

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF MARRIAGE ON WOMEN'S SENSE OF IDENTITY - AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Urfa Zubair^{*1}, Amna Nawaz²

^{*1}Government College University, Lahore

²Consultant Clinical Psychology Niazi Hospital, Lahore

¹urfazubair1@gmail.com, ²amnanawaz1262@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Urfa Zubair

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17797599>

Received	Accepted	Published
01 October 2025	18 November 2025	29 November 2025

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, titled "Psychosocial Impact of Marriage on Women's Sense of Identity," explores the profound transformations experienced by married women within Pakistan's predominantly patriarchal society. Marriage, a significant developmental milestone, instigates complex social and biological changes that critically impact women's mental and social well-being, often reshaping their identity and self-perception. Utilizing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), in-depth interviews were conducted with six middle-class women residing in urban Pakistani cities, all belonging to joint family systems. The analysis revealed five interconnected master themes: Compromised Personal Agency, Post-Marital Identity Shift, Varied Marital-Familial Dynamics, Role Conflict Management, and Psychosocial Distress Management. Findings indicate that women frequently navigate challenging in-law relationships and a lack of spousal support, leading to diminished autonomy and increased dependence. This often results in a shift towards a relational identity, where self-worth is tied to marital preservation and familial roles, sometimes at the expense of personal aspirations and broader social connections. The study underscores the significant psychosocial distress experienced due to unmet expectations, gendered role rigidity, and emotional neglect. These insights highlight the critical need for greater understanding, support, and societal shifts to empower women in navigating marital life while preserving their individual identity and well-being.

Keywords: marriage, psychosocial impact, identity, marital well-being, IPA

INTRODUCTION

Marriage significantly influences a woman's sense of identity in Pakistan, a society governed by patriarchal norms and gender inequality. In Pakistan, women are often perceived as extensions of their family's patriarch (Ali, et al. 2022; Gopang, 2024), leading to a compromise in their identity and autonomy, eventually leading to women not having self-determination with regards to work, education, lifestyle and family choices. According to research, 18.3% of women were either married or tied up in a union by their families before the age of 18 in Pakistan (UN Women, 2021) which quantifies the lack of

deciding faculty that women have in Pakistan. It has been observed that achieving a marital status is seen as the highest form of social achievement a woman can access (Fatima et al., 2023). As a consequence of which preservation of said status is given more importance than personal desires and needs to an alarming extend.

1.1 Identity

Identity is an individual's sense of self defined by (a) a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person, a range of

affiliations (e.g., ethnicity) and social roles. Identity involves a sense of continuity, or the feeling that one is the same person today as one was yesterday or years ago (despite physical or other changes). Such a sense is derived from one's body sensations; one's body image; and the feeling that one's memories, goals, values, expectations, and beliefs belong to the self.

1.1.1 Types and Components of Identity

Types of identity deal with the factors that have an influence on person's overall sense of self some of which form the central heart of identity. The two most important types of identity for the purpose of this study include social identity and personal identity.

Social identity.

It relates to the groups an individual identifies with, such as family, friends, or social organizations, and how these affiliations shape one's sense of belonging and interaction. Social identity includes an individuals' roles, values and cultural affiliation or ideals they have inherited through socialization.

Personal identity.

It refers to the distinct characteristics that make an individual unique, encompassing traits such as their name, physical features, personal choices, temperament, values, beliefs, and experiences.

Additionally, there are also three major components of identity (Doeselaar et al., 2018), which are important to understand the internal framework of an individual: distinctiveness, coherence and continuity.

Distinctiveness of Identity.

It refers to seeing the self as unique and distinct from others. This difference can be on the basis of psychological characteristics (privacy, isolation, mentally created boundaries) or social characteristics (relationships, role, social status) (Vignoles et al., 2000). General distinctiveness i.e., differentiating oneself from others on a general basis led to a more adaptive personality than comparative distinctiveness i.e., the degree in which one's self-perception is different from their perception of others within their specific social context (Doeselaar et al., 2018). Distinctiveness of identity forms a foundation

from which coherence and continuity of identity can foster (Pasupathi, 2014).

Identity Coherence.

Identity coherence refers to perceiving oneself similar across different domains. An individual develops different components of identities in different domains e.g., school, home, workplace etc. An individual with a coherent or stable identity will not change their identity when they are in a different setting. This can be achieved when new aspects of identity become integrated in previous one to create a stable form of identity.

Continuity of Identity.

Identity has continuity, as one feels to be the same person over time despite many changes in their circumstances (Yilmaz). Erikson (1950, 1968) explained that a key asset of an identity is that it provides a sense of sameness and continuity. This does not mean that components of identity will not evolve as identity can undergo transitions due to multiple factors including major life transitions like marriage, but continuity refers to being the same person one was before. Continuity of identity or a portion of it is important to maintain one's sense of self. A lack of continuity can profoundly impact an individual's personal growth and psychosocial development, subsequently impacting their mental health.

1.2 Marriage

Marriage is a social institution where two individuals commit to a relationship that is sanctioned by society, where having sexual intercourse is acceptable and both spouses are legally obligated to each other and any offspring (American Psychological Association, 2018). The act of marriage is given utmost importance in Pakistan. It is considered as the backbone of community, something deeply important in the traditional landscape of the country. Study shows that the place of residence and education has a significant impact on the decision to marry particularly in early age marriages (Suhariyati, 2020). Other factors like religiosity and ethnicity are also seen to play a role in marital decision (Fuller et al., 2015).

1.2.1 Family Systems

Within South Asian cultures, joint family systems are prevalent and culturally accepted. A Joint

Family System, or an extended family, is a large family unit that includes multiple generations, usually 3 or more living together. Parents, their children, and other relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins are often included within a joint family system. (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). With the involvement of extended family members, the structure of marriage subsequently changes creating more nuanced relational dynamics and impacts. Impact that biological and/or environmental elements have on a person's social and/or psychological features is known as psychosocial impact. In context of this study, it refers to the psychological and/or social changes incurred on a woman by various components of marriage (de Oliveira et al., 2013).

1.2.2 Factors Contributing to Marital Stability

No marital type or family system is automatically successful or positively contributing to the well-being of both partners. A positive marital experience is important in order to maintain psychological wellbeing of the unit. There are certain factors that contribute to the marital stability. Those impacting this research are the following:

Proportionality of burden.

In context to marriage, it refers to the amount of burden placed on women and men in terms of marital and parental duties. In patriarchal societies, most of these duties are placed on women with little to no support or reward which leads to something called role overload. Role overload exists when an individual fulfills multiple roles simultaneously and lacks the resources to perform them. It can evolve from both excessive time demands and excessive psychological demands (Creary, et al. 2016). These demands are often made by the husband himself, his family or the society.

In laws.

Pakistan being a collectivist society puts great emphasis on communal values and traditions that often has been existing through generations (Sajjad et al., 2023). These values contribute significantly to the lives of the marital couple, guiding and coercing their decisions. Often times, their role in a daughter in law's life is characterized by excessive monitoring, guilt

tripping and invalidation influencing marital harmony (Ashfaq, 2024).

Exclusivity.

It refers to maintaining loyalty and not involving oneself with extra-marital affairs. It fosters trust and feeling of sexual protection which forms the basis of a long-lasting relationships (Karimi et al., 2018).

Commitment.

Commitment involves formation of strong bond and collaboration in different areas of life. These areas may include finances, child care and joint decisions regarding the future. Commitment also has a strong link with marital stability and fulfillment. (Karimi et al., 2018).

Social Stability.

Social stability is multifaceted, it includes both the social recognition of rights and duties of both the partners within a marriage but also mutual understanding on role division. A stable monogamous unit offers a supportive setting for raising children, aid in passing down productive cultural values and strengthen social unity.

Congruence in Values and Beliefs.

A sense of unity and coherence in values among partners fosters better understanding and communication (Karimi et al., 2018) as it significantly influences decision-making. These values might be personal, familial, religious or ethical in nature. In cases of incongruence, power struggle and patriarchy might result in suppression of women's values and beliefs.

Forgiveness and Sacrifice.

Marital satisfaction and happiness are contingent on forgiveness and sacrifice being made by both parties (Tavakol et al., 2017). One sided sacrifice can result in the exploitation of a partner resulting in their reduced well-being. It also involves turning towards each other rather than away at the time of conflict (Gottman, 1993).

Equality of Power.

Marriage involves a bilateral influence between the couple. Often times, one partner starts imposing power more on the other which leads to power-mongering (Gottman, 1993). It is a phenomenon often seen more in men than women but in

certain cases women show signs of power-mongering too. A willingness to respect each other's opinion is a prerequisite for compromise.

1.2.3 Gender Roles and Stereotypes in a Marriage

Within the context of marriage, gender roles refer to the expectations from men and women in terms of their role and responsibilities. This often times results in a specific role attributed to one partner due to their gender for example women are often expected to do household chores and men are expected to be the breadwinner of the family (Pace, 2024).

Gender Stereotypes emerge as a way to rationalize gender roles (Denmark et al., 2004). Gender is categorized in masculine and feminine traits which results in stereotyping. Women are often perceived as more communal and expressive than men and men are considered more competent, agentic and instrumental than women (Helmreich and Stapp, 1974). According to Eagly (1987), men and women have developed characteristics that help them fulfill their gender roles. Men tend to be more independent, instrumental and task oriented, whereas women tend to be more communal, emotionally expressive and nurturing. Valian (1998) believes that women are more nurturing due to their most prominent social role which is motherhood. He attributes restricted mobility of mothers to demands of motherhood. The gender stereotypes can be of 4 types, behavioral, occupational, based on appearance and domestic behavior (Payne, 2025).

Domestic Behavior.

