

Gender Stereotypes and Self-efficacy as Determinants of Young Men's Attitudes toward Working WomenFaiz Younas^{a*}, Maria Nawaz^a, Shazia Qayyum^a^a Institute of Applied Psychology, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.**Abstract**

In the current study, the aim was to examine the relationships among gender stereotypes, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward working women among young adult men. For this correlational study, convenience sampling was used to recruit 200 men aged 18 to 35 years ($M = 21.27$, $SD = 2.09$) from public-sector universities. First, informed consent was obtained from the participants. Second, they were asked to complete a sociodemographic sheet. Finally, the Gender Role Beliefs Scale (Kerr & Holden, 1996), the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 2010), and the Multidimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale (Valentine, 2001) were administered. Results revealed that stronger gender stereotypes were associated with more traditional attitudes toward working women, and self-efficacy was negatively related to gender stereotypes and attitudes towards working women. Additionally, gender stereotypes significantly predicted attitudes toward working women. Self-efficacy mediated the relationship between gender stereotypes and attitudes towards working women. Finally, no demographic differences emerged except that the participants in nuclear families reported stronger gender-stereotypical beliefs. The findings stress the need to keenly counter gender bias by gender-sensitization trainings and advancing gender-equitable policies, particularly in workplaces where women remain underrepresented.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Gender Stereotypes, Working Women, Mediation, Gender Roles**Correspondence:** Faiz Younas (Lecturer)

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1. Introduction

Gender stereotypes influence how society evaluates women, their competence, and professional potential. Gender stereotypes guide the expectations and evaluations of individuals in the workplace for both men and women (Eagly and Karau, 2002). This results not only in the reduction of self-efficacy in working women, but also in men. Although gender stereotypes are related to domain-specific self-efficacy, they can also result in a reduction in general self-efficacy. This study examined the relationship between gender stereotypes and attitudes of young adult men toward working women, as well as the role of self-efficacy in this relationship. Understanding these mechanisms is essential for efforts to reduce gender bias in the workplace (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Gender stereotypes have been defined as the cognitive expectations that individuals hold about how men and women should think, behave, and occupy social, occupational, and family roles in society. According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, individuals form attitudes by observing others' behaviors. Therefore, gender stereotypes act as filters through which young men interpret the abilities of women. Previous work has revealed that attitudes are not only shaped by direct experiences but also by broader cultural narratives and expectations as well (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Contemporary research has classified gender stereotypes as prescriptive and descriptive norms that influence the acceptable behaviors for each gender in a society (Mushtaq & de Visser, 2023). Perceiving gender as a binary construct, either feminine or masculine, can limit the recognition of gender diversity (Jones, 2022). Eagly et al. (2020) proposed two dimensions of gender, which were communion and agency. Communion encompasses warmth, empathy, and nurturing, typically associated with femininity, and agency involves assertiveness, ambition, and independence, typically associated with masculinity and men.

Research has shown that in Pakistan, although the traditional gender roles are in decline, they still exist (Zahra, 2022). Furthermore, strong gender stereotypes have been associated with changes in perception, self-evaluations, behaviour, attention, and memory (Ruble et al., 2006). Additionally, they can also shape how individuals interpret themselves and others.

Cookley et al. (2015) reported that by adhering to the traditional gender roles, women are more prone to experience impostor syndrome as compared to men, which is typified by the conviction that one is undeserving of success and the fear of being exposed as a fraud. Similarly, men, on the other hand, could feel forced to uphold standards of emotional restraint and toughness, which might be harmful to their mental health and willingness to seek help (Burns & Syzdek, 2007).

Also, gender stereotypes can contribute to discrimination and inequality based on gender, which may restrict women's ability to grow in their careers, be represented in leadership roles, and have access to greater economic opportunities (Ellemers, 2018). Stereotypes such as that women are less competent for leadership jobs have been shown to contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions (Heilman, 2012). Hence, those individuals who internalize social norms related to gender roles and fail to live up to expectations experience compromised self-esteem, self-efficacy, with increased stress and anxiety (Wood, 2012).

