

Changes in Perception of Gender Roles: Returned Migrants

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This study explored how migration influenced gender role perceptions. A comparison of returned migrants with non-migrants was made to see the effects of migration-repatriation. Sample of 120 men and women returned migrants were interviewed and Islamic Attitude towards Women Scale (Khalid & Freiz, 2004) was administered. *t*-test results showed significant differences in attitude towards gender roles. Changes in the returned migrant groups were also related to a number of demographic factors. Results also suggested that returned migrant men and women either take on new patterns of behavior or maintain the traditional ones only when these are congruent with financial concerns of the family or can be integrated into living conditions in Pakistan upon return.

Keywords: migration, repatriation, perception of gender roles, task sharing behavior

Gender role perceptions are socially constructed standards. The expectations of gender related tasks and power distribution roles may differ within a culture and across cultures. Social role approach, the predominant approach to understand gender role beliefs, attributes the sources of these beliefs to the different social roles performed by men and women (Eagly & Wood, 1991).

The situation in Pakistan today reflects two positions regarding appropriate gender roles, the liberal and the conservative. The conservative group promotes the marginalization of women and looks down upon their independence from the home. The liberal group accepts an egalitarian view of women and men and encourages emancipation of women. Perception of appropriate roles for men and women has universally changed over the years. The change is mainly due to urbanization, industrialization, media, exposure to other cultures, technology, migration and repatriation of populations. Due to several economic and political reasons, there is a continuous influx of migration and repatriation of the Pakistani population.

Every year numerous students and professionals from Pakistan migrate for a short period, i.e., one to three years, to developed countries for improving their qualification. The number of Pakistani students studying abroad has significantly increased; majority of them are postgraduate students. The postgraduate students are usually joined by their spouses and are likely to stay abroad for 3 to 4 years before returning to Pakistan.

Pakistani migrants to UK, before their departure, live in a traditional Muslim and patriarchal society where gender roles are organized in terms of sex and age of its members. In the host industrialized society they experience living in a more liberal and egalitarian environment where segregation of sexes is not practiced, relationships between men and women are more informal and gender roles are more flexible and permissive; although this does not mean that some kind of gender typing stereotypes do not exist there. Shared responsibility for housework and childcare is more likely to be practiced by Pakistani couples in UK than in the country of their origin. Sharing of domestic tasks is considered an important indicator of gender equality. More egalitarian gender role beliefs are associated with more sharing of domestic work (Xu & Lai, 2004). Acculturation refers to changes in cultural attitudes, values and

behavior that result from contact between two distinct cultures (Berry, 1997, 1998). Acculturation experiences of returned migrants are likely to modify certain aspects of their gender role beliefs in a non-traditional direction (Kagitcibasi, 2006; Marin & Gamba, 2003). It has been observed that traditional gender role beliefs decrease due to acculturation process (Leaper & Valin, 1996; Rosenthal, Rainieri & Klimdis, 1996). It has also been observed that women tend to be more egalitarian than men (Berkel, 2004; Larsen & Long, 1988; Locke & Richman, 1999; Tang & Dion, 1999).

Individuals and ethnic groups acculturate in different ways and at different rates, depending on the combination of group, cultural characteristics and structural features of the societies to which the acculturation occurs (Dion & Dion, 1996). Whether the changes due to acculturation experiences are retained after repatriation to their country of origin is yet to be examined. Gender roles are influenced by multiple sources across culture and time and they cannot be understood outside the context of particular ethnicities, societies and social settings (Ferdman, 1999).

Research literature indicates that the effects of migration on an individual are multiple and although these have been examined extensively as far as migrants in the host country are concerned, returned migrants and subsequent changes in them are relatively neglected. It would be interesting to know the effects of acculturation on returned migrants' perception of gender roles.

Returned migrants from UK to Pakistan have to their credit the experience of having lived in Pakistan as well as the exposure to the different lifestyles and values of the British society; a society that is relatively more open, tolerant, and egalitarian as far as gender roles and task sharing behaviors between the genders are concerned. It would be interesting to observe and examine whether the migrants' living in British society adapt and become more egalitarian and less conservative or whether they react to this egalitarian and permissive atmosphere of UK and become more conservative.