Women are expected to be taking care of the household chores which can include cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children. Whereas, men are considered responsible for taking care of the financial responsibilities of the entire family.

Occupation.

Women are expected to do jobs that involve nurturing and emotional expression like teaching and medicine etc., whereas, men are expected to hold technical positions like army, engineering and medical professions etc.

Personality.

Women are expected to be flexible and compromising whereas men are expected to be aggressive and emotionally cold.

Physical Appearance.

Women are expected to dress modestly and carry themselves with grace. They are also expected to look softer. Whereas men are expected to be tall, intimidating and muscular looking.

1.3 Rationale

Existing research primarily examines the overall impact of marriage and gender discrimination on women, with limited focus on identity transformation. Identity has successfully established its importance within existing psychological research; however, this study adds to its value by looking at it from a highly dynamic developmental process. This study aims to fill the gap within western literature which views marriage as a collaborative process rather than one etched by power dynamics. It does so by exploring the psychosocial impact of marriage on women's identities within Pakistan, an eastern and collectivist country. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing culturally sensitive mental health interventions and advocating for women's autonomy and self-perception in marital relationships. This can further facilitate the field of family counselling. Moreover, it can help expand on the existing theories of identity by providing a culturally sensitive lens.

1.3.1 Objectives

Keeping in mind the existing gaps in literature and the aims of the study, following are the objectives of this research:

- Explore the psychosocial impact of marriage on women's sense of identity.
- Discover the changes in the sense of identity in women before and after marriage.
- Analyze the nature of psychosocial impact of marriage on the sense of identity of women.
- Explore the changes in social roles post marriage in women.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to fulfill the aims of this research:

- 1 What are the shifts in women's sense of identity before and after marriage, as experienced by them?
- 2 How do women perceive changes in their sense of self after marriage?
- 3 How do societal expectations and gender roles influence women's experiences of identity transformation after marriage?

Methodology

The research method employed for this research was qualitative. It helped us gather in depth insight on the experiences of married women and impact of marriage on their sense of identity. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used due to its ability to analyze nuanced personal experiences. It allowed for a deep focus on idiographic accounts of events.

2.1 Sample

Purposive sampling method was used to select 6 female participants who are in a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. Purposive sampling involves selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the study. It helped in narrowing down participants from the pool of people willing to participate in research. It also helped focusing the research on the lived experiences of a specific group i.e., married women living in Pakistan.

2.1.1 Inclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria was used to in order to select the sample:

- Participants in the age range of 20-45 were selected as it was in accordance to Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development. Participants in this age range go through the crisis of Isolation vs. Intimacy which is relevant for this study.
- Women who had been married for over 3 years were included in this research as this duration allows enough time for the transition and its effects to be fully realized.
- Women in middle class households were considered for the research because they live between the intersection of conservative family values and modern liberal values like independence.
- Women who were in monogamous marriages to keep the focus of the research precise as polygamous marriages add an additional

tangent i.e., presence of a second wife which would shift the focus of this research.

- Women who showed willingness to participate in semi-structured interviews.

2.1.2 Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria was kept in consideration while excluding individuals from participation in research:

- Women whose life conditions varied significantly from the societal norms for example those women who are sole breadwinner of family.
- Women who have been married for less than 3 years were not included in this research as they are still in the initial stages of marriage, going through the honeymoon phase limiting their realization of change.
- Women from lower and upper socioeconomic classes were not included in the study because they represent the extremes of the socioeconomic range. Women from lower-income families frequently deal with extra poverty-related issues, which can have a big impact on their psychosocial experiences. On the other hand, women from higher socioeconomic groups might have access to tools and networks of support that help lessen stress. By include these groups, the study's focus on the complex experiences of middle-class women may be limited and the results may be skewed.
- Women in polygamous marriages were not included in this research as their experiences include a unique dynamic which could significantly influence their perception of marital experience, potentially diverging the focus of this research.

2.2 Demographics Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the participants include age, years of marriage, number of children, family system, employment status and city of residence. The sample of this research consisted of 6 female participants. The mean age of participants was 31.5 years. Every participant was in a cohabitated relationship with their spouse and his family. Each participant had either one or two children. Minimum years of marriage among the participants were seen as 3 years and maximum years of marriage were seen as 24 years. The participants were mainly residing in Lahore, Pakistan with the exception of two, one was residing in Rawalpindi, Pakistan and one in

Karachi, Pakistan. The table 2.1 outlines the demographic details of each of the participant.

Table 2.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=6)

Case No.	Initials	Age	Years Marriage	No. Children	Family System	Employment Status	City Residence
1.	S.F	44	24	2	Joint	Housewife	Lahore
2.	S.T	30	4	1	Joint	Housewife	Lahore
3.	M.A	30	4.5	2	Joint	Employed	Lahore
4.	N.N	25	3	2	Joint	Housewife	Rawalpindi
5.	M.M	28	3	1	Joint	Student	Lahore
6.	S.A	32	6.5	1	Joint	Housewife	Karachi

2.3 Data Collection Method

Data was collected by using in-depth semi-structured interviews in correspondence to the qualitative method of research. This type of interview provides a mix of structured and unstructured approach allowing for maximum insight and flexibility. By allowing the interviewer to change the nature and order of question on spot based on the flow of conversation, it facilitates the establishment of greater rapport with the interviewee in comparison to structured interview (Lal, 2025). This helps in eliciting a more natural and genuine response from participants. Interview protocol consisting of 18 open ended questions was designed before conducting the interview. Questions were designed keeping the research questions and literature review in consideration and consisted of following domains; changes in lifestyle post marriage, identity continuity, identity coherence, autonomy, social responsibility, and societal and self-perception of women. Interviews were taken bilingually in Urdu and English, depending on the convenience of the participants. Most of them were taken on zoom on video call or voice call in order to provide the maximum comfort to the participants while some were taken in person.

2.4 Procedure

The first step of this study was to create an interview protocol in accordance to the purpose of the research. Then the search for participants commenced using purposive sampling. Participants were identified and contacted through a friends, family and Instagram. The rest of the participants were contacted through the help of initial participants. Initially 17 candidates reached out but 6 meeting the inclusion criteria were selected. Participation in the study was

entirely voluntary. Each potential participant was informed about the nature and purpose of the research, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained verbally from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. The interviews were conducted online on Zoom or via WhatsApp video call, keeping in check participant's level of comfort. Permission to record the interview was taken prior to the conduction of the interview. The recording was done on the interviewer's personal cell phone to maximize security and confidentiality. Personal notes were also taken during the interview to form follow up questions. The maximum duration of interviews consisted of 1 hour and 3 minutes. On average, the interviews took between 30 to 50 minutes. Phone number of the researcher was shared after the interview for any follow up questions by the interviewees. The first author recorded, transcribed and analyzed the data using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. It was then categorized into superordinate, subordinate and emergent themes. This entire process was performed under the supervision of the second author.

Results and Analysis

3.1 Results

A total of 5 masters themes namely Varied Marital-Familial Dynamics, Compromised Personal Agency, Role-Conflict Management, Post-Marital Identity Shift and Psychosocial Distress Management emerged from the analysis and integration of individual tables. Detail of the results has been given in *Table 3.1*.

Table 3.1 Frequency of Themes Across all Participants(n=6)

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Percentage (%)
Varied Marital-Familial Dynamics	Familial Subjugation	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	50
	Spectrum of Spousal Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
	Adjustment Difficulties	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	50
	Loss of Autonomy and Independence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
	Compromised Self Preservation	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	83
Role-Conflict Management	Role Overburden	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
	Traditional Gender Role Expectations	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	83
Post-Marital Identity Shift	Relational Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
	Suppression of Verbal Expression	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	83
	Compromised Career Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Psychosocial Distress Management	Affective Dysregulation	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	83
	Coping Mechanism	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	50

3.2 Analysis

This research found that marriage has a profound impact on women's sense of identity and their well-being. The major components of marriage that impacted the identity of women turned out to be two; the relationship she had with her spouse and in-laws alongside the spousal and maternal duties. Analysis of the transcript resulted in 5 master themes including 12 subordinate themes.

3.2.1 Varied Marital-Familial Dynamics

This theme captures the complex three-way relationship dynamic between women, their in-laws, and their husbands. It was seen to have played a crucial role in determining a woman's well-being and ease of adjustment into her new family and social roles. Spousal support within this dynamic existed on a spectrum; the husband acted either as a buffer during conflicts or as a passive member in the ongoing interactions. The general experience of women within this

triangulation was conceptualized into three superordinate themes; familial subjugation, spectrum of spousal support and adjustment difficulties.

Familial Subjugation.

A common theme across multiple participants was the power-struggle between the women and their in-laws. In majority of the cases, it was seen that the presence of in-laws was acting as a negative factor towards marital harmony with women believing that their in-laws were negatively influencing their husband by giving them advice that was against their wives.

"اگر in-laws کی involvement ہے تو لڑکا اچھا

بھی ہو تو اچھا نہیں رہتا۔" (Participant 6)

These comments highlight that participant generally believed that the negative attitude of their husbands towards them or their families was attributable to their in-laws particularly their

mother-in-law. It was also seen that in-laws did not respect the privacy of the wife and expected her to be around them all the time. Constant surveillance and "reports" on wife stirred up conflicts between the couple.

یہ ہوتا تھا کہ reporting ہوتی تھی، اگر reporting چلی گئی ہے تو میرے husband کا میرے ساتھ جھگڑا ہو جاتا تھا۔ (Participant 2)
"ایک میرا room تھا اور اُس میں بھی اگر میں کمرہ بند کر کے بیٹھتی تو مجھے سُننے کو ملتا کہ آپ کیوں اس طرح کمرہ بند کر کے بیٹھتی ہیں۔" (Participant 4)

Participants reported feeling frustrated over being watched all the time without having any time to self. They also viewed the insertion of their in-laws in their relationship to be intrusive and problematic. Alongside intrusive attitude, it was also seen that in-laws were involved in criticizing participants' various habits like eating preferences, temperament, and personality characteristics. This led to a change in the attitude of women.

