couples. Similarly, males of dual-earning families were having low mean scores on role conflict (7.310) in comparison to the females of dual-earning families (9.390) and the *t*-value (4.120) shows the significant difference in the role conflict of dual-earner couples.

The observed high level of role conflict in females can be justified by the fact that labour force participation gives exposure to new people and ideas and it increases expectations and confidence for financial independence, particularly in young women, and presents additional role models for negotiating work and family roles (Shannon & Greenstein, 2009). When there is a failure in balancing work and family life, the level of conflict arises. In India, there is no provision for paternity leave; hence, women are forced to walk on a double-edged dagger where she suffers feeling of guilt over the inability to perform at work and family with equal dedication.

Table 6: The Relationship between Gender Ideology and Role Conflict

Descriptive Statistics				
Type of Families			Role Conflict	Gender Ideology
Single-earning families	N	Valid	96	96
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		4.2800	15.5200
	Standard deviation		1.4900	5.6700

Dual-earning families	N	Valid	92	92
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		8.7400	28.5200
	Standard deviation		2.1900	6.2500

Correlations				
Type of Family			Role Conflict	Gender Ideology
Single-earning families	Role conflict	Pearson correlation	1	0.726**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.008
		N	96	96
	Gender ideology	Pearson correlation	0.726**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	
		N	96	96
Dual-earning families	Role conflict	Pearson correlation	1	0.792**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
		N	92	92
	Gender ideology	Pearson correlation	0.792**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		N	92	92

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows the relationship between gender ideology and the role conflict of single- and dual-earning couples. It is evident from the results that a strong positive relationship was found between gender ideology and the role conflict of single- and dual-earning couples (0.72 and 0.79 respectively). The results showed that with the increase in scores on gender ideology the scores on role conflict also increase. As discussed in the methodology section, high scores on gender ideology depicted the egalitarian gender ideology. Therefore, it can be said that as the having more egalitarian gender ideology increases the level of role conflict.

The contribution of females in domestic work is higher than males and the perception of spouse involvement is lower in females. Perception of partner involvement and unequal involvement in household chores between men and women is associated with increased work-family conflict both in women and men, Therefore, results showed that traditional gender roles still influence the way males and females deal with the family and work interface (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Since the 1960s, the gender role attitudes of both men and women have become less traditional. Conflict arising is not due to the working but it affects by how one and his/her partner perceive that role change. Since the women have

entered the work world not long ago, therefore it can be said that they are still in the transition phase; therefore, the perception and adaptation to changed circumstances are also under the transition phase.

Table 7: The Relationship between Gender-Role Swapping and Role Conflict

Descriptive Statistics				
Type of Families			Role Conflict	Gender-Role Swapping
Single-earning families	N	Valid	96	96
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		4.2800	8.3200
	Standard deviation		1.4900	2.6400
Dual-earning families	N	Valid	92	92
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		8.7400	18.6600
	Std. deviation		2.1900	4.2400

Correlations				
Type of Family			Role Conflict	Gender-Role Swapping
Single-earning families	Role conflict	Pearson correlation	1	-0.791**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.009
		N	96	96
	Gender role swapping	Pearson correlation	-0.791**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	
		N	96	96
Dual-earning families	Role conflict	Pearson correlation	1	-0.843**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
		N	92	92
	Gender-role swapping	Pearson correlation	-0.843**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
		N	92	92

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 shows the relationship between gender-role swapping and role conflict of single- and dual-earning couples. It is evident from the results that a strong negative relationship was found between gender-role swapping and role conflict of single- and dual-earning couples (-0.79 and -0.84, respectively). The results showed that when the gender-role swapping increases between the couples then the role conflict decreases in couples.

Indeed, times are changing and the role of housewife is becoming an equal partnership and responsibility. No wonder it is not uncommon to hear terms like househusband complementary to the age-old term housewife. The call of the day is to work together and share responsibility. Household work can become a lot more exciting, innovative and experimented if both genders do not showcase the jobs in water tight compartment based on traditions. Calub (2018) recommended that husbands, including other family members, should help wives in reducing their role conflict.

CONCLUSION

A new form of family, i.e. dual-earning families is the demand of the contemporary time for various families. With the increase in dual-earning families, the line of distribution of roles has been blurring. Dual-earner couples face difficulty in maintaining a balance between their work and family roles. Although the change in gender stereotypes has been observed in families yet perception and adaptation to new gender roles are also under transition phase. Inability to fulfill the two conflicting role demands at the same time creates the situation of role conflict for couples.

The results of this study showed that among dual-earner couples, the level of work-family conflict was higher than in single-earning families. It was found that majority of males and females from single-earning families were found in the category of a moderate level of role conflict. However, most of the males and females from dual-earning families were having a high level of role conflict.

Males were falling mostly in the category of low to moderate level of role conflict, while females were falling in the category of moderate to high level of role conflict. Problems in balancing work-family interface among employed women are more common, because women are still primarily responsible for the home and children and therefore they have to balance the demands arising from family and work roles. Working females has to do “second shift” at home which includes childcare and housework chores.

The results showed that having a more egalitarian gender ideology increases the level of role conflict. Couples having egalitarian gender ideology may face the condition of role confusion in the absence of mutual coordination and clear boundaries of work. The results also showed that when the gender-role swapping increases between the couples then role conflict decreases. Sharing work together can be very exciting, innovative as well as fun. The couples who were involved in gender-role swapping showed a low level of conflict and couples having egalitarian gender ideology showed a high level of conflict. Thus, the perception of gender ideology is not helping in reducing role conflict but it is the actual gender-role swapping which was found

negatively correlated with role conflict. This fact is well established that the permeability between work and family spaces creates work–family conflict. The uneven distribution of domestic work between males and females is associated with increased work–family conflict. The call of the day is to set clear and equal distribution of the responsibilities and develop readiness to share responsibilities among couples for avoiding the situation of role conflict and living a healthy family and work life.

Suggestions for Further Research

In family and gender studies, it is a burning issue to study the various work and family issues faced by single- and dual-earning couples in contemporary time. This study is useful for the couples to understand the role of gender role ideology and gender-role swapping in reducing role conflict. Various other strategies can also be helpful for reducing role conflict among couples, especially in dual-earner couples like developing empathy, family support, proper time management, proper training, justified workload, healthy working environment, developing communication skills, flexible work schedules, support of heads and authorities. This paper calls various researchers from family and gender studies, institutions and organisations to conduct further researches for assessing the effectiveness of these strategies in a scientific and reliable manner.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest exists.

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