The present paper addresses changes in perception of gender roles within returned migrants. It focuses on Pakistani migrants who return from UK to urban areas in Pakistan. It attempts to explore changes in task sharing behaviors and perception of gender roles as a consequence of migration repatriation and subsequent cultural alterations of the migrants. A comparison of returned migrants with non-migrants is made to see the effects of migration and repatriation. The term change is defined as a degree of differentiation between returned migrants and non-migrants, thus allowing changes in gender role perception and task sharing

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behaviors to be measured in relation to existing realities as expressed by both the groups.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There would be significant differences in gender role beliefs between the returned migrant and the non-migrant groups.
2. Gender role perceptions and attitudes of the returned migrant group would be more egalitarian than the non-migrant group.
3. In both the returned migrant and the non-migrant groups, women would be significantly more egalitarian in gender role perceptions than men.
4. There would be significantly more reported task sharing behavior between the returned migrant couples than the non-migrant couples.
5. There would be a significant association between gender role beliefs and sharing of responsibilities in couples.

Method

Participants

A sample of 120 married individuals (66 men and 54 women) returned migrants, who had stayed in UK for at least 2 years or more before returning to Pakistan formed the migrant group for this study. For comparison, a sample of 120 non-migrants matched with migrant sample for sex, profession and age was also located to form the non-migrant group. The age range for the sample was 30-45.

Instruments

The following tools of measurement were used.

1. *Islamic Attitudes towards Women Scale (IAWS; Khalid & Frieze, 2004)*. This measure is a standardized scale developed and validated for measuring gender role perceptions for Muslim societies. It consists of 30 items that are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". A high mean score on the scale indicates more conservative view of gender roles.

2. *Task Sharing Questionnaire*. It measures the extent to which house and parental responsibilities are shared by a couple. It consists of 14 items that cover the extent to which responsibilities are shared by the couple for management and maintenance of household (shopping, cleaning and cooking and maintenance of the house) and parental responsibilities (washing, dressing, schooling, health care and emotional support of children). For each item, the respondents were asked to indicate how family responsibilities were divided between spouses by using six alternative responses (wife only; wife more than husband; wife and husband about same; husband more than wife; husband only; neither husband nor wife).

Since the purpose of the research was to identify the degree of task sharing rather than to identify which spouse had the major responsibility for each task, items were recorded as 1= non-shared; 2 = partly shared; and 3 = equally shared.

Procedure

Data was collected from the sample using the above mentioned questionnaires. Interviews were carried out separately for husbands and wives in order to confirm demographic data and to obtain their

perceptions and satisfaction about sharing household and childcare responsibilities.

Results

The results were analyzed using SPSS. Data for the questionnaires was tabulated by post-graduate students.

Gender Role Perception

It was observed that in both the returned migrants and non-migrant groups, the mean scores showed a leaning towards a liberal view of women role in society. As hypothesized, we found that in returned migrant group both men and women were significantly more liberal in their view of women role in the society (Table 1a and 1b).

We also observed that in both returned and non-migrants groups men were more conservative than women regarding women role and independence in the society (Table 1c and 1d).

Data on individual items as shown in Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference between the non-migrant and returned migrant groups on some items only.

Table 1a

t- test for Returned Migrants and Non-Migrants in Men for Islamic Attitude Towards Women Scale (N = 108)

	Returned migrants (n = 54)		Non-migrants (n = 54)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Men	2.3	.39	2.7	.45	5*

df = 106. **p* < .01.

Table 1b

t- test for Returned Migrants and Non-Migrants in Women for Islamic Attitude Towards Women Scale (N = 132)

	Returned migrants (n = 66)		Non-migrants (n = 66)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Women	1.3	.48	2.2	.53	10.23*

df = 130. **p* < .01.