"اُس لحاظ سے مجھے بہت باتیں سُننے کو ملیں کہ یہ تو منہ پھٹ ہے۔" (Participant 4)

It was also seen that in-laws' expectations from both the husband and wife were perceived as overbearing and unrealistic.

"Husband گھر کا بڑا بیٹا ہے، ان کی بہن کی بھی expectations ہیں، mother کی بھی expectations، sharing والا حساب نہیں ہے، ماں اپنا بیٹا share نہیں کر سکتی، بہن اپنا بھائی share نہیں کر سکتی۔" Participant (2)

These expectations caused husbands to prioritize their families over their wives while simultaneously expecting women to compromise which leads the research to the next superordinate theme.

Varied Spousal Support.

It was observed that, for women, it was important for their husbands to be actively involved in their lives. This involvement included tending to their emotional needs, acting as a mediator between them and their in-laws, demonstrating an understanding attitude, and providing space for adjustment. Women who received spousal support acknowledged its importance, while those who did not often presented feelings of longing or grief.

"Understanding تھی، اُس

سے 100% فرق پڑتا ہے۔" (Participant 1)

Husband's support at the time of a life-changing event became a very important tangent. Women who had understanding husbands, their main pillar of strength at time of distress e.g., death of a loved one, pregnancy, etc. was seen to be their husbands. They gave them the emotional space to process their emotions without holding any resentment towards them for their negative behavior at such time. It led to women feeling better about themselves, and more confident in their abilities to tackle difficult circumstances.

"When you got good support system, - my parents were also supportive but after my father's death, میں بہت depressed تھی، اُس time پر میرے husband نے میرا بہت ساتھ دیا، apart مجھے بہت سنبھالا۔ ابھی بھی support system اچھا ہے تو میں زیادہ confident محسوس کرتی ہوں اپنے آپ کو۔" (Participant 5)

However, it was seen the men generally disregard women's emotional needs often leading to emotional neglect. Women expected their husbands to show caring attitudes towards them but when they were met with emotional coldness, it became harder for them to cope and accept their own emotions. Women presented a longing for someone who would understand their emotions.

"emotionally تو میں بہت زیادہ depression میں چلی جاتی تھی، اپنے آپ کو بھی نقصان پہنچانے کی کوشش کرتی تھی لیکن یہ کہ کوئی سُننے والا بھی نہیں تھا، اُس پر بھی افسوس ہوتا تھا، یہ تو میں آپ کو بتا رہی ہوں ویسے کسی کو بتایا نہیں لیکن emotionally میں بہت زیادہ ہو جاتی تھی جب میرے husband مجھے understand نہیں کرتے تھے۔" (Participant 4)

It can be seen that the absence of support system at the time of distress led to women feeling more emotionally vulnerable. In order to maintain their marital harmony, women rationalized the behavior of their husbands by either associating it with the nature of men or by blaming the circumstances in which he was operating.

"اب مرد ہے اُسے غصہ تو آ ہی جاتا ہے۔" (Participant 4)

Apart from emotional neglect and a lack of understanding, women were also expected to compromise their emotional, social and physical needs. Key areas of compromise included interactions with in-laws, where women were expected to remain quiet and ignore negative comments. They also bore the brunt of household

chores, working without a break while men could take vacations or socialize with friends. Furthermore, childcare was seen as the sole responsibility of mothers, as fathers were perceived as incapable of caring for children.

"عورت کو ہی compromise کرنا پڑتا ہے اور

رہنا پڑتا ہے in-laws کے ساتھ... وہ تو achieve کرتے ہیں، اُن کے friends ہیں، وہ سال میں 3-4 دفعہ جاتے ہیں، گھومنے چلے جائیں یا کہیں بھی چلے جائیں لیکن میری restriction آ جاتی ہے بچوں کی کہ دو بچے ہو گئے ہیں تو اب دو بچوں کو لے کر کیسے جائیں گے۔" (Participant 4)

Most of the women reported being the only one to compromise, some not even being able to state one thing which their husbands compromised on. Compromise became easier when the husbands were understanding of the changes that their wives were going through. Acknowledgment and understanding made adjustment into the new lifestyle and routine easier.

"ہاں تو وہ لڑکی کو زیادہ کرنا ہوتا ہے، because

she is the one coming دوسرے گھر سے، باقی سب تو رہ رہے ہیں، اُس طرف سے compromise تو نہیں تھا لیکن understanding بہت زیادہ تھی۔" (Participant 5)

Adjustment Difficulties.

With a woman leaving her home and entering into a new family, one of the most immediate difficulties they faced was adjustment. Adjustment in context of marriage refers to the establishing adaptability into the new family in terms of routine, relations and responsibilities. Women were seen coming with a set of expectations that often stemmed from fantasies that they had read in novels or personal standards that they had set. The fulfillment of these expectations allowed for women to adjust better but it was noticed that in most cases, these expectations were not fulfilled.

"ایک wife ایک نئے گھر میں گئی ہے تو اس کو

sari expectations اپنے مرد سے ہی ہوتی ہیں کہ میں اس کے لیے آئی ہوں، یہ میرے لیے stand لے" (Participant 2)

Women expected their husbands to prioritize them and take a stand for them in front of their in-laws. These expectations remained unmet causing difficulty in adjustment. Another important component within adjustment was the time given to it. Those women who were given more time to talk to their husbands during the courting period, developed an understanding and adjusted into the lifestyle of her husband and his family relatively easier than those who were not.

It was also seen that they had a better outlook on marital life than the latter.

"تو ان تین سالوں میں understanding تھی، ہم phone پر بات کرتے تھے، family میں گھر میں آنا جانا تھا، تو شکر ہے مجھے کوئی problem نہیں ہوئی۔" (Participant 1)

3.2.2 Compromised Personal Agency

Personal agency refers to the actual or perceived control one has over the trajectory of their life. It includes having freedom to act in any direction that they want, it is seen as an extent by which one influences the outcome of their life. It was seen that personal agency was majorly compromised in all participants. Participants perceived it as one of the most important needs in terms of maintaining personal identity and preserving one's self. Two subordinate themes emerged from the data that were included under compromised personal agency; autonomy and independency, and compromised self-preservation. Personal agency was seen to be present more before marriage than after. In some cases, it was deliberately cut short by the in-laws to maximize control.

Autonomy and Independence.

Autonomy refers to the freedom to choose and take decisions free of any coercion. It was seen to be majorly missing in most participants. Autonomy and independence also include how much an individual believes that they have a control over their own life. It was seen that most women have an external locus of control, they did not believe that they have any authority over their lives. Control was either associated with God or their surroundings.

"بہت ساری چیزیں ایسی ہوتی ہیں، بہت ساری ہوتی ہیں کہ آپ کرنا چاہتے ہو لیکن وہ نہیں ہو پاتی کیونکہ آپ کی surrounding میں جو چیزیں چل رہی ہوتی ہیں وہ آپ کے control میں نہیں ہوتی۔" (Participant 2)

Women's lack of control over their lives diminished their decision-making power. Consequently, they often faced situations they were unprepared for or that directly contradicted their personal plans.

"February میں میری شادی ہوئی اور ساتھ ہی conceive کر لیا، کافی دفعہ یہ نہیں پوچھا جاتا کہ آپ اس چیز کے لیے ready ہو یا نہیں۔" (Participant 4)

One of the participants expressed grief over not being asked before the decision to have children right after marriage, despite being the one going through all the physical and emotional changes alongside managing maternal and domestic responsibilities. In terms of getting married, it was seen that most women did not take the initiative themselves but their opinion was considered and valued. Most women were asked by either their husbands or families whether they wanted to get married or not, and most of them agreed to marriage themselves.

"میرا ذہنی طور پر یہ ارادہ نہیں تھا کہ شادی کرنی ہے، بس ایک چیز والدین کی طرف سے طے ہوئی، میری رائے پوچھی گئی تھی، کیونکہ مجھے خود کوئی اور پسند نہیں تھا تو میں نے ہاں کر دی" (Participant 3)

Even though the participant agreed to marriage herself, it can be implicitly seen that parental pressure or need of parental approval was present meaning that there are instances where women agree to marriage to please their families and not out of personal preference. One of the things noticed alongside the absence of decision-making ability was the absence of independence. Most women were dependent on the male figures in their lives. It was seen as a stable factor before and after marriage as women were dependent on their fathers/brothers before marriage and on their husbands after.

"شادی سے پہلے آپ کے father support بہت supportive husband کے بعد اگر آپ کو مل جائے تو چیزیں ہو جاتی ہیں۔" (Participant 3)

This dependence was logistical and financial. Women relied on their husbands to take them places or provide for them financially which usually resulted in the restriction of social mobility. The restricted mobility was perceived as being equivalent of imprisonment.

"شادی سے پہلے آپ کچھ کرتے ہیں، آپ اپنے parents کو بتا رہے ہیں کیونکہ وہ آپ پر بہت trust کرتے ہیں۔ اب یہاں پر ایسا ہے کہ آپ کو مایکا آنے کے لیے بھی اجازت لینی پڑتی ہے، آپ independently مایکا بھی آ سکتے ہو" (Participant 2)

"لیکن آپ دیکھیں نا کہ شروع سے جب سے پیدا ہوئی ہوں میری routine تھی میں نے صبح اٹھنا ہے، میں نے پڑھنا ہے، میں نے جانا ہے، school, college, university, کام کرنے ہیں اور ایک دم سے ایک قید مل گئی کہ نہیں جانا، اندر رہو، یہ میرے لیے tough time رہا ہے۔" (Participant 6)

There were certain needs observed in terms of autonomy and independence. It was seen that women valued self-sufficiency and believed that

education and career were the best way to achieve it. One participant stated the importance of maintaining lifestyle regardless of getting married or not. Other believed that education played a role in fulfilling parental responsibilities in a better way.

