

## Masculinity Enactment in a Pakistani Culture: Role of Masculine Socialization

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### Abstract

Current study looked into masculine socialization process in order to produce masculinity enactments from men in a Pakistani culture. Specifically gendered messages were focused and a qualitative analysis was done for the situations in which those gender targeting remarks are received. The study utilized individual interviews and focus group discussions as a data collection tool. Both married and unmarried men and women ( $N = 35$ ) participated in the study through convenience sampling procedure. Findings indicated that men are seriously charged on any display of femininity/fragility, debased manliness, dubious sex representation, androgyny, subordination to wife, lack of spousal control, disbanded honor, and lack of independent thinking. Moreover, men are pressed hard to regain liberty that has been taken away from them. Importantly, these findings have highlighted that men were protected for their higher social status through these gendered messages. These messages highlighted that systems are implanted within the culture that keep check on gendered behaviors and serve to bring them back on track when they are off the track from what society has devised for them. In other words it can be said that patriarchy is being fostered through these messages. Generating sensitivity about such messages and their impact may prove to be helpful for masses.

**Keywords:** *Focus group discussions, gendered messages, interviews, masculinity enactment and socialization,, thematic analysis*

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### Introduction and Literature Review

The notions of individualism and collectivism highlight the significance of social relationships in an individual's life which are central to the self. Looking at individualism one can see an independent self, whereas collectivism calls for an interdependent self which is entrenched into the web of social systems and obligations (Gorodnichenko & Roland as cited in Davis & Williamson, 2019). Within individualistic communities the standards that are emphasized include self-expression, creativity, autonomy, and the philosophy of an individual's rights. These are essentially egalitarian and go beyond their gender identities. Consequentially, the norms and values prevailing in an individualistic culture tend to form a scenario where women are equally autonomous individuals who reserve equal rights as of men. When it comes to the collectivistic societies personal goals of women are down played in comparison to social obligations. There are more hierarchies within the collectivistic

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cultures since the line of authority structure enables the coordination of collective behavior (Davis & Williamson, 2019). Alongside these polarities of gender related expectations within the two types of cultures it is generally believed that egalitarian views about sexism and gender equality are gradually taking stride. Even in such modern societies the gap in professions and wages is often tied to sex of the individual. Moreover, still there are prominent differences in expectations owing to one being a male or female (Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). Within South Asia the inequalities based on one's class, ethnicity, religion, and caste are further amplified through gender based discrimination (UNICEF South Asia, n.d.).

Masculinity depictions required by men keep the insecurities up in them as they need to demonstrate masculinity to others and to themselves. Within a patriarchal context, masculinity is highly prized either in men or women but if men get off track from the prescribed masculinity script devised by the culture, they have to bear serious consequences. Oftentimes such portrayals are coupled with instances of humiliation, embarrassment, and degradation specially when done in front of others (Ahmad, 2021).

Keeping in mind the collectivistic environment of Pakistani society the impact of socialization is heavily pronounced. It could be summarized as an enmeshment where primary and secondary socialization fail to be distinct in their position. As not only are the immediate family members (parents, grandparents, and siblings) involved rather, extended family (paternal and maternal relatives), friends, and colleagues also establish a hold on one's behavior. The lack of distinct boundaries can go as far as the neighbor or a passerby reprimanding or providing their two cents on the matter. During this process, men have been encountering different gendered messages that are targeted to make them realize that they were not able to follow the masculine code devised for them in the culture. The focus of current study was on this aspect of socialization. Within a particular culture the behaviors and characteristics tied to men are those which are regarded valuable, considered as a standard, neutral, normal, rewarded, or are required aspect in that culture, thus these are termed as masculine defaults. These include those practices, ideas, norms, artifacts, values, interaction styles, policies and beliefs that are not inherently discriminatory rather paves the way to disfavor women and thus termed as masculine defaults (Cheryan & Markus, 2020).

As always there are going to be varying notions of how manhood is conceptualized in a culture's sphere. Such philosophies are shaped up by host of influences ranging from factors like age, politics, race, culture, geography, religion, history, economic conditions, sexuality and history (Dery et al., 2022; Langa 2020; Smith, 2017). Therefore, exploration of a phenomenon from the particular cultural context is important. Within ecological framework, developmental research endorse that such influences are not only confined to one's closer social system (family, school, or work) rather distant structures like cultural values and media do also have an impact (Solbes-Canales et al., 2020). Verbal communication is of vital significance when it comes to learning through socialization.

