

Assessment of Traditional and Egalitarian Gender Role Ideology among Single and Dual Earning Families

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Abstract

In recent past most significant social transformation in India has been the increase in dual earning couples. Therefore the objective of the present research was to identify the gender role ideology prevalent in single and dual earning couples. To assess the gender role ideology a self constructed tool was filled by 48 couples from single earning families and 46 couples from dual earning families. The results depict that 75% males from single earner families and 67.39% males from dual earner families were having traditional gender ideology. Males were more stereotyped rather than females in single ($t=5.61$) as well as dual earning families ($t=5.83$). Majority of males and females, who were having traditional gender ideology, responded more on traditional perception (52.78%, 67.74%) for its justification. There is a significant difference in attitude of females of single earning families and dual earning families. It is evident from t value (6.06) that females of single earner families were more stereotyped in comparison to females of dual earner families. Females of dual earner families want more sharing of roles and responsibilities (54.35%) than their counterparts (32.61%). Females having egalitarian gender ideology justified it on the basis of equal division of labour. It shows that gender role perception is showing greater changes in dual earning families. Although the change is very slow but the change is occurring.

Keywords: Single earning families, Dual earning families, Gender role ideology.

Introduction

In the recent past, the most significant social transformation in India has been the increase in dual-earning families. The families where husband and wife both are doing earning activities and man is not only the bread winner but female also works as second bread winner are considered as dual earning families. On the other hand, "traditional family" structure in which mothers are the caregivers and fathers are the income earners is known as single earning families. With continuous changes occurring in the society like women influx in the workforce, it becomes imperative to assess the gender role ideology existing among single and dual earning couples.

The term gender role denotes a set of behavioral norms. Gender role ideology refers to attitudes regarding the appropriate roles, rights, and responsibilities of women

and men in society. Such attitudes typically range along a continuum from traditional to nontraditional. Traditional gender ideologies emphasize the value of distinctive roles for women and men. According to traditional gender ideology, man plays the role of provider while woman plays the role of caretaker in family. Egalitarian ideologies, by contrast, endorse and value men's and women's equal and shared breadwinning and nurturant family roles.

Gender roles can be a source of satisfaction and also of tension (Barnett, 2001). The unequal division of both household labor and childcare, with women doing the bulk of the work, is thought to contribute to the reported lower marital satisfaction for women. Therefore the present study was conducted to identify the existing gender role ideology in single earning and dual earning couples.

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Objectives of the Study

The objectives which were undertaken for the research were as follows:

1. To study the gender role ideology of males and females of single earning couples.
2. To study the gender role ideology of males and females of dual earning couples.

Sample

Forty eight couples from single earning families and forty six couples from dual earning families ageing between 25-45 years were purposively selected from Agra city by using multistage stratified sampling method. The important criterion for selection of the subjects was that families must be nuclear in nature and should not have a full time servant.

Tool

A self prepared Gender Role Perception Scale was used to assess perception of husband and wife for gender role ideology. Total 12 items were designed to achieve the objective. This scale was filled up by husband and wife separately. In this scale three point scale has been used. A score of 1 was assigned when male respondent responded on male option for male stereotype and 2 was given for responding on female or either for male stereotypes. Similarly, 1 was given for female respondent when she responded on female option for female

stereotypes and 2 was assigned for responding on male or either option for female stereotypes.

Results

The table 1 shows that 79.17% males and 66.67% females of single earner families think that responsibility of arranging money for fulfillment of essential needs should be performed by only male. About 96% males and 79.17% females of single earner families think that security of family members should be a duty of males. Majority of males and females replied that being a head of the family is a role of man, as the figures show (87.50% and 72.92% respectively). Similarly pattern was found for other responsibilities also. Thus the results showed that most of the male and females of single earning families were having traditional gender role ideology. However, in all these roles and responsibilities females have always a higher willingness to do role swapping rather than males.