"یہ ہے کہ آپ خود سمجھتے ہو چیزوں کو تو آپ الادکی اچھی تربیت کر سکتے ہو۔" (Participant 1)
"میرا شادی سے پہلے یہ تھا کہ بندہ شادی کرے نہ کرے، اپنا lifestyle maintain رکھے، status maintain رکھے، وہ تب ہی maintain ہے جب آپ job کر رہے ہوں گے۔۔۔ آپ کسی پر dependent ہو کر اپنا status نہیں رکھ سکتے۔" (Participant 6)

Another need that was seen as significant to maintaining mental well-being in a joint family system was the need to maintain boundary. Both the participants; those who had boundaries and those who lacked it stated the importance of maintaining a mental and physical distance from their in-laws.

"Now the thing is that you don't have to make everybody happy, you can't make

everyone happy. peace of mind جتنا کر سکتے ہیں اتنا کریں، بہت over the top نہیں جانا چاہیے کہ دوسرے آپ کو for granted لینا شروع کر دیں" (Participant 5)

It was observed that for one participant, mental boundary looked like the acceptance of her inability to please everyone. By acknowledging the unrealistic nature of expectations, women were better able to make peace with their own self. Apart from boundary, it was also seen that women disliked when their parenting authority was challenged either by their own family or their husband's family. Parenting authority became a struggle of power between mothers-in-law and the women. It was seen that their parenting style was either challenged or their importance as a mother was minimized.

"ہم نے بھی تو بچے پالے ہیں، جیسے میرا بیٹا روئے تو میں اس کو منع کرتی ہوں یا ساس کو بیٹھے کے ساتھ کچھ کرنے سے منع کروں گی تو میری ساس کہے گی کہ تمہارا انوکھا ہے؟ ہم نے بھی تو بچے پالے ہیں، ایسے ہی پلتے ہیں۔" (Participant 2)

The lack of autonomy and independence impacted women the most when they were on all fronts, namely, financial, social, parental, and physical. Some women, alongside the support of their husbands were able to navigate through it, those women that did not have supportive

husbands ended up feeling suffocated. Eventually, the independence and subsequently the wellbeing of a woman was at the discretion of their husbands and in-laws.

Compromised Self Preservation.

The expectation of women to be the one always compromising develops a mindset where women always prioritize the needs of over their own. That was also seen in the participants with most women having their children or their husbands as their top priority rather than their own needs or aspirations.

"ظاہر ہے جیسا سوچا ہوتا ہے کہ یہ کریں گے وہ کریں گے تو ایسا کچھ بھی نہیں ہے کیونکہ husband کے according چلنا پڑتا ہے، چاہے husband cooperative ہو یا نہیں، اس کے ساتھ ہی چلنا پڑتا ہے۔" (Participant 4)

For a few women, this was an act of love and they did it out of their own free will. For others and majority, it was something that suppressed their wishes and their own desires. Fulfilling the expectation of their husbands became an act of self-sacrifice which led to a compromise in their own well-being.

"ان کی expectations کو پورا کرنے کے لیے وہ چیزیں کرنی پڑتی ہیں جو میں نہیں بھی کرنا چاہتی۔" (Participant 2)

It was observed that women put more significance on their negative experience of marriage than the positive ones. It showed that for women, the negative components of marriage had impacted them more significantly than the positive ones. "Positives" تو یہ ہیں کہ... مطلب positives نہیں، negatives بتاتی ہوں [laughs]۔" (Participant 4)

3.2.3 Role Conflict Management

Role conflict refers to a clash existing between two or more social roles an individual occupies. The social roles are either acquired with time and personal decisions or given to you by birth e.g., gender roles. Participants of this studied occupied multiple roles with the most prominent ones being the roles of mother, daughter-in-law, wife, and employee or a student. It was seen the women generally had an issue with management of all these roles. Two subordinate themes under role conflict management emerged from the data; role overburden and gender role expectations.

Role Overburden.

Role overburden was seen in all participants. It refers to excessive responsibilities leading to a state of burn out in individuals. The responsibilities of participants often included household chores and parental duties. Women were responsible for the management of the entire household alongside the duties of her children with little to no help. These responsibilities continued even in situations where rest was medically required such as a pregnancy. The household responsibilities included cooking food, cleaning, maintaining orderliness, keeping up with everyone's routine and in most cases, it extended not just to the immediate family but also husband's family. Child related duties included changing diaper, feeding with an emphasis on mother feed during infancy, cleaning, school work and engaging with the child.

"جب first pregnancy تھی... پھر مجھ سے workload کافی لیا گیا... بہت زیادہ کھڑا ہونے والا کام، kitchen کا کام، کھانا پکانے کا، برتن دھونا، کپڑے دھونا۔" (Participant 4)

"Husband" بچی کے ساتھ کھیلتے ہیں لیکن responsibilities اس کی as such کوئی نہیں لیتے۔" (Participant 6)

Even in those cases where help was present, duties were distributed only among the women while men were only responsible for fulfilling the financial needs. As a result of this, women were not only overburdened by the excessive demands of their roles but also did not have any time left for themselves. Unlike their male counterparts, women were rarely afforded a break. They also could not manage their hobbies alongside their marital roles.

"School" سے، ان کو سلانا، routine، کھانا پلانا، پھر پڑھانا تو آپ سوچ سکتے ہو کہ time ملتا کہاں ہے؟" (Participant 1)

"میں articles لکھتی تھی لیکن اس کے لیے اب مجھے time نہیں مل پاتا، میں sketching بھی کرتی تھی۔" (Participant 2)

It was also noticed that inter-role conflict made women perceive themselves as incapable of managing multiple roles. Women generally believed that they were not able to balance multiple roles leading to inefficiency in fulfilling the duties associated with each. This theme was seen in most women but it was heightened for those that had a job or a negative relationship with their in-laws.

"میں یہ کہتی ہوں کہ میں اچھی wife بنانے کے چکروں میں اچھی بیٹی بن سکی، میں اچھی daughter in law بنانے کے چکروں میں اچھی wife نہیں بن سکی، اور ان دونوں کے چکروں میں میں اچھی ماں نہیں بن سکی" (Participant 2)

When asked for help, husbands stated that it is a woman's sole responsibility to take care of the household while men provide for the family. There was also a negative attitude seen towards getting external help in one of the participants.

"Helper نہیں ہے میرے پاس۔ میں کہتی ہوں helper رکھوا دو تو کہتے ہیں helper" جو رکھواتے ہیں، ان کی کمائی میں برکت نہیں ہوتی۔" (Participant 6)

Gender Role Expectations.

Pakistani society is bound by strict gender roles where women are expected to be indoors, submissive and taking care of the children while men are expected to be dominant and financially responsible for the household. There are certain gender roles that govern the marital institution as well. Most women were told by their own families and in-laws to remain submissive and quiet in order to maintain marital harmony and avoid conflict. This served as a mechanism of maintaining a submissive nature of women.

"جیسے husband کہہ رہا ہے ویسے ہی کرنا ہے، اُس کو ناراض نہیں کرنا، اپنے معاملات سیدھے رکھنے ہیں، اپنے in-laws کو خوش رکھنا ہے جس طرح مرضی رکھنا پڑے رکھنا ہے" (Participant 4)

This submissiveness was further reinforced by not allowing women to get a divorce. In times of unfair treatment, even when women wanted to seek divorce, they chose not to because they had to think about the social standing of their family. Divorce in the family was also used a taunt against some women. This shows the negative stereotype attached with divorce and the reason why many women choose not to part ways even when the situation is bad for them.

"مجھے اس کو لے کر continue کرنا تھا کیونکہ جو ہمارا society ہے especially middleman کا society یہ ایسا ہے کہ آپ اپنے relationship کے متعلق آپ step لے نہیں سکتے especially اگر آپ joint family میں بھی ہو اور آپ کے بہن بھائی بھی ہوں، آپ اس کے بارے میں سوچ ہی نہیں سکتے ہو"

Participants reported their husbands having a strong dislike towards co-working environment which acted as the foundation of women's restricted social mobility. It was believed that

women who work alongside men are disloyal and involved in extra-marital affairs.

"وہ یہ کہتے تھے کہ جو لڑکی گھر سے باہر نکلی ہے اُس کا affair تو لازمی ہے، یہ possible ہی نہیں ہے کہ وہ جو گھر سے باہر نکلی ہو وہ بچی ہو۔" (Participant 6)

One participant also reported her husband believing that the income coming from women in co-working environment is illegitimate and cursed. This behavior and stereotype influenced women's working attitude resulting in women either not working or only working in female spaces. Working mother complained about being seen as incompetent mothers in the society with one hearing comments regarding bad parenting. This comment shook the way she saw herself as a mother.

"کہ لوگوں کو لگتا ہے کہ اگر میں ایک working mother ہوں تو میرے بچے رُل گئے ہیں" (Participant 3) Another common stereotype that existed was women changing their surname after marriage. It was seen that despite not having any external pressure from husband, women changed their surname due to social trends. Some women, who did not change their surname called doing so, a lack of awareness. Other women who did not want to change their surname had to do it for legal reasons and it was only limited to their national identity card.