Table 1c

Gender Differences in Means and t scores for Islamic Attitude Towards Women Scale for the Returned Migrants (N = 120)

	Men (n = 54)		Women (n = 66)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Returned migrants	2.3	.39	1.3	.48	2.5*

df = 118. **p* < .01.

Table 1d

Gender Differences in Means and t scores for Islamic Attitude Towards Women Scale for the Non-Migrants (N = 120)

	Men (n = 54)		Women (n = 66)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Non-migrants	2.7	.45	2.2	.53	5.56*

df = 118. **p* < .01.

Table 2
IAWS Item Descriptive Data

	Items	Migrants	Non-migrants
7	Women should concentrate only on their duties as good wives and mothers.[R]	3.1(1.3)	2.4(1.2)
10	Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry, etc.	2.5(1.3)	1.9(1.1)
11	Women should be only concerned with their duties of childbearing and house tending, rather than with desires for professional and business careers. [R]	2.6(1.2)	2.0(1.1)
18	The seclusion of women should be encouraged in the community. [R]	2.5(1.3)	1.6(1.1)
27	Women should be regarded as intellectually inferior to men. [R]	2.2(1.3)	1.5(0.6)

Note. Items were scored from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree, making a high score the more conservative response. Items with [R] are reverse scored. Scores have been adjusted to reflect this reversal. Means for each item are listed along with the standard deviations in parentheses.

Table 3a
t-test for Returned Migrants and Non-Migrants in Men for Task Sharing Questionnaire (N = 108)

	Returned migrants (n = 54)		Non-migrants (n = 54)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Men	39	1.8	26	1.2	44.2*

df = 106. **p* < .01.

Table 3b
t-test for Returned Migrants and Non-Migrants in Women for Task Sharing Questionnaire (N = 132)

	Returned migrants (n = 66)		Non-migrants (n = 66)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Women	36	1.4	24	0.9	60*

df = 130. **p* < .01.

Table 3c
Gender Differences in Means and t scores for Task Sharing Questionnaire for the Returned Migrants (N = 120)

	Men (n = 54)		Women (n = 66)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Returned migrants	39	1.8	36	1.4	10.34*

df = 118. **p* < .01.

Differences in Task Sharing

There were significant differences between the returned migrant and non-migrant groups in both men and women on Task Sharing Questionnaire (Table 3a and 3b).

Results also indicated that in both returned and non migrants gro-

ups, men were more likely than women to take on the task of the house maintenance, e.g., repairs and payment of bills (Table 3c and 3d).

Table 3d
Gender Differences in Means and t scores for Task Sharing Questionnaire for the Non-Migrants (N = 120)

	Men (n = 54)		Women (n = 66)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Non-migrants	26	1.2	24	.09	10.54*

df = 118. **p* < .01.

Table 3e
Mean scores and t-test for Male Partners in Child Care for Task Sharing Questionnaire (N = 108)

	Returned Migrants (n = 54)		Non-migrants (n = 54)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Child care					
Shopping	4.2	.8	2.2	.9	16.26*
Schooling	4.5	1.1	2.4	1.3	11.79*
Health Care	3.2	1.5	2.1	1.3	6.14*

df = 106. **p* < .05.

The difference in task sharing for the returned and non-migrants groups in men is due to the reported sharing in three areas of child care, i.e., shopping, schooling, and health care for children. No difference was observed for cooking and cleaning and for house maintenance.

Determinants of Gender Role Perceptions and Task Sharing

Table 4 shows Pearson correlation which indicates significant negative relationship between conservative beliefs and task sharing behavior for our returned migrants and non-migrant sample. There was an inverse relationship between task sharing questionnaire and gender role perception.

As shown in Table 5a for the total sample, education and employment of the women were predictors for Gender Role Perceptions. The predictors for task sharing behaviors of the couples were education, employment of the women and migration status (Table 5b).

Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate the nature and extent of differences in gender role beliefs, sharing of household tasks, childcare responsibilities between spouses and satisfaction with sharing of household and childcare responsibilities in returned migrant and non-migrant groups.