The prevailing norms and values of a locality are internalized through the process of socialization. These internalized schemes are utilized to construct expectations of others, to choose companions, and to judge others. According to social learning theory appropriate action tendencies are reproduced by observing and imitating the behavior of those one identify with. By employing the process of vicarious learning these identifications are often done with those who are of same sex and what reactions they get from the environment (Endendijk et al., 2018). Evident forms of environmental influences are gender stereotypes and sexist messages that predominates a culture. Apart from them, role of television and internet does also count in today's world (Döring & Mohseni, 2019).

### **Rationale of the study**

Masculinity studies have started gaining momentum around the globe whether they are social activists, academic scholars, or development practitioners to such an extent that these studies have become trans disciplinary, transcultural, and transnational industry (Dery & Apusigah, 2020). Growing interest in masculinity research has stimulated transnational dialogues, debates, and exchange of ideas among various academic communities (Shefer et al., 2015). These debates have given emphasis to multiple masculinities existing within and across different social, cultural, and historical contexts (Dery et al., 2022).

This inquiry is targeted to focus on those comments that are associated with culturally defined code of masculine behavior. Psychology of gender often addresses the issues pertaining to the oppression of women. Men and women being partners in the whole social system, a change of focus is required that also serves to look at what men are going through in their gendered lives that would eventually serve to work for both of them and the overall society. It is worthwhile to mention that literature on linguistic aspect of socialization has targeted examination of masculine slurs from various perspectives (Kremin, 2017) considering the indigenous scenario the more frequent incidence of gendered messages rather than mere usage of words calls for inquiry of those gendered messages to unfold about the embedded masculine aspects. As understood by the rationale it is vital to gain the necessary grip on the subject at hand. This study will thus enrich the research literature on masculinity enactment with reference to a Pakistani culture emphasizing the socialization process and will also propagate a stronger foundation to bring in a healthy change.

### **Objective of study**

To contextually explore different gendered messages delivered to men in Pakistani culture and look for underlying domains of masculinity.

### **Materials and Methods**

#### **Inquiry Approach**

This study utilized interviews ( $n = 15$ ) and focus group discussions ( $n = 20$ ) to collect data. Participants were asked to mention about gendered statements uttered to men and the associated scenarios that call for utterance of those gendered statements. Participants were made part of the study after taking informed consent and were assured for data confidentiality. Data obtained was audio recorded that was later transcribed and was analyzed likewise. Participant permission was taken before recording any interview or focus group discussion.

Thematic analysis was performed for various gendered messages and the scenarios in which these remarks are given. Thematic analysis is a widely applicable, flexible, and cost effective tool for exploratory studies which tend to look for patterns of meaning (themes) from a script. Themes are thus generated based on shared patterns from the data at hand (Herzog et al., 2019). Similar messages are designated a theme of data and subthemes signifying questionable aspects of masculinity which are derived from the codes explaining situations of use for respective messages.

### **Sample**

This study utilized the convenient sampling approach to recruit the participants. Participants were required to be Pakistani Citizen living in Pakistan. Moreover, they were required to have not lived in another country. Similarly, they were required to be able to talk and understand Urdu language (as all interviews were conducted in Urdu Language). The participants ( $N = 35$ ) included both men ( $n = 15$ ) and women ( $n = 20$ ). Participants belonged to different provinces of the country including Punjab ( $n = 15$ ), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ( $n = 10$ ), Sindh ( $n = 4$ ), Balochistan ( $n = 2$ ), Gilgit-Baltistan ( $n = 3$ ) and Kashmir ( $n = 1$ ).

Participants comprised of both married ( $n = 10$ ) and unmarried ( $n = 25$ ) individuals ranging in age from 21 to 38 years ( $M = 26.71$ ,  $SD = 4.61$  years).

**Findings and Discussion**

Being a lifelong process socialization serves to imprint the reflections of prevailing culture onto the individual’s mind. In doing so the individual is on the way to configure one’s self-concept. After submerging into what is being dictated by others during the earlier course of development, the individual is all set to reconfigure the self-concept on adoption of new roles and joining in new groups later during the development (Dinmohammadi et al., 2013). The primary socialization process though has an enormous impact on the beliefs and values generated at first. Current study aimed to bring forth the various gendered statements men encounter during the process of socialization. The context in which each message is given was qualitatively analyzed to look for the inherent masculinity aspects that are deemed important in a Pakistani culture. These have been presented in connection to the situations in which these messages are used.