"کوئی pressure نہیں تھا، میں نے videos وغیرہ دیکھی تھیں کہ نام change کر لیتے ہیں، cool سا لگتا ہے یا اچھی vibes آتی ہیں۔" (Participant 6) "ہم دونوں کی love marriage تھی، تو مجھے اچھا لگتا تھا، اُس وقت trend بھی تھی، کوئی pressure نہیں تھا ویسے ہی کیا تھا۔" (Participant 1)

3.2.4 Post-Martial Identity Shift

Marriage brings out many new social roles in a woman's life, some become so important that they start shaping her identity accordingly. New social roles require adequate management and balance with the old ones. All of this needs to be maintained alongside one's personal identity in order for them to retain a sense of continuity in their personality. It was seen that balance was not achieved due to the factors already discussed before. This led to a shift in women's sense of identity after marriage. This shift was observed in their relationships, careers, aspirations, and self-expression.

Relational Identity.

It was seen that majority of the participant developed a relational identity in which they viewed themselves in accordance to the important relationships in their life i.e., their husband, child and in-laws. In certain circumstances, a relational identity served participants a positive function by maintaining their social life or giving them a purpose in life at a difficult time. However, at other points it was seen as restricting their life to just their family. For most women, their children were the purpose of their lives, subsequently, the reason why they were able to continue their marriages, despite the hardships.

"مقصد ہے، میری بچی ہے، اگر یہ نہ ہوتی تو پھر شاید کچھ نہ ہوتا۔" (Participant 6)

It was also seen that children became the top priority in lives of mothers and they slowly started paying less attention to themselves and more to their children.

"Job کا depend کرتا کہ آپ need کے طور پر کر رہے ہو یا بس time spend کرنے کی وجہ سے کر رہے ہو، اب مجھے need نہیں ہے تو میں اپنا quality time بچوں کے ساتھ گزاروں،" (Participant 1)

The social life of participant was significantly impacted by their marriages or their friends' marriages leading to a reduced social circle.

"بہت کم ہو گئی، phone پر contact ہے، بات کر لیتی ہوں، کبھی message کر لیا لیکن ملنا نہیں ہوتا۔" (Participant 2)

At that point, participants found engagement in form of their families and children to be fulfilling. Some did not find the need of making new friends because they had their children and husbands in their lives, others had no choice but to rely on their children for social engagement.

"اب میرے پاس یہی entertainment رہ جاتی ہے کہ میں free ہو کر اپنے بیٹے کے ساتھ busy ہو جاتی ہوں۔" (Participant 2)

It was also observed that society perceived married women to be more mature and treated them with more respect post marriage. The standard of maturity and responsible nature was not attached with age rather the marital status. Some participants observed that they had started getting more attention and care from relatives after marriage.

"جو میری side کے رشتہ دار ہیں وہ اور زیادہ اچھے طریقے سے treat کرتے ہیں، husband کی وجہ سے اور بچوں کی وجہ سے۔ لیکن اب سب equally treat کرتے ہیں کیونکہ میری شادی ہو گئی ہے تو اب مجھے اپنا آپ بڑا بڑا لگتا ہے۔" (Participant 4)

However, with maturation also came the expectation to act more responsibly. This expectation made women lose a sense of coherence in their identity. They reported having to act more responsibly in their in-laws to keep up with their social image while having more freedom to act however they please at their own homes.

"پہلے آپ گھر پر ہوتے ہیں تو اپنے گھر پر الگ طریقے سے ہوتا ہے، سسرال میں تھوڑا responsible act کرنا ہوتا ہے، گھر پر آپ جیسے بھی ہو۔" (Participant 5)

Suppressed Verbal Expression.

One of the most recurrent themes within the data was suppressed verbal expression. Woman reported having to suppress their opinion because it was not welcome in their in-laws. They were criticized for giving their opinions or expressing their likes and dislikes. Women expressed feeling a shift in their identity after marriage because they were not allowed to express themselves.

"میری personality different ہے دونوں میں، سسرال میں میں اتنا بول نہیں سکتی، بات نہیں کر سکتی۔" (Participant 2)

All of the participants put an emphasis on ignoring or remaining quiet as a way of tackling criticism from in-laws. They believed that staying silent is the way of protecting marriage. Some women did it by themselves as a strategic way of conflict resolution, while others were forced to do it by their in-laws and family implicitly or explicitly.

"بس ignore کرنا ہوتا ہے، کوئی بات کسی کی بری لگ جائے، تو غصہ آ رہا ہوتا ہے۔" (Participant 5)
"کچھ بھی نہیں، کیا کرنا ہے، چپ کر کے سنتی ہوں۔" (Participant 6)

Alongside the suppression of voice, it was also observed that women were expected to suppress their negative emotions, particularly anger. The reason why most women tend to suppress their opinion, wants and personality was the fear of consequence. Women were found to be afraid of their husband's anger and criticism from in-laws.

"اُدھر آپ جتنا reserved ہیں، آپ نہیں کر سکتے ہیں، ان کو برا لگے گا اور کہیں گے آپ کی wife نے ہمارے

ساتھ یہ بات کی ہے، اگے بات جائے گی تو وہ میرے حق میں غلط ہے۔" (Participant 2)

"اب مجھے likes dislikes بھی boundaries کو جانتے ہوئے کرنا پڑتا ہے، اگر میں نے کسی چیز کو like کیا تب بھی consequences ہوں گے اور dislike کیا تب بھی consequences ہوں گے۔" (Participant 6)

Compromised Career Identity. As discussed earlier, neither of the participant showed initiative towards marriage. Every participant was involved in pursuing a degree or a career before they got married. They described themselves as goal oriented and high achievers with plans to pursue higher education or careers.

"شادی سے پہلے میں job کر رہی تھی، میں ایک goal oriented لڑکی تھی، میرا زیادہ focus میری job اور studies تھا۔ میرا MS کرتے ہی میری شادی ہو گئی تھی۔ صرف covid کا وقت میرا گھر پر گزرا تھا لیکن اُس وقت بھی میں online job کر رہی تھی" (Participant 4)

Participants reported having to compromise on their careers and education in order to maintain marital harmony. This involved either completely cutting off their dreams or restricting it within certain limits, both leading to a compromise in their identity. The restrictions were placed on the women by either their mothers-in-law or their husbands. Reason given was multifold including unacceptance of co-working environment and lack of need suggesting that women should only work if there was a financial need.

"میری mother-in-law بہت strict تھیں، even میرے husband بھی اس حق میں نہیں تھے کہ میری بیوی job کرے۔" (Participant 4)

There was a feeling of nostalgia attached with regret when women talked about their lost aspirations. Nostalgic regret refers to looking back in the past and feeling sorrowful or angry with regret on how things turned out. Even those women that had a good relationship with in their in-laws and had higher levels of marital satisfaction could be noticed feeling nostalgic regret.

"جب کبھی غصہ آ رہا ہوتا ہے تو سوچتی ہوں کہ پہلے میں صحیح تھی، پڑھ لیتی تھی ٹھیک سے، دماغ چلا کر۔" (Participant 5)

Women dealt with their lost aspiration in different ways. Most felt a sense of hopelessness

and disillusionment towards their goals. They felt that they could either choose career or their marital life, a sense of finality was attached with both the options. Some felt their goals were now unattainable since they were married and lacked permission to work. It could also be seen that they felt that they have lost their potential by getting married. They reported feeling as if their personality had been reduced to domestic politics when they could have been doing something bigger.

"میرا شادی کا mood ہی نہیں تھا، میرا PhD تک کا mood تھا، لیکن میری جب شادی ہو گئی تو میں نے کہا اب ہو گیا ہے، کام ختم ہو گیا ہے۔" (Participant 6)

While the most prominent narrative was disillusionment, a more positive narrative also emerged from the data. A participant felt that regardless of her inability to pursue further education or career, her academic background has helped her in becoming a better mother. This made her feel as if her studies have not gone to waste, rather have been adjusted productively into her new identity.

"سب کہتے تھے اچھی، sharp، اور پڑھنے میں بھی اچھی تھی۔ لیکن اُس کا فائدہ مجھے یہ ہوا کہ میرے جو بچے تھے ان کو شروع سے اچھے schools میں ڈالا تاکہ اچھی ان کی base ہو" (Participant 1)

Hence, it was seen that compromise when coming from the heart, could be adjusted productively in life. However, when women were forced to compromise on something without letting them have an option to choose led to negative mental consequences for them.

3.2.5 Psychosocial Distress Management

The last and one of the most important master themes that emerged from the data was Psychosocial Distress Management. It refers to the psychological and/or social problems created by psychological and in this case social scenarios. This theme explores the psychological impact of a compromised identity, lack of support and understanding and change in the biological health of participants. The main subordinate themes emerging from data under this master theme includes, affective dysregulation and coping mechanism.

Affective Dysregulation.

The most common psychological problem that was presented in women was affective dysregulation. This includes mood irregularities like mood swings, stress, clinical depression and anxiety. Women reported feeling discontent with themselves. This can be seen as significant in highlighting the identity shift as the inability to continue their true identity had led to a feeling of discontentment in them.

"نہیں، میں خود کے ساتھ exist نہیں کر سکتی۔" (Participant 2)

Affective dysfunction seen within women was of clinical nature leading to either loss or self-harm. The causes of depression and stress often included loneliness due to separation, relational problems with in-laws and husband, and changes brought by post-partum. In one severe case, amount of stress due to household chores and criticism from in-laws led to a miscarriage, a time in which she faced many emotional difficulties but instead of supporting his wife emotionally, participant's husband gave her the ultimatum of divorce, worsening her situation. It was seen that wives that were supported by their husbands at times of distress, were able to cope with it more effectively.

"میں stress out ہو جاتی ہوں، panic ہو جاتی ہوں... ایک tragedy ہو گئی کہ میں first time expected delivery دو مہینے دور تھی لیکن وہ اتنا stressful period رہا تھا کہ میرے بیٹے کی death ہو گئی تھی۔" (Participant 2)

A negative shift in behavior was attributed to marriage. Participants reported others commenting on the negative change in their behavior as well.