It is clear from the table 2 that majority of males from single earner families think that household tasks like cleaning of the house, cooking and child rearing should be done only by females, as evident from the results (95.83%, 87.50%, and 85.42% respectively). Most of the males believe that females should be responsible for caretaking of parents and family members. Interestingly 62.5% males think that guidance to the child should be given by both the partners. Similarly, females also think that roles of females should be done only by females as they can perform them easily and effectively which shows their traditional gender role ideology.

Table 1: RESPONSES of Single Earner COUPLES on Male Gender Role Ideology

	ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES	Single Earner COUPLES											
		Male						Female					
		M		F		E		M		F		E	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Earning	38	79.17	0	0.00	10	20.83	32	66.67	1	2.08	15	31.25
2	Providing security	46	95.83	0	0.00	2	4.17	38	79.17	1	2.08	9	18.75
3	Head of the family	42	87.50	0	0.00	6	12.50	35	72.92	1	2.08	12	25.00
4	Taking major Decision	34	70.83	0	0.00	14	29.17	30	62.50	2	4.17	16	33.33
5	Organizing ceremonies	36	75.00	2	4.17	10	20.83	33	68.75	4	8.33	11	22.92
6	Documentation	33	68.75	3	6.25	12	25.00	29	60.42	2	4.17	17	35.42

Table 2: RESPONSES of Single Earner COUPLES on Female Gender Role Ideology

S. No.	ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES	Single Earner COUPLES											
		Male						Female					
		M		F		E		M		F		E	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Cleaning of house	0	0.00	46	95.83	2	4.17	1	2.08	44	91.67	3	6.25
2	Cooking	0	0.00	42	87.50	6	12.50	1	2.08	41	85.42	6	12.50
3	Child rearing	0	0.00	41	85.42	7	14.58	1	2.08	42	87.50	5	10.42
4	Caring family members	3	6.25	34	70.83	11	22.92	5	10.42	36	75.00	7	14.58
5	Caring Parents	4	8.33	36	75.00	8	16.67	4	8.33	37	77.08	7	14.58
6	Child Guidance	7	14.58	11	22.92	30	62.50	8	16.67	31	64.58	9	18.75

Table 3: RESPONSES of Dual Earner COUPLES on Male Gender Role Ideology

S. No.	ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES	Dual Earner COUPLES											
		Male						Female					
		M		F		E		M		F		E	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Earning	22	47.83	0	0.00	24	52.17	18	39.13	0	0.00	28	60.87
2	Providing security	31	67.39	0	0.00	15	32.61	32	69.57	0	0.00	14	30.43
3	Head of the family	34	73.91	0	0.00	12	26.09	34	73.91	0	0.00	12	26.09
4	Taking major Decision	31	67.39	4	8.70	11	23.91	16	34.78	1	2.17	29	63.04
5	Organizing ceremonies	32	69.57	2	4.35	12	26.09	15	32.61	3	6.52	28	60.87
6	Documentation	30	65.22	3	6.52	13	28.26	19	41.30	4	8.70	23	50.00

The table 3 shows that 52.12% of males and 60.87% females of dual earning families want sharing of the major role, i.e. arranging money for the fulfillment of needs showing egalitarian gender role ideology. However, most of the males and females of dual earning families feel that being head of the family (73.91%) and providing security to family members (67.39% and 69.57% respectively) is the responsibility of males. While comparing males and females of dual earning families on taking major decisions, organizing ceremonies and documentation, it was found that willingness for gender role swapping was higher in females (63.04%, 60.87% and 50.00%) rather than males (23.91%, 26.09% and 28.26%).

The table 4 shows that majority of males (80.43%, 73.91%, and 82.61% respectively) as well as females (82.61%, 80.43%, and 78.26% respectively) from dual earning families think that household tasks like cleaning of the house, cooking and child rearing should be done only by females. It was interesting to note that 56.52%

males think that guidance to the child should be given by both the partners but 45.65% females perceive it as their responsibility.

The table 5 shows the percentage of males and females having traditional and egalitarian gender ideology. The table depicts that 75% males of single earner families were having traditional gender ideology, while only 25% males of single earner families were having egalitarian gender ideology. It was interesting to know that females of single earner families were less stereotyped (68.75%) than males (75%). Females of single earner families want more sharing of roles and responsibilities (31.25%) rather than males (25%).