**Table 1**  
Subthemes and Codes for Avoid Femininity Theme

Themes	Message Gist	Subthemes	Codes
Avoid Femininity	Wearing Bangles	Lacking proactive action tendencies: Lesser revengefulness /idleness	Not fighting back Not abusing Going for a compromise/Defensive approach Provoking aggressive reactions Turn down provocation for honor killing Spending more time at home Refusing to do outside home tasks
		Depleted competency	Lack of courage/bravery Inability at handling issues Wife is earning Wife is earning more Not earning Care taking of children
	Behaving in a Feminine way	Display of emotionality Waste of energy/time	Crying on petty issue Indulging in arguments

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	<p>Girlish behavior</p> <p>Incompetency</p> <p>Lacking proactive action tendencies</p> <p>Favoring women</p>	<p>Watching cooking shows</p> <p>Engaging in skin care</p> <p>Feminine clothing/Cross dressing</p> <p>Indecision</p> <p>Inapt explanatory power</p> <p>Sitting pointlessly</p> <p>Spending time on sleep/rest</p> <p>Withdrawing socialization</p> <p>Not fighting</p> <p>Lending support to women</p>
	<p>Sit with women inside home</p> <p>Depleted aggression</p>	<p>Not being revengeful in fights</p> <p>Not being revengeful of abuse</p>
	<p>Being faint-hearted</p> <p>Lacking proactive action tendencies</p>	<p>Staying away from physical fights</p> <p>Not fighting from the front</p> <p>Not being revengeful</p> <p>Avoiding Police/Court cases</p>

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**Avoid Femininity.** Fragility display was associated with statements “like *Kiya tum ny churian phn rakhi hain*” [Are you wearing bangles], “*Tum churiyan phn lo*” [You may wear bangles], “*Men ne konsa choriyan phen rakhi hn*” [As if I have worn bangles]. In literal sense, this satirical statement points to exhibiting a feminine behavior by specifying wearing bangles (Sarwar, 2020). However in an implied sense, this betokens being cowardly, weak, and impotent (Das, 2003). It is also popularly used when men are seen to lack courage/bravery in any manner. A married man mentioned about a situation in which a man is said “*You have not beaten up, you have not abused in return of abuse, are you wearing bangles?*” Similarly, when a man decides to go for a compromise, go on back foot in case of clash, or does not contest in fight. Use of this statement is not limited to individual level scenarios rather it is also used on incidence of country level adoption of a politically defensive approach. An unmarried man mentioned that “*At political level, especially men*

*politicians have to listen that another country invaded your country and you did not retaliate back so were you people wearing bangles?"*

The provocation for fighting is done through this statement. A married man exemplified as *"Yes come forward and touch me, have I worn bangles."* If there is an observed lack of honor or disregard of societal provocation about honor killing like in a situation where sisters choose love marriage, such statements comes into play. Moreover, femininity display is also associated to idleness like if a boy is asked to stay at home or refuses to do some assigned task like buying some grocery items. Similarly, if a man is unable to take stand for his position connotes weakness in terms of handling issues. A married woman explained that *"It is the woman who can be helpless; a man cannot be because man can do everything."*

Furthermore, threatened competency marks for use of this statement when wife is earning, especially when she is earning more. A married man said that *"It is even worse if man is not earning and taking care of children,"* as child care does not suit men. It is also a threat when a woman is self-sufficient and is not dependent on man, so men are accused for not being able to serve her or fulfill her needs.

Another group of statements serve to build connection with feminine behaviors. These include *"App tu larki ho"* [You are a girl] or *"Larkiyun ki tarhan kiyun behave kr rhy ho?"* [Why are you behaving like girls?]. Since anti-femininity is an integral part of masculinity so a number of statements (see table 1) have been uttered symbolizing this aspect. Another message referring to femininity in men's behavior is given on overemotional responses which are counted here. An unmarried man mentioned that *"If a boy cries on petty issues like getting 99 marks out of 100 then he is associated with girls."* On crying men are not asked 'why are you crying like a girl' rather they also say that 'you are crying being a man!' Therefore, emotional display of crying is also seriously charged. Again, vulnerability is something associated with feminine gender (Gilson, 2016).