Table 4
Correlations between IAWS and Sharing of Responsibilities for Couples (N = 240)

Gender	Returned Migrants (n = 120)	Non-Migrants (n = 120)
Men	-.54**	-.41**
Women	-.39**	-.32*

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01.

Table 5a

Multiple Regression Analysis for Predictors of Gender Role Attitudes (N = 120)

Predictors	β	ΔR^2
Education	-0.20*	0.04**
Wives Employment	-0.16*	0.07**

$R^2 = .11$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 5b

Multiple Regression Analysis for Predictors of Task Sharing (N = 120)

Predictors	β	ΔR^2
Education	0.41**	0.17**
Migration Status	0.30**	0.09*
Wives Employment	0.33**	0.11*

$R^2 = .37$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The five hypotheses were largely confirmed. Differences in gender role beliefs between the returned migrant and non-migrant groups were significant. Gender role perceptions and attitudes of the non-migrant group were more conservative than the returned migrant group. We found that women in both the groups held less conservative and more egalitarian beliefs than men, although gender differences for the returned migrant group were very small when compared with the non-migrant group.

The present study indicates that acculturation process has diluted the conservative views of the Pakistani returned migrant group, making them less traditional and more egalitarian in their gender role beliefs. This change is reflected in their views after repatriation. We also found that this acculturation process was facilitated by education and work status of their spouses.

Individuals in both the returned migrant and the non-migrant groups with less conservative beliefs tended to report more task sharing behavior. This relationship was stronger for men than for women. This finding supports research literature in Western societies that indicates that men gender role beliefs are more strongly associated with the division of labor within the house (Shelton & John, 1996).

The finding that men report more sharing of household responsibilities than women in both the returned migrant and the non-migrant groups was somewhat surprising. Following explanations can be offered for this unexpected finding:

Firstly, because childcare and household task sharing is not expected from Pakistani men, our male respondents may have reported more task sharing behaviors than the female respondents. Self serving bias seems to be operating for our male respondents. Men and women are taught that home and childcare responsibilities are not to be shared equally, therefore, any contribution by the men is remembered and "blown up" by the couple. It is also possible that because men are not expected to do house work, men tend to over-estimate their contribution and under-estimate their wives contribution in household chores and childcare responsibilities.

Secondly, this finding can presumably be explained by the cultural practice of getting the household chores like cleaning, washing, and cooking done by domestic help. Cheap labor is readily available and it seems that our respondents belonged to a social class who utilize domestic help in their homes. However, the

responsibility for these tasks usually involves supervision, which perhaps was being shared by our respondents.

Thirdly, the task sharing behaviors included payment of utility bills, maintenance of the household (e.g., repairs, plumbing, electrical appliances etc.) which are culturally considered to be masculine tasks. These responsibilities may involve hiring skilled workers which is again considered to be a male prerogative.

Fourthly, reference group affects perceptions. Perhaps when our male respondents answered questions about sharing behavior, they evaluated themselves in comparison with the "average" Pakistani male; and possibly with their fathers or elder male members of their family. With this reference group in mind, they reported that they shared relatively more household and childcare tasks with their spouses.

Finally, methodological errors could have contributed to the high scores of our male respondents; for instance, instead of a 3-point response scale that was used in this study, a more detailed response scale addressing the frequencies of doing household tasks could have been used.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing literature on the effects of acculturation on the perception of individuals. It highlights the belief that exposure to alternative lifestyles tends to make people less traditional and more open to change. Our study is also an important addition to the literature on gender related beliefs and practices in a Muslim society. It also highlights the division of labor in the household within the sub-groups in a culture. The fact that educational level and employment of women are mainly responsible for difference in gender role beliefs across the returned migrant and the non-migrant groups is an important finding for the feminist cause in Pakistan. Future research could elaborate more on cultural differences in perception of fairness in gender equality in other Muslim societies. More research is required to investigate and understand how experiences of living in other societies may strengthen egalitarian or traditional views towards gender roles.

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