Similarly, 67.39% males of dual earner families were having traditional gender ideology, while only 32.61% males of dual earner families were having egalitarian gender ideology. Again, it was quite interesting to note that females of dual earner families were less stereotyped

(45.65%) than males (67.39%). Females of dual earner families want more sharing of roles and responsibilities (54.35%) than their counterparts (32.61%). In total, males (71.28%) were more having traditional gender role ideology in comparison to females (57.45%).

The table 6 shows that males of single and dual earning families, who were having traditional gender ideology, responded more on traditional perception (52.78%, 67.74%) for its justification. Working ability stood second as the reason for having traditional gender ideology, as 25% and 16.13% males have given this reason for having such kind of attitude. Again among the females of single and dual earning families (75.76%, 67.74%) responded more on traditional perception for having traditional gender ideology. Interestingly, 14.29% females in dual earning families were having traditional gender ideology just because of their self motivation.

The table 7 shows that males of single and dual earning families had egalitarian gender ideology because of self motivation (41.7%, 53.3%). It was interesting to note that 33.3% males of single and dual earning families think that there should be an equal division of labour, while 25% males of single earning families and 6.7% males of dual earning families think that females are also educated so there should be a sharing of responsibilities. On the other side, females of single and dual earning families had egalitarian gender ideology (53.3%, 60%) which was justified on the grounds of equal division of labour. Again, 26.7% females of single earning families and 24% females of dual earning families were self motivated behind egalitarian gender ideology. In total, males and females showed similar trends.

Table 4: RESPONSES of Dual Earner COUPLES on Female Gender Role Ideology

S. No.	ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES	Dual Earner COUPLES											
		Male						Female					
		M		F		E		M		F		E	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Cleaning of house	0	0.00	37	80.43	9	19.57	0	0.00	38	82.61	8	17.39
2	Cooking	0	0.00	34	73.91	12	26.09	0	0.00	37	80.43	9	19.57
3	Child rearing	0	0.00	38	82.61	8	17.39	0	0.00	36	78.26	10	21.74
4	Caring family members	3	6.52	31	67.39	12	26.09	7	15.22	28	60.87	11	23.91
5	Care of Parents	5	10.87	33	71.74	8	17.39	5	10.87	24	52.17	17	36.96
6	Child Guidance	11	23.91	9	19.57	26	56.52	7	15.22	21	45.65	18	39.13

Table 5: The Percentage of MALES and FEMALES of Single Earning FAMILIES and Dual Earning FAMILIES having Traditional and Egalitarian Gender Role Ideology

S. No.	Gender Ideology	Single Earner COUPLES				Dual Earner COUPLES				Total			
		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Traditional (12 -16)	36	75	33	68.75	31	67.39	21	45.65	67	71.28	54	57.45
2	Egalitarian (17-22)	12	25	15	31.25	15	32.61	25	54.35	27	28.72	40	42.55

Table 6: The Percentage RESPONSES of Single Earner COUPLES and Dual Earner COUPLES for the REASON of having Traditional Gender Role Ideology

S. No.	REASON	Traditional Gender Ideology											
		Single Earner COUPLES				Dual Earner COUPLES				Total			
		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Traditional Perception	19	52.78	25	75.76	21	67.74	16	76.19	40	59.70	41	75.93
2	Education	4	11.11	2	6.06	3	9.68	1	4.76	7	10.45	3	5.56
3	Working ability	9	25.00	1	3.03	5	16.13	1	4.76	14	20.90	2	3.70
4	Equal division of labour	1	2.78	3	9.09	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	1.49	3	5.56
5	Self motivation	3	8.33	2	6.06	2	6.45	3	14.29	5	7.46	5	9.26

Table 7: The Percentage RESPONSES of Single Earner COUPLES and Dual Earner COUPLES for the REASON of having Egalitarian Gender Role Ideology