When men indulge in arguments, they are thought to have womanlike verbal self-presentation 'Why are you arguing like a woman?'. This is so because men are thought to talk less, talk to the point, and are preferred to talk precisely rather than spending limitless time on trivial things or if lacks explanatory power. Then if a man is sitting idly he is asked 'why you are sitting like a girl?' followed by 'Come on have fun.' Likewise, this remark is also associated with men spending time on rest or sleep. Again staying isolated or engaging in purposeless stuff is least expected from men. Even watching cooking shows has been seen as a feminine interest and men are disregarded for that. An unmarried woman said that *"Men who watch cooking shows are said 'What! You are watching feminine cooking programs?"*

Investing on physical self-care like start avoiding sun light to preserve the skin tone or being sensitive about skin in any way, serves to suspect a man of femininity. Feminine clothing also invites social such remarks. Moreover, a man who lends support to women close in family is alleged to be like a woman. Similarly, this message is also casted off when a man is not able to take decision, since indecisiveness is often associated with women (Rassin, & Muris, 2005).

In context of nonexistent revengeful impulses men are asked *"Tum Apny Ghar k Andr Apni Aurtun k Saath Beth jao"* [You may go and sit with your women] especially in response to abusive language. As action tendencies are expected of men and if they do not react on being threatened, sternness flowing from gendered messages is enlarged. An unmarried man mentioned that *"If someone abused me and I did not reply back in a befitting manner then it will be a kind of abuse for me."*

As with other statements, BuzDil ho? [Are you faint-hearted?] implies cowardice among men when a man stays away from fight or lacks self-defense tactics. According to a married man, men are often said that “*Why are you lagging behind like girls/women, come and talk from the front.*” This indicates that having a face to face confrontation is something considered manly in nature. Just in the same manner, when a man wants to stay away from police/court matters this statement is said. In this sense a married man mentioned that “*When educated men refuse to engage in police/court matters men are accused that they don’t have heart to face it and are further accused that whether its duty of women (mother, sisters, wife, daughter) to face all such scenarios?*” Thus, taking up issues related to police and court and proactive participation in them counts for being a man.

**Table 2**  
Subthemes and Codes for Reinstate Manliness Theme

Theme	Message Gist	Subthemes	Codes
Reinstate Manliness	Be a man	Provoking for undesirable acts	Arouse aggressive action tendencies
			To kill in the name of honor
		As reconfiguring advice	Boosting up for criminal acts (theft, robbery, & rape)
			To give divorce
			Women are to be controlled/abused
Expressing emotionality	Threaten opponent		
	Facing failure		
Feminine behavior	To gain strength		
	Keeping track of aggressive amplifications		
	Crying on death		
Charging regard	Crying with pain		
	Cross dressing		
	Use of feminine accessories		
	Feminine demeanor/gait		
Charging regard	Taking care of wife		
	Helping wife		
	Listening to wife		
	Affection towards		

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	wife/children
Favoring women	Supporting women (sisters/cousins)
Depleted competency	Unsuccessful Being unemployed Relying on women for finances
Lost strength	Unable to face crowd Getting overwhelmed of confronted problems Disobedience of children Wife taking lead in argument Loss of courage Feeling being broken up Feeling of hopeless/helpless Getting fearful
Lacking proactive action tendencies	Not speaking up before police Staying at home Sitting idly Surrendering Receding back in fight Not being revengeful of murder

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**Reinstate Manliness.** Masculinity of men is directly targeted through statements like “Mard bano mard” [Be a man], “Mard ban k raho” [Stay like a Man], “Mard k bachy bano” [Be a man’s offspring] or Ye tu mard ka bacha nhi hai [He is not a man’s offspring]. These are few variations of ‘Be a Man’ which is a popular message in many cultures. This at times is used for teasing, sometimes as trigger to arouse negative reaction and also as a bucking up statement to gain strength. A married woman mentioned that “*This is said when a man gets broken up and feels helpless.*”

Pointing to the emotional displays, its usage is there when a man get carried away by a situation and tend to display oversensitivity or get overemotional. For instance, if a man is crying due to physical or emotional pain they are prompted again and again by saying that “Mard ko dard nhi hota” [Man does not get hurt] that are uttered to abstain them from agonizing about pain. Staying immensely strong is demanded up to a level that one is able to



withstand grief associated with death of loved one with any display of emotions. An unmarried man said *“God forbid if a family member dies and a man is crying then he is said men do not cry, be a man, you need to support family members, and you yourself is crying.”* Thus, withholding display of weak emotions is tied to being manly and performance of masculine roles and responsibilities. Likewise, similar kind of firmness is advocated when a man is getting depressed with reference to being confronted by problems or share being fearful. Aggressiveness is an important associated feature of masculinity display, but when it gets amplified to an uncontrollable extent, men are recommended to stay calm by using ‘Be a Man’ variants. This is done to reserve their standing as being reasonable in their actions.