Self-efficacy refers to individuals' belief that they can carry out tasks and achieve desired goals in particular domains (Elliott & Dweck, 2005). Self-esteem has been shown to impact the motivation, perseverance, and performance of individuals. Therefore, this concept is essential to psychology, education, and organizational behavior research. Self-efficacy consists of the three elements or dimensions: task-specific

competence, social competence, and overall self-worth (Bandura, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 2000). These dimensions of self-efficacy fluctuate on the basis of an individual's subjective experiences, social comparisons, and feedback from the environment (Bandura, 1997).

Another related construct to gender stereotypes is the attitudes towards working women. It refers to the individual's opinions and beliefs about the participation of women in the workforce. For instance, support for gender equality or stereotypes that can result in women's restriction of advancement in the workplace. Research has shown that social structures and expectations in a society can shape women's work experiences, and that gender stereotypes can lead to negative attitudes towards working women (de Beauvoir, 1949; Sandberg, 2013). Furthermore, various intertwined human, cultural, and socio-economic factors can influence an individual's attitudes towards working women. Traditional expectations assign men to paid work and women to domestic roles, leading some men to view working women as violating social standards (Eagly & Wood, 2020). Although studies show decreased self-efficacy among women due to traditional gender roles, its impact on men is underrepresented and underreported.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The relationship between the study variables can be explained through social role and social cognitive theory. From the perspective of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), people's traditional gender beliefs reflect internalised societal norms about what men and women should do. Individuals who strongly endorse these beliefs have been shown to perceive the world and themselves through restrictive gendered lenses, which can limit their confidence in their ability to cope with diverse and nontraditional situations (Moraga-Pumarino et al., 2025). Additionally, traditional beliefs have been shown to create task-specific self-efficacy; however, a reduced perceived competence overall (Anjum et al., 2021).

Similarly, traditional gender beliefs create expectations that assign men to do paid work and women to carry out domestic responsibilities, which can cause some men to view working women as violating the social standards (Eagly & Wood, 2012). It can directly influence the attitudes of men towards working women. Furthermore, according to some studies, self-efficacy has been shown to influence openness to social change and progressive attitudes. In other words, people with higher confidence may feel less threatened by nontraditional gender roles (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

These findings can also be viewed through the lens of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). This theory can be interpreted as the people with higher self-efficacy are more likely to accept flexible, progressive norms because they believe they are capable of handling difficulties and departures from traditional expectations. On the other hand, individuals with lower self-efficacy may be more conservative and less supportive of women pursuing careers outside of the home.

Various researchers have provided a reasonable ground for the relationship between gender stereotypes, self-efficacy, and attitudes towards working women. For instance, a study by Heilman et al. (2024) and Ellemers (2018) has shown that gender norms assign agentic, competence-related expectations to men and have consequences when they are not followed. Additionally, developmental and socialization studies (Olsson & Martiny, 2018; Solbes-Canales et al., 2020; Piatak-Jimenez et al., 2018) have demonstrated that these role-prescriptions are internalized early, creating long-lasting templates for what men should be competent at and how they evaluate competence in social and occupational contexts. Empirical work on the evaluation of competence

(Bian et al., 2018; Moscatelli et al., 2020; González et al., 2019) and some organizational reviews (McKinnon & O'Connell, 2020; Alqahtani, 2020; Fassiotta et al., 2018) have further indicated that competence judgments and evaluative standards are gender-marked. It can influence the ways that men perceive themselves and others standing in the workplace, contingent on maintaining traditional role boundaries.

These patterns make it theoretically plausible that stronger endorsement of traditional gender beliefs will structure men's global sense of efficacy. Either making their self-efficacy conditional on role or provoking threats to self-competence when roles shift, and that this altered self-evaluation will shape attitudes toward working women. Studies have linked benevolent sexism and status protection to candidate preferences (Cassidy & Krendl, 2019), explored cultural reinforcement of male authority roles in South Asia (Fazal, 2023; Mirza & Jabeen, 2020; Tahir et al., 2021; Islam & Asadullah, 2023), and conducted experiments showing early-emerging stereotypes about brilliance and fit (Bian et al., 2018). All of these studies have supported that traditional beliefs create a competence-based identity frame for men, which influences how men appraise and react to women's presence in paid roles. In short, the literature provides converging theoretical and empirical support for treating men's perceived competence (self-efficacy) as a psychologically meaningful pathway that reveals the link between their gender-role beliefs and their attitudes toward working women.