S. No.	REASON	Egalitarian Gender Ideology											
		Single Earner COUPLES				Dual Earner COUPLES				Total			
		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Traditional Perception	0	0	0	0	1	6.7	0	0	1	3.7	0	0
2	Education	3	25.0	2	13.3	1	6.7	3	12	4	14.8	5	12.5
3	Working ability	0	0.00	1	6.7	0	0.00	1	4	0	0	2	5
4	Equal Division of labour	4	33.3	8	53.3	5	33.3	15	60	9	33	23	57.5
5	Self motivation	5	41.7	4	26.7	8	53.3	6	24	13	48.2	10	25

Table 8: The Mean, SD and t VALUES of Gender Role Perception in Single and Dual Earner COUPLES

Working Status	Gender	Mean	SD	t	P
Single Earner Couples	Male	13.44	3.45	5.61	.01
	Female	16.82	2.35		
Dual Earner Couples	Male	14.82	2.98	5.83	.01
	Female	20.26	3.09		
Total	Male	14.12	4.16	7.12	.01
	Female	18.5	4.27		

Gender	Working Status	Mean	SD	t	p
Male	SEF	13.44	3.45	2.08	NS
	DEF	14.82	2.98		
Female	SEF	16.82	2.35	6.06	.01
	DEF	20.26	3.09		

Table 8 shows that males were more stereotyped rather than females in single ($t=5.61$) as well as dual earning families ($t=5.83$). In case of total males and females, the similar trend was seen. While comparing males of single earner families and dual earner families, the scores were about the same. The t value (2.08) also shows that there was no significant difference in gender role perception of males of single earning families and dual earning families. It is interesting to know that there is a significant difference in attitude of females of single earning families and dual earning families. Females of single earner families were more stereotyped (16.82) in comparison to females of dual earner families (20.26). The t value (6.06) also shows the same.

Discussion

Perhaps the reason behind having traditional gender role ideology was typical traditional belief that male's role is instrumental, while role of female is expressive. Besides this women are by nature caring, nurturing, giving and sacrificing. This can be a big cause of maintenance of traditional gender role ideology among female respondents. For women who have not entered the work force it may be reasoned that getting and pursuing a job is not an easy task therefore females use safe guarding techniques (Adler, 1956) by saying that I did not want to take up a job and have therefore stressed that the role of provider be performed by males only.

Lower level of swapping among male respondents can be explained on the basis two reasons. Firstly, it is more convenient for the man to come home and watch TV rather than enter the kitchen. Then why should he take the additional responsibility when societal demands do not require him to do so. Secondly, in some cases he may not be so strong willed to be able walk against the wind. That is to say he is unable to challenge societal norms.

Feldman (2000) have also found that since the 1970s, the gender role attitudes of both men and women have become less traditional. Gender schema theory (Kaufman, 2000) also supports the fact as it says that gender schema of person is accumulated according to the experience. Perhaps the dual earning couples have assimilated the changed circumstantial requirement and have accommodated by adaptation. Again it would be wrong to say that all dual earning couples have undergone this transition. No wonder the perceptual change has occurred in only a segment of sample.

It was very interesting to note that females have always more willingness to do swapping rather than males because swapping will ease the strain of women

and not the man. Males of dual earning families were more in favour of swapping rather than males of single earning families. Similarly females of dual earning families were found more willing for gender role swapping in comparison to females of single earning families. The reason behind this finding is that dual earning couples have to perform all the roles and responsibility in the limited time therefore they use sharing technique as a coping mechanism. They understand that call of the day is to work together and share responsibility for living a healthy life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that most of the males and females have traditional gender role ideology, but the shift toward egalitarian gender role ideology is occurring gradually. Perception of dual earner couples is changing more rapidly than single earner couples. It is becoming vital that rather than blaming each other for the situation, men and women should be increasingly willing to work together to learn about their new roles. Successful marriage partners are the ones who learn to negotiate and share tasks. Household work can become lot more exciting, innovative and experimented if both gender do not show case the jobs in water tight compartment based on traditions.

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