Corrections are imposed through this statement on femininity displays of cross dressing, use of feminine accessories, even if a man talks or walks in a feminine demeanor. Also, in the context of marital relationship if a man is helpful towards wife and display caring gestures towards his wife that actually serves to strengthen their bond (Baxter & Braithewaite, 2008), but they are reprimanded by others. An unmarried woman mentioned that *“When a husband takes care of his wife during pregnancy and do some chores for her, he is accused by family members that she is not the only one going through this so do not spoil her.”* Social comparison based remarks are thus given to break the persistence of kind behavior directed at wife. This accusation occurs even on attending to what wife says. A married man very well explained in view of superiority of men that *“Since authority is thought to be with man so man is expected to be in commanding role.”* A statement more common in KPK and Baluchistan says *“Mard k Bachy Bano”* [Be a man’s offspring] where affection towards wife and children is pointed out. Public display of affection is not acceptable particularly in remote setups where conservative ideologies are prevalent.

Similarly, a man lending support to woman from the family who is caught doing questionable acts is provoked to take action and even kill her in the name of honor. Besides this, it is also used to boost negative behaviors like doing theft, robbery, rape, or even giving divorce. A married woman mentioned that often times those in a man’s social circle pressurize and coerce men by using this statement *“Have the courage and divorce her.”* Such statements are even utilized to destabilize men’s relationships by the virtue of created social pressure.

In the context of competency, a general expectation is there that a man cannot fail and if one unfortunately fails then he is not a man. In case of unemployment he is reminded that a man must be the bread earner and cannot continue without a source of income. Within a Pakistani context role of an earner is loaded on man to such an extent that men seeking financial input from the wife have to face severe reprimand. With respect to social competency this assertion is done when a man is not able to face the crowd, not going outside home, sitting idly, surrendering in to avoid pressure situation, or getting confused in face of pressure situations, being provoked to reveal truth before police and the like. These scenarios calls for behaving smartly in social interactions and staying composed in face of pressure.

It is also utilized to get away from lost strength such as, if a man starts feeling low, starts losing courage or gets hopeless or helpless like when not getting a job or facing disobedience of children, he is clued to watch out for the situation at hand with a big heart. More often it is associated with scenarios where women are not in control or they take charge in some arguments. Others around convey that a man’s control is threatened and his ego is hurt.

By virtue of inherent strength men are supposed to fight, so if one retreats in a fight he is provoked to fight back and take his right. Particularly deadly scenario emerges, when men

are seen to avoid revengeful behavior in reply of murder and manslaughter. On a less toxic level this statement is also uttered to threaten the opponent. Thus, it can be said that such a statement is a reaction due to the lack of aggressiveness in men.

**Table 3**  
Subthemes and Codes for Dubious Sex Presentation Theme

Themes	Message Gist	Subthemes	Codes
Dubious sex presentation	Inapt sex presentation	Feminine behavior	Talking in feminine manner Being faint hearted
		Depleted sexuality	No romantic affair No children after marriage
	Non-masculine	Display of emotionality Depleted sexuality	Crying publically Open to share feelings Unable to reproduce

**Dubious sex representation.** Uncertainty about one’s sex is displayed by designating a man a Hijra [Intersex] or saying to him “Khusray tu nhi ho” [Aren’t you an intersex?]. A man is suspected of being an intersex when behavior is feminine in any way. If a man talks like a girl or behaves being faint hearted he is often described as an intersex. An unmarried man said that “*If a boy displays girlish behavior, then other boys would be teasing him that he is transgender.*” Moreover, in the context of sexuality if a man is not able to have any romantic affair or is not able to have children after marriage this word is used to refer to his sexual impotency. This means staying active in sexuality domain by having romantic relationships or by having children is tied to a masculine notion.

Open display of emotionality by crying publically or when openly sharing inner thoughts and feelings invites ridicule in the form “Ye tu mard hi nhi hai” [He is not a man] which marks him an out group person from the more masculine ones. Also if a man’s family is not growing, he is not considered a man. This occurs because family propagation is expected from men and a family clan runs in the name of a man. If he is unable to grow or to have children then he is accused of being non-masculine. In such a scenario even serious repercussions are there because he is regarded out of the manly circle by designating him Namard [Non-masculine]. Sexual impotency is very highly charged when a person’s masculinity is evaluated. Facing public humiliation is a commonplace thing for men depleted in sexuality (Adinkrah, 2012).