"میں بہت زیادہ aggressive ہو جاتی ہوں، میں loud react کرتی ہوں۔ انہوں نے بھی میرے ساتھ time گزارا ہے، میرا یہ behavior نہیں ہے، میرا change ہو گیا ہے۔" (Participant 6)

Coping Mechanism.

Women held their environment responsible for their depression. Some took a passive approach towards dealing with their emotional irregularities like waiting for their environment to change by themselves. Others were seen relying on religion, professional help and activities that can be done at home to alleviate their mood like cooking. It

was seen that reliance on religion increased after a life-changing event.

"اُس depression میں میں نے نماز پڑھنی شروع کی کیونکہ depression میں مجھے کسی کا سہارا چاہیے تھا، تو تب میں نے نمازیں اور تسبیح پڑھنی شروع کی۔" (Participant 1)

Every single participant except one reported going through psychological difficulties after marriage. For some, the cause was an inevitable change that comes with marriage like pregnancy and for some, it was something more avoidable. Regardless, marriage became a significant life-changing event in women's life.

Discussion

Marriage marks a significant milestone in a woman's developmental journey. It brings about social changes and becomes a prerequisite for biological changes, each impacting the mental and social well-being of a woman. This study offers critical insight into the experiences of married women in Pakistan, a broadly patriarchal and developing society with shifts towards equality and liberal values still in its early stages. It also discovers how marriage results in the change of women's identity and self-perception. It underpins social factors that create challenges for women, their personal and mental implications alongside discussing the components of identity that gets most impacted. The most prominent social factor that played its role in impacting women post marriage was their dynamic with their in-laws and their husband's role in resolving any conflict among the three of them. This corresponds to the concept of triangulation given by Murray Bowen (1966), which states that relationships that experiences stress or tensions end up forming triangles through the involvement of the third person. Hence, the couples that had internal tensions, and there was not enough understanding developed between them, they were more susceptible to their in-laws inserting themselves in their relationship. In healthy triangulation systems, the third person offers stability to the relationship by resolving tensions between the other two. However, in majority of cases, it was seen that the triangulation was not serving its purpose with in-laws exacerbating the problems between the couple and husbands adopting a passive position in conflict between their families and wives. Another

unhealthy aspect of triangulation observed was the singling out of the woman. This was specially seen when the triangular system was formed between, sister-in-law, mother-in-law and the wife. The excessive criticism and surveillance became an instrument of conformity that in laws used against women, resulting in women having to change their selves to order to fit into the expectations of their in-laws. Eagly (1986) did an experiment which showed that women tend to conform more under surveillance than men. Fitting into the molds set by their in-laws come at the expense of personal well-being and desires, resulting in self-sacrifice. This self-sacrifice was not altruistic in nature rather something women were forced to do. This was concluded from their emphasis on negative experience in comparison to positive. Evans (2017) discusses society's expectation for women to be caring and serving regardless of personal costs, an expectation that exists even in spheres outside of the home, such as academic workplaces

Criticism is not the only mechanism of control employed on women by the society. It was seen that women are kept dependent on male figures of the family in order to restrict their personal agency. This control keeps the patriarchal system in check. Results showed that participants have a restricted sense of autonomy with many believing that their situation is no longer in their control. Women acknowledged the importance of self-sufficiency in establishing their importance within their family hinting at their feeling of inadequacy due to their lack of financial independence. The lack of autonomy and independence creates a social deadlock for women, often restricting them to their own homes where the involvement of their in-laws restricts their autonomy further, this results in women feeling frustrated and suffocated. The absence of a social support network results in bottling up of emotions ending in aggression, something deemed as unacceptable in women by the society. Hence, the lack of autonomy creates a cycle of oppression for women, from which escaping requires self-sufficiency, something women feel is no longer in their control. In their article, Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea (1991) argue that without a secured sense of self, giving rights and public space to women is not valuable. In order to empower women, helping them overcome self-doubt, especially with regards to

their abilities is important. Their analysis of a mid-19th century traditional society in America corresponds to present-day analysis of this study of Pakistani society in which family systems are responsible for embedding cultural message of subordination in women. Within this framework, it was seen to be a common belief that men had the inherent right to control women's lives, reinforcing male authority both within the home and in broader society. Simultaneously, society fosters a sense of social and economic reliance, this was seen in the form of financial dependence on men and the need of asking permission to do anything. Pacherie (2007) argues that the sense of agency can be attributed to components of our experience including the experience of intentional causation, the sense of initiation and the sense of control. Our research found the sense of initiation and the sense of control missing in women, hence women tried to assert control in parenting as a way of reclaiming the lost agency. Women wanted parental decisions to be in their hands and did not like taking criticism on their parenting style. It underscores the need for their role as a mother and authority figure to be acknowledged by the entire family and not just the children. The theme of self-sacrifice and prioritization of the needs of others was particularly significant in motherhood. This is due to motherhood being the ultimate responsibility of a mother and her most significant contribution to the society. In this research, it was revealed that men are perceived incapable of raising children or helping out in the household chore, this serves both as a rationalization for women and an excuse for men. This incapacity to learn is instrumental in nature, resulting from escaping accountability and responsibilities. As a result of this incapacity, women are left alone handling all the parental responsibilities alongside household chores. Cantillo and Hutton (2020) research on motherhood discusses a phenomenon of intensive mothering which refers to the cultural expectation that good mothers prioritize caregiving, investing time, money, and emotional labor into their children, often reducing or eliminating paid work. This solidifies the finding in this research that working women often faced criticism from their relatives with their competency as a mother being challenged. In some cases, the women had normalized the

compromise themselves as well. This was often times linked with the support from their husbands. If husbands were supportive, women find it easier to adjust and compromise. It has been found that support provision results in reduced anxiety and depression in married couples. Consequently, the lack of acknowledgement was related to more anxiety and depression (Biehle et al., 2012). It was seen that women's premarital expectations played a significant role in determining their marital fulfillment. Women expected their husbands to be caring, understanding and protective. Researches indicate that being understood is crucial not only for the quality and satisfaction of the relationship but also for the personal wellbeing of an individual (Reis et al., 2017). In majority of the cases, these expectations were not met and women were faced with emotional neglect. This looked like their partners dismissing their emotions and calling them overdramatic, something in sync with societal image of women. The lack of validation from their husbands results in women feeling unimportant. Research shows that gender stereotypes impact how individuals attend to, interpret and remember information about themselves. (Ellemers, 2018) Another gender stereotype that was confirmed through this research was the negative attitude of husbands towards co-working environment. There was a general mistrust towards women, considering them inherently disloyal. It also hinted at a sense of ownership men feel towards their wives, disallowing them from going outside and interacting with other men at the fear of other men taking interest in them. Work was considered something that women should do only out of necessity and not out of freedom of choice. Dutton & Goodman (2005) coded interviews with violent men and observed that possessive language is common among men establishing ownership over women. Overall, the research revealed that role expectations are gendered in essence. Not only that, the boundary between gender roles is so rigid that men were not willing to help their wives even if it was causing the physical strain. Women were the ones responsible for all the duties inside the house with the expectation of them never demanding a break. Even if they did demand a break, it was not given as it was coming at the expense of husband's freedom and their need for break. This allowed

for the conclusion to be drawn those men were not willing to compromise at all for the well-being of their family and that male well-being is always given more importance than women's well-being. Study shows that individuals with traditional gender-role beliefs, especially men, experience lower conflict between work and family because they maintain separate roles. When their work demands increase, they mobilize resources for their professional identity and consciously deprioritize family well-being (Chen et al., 2022). It was noticed that women are governed by the society's standards of what a good woman, wife, mother and daughter is and that defined her self-worth. It was seen that things that brought women joy are now considered as an inconvenience to their schedule as they no longer had time to balance their hobbies with their responsibilities. In contrast, men could still manage to get time to go on vacation and spend time with friends. Hence, women face more role-conflict than men. It was also seen that women constantly worry about their household responsibilities even when they are at job, underscoring their ability to do one job mindfully. Quantitative research led by Canivet (2010) concluded that women face more exhaustion and job strain than men signaling at more responsibilities on women than men. One participant stated the lack of stamina to be the reason why women leave jobs, hinting at large amount of energy required to balance dual roles. Everything discussed so far brings about change in a woman's identity and the way she perceives herself. The major component discovered under the theme of "Post-Marital Identity Shift" is relational identity. It was seen that post-marriage women defined themselves in relation to their family members. The act of sustaining a marriage significantly enhanced women's societal standing, primarily because marriage is deeply ingrained as a fundamental societal institution, often perceived as a sacred duty and a mark of honor. This perspective was reinforced by the common counsel given to women, urging them to exert all possible efforts to preserve their marital union. The reason behind this elevated social status is a little less glamorous. Family's honor is determined by woman's social behavior (Paulusson, 2013). That is the reason why women are given more importance after they conform to the societal standards of maintaining a marriage. Despite increased social visibility, it was seen that their