**Table 4**  
Subthemes and Codes for Regain Lost Superiority Theme

Themes	Message Gist	Subthemes	Codes
Regain Lost Superiority	Subordinating Wife	Charging regard	Spending time with wife Helping wife Taking care of wife Affection towards wife Spending on wife or

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		in laws
		Visiting in laws
		Holding wife's purse in market
		Holding a kid during shopping
		Opening car's door for wife
		Listening to wife
		Favoring wife
		Crying for wife
	Inhibited socialization	Breaking up with friends
	Inapt concerns	Discloser of bad habits before wife
	Lacking proactive action tendencies	Staying away from physical fights
		Not coming to forefront
		Not acting as authority figure
	Less concern for siblings	Beating up siblings

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Lacking control on wife	Losing authority	Wife exercising her will
		Wife displaying anger
		Divorce scenario

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**Regain lost superiority.** An inferior status of a man is portrayed through statements like “Joro ka Ghulam” [A wife’s subservient/Hen-pecked husband] or “Zan Mureed” [Wife’s disciple]. They signify the subordinate role of a man on the incidence of spending quality time with his wife, helping her, lending care, being affectionate with her, spending on her or her family, even on visiting in laws. A married man mentioned “*Joro ka Ghulam is said when a man holds her purse in market, hold a kid while shopping, opens car door for her, buy something for her, visit in-laws, or spends on in-laws.*” Thus, this depicts that adoption of changing gender roles, where such practices are commonplace, cannot be adopted easily as they invite public reactions pointing to depleted masculinity.

There is also an associated cultural dilemma with reference to spousal relationship that a son in law is good if he is caring for one’s daughter but a son is not good if he is taking care of his wife (one’s daughter in law). Strong reactions also come when a man tends to listen to her wife’s point of view or giving importance to her choices like when ordering food. An unmarried man reported that “*When a wife is dictating a man that you have to do this, then we often call such people a wife’s subservient*”. It is more astonishing that such patterns prevail in educated segments too. More extremely reprimanded situations include

favoring wife in any manner or crying for wife. Overall, the connotation is that a man who is being enslaved in spousal relationship is disregarded because men are supposed to keep an upper hand.

Moreover, when a man cuts off from friends, his inhibited socialization is associated to wife’s subservience, for being unavailable as he does not join them for different outdoor activities. Also, friends tease through this message for revealing about any bad habits. Any display of resistance to fight is charged though it is opted strategically to avoid amplifications. Likewise, this is also utilized when a man is not able to act out as an authority figure or when he beats up siblings implying that one has got so much involved in wife that siblings are devalued in front of her.

Exercising control on wife is integral part of Pakistani culture so deficits in this domain invites statements like “Falanay banday kolon zanani nahi sambhali gae” [That person could not control his wife] “Tum sy aik biwi nhi sambhali jaati” [You are unable to control a wife]. These statements are used when women associated to a man get out of control in any manner like acting on her will without regard to husband. An unmarried man said that “*When a wife gets out of control then a man is said Oh! you are unable to control a wife.*” Similarly, a man’s capability of controlling a wife is questioned in divorce scenarios that how come situation reached till divorce, a man should have guts to keep wife in control.

**Table 5**  
Subthemes and Codes for Display Honor Theme

Themes	Message Gist	Subthemes	Codes
Display honor	Disbanded honor	Lack of control	Aggressive flare-ups on wife/women Wife/Women exercising their will
		Lacking proactive action tendencies	Unable to defend oneself
		Lack of concern for family’s social standing	Refusing a cousin’s proposal Favoring a status wise mismatch proposal for women of family

**Display honor.** Honor related satire is done using the statements “Kiya tum me ghairat nhi hai” [Don’t you have regard for honor] “Ghairat kro” [Show honor]. Such statements are used in scenarios of honor and respect when aggressive outbursts are lashed on wife or women, then men are communicated to conserve male dignity. Then, when a man does not defend oneself on requirement, he is provoked to display some honor and fight back. Also, when wife or women of family are following their own will and does not acquire permission from male authority figure men are said to exercise some control. Keeping women under one’s control is a masculinity requirement. Surprisingly, it is also said when a man refuses a cousin’s proposal. A married man elaborated that “*Such a man is accused as he is not concerned about family honor which will go out of the family because of this refusal.*” Also it is said to a man for supporting a status wise mismatch proposal for his sister

or cousin. These examples again ponder attention towards the notion that a man’s honor is associated with women in family (Babur, 2007).

**Table 6**  
Subthemes and Codes for Surge for Independence Theme

Themes	Message Gist	Subthemes	Codes
Surge for Independence	Mama’s boy	Depleted competency	No self-reliance

**Surge for independence.** Connotations of deficits in independent thinking come through statements like “Maa k palu sy bandha hua” [He is mama’s boy]. Mental toughness has been explained as an important quality of men so when they rely on interpretation inoculated by others they are accused. This statement is used when a man listens to his mother only and does not make use of his own thinking power.

**Table 7**  
Subthemes and Codes for Avail Male Privilege Theme

Themes	Message Gist	Subthemes	Codes
Avail Male Privilege	Sex based liberty	Routine affairs	To go for trip To go out To stay out late night
		Sexuality	Romantic affairs Remarriage Extramarital relationships
		Criminality	Murder Rape

**Avail Male Privilege.** Ultimate remarks like “Mard kuch bhi kr skta hai” [Man can do anything] are used to express the lack of restrain on men that warrants them to do whatever they want. In this connection men have the liberty to go for recreational outings/trips, they can stay out late at night without any inquiry, they can have romantic affair/s, they can remarry, they are allowed to have extramarital relationships, and they are also allowed to have relationship with prostitutes or sex workers. A married man explained that “*In such scenarios questions are raised by wife’s parents only.*” It means that a man’s own circle accepts it, but in rare cases wife’s family can launch some inquiry. Again it implies that exercising control is something done with women and men are free from being regulated since they themselves are designated for governing duties.

This freedom is given to such an extent that a unperturbed stance is there with reference to criminal behavior where men are defended through statement like “Mardun ki gameez py koi dhabba nhi hota” [A man’s shirt is free from any stain]. It is very common in Pakistani society that a woman who has been charged with questionable act gets a stain on her dress. But for a man even a murder or a rape keeps him clean. Such discriminated repercussions of similar acts points to the liberation given to men owing to their superior status that character checks are stronger for women and very lenient for men.

It is evident from the study that on their incidence the various messages delivered to men serve to threaten man's self-concept (Ahmad, 2021) since most of them are articulated sarcastically. It is also clear that the experience created by these remarks serves to create great deal of pressure even if one agrees with them personally or not. In other words, men are forced to act out in ways that are dictated by the culture. Such occurrences can be explained through gender role strain paradigm which says that men tend to experience strain in view of the prevailing gender roles in society. This paradigm elaborates for three kinds of strains that can be seen associated with these messages as well. For instance, when a man is unable to enact the prescribed masculine role, he is going through discrepancy strain at personal level which gets enhanced through these gendered messages. Secondly, the socialization process serves to put men under trauma strain when they are in process of receiving these messages. Likewise, when men are expected to follow the masculine code of conduct they tend to experience dysfunction strain, like they are expected to restrict emotions because of which they have to face issues in relationships (Pleck, 1995). The study also indicated that the gender based statements are markedly associated with behavioral depictions and non-depictions. On depiction side men tend to receive these derogatory remarks when they serve their wives (or her family), show emotionality, exhibit femininity, favor women, and express tenderness. On non-depiction side incidence of humiliation occur when they tend to fall short in aggression, sexuality, control, self-reliance, respect and honor, competency, socialization, and proactive action tendencies. Moreover, some of the statements also catered for either provoking or concealing wrongdoings performed by men. All the different aspects of masculinity portray the picture of male domination in both public and private spheres of life (Sultana, 2012), that is, the true flavor of patriarchy that has surfaced through stated messages.