broader social identity showed a decline in development. Most women had to maintain distance from their friends because of increased responsibilities or geographical distance due to marriage, something women believed happened naturally. As a result of lost friendships, women relied on their husbands and children as a source of engagement and purpose. Though perceived positively by participant, it raises a concern of social dependence on family. The absence of a support system outside of family, makes it incredibly difficult to ever step out of the system. It also leads to lack of social support at times of familial conflicts. Only in healthy couples was support from outside the family positively associated with marital quality, according to a Chinese study including hemodialysis patients and their spouses (Jiang et al., 2015). Reliance on family support alone did not enhance, and occasionally deteriorate, marital and family functioning in households under stress. Women associating the purpose of their life with their children not only showcase a relational identity but also the lack of purpose otherwise. This can put women under significant strain of perfectionism in the role of motherhood. Quantitative study on parental burn out found that feeling pressured to be a perfect mother was positively related to parental burnout (Meeussen et al., 2018). The same research also stated that the pressure to be a perfect mother might stem from high career ambitions as there is a societal demand on women to prioritize family over work. This was seen true in one participant who received excessive criticism on doing job and sending her children to daycare. As compensation, she spent more time making sure that her children are on an all-organic diet, making it more difficult to manage both her career and children. The women who had taken up a role themselves for example, the role of an employee, attributed the burden of the role to their choice, showing the problems one faces internally when they dissent from their societally appointed role. In other women, pursuing a career was not an option due to their husband's dislike towards women doing job, signaling towards a lack of control over one's own life decisions. This resulted in women going through extreme nostalgic regret and feeling like they had wasted their potential. There was also a sense of hopelessness observed in participants. This relates

to a foreclosed identity being formed due to lack of exploration but commitment to familial identity. Those women, who chose to work before marriage and now were not working out of their own free will, they did not have nostalgic regret present in them. However, this idea adds to Erik Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development as the need of intimacy directly clashes with identity and women chose intimacy over their identity. Women also showed feeling of discontent towards themselves. This discontent hints at the cognitive dissonance inside them regarding their wishes and the expectations placed on them (Festinger, 1957). Some women were more explicit at mentioning the incongruity existing between their desires and expectations. Marriage involves separation from family members, people who you develop attachment too over the course of life. separation from parents and siblings caused loneliness in participation. This loneliness was exacerbated by the death of their parent. This separation triggers the insecure attachment style in women, making it difficult to mentally cope with the loss. Often times, women developed depression after a life-changing event involving loss. Detrixhe (2014) did research which concluded that a positive experience of solitude is only possible when one is securely attached and secure attachment requires the potential for aloneness. So, women generally did not have the potential for aloneness and were reliant on their social relations to provide them support. Women who had spousal support were able to cope with depression and loss better.

The themes of self-harm and depression were common among multiple participants. It stemmed from suppression of emotions, post-partum and/or loss. One participant blamed her environment and in-laws for depression, stating that therapy won't be useful till she changes her environment. This draws at the significance of environment on the mental well-being of individuals. Studies have concluded a correlation between self-harm and environment (Althoff et al., 2011). Multiple coping mechanisms were reported by the participants but religion was the most common one, highlighting the need of grounding at times of crisis. It was seen that women started participating in rituals in order to cope with their life stressors, this allowed them to remember the temporary nature of this world and divert their attention towards afterlife. Religion

can be both a positive coping mechanism where it provides ground, taking you away from the material nature of world demand, or it can be negative, making you avoid situations that needs to be dealt with more assertively. Pargament and Brant (1998) highlights the importance of paying attention to religion as a way of coping, they state that religion can sometimes do more harm than when depending on the situation in which it is employed.

Implications

This research has both practical and theoretical implications. It can be used within the fields of clinical, counselling, developmental, and social psychology. It is also helpful in gender studies and sociology.

- Within clinical psychology, it highlights the mental health impact of post-partum and need of unconditional support in that time period.
- It also builds on the influence of the environment in self-harm behavior and depression. This can be employed as the basis of family system-based practices rather than practicing in vacuum as women perceived therapy in vacuum to be inefficient.
- There is a critical need to work on the internalized fear many women experience in their relationships and to challenge the normalization of negative male behavior. Culturally sensitive psychoeducation can help women recognize unhealthy dynamics and build the confidence to seek support or change.
- Social activist should work alongside mental health practitioners in developing educational programs to promote the equal distribution of household and emotional responsibilities between spouses. These initiatives must particularly engage men in conversations around compromise, emotional labor, and caregiving roles.
- It also highlights the need of equipping women with assertiveness training and communication techniques that enable them to express their emotional needs and set healthy boundaries within marital and familial relationships. This can help mitigate emotional over-reliance on children and promote more equitable partnerships.
- Programs targeting extended family members, particularly in-laws, can foster awareness about the emotional and psychological

adjustments women undergo post-marriage. Encouraging empathy and shared responsibility within the extended family can reduce pressure on women to conform to rigid expectations.

- Mental health professionals and social workers can play an integral role in establishing community-based support groups and safe spaces for women. Such networks provide emotional validation and practical support, reducing overdependence on the immediate family and enhancing women's sense of self beyond their relational roles.
- This research can enhance counseling practices by shedding light on the specific expectations women hold from their husbands, such as providing mediatory support during familial conflicts, demonstrating emotional understanding, supporting their personal goals and aspirations, and sharing the domestic and parental responsibilities equally.
- This research theoretically expands gender studies and feminist theories by providing a nuanced analysis on gender inequality in domestic, parental roles and relationships leading to a loss of self-worth and personal identity.
- This study can add on to the existing models of identity as it explicitly addresses Erikson's "intimacy vs. isolation" stage, revealing how, for these women, societal pressure to acquire intimacy frequently results in identity loss rather than healthy integration. It demonstrates that the choice of "intimacy over identity" is not necessarily a freely chosen developmental path, but can be a forced result of cultural expectations and power dynamics, adding to Marcia's concept of foreclosed identity by illuminating its socio-cultural factors.
- The concept of relational identity, in which women describe themselves largely in terms of family members strongly supports Social Identity Theory. The study expands on this by demonstrating how a new social group takes precedence as the primary source of identity and self-worth, frequently at the expense of pre-marital social identities. Furthermore, the findings expand Self-Perception Theory, demonstrating how external pressures and observed behaviors can fundamentally alter one's self-concept.

3.2 Conclusion

This study critically illuminates the multifaceted challenges faced by married women in Pakistan's

patriarchal society, revealing how marriage profoundly reshapes their social and mental well-being, often at the cost of personal agency and identity. The findings highlight the negative impact of unhealthy in-law dynamics, a pervasive lack of autonomy exacerbated by financial dependence, and rigid gendered role expectations that unfairly burden women with domestic and parental responsibilities while denying them emotional validation and personal pursuits. As a result, women's identities frequently become primarily relational, tied to familial obligations, resulting in a decrease in overall social participation and an increased risk of mental health concerns such as depression and self-harm. While religion emerges as a common coping mechanism, the study ultimately emphasizes the critical need for societal re-evaluation of gender roles, increased spousal support, and systemic changes that empower women to reclaim their self-perception, assert their agency, and foster holistic well-being outside of traditional marital expectations.

REFERENCES

- Abid, M., Bajwa, R. S., & Batool, I. (2016). Impact of Interpersonal Support on Happiness and Life. *Global Journal for Advanced Research*, 3, 826-831.
- Ahmad, K., Farooq, A., & Kiyani, A. K. (2015). Marriage And Family Structures in The Rural Punjab: A Shift from Conservative to Contemporary Patterns. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 35(5), 306-324. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-05-2014-0034>
- Althoff, R. R. Hudziak, J.J. Willemsen, G. Hudziak, V. Bartels, M. Boomsma, D. I. (2012). Genetic and Environmental Contributions to Self-Reported Thoughts of Self-Harm and Suicide.
- Biehle, Susanne, N. Mickelson. Kristin, D. (2012). Provision and receipt of emotional spousal support: *The impact of visibility on well-being. Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 1(3), 244-251.
- Bilal, H. A., Tariq, A. R., & Aleem, U. (2013). The Effect of Nuclear and Joint Family Systems on Academic Achievements of Students. *Research Gate*.
- Blood, R. O., Jr., and Wolfe, D. M. (1960). Husbands and wives: The dynamics of family living. *Free Press Glencoe*.
- Brickell, K., & Chant, S. (2010). 'The Unbearable Heaviness of Being': Reflections on Female Altruism in Cambodia, Philippines, The Gambia and Costa Rica. *Progress in Development Studies*, 10(2) 145-159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14649934090100204>
- Brook, A. T., Garcia, J., & Fleming, M. A. (2008). The Effects of Multiple Identities on Psychological Well-Being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(12), 1588-1600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208324629>
- Pargament, K. I. & Brant, C. R. (1998). 8- Religion and coping. *Handbook of Religion and Mental Health*, Academic Press, 111-128.
- Cantillon, S., & Hutton, M. (2020). Exploring self-sacrifice, role captivity and motherhood. *Thriving Mothers: Depriving Mothers*, 151-166.
- Chen, G., Zhang, J., Hu, Y., & Gao, Y. (2022). Gender role attitudes and work-family conflict: A multiple mediating model including moderated mediation analysis. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1032154>
- Canivet, C., Ostergren, P. O., Lindeberg, S. I., Choi, B., Karasek, R., Moghaddassi, M., & Isacsson, S. O. (2010). Conflict between the work and family domains and exhaustion among vocationally active men and women. *Social science & medicine*, 70(8), 1237-1245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.12.029>
- Chen, Y., & Hu, D. (2021). Gender norms and marriage satisfaction: Evidence from China. *China Economic Review*, 68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2021.101627>
- Cohen, I. S. (2024), The Role of Triangles in Family Dynamics. *Psychology Today*.
- Coltrane, S. (2000). Research on Household Labor: Modeling and Measuring the Social Embeddedness of Routine Family Work. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 1208-1233. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1566732>