Any kind of weakness that serves to derail the power associated with men serves to bring in reprimand. In other words, social feedback comes to protect their higher status so that anything invaluable to retain a higher position, gets corrected straightaway. Being emotionally sensitive in terms of crying (on trivial matters, in pain, on death of loved ones) or being more open about sharing one's feelings gets targeted. It is because restrictive emotionality is a popular traditional masculine ideology according to which men are expected to limit their emotional response (Darabos & Hoyt, 2017; O'Neil et al., 1986). A study has indicated that this very pressure of not being allowed to ooze out emotions was lowered when men joined other drug abusing companions and felt a sense of belongingness in their company (Daley, 2016). A distinctive finding point to the social influence created on men who are not allowed to invest in their relationships especially in case of spousal relationship where checks are well in place. Men are not allowed to take care of wife, listen to them, favor them, help them in any manner or financially invest on them. Then withholding tenderness within themselves is also expected of men. Western cultures put sanctions on display of affection towards men (O'Neil et al., 1986). However, the conservativeness prevailing in a Pakistani culture does not enable them to open up in even spousal relationship, since public display of affection is not tolerated at all (Gaur, 2020; Romano, 2017). Patriarchy calls for subordination by women so when men themselves tend to get subordinated in any way reactions come from the social world. More, startling is the finding that openly displaying love for children even in some remote cultures like KPK and Baluchistan is not appreciated. Though ease of expressing affection and overall the free flow of emotions is well celebrated in an intergenerational context (Richardson, 2015).

Pakistan is among those countries that attach great deal of importance to the concept of honor which is thought about in terms of precedence, reputation, and status. In other words, the virtues of power and strength of a man serves to protect family and possessions

through the control exercised on others and the commanding differential character offered to men (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). The social, political, economic, and religious structures and processes serve to feed this supremacy of men (Tabassum, 2016). In order to maintain such reputation men therefore requires to exhibit control on others, be aggressive, able to defend oneself, being self-sufficient, be competent in all respects particularly socialization, be sexually potent, and is able to conserve one's respect and status. It is important to highlight that sexuality has greatest associated premium since the message tied to sexual deficits designates a man, 'non-masculine' all the way. This is how masculine ideologies serves to reflect the prevailing patriarchy since men in a traditional patriarchal society have been thought to hold more power and thus are more privileged when it comes to the ideologies that shape up gender.

In addition to commenting on what's lacking in men's behavior, some observed messages also served to protect male prestige by propagating about men's superior status and in process guarding them against the reprimand that may come in view of malpractices done by men. Literature on slurs also registers for non-derogatory use of slurs (Croom as cited in Saucier et al., 2015). Again the purpose is to encourage men that their higher social status allows them to get away from punishing consequences of malpractices.

These finding endorse that the society's social structures and hierarchies grant some men (and women) cultural and political authority, while subordinating and marginalizing a host of others (Gopinath & Sundar, 2020). This authority can therefore thought to be linked with enactment on masculinity script within a society. The findings also tend to highlight about social pressure created by gendered messages to enact on culturally devised script for masculinity. Moreover, they tend to hinder adoption of equality based gender roles. Though many of the ideologies embedded in these culturally anchored gendered statements can be seen as well placed checks on masculinity enactment. At occasions, it was observed that masculinity script popped up by the popular culture requires a very calculated enactment. A particular behavioral pattern which is not appropriate in one scenario but it becomes a desired one in another scenario. Men are required to be aggressive and exercise their powers on others especially on women (Tabassum, 2016), which is the very reason that they are unable to perform well into their relationships that require tenderness from them. Or for that matter, during the aggressive outbursts they are also supposed to be mindful of its extent so that men are able to contain their prestige and status as well. Such contradictory notions pose a perplexed scenario which requires fine tuning of one's gendered performances.

### **Conclusion**

This study has come out with evidence that prevailing gender role socialization pattern particularly those pertaining to gendered messages offer great deal of strain to the men encountering these messages. Moreover, such socialization patterns serve to feed in the patriarchy prevailing within the society and thus increase in gender polarization. This triggered inequality serves to be the very reason of prevalence of much of the suffering set forth by gender of an individual.

### **Limitations and Future Recommendations**

All of the interviews were conducted by the researcher; female gender of researcher may impede open sharing of information by male respondents. Future studies are therefore recommended to conduct same gender interviews so as to break any kind of gender based communication barrier.

This study did not cater for psychological impact that gendered messages would entail. Future researchers are therefore suggested to look at the gendered messages by revealing about their impact on one's psyche.

### Implications of the study

Embedded in prevalent masculinity ideologies, social pressure exerted by the community tends to ensure masculinity enactment among men. Glimpses of powerful gendered messages highlight about pattern of existing masculinity ideals. Moreover, they have brought to the surface various areas of masculinity enactment that are permissible for men and those that are prohibited. This research would serve as impetus to conduct further research to unfold about masculinity standards men are expected to follow in Pakistan. Advocacy on grounds of gendered messages may make practitioners realize about the trauma strain men go through in their masculine lives.

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