- Creary & Gordon, R. (2016). Role Conflict, Role Overload, and Role Strain. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Family Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119085621.wbefs012>
- de Oliveira, A.M., Buchain, P.C., Vizzotto, A.D.B., Elkis, H., Cordeiro, Q. (2013). Psychosocial Impact. *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_919
- DeMaria, R. M., & Harrar, S. (2006). 7 Stages of Marriage: Laughter, Intimacy and Passion Today, Tomorrow, Forever. *Readers Digest*.
- Denmark, F. L., Rabinowitz, V. C., & Sechzer, J. A. (2005). *Engendering Psychology: Women and Gender Revisited (2nd ed.)*. Psychology Press, 8-9.
- Detrixhe, J. J., Samstag, L. W., Penn, L. S., & Wong, P. S. (2014). A Lonely Idea: Solitude's Separation from Psychological Research and Theory. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 50(3), 310-331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2014.897853>
- Doeselaar, L. V., Klimstra, T. A., Denissen, J. J., & Meeus, W. (2019). Distinctiveness as a Marker of Identity Formation. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 78, 153-164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.12.002>
- Doeselaar, L. V., Becht, A. I., Klimstra, T. A., & Meeus, W. H. (2018). A Review and Integration of Three Key Components of Identity Development: Distinctiveness, Coherence, And Continuity. *Tilburg University*, 278-288.
- Dutton, M.A., Goodman, L.A. (2005). Coercion in Intimate Partner Violence: Toward a New Conceptualization. *Sex Roles* 52, 743-756. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-4196-6>
- Eagly, A. H. & Chivala, C. (1986). Sex Differences in Conformity: Status and Gender Role Interpretations. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 10(3).
- Ellemers, N. (2018). Gender Stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 69, 275-298. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011719>
- Erban, E. (2024, October 22). The Carol Gilligan Theory: A Sense of Self. <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/psychologists/carol-gilligan-theory-how-women-develop-their-sense-of-self/>
- Evans, T. M. (2016). The Myth of Self-Sacrifice for the Good[s] of Mankind: Contingency and Women's Work. *Rhetoric Review*, 36(1), 86-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2017.1246020>
- Fatima, K. R. (2022). Experiences, Challenges and Coping Strategies of Never Married Single Women in Pakistan – A Qualitative Analysis. *Foundation University Journal of Psychology* 7(1). 10.33897/fujp.v7i1.425
- Fuller, J. N., Frost, A. M. H., & Burr, B. K. (2015). Exploring The Impact of Religiosity and Socioeconomic Factors on Perceived Ideal Timing of Marriage in Young Adults. *Journal of Student Research*, 4(1).
- G., J. (2016). Foundations of Economic Theory: Money, Markets and Social Power.
- George, T. (2022). Semi-Structured Interview | Definition, Guide & Examples.
- Gopang, N. (2024). Gender Discrimination in Pakistani Society and its Impact on Youth and Women. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 24(1), 138-157. <https://www.socialsciencejournals.pjgs-wws.com/index.php/PJGS/article/view/752/678>
- Gottman, J. M. (1993). A Theory of Marital Dissolution and Stability. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(1), 57-75.
- Hamid, S., Johansson, E. & Rubenson, B. (2009). "Who am I? Where am I?" Experiences of married young women in a slum in Islamabad, Pakistan. *BMC Public Health* 9, 265. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-9-265>
- Harmon-Jones, E. Mills, J. (2019). An introduction to cognitive dissonance theory and an overview of current perspectives on the theory. *American Psychological Association*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000135-001>
- Hochschild, A. R. (1989). *The Second Shift*. Penguin.
- Hopper, E. (2020). What Is Role Strain? Definition and Examples. <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-role-strain-in-sociology-4784018>

- Jacobs, G. (2016). Money, Markets and Social Power. *Cadmus*, 2. 20-42.
- Jenifer, N. Fullera, A. M. (2015). Exploring the Impact of Religiosity and Socioeconomic Factors on Perceived Ideal Timing of Marriage in Young Adults. *Journal of Student Research*, 4(1).
- Jiang, H., Wang, L., Zhang, Q., Liu, D. X., Ding, J., Lei, Z., Lu, Q., & Pan, F. (2015). Family functioning, marital satisfaction and social support in hemodialysis patients and their spouses. *Stress and health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*, 31(2), 166-174. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2541>
- Junior, B. R., & M., W. D. (1960). *Husbands and wives: The Dynamics of Family Living*. American Psychological Association.
- Karimi, R., Bakhtiyari, M., & Arani, A. M. (2019). Protective factors of marital stability in long-term marriage globally: a Systematic Review. *National Library of Medicine*. doi: 10.4178/epih.e2019023.
- Kranic, A. E. (n.d.). Social Role Theory | Definition, Importance & Criticisms.
- Kumar, A. (n.d.). Role Strain | Overview, Definition & Examples.
- Lal, I (2025). Semi-Structured Interviews: Techniques, Examples & Challenges. <https://heymarvin.com/resources/semi-structured-interview/>
- Limbu, L. P., & Shrestha, P. (2022). Nexus Between Women's Identity and Marriage. *Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies*, 5(1), 67-75. <https://doi.org/10.3126/rnjds.v5i1.45956>
- Liu, R. (2024). The Significance of Identity in Psychology: An In-depth Analysis. <https://listen-hard.com/social-and-cultural-psychology/identity-significance-psychology/>
- Lotte, V. D., Becht, I. A., Klimstra, A. T., & Meeus, W. H. J. (2018). A Review and Integration of Three Key Components of Identity Development: Distinctiveness, Coherence, And Continuity. *American Psychological Association*. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000334>
- McLeod, S. (2025). Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development. *Simply Psychology*.
- Meeussen, L. Laar, C. V. (2018), Feeling Pressure to Be a Perfect Mother Relates to Parental Burnout and Career Ambitions. *Front. Psychol*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02113>
- N.d. (2020). Costing Study on Child marriage in Pakistan. UN WOMEN. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Documents/Publications/2021/06/Child%20Marriage%20Costing%20Study%20Report-Pakistan-Final.pdf>
- N.d. (2023). Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey. <https://gallup.com.pk/post/35389>
- N.d. (2024). Nuclear Family and Joint Family. <https://anthroholiic.com/>
- N.d. (2024). The Domestic Division of Labour: Exploring Gender Roles in the Family. <https://easysociology.com/a-level-sociology/families/conjugal-role-relationships/the-domestic-division-of-labour-exploring-gender-roles-in-the-family/>
- N.d. (2024, August 30). Talcott Parsons and the Functionalist Perspective on Families. <https://easysociology.com/a-level-sociology/families/functions-of-the-family/talcott-parsons-and-the-functionalist-perspective-on-families/>
- N.d. (N.d.). Marital Power/Resource Theory. <https://sociology.iresearchnet.com/sociology-of-family/marital-power-resource-theory/#>
- Pace, R. (2024). 10 Ways on How Do Gender Roles Impact Marriage. <https://www.marriage.com/advice/relationship/gender-roles-in-marriage/>
- Pacherie, E. (2007). The Sense of Control and the Sense of Agency. *Psyche*, 13 (1), 1-30.
- Parsons, T. (1955). *Family, socialization and interaction process*. Michigan: Free Press.
- Paulusson, M. (2013). Why honor is worth more than a life: A literature review about 'so called' honor violence. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:bth-3645>
- Payne, L., (2025). "Gender role". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/gender-role>.

- Pirak A, Negarandeh R, Khakbazan Z., (2019). Post-Divorce Regret among Iranian Women: A Qualitative Study. *Int J Community Based Nurs Midwifery*, 7(1), 75-86. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6311202/>
- Reis, H. T., Junior, E. P. L. & Finkenauer, C. (2017). Toward understanding understanding: The importance of feeling understood in relationships. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12308>
- Rezaei, E. (2017). A Review of the Factors Associated with Marital Satisfaction. *ResearchGate*, 197-207.
- Rowland-Serdar, B., & Schwartz -Shea, P. (1991). Empowering Women: Self, Autonomy, and Responsibility. *Western Political Quarterly*, 44(3), 605-624. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299104400307>
- Sajjad, S., & Malik, J. A. (2023). Familism Values Flow in Pakistani Intergenerational Families.
- Santrock, J. (2012). *Life-Span Development (14th ed.)*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Shabbir, Syeda. (2021). The effect of nuclear and joint family systems on academic achievements of students. 543. *Academic Research International*, 4,
- Slariya, M. (2025). Monogamy and Polygamy. <https://buddingsociologist.in/monogamy-and-polygamy/>
- Soulsby, L.K. & Bennett, E. (2015). When Two Become One: Exploring Identity in Marriage and Cohabitation. *Journal of Family Issues*, 1(23).
- Suhariyati, S., Haryanto, J., & Probowati, R. (2020). Trends of Early Marriage in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review. *Jurnal Ners*, 14(3), 277. DOI:10.20473/jn.v14i3.17019
- Tavakol, Z., Moghadam, Z. B., Nasrabadi, A. N., Salehiniya, H. & Rezaei, E. (2017). A Review of the Factors Associated with Marital Satisfaction. *Galen Medical Journal*, 6(3), 641. <https://doi.org/10.31661/gmj.v6i3.641>
- Tuffour, I. (2017). A Critical Overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: A Contemporary Qualitative Research Approach. *J Healthc Commun*, (2)52. doi: 10.4172/2472-1654.100093
- Turner, J. C. & Oakes, P. J. (2011). The significance of the social identity concept for social psychology with reference to individualism, interactionism and social influence. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 25, 237 - 252. 10.1111/j.2044-8309.1986.tb00732.x.
- Willig, C., (2008). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Open University Press.
- Yilmaz, E. (n.d.). Identity: Definition, Types, & Examples. <https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/identity.html#:~:text=Identity%20includes%20a%20person's%20qualities,ethics%2C%20morals%2C%20and%20values.>
- Zaman, S., & Haq, A. u. (2023). Impact of Role Identity Salience between Inter-role Conflict. *Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 30(1). https://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/doap/PDF-FILES/3_V33-1-2023.pd