Recent Pakistani research has also provided a strong contextual basis for our proposed model linking traditional gender beliefs, men's general self-efficacy, and their attitudes toward working women. Studies such as Aziz and Kamal (2015) have shown that men often internalize gender-prescribed competence beliefs, with traditional role attitudes aligning closely with domain-specific self-efficacy. Naveed and Husnain (2025) and Ali et al. (2011) have revealed in their broader sociocultural analyses that Pakistani men experience a continuous pressure to conform to the identity of breadwinner or an authority figure. A man's sense of competence or self-efficacy is, therefore, intertwined with how well one conforms to these expected gender roles. Additionally, studies from Lahore and Karachi (e.g., Tabasum et al., 2021) have further demonstrated that gender role expectations shape beliefs related to the self. Societal narratives position men as dominant decision-makers and women as secondary earners. These narratives can make an individual's self-efficacy contingent upon how well one conforms. These findings highlight that cultural norms in Pakistan have raised men's negative opinions about women in the workplace and may have anchored their self-efficacy in the expected gender roles.

To understand the social and psychological factors that influence women's career advancement, it is important to understand the relationship among gender stereotypes, the self-efficacy of men, and their attitudes toward working women. Traditional gender roles have reinforced workplace discrimination and restricted occupational participation of women in Pakistan. Gender related beliefs in a society can shape men's self-efficacy as well as influence their attitudes toward working women. Although existing research on gender roles exists, few studies have simultaneously examined traditional gender stereotypes, men's self-efficacy, and attitudes toward working women within the same empirical framework. The present study aimed to address this gap by examining the relationship among these variables and assessing the mediating role of self-efficacy. Based on the literature, it was hypothesized that gender stereotypes, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward working women would be interrelated, and that the self-efficacy would

mediate the relationship between gender stereotypes and these attitudes in men.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional, correlational research design was employed for the current study.

2.2 Sample

A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit 200 native Pakistani men between the ages of 18 and 35 years ($M = 21.27$; $SD = 2.09$). The sample consisted of individuals who were admitted to public sector universities in Pakistan. Individuals with any form of physical or mental health-related issues were not included in the sample, which was ensured via self-report before the data collection. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1. A priori power analysis was conducted for the estimation of the sample required to achieve power of at least .80. The minimum sample required for the current study was 180, while using small to moderate effect size in predictor-mediator and mediator-outcome pathways.

2.3 Instruments

2.3.1: The Gender Role Beliefs Scale: The Gender Role Beliefs Scale (Kerr & Holden, 1996) was used to assess gender stereotypes. It is a 20-item 7-point Likert scale with responses from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree), and a score range of 20 to 140. Higher scores represent a more traditional, stereotypical ideology pattern. Kerr and Holden (1996) reported a reliability of more than .80; however, it was .57 in the current study.

2.3.2: The General Self-Efficacy Scale: The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 2010) was used to measure self-efficacy. It is a 10-item 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true), and scores range from 10 to 40. Higher scores indicate higher self-efficacy. Jerusalem and Schwarzer (2010) reported the scale's reliability from .76 to .90, and in this study, reliability was .77.

2.3.3: Multidimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale:

Attitudes towards working women were assessed by the Multidimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale (Valentine, 2001). It is a 10-item self-report measure rated on a 4-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), and a score range of 10 to 40. A higher score on this scale reflects more traditional gender attitudes towards working women. This scale has two subscales: employment skepticism and traditional role preference (5 items each). In the current study, the reliability of this scale was .78. Employment skepticism ($\alpha = .66$) and traditional role preference ($\alpha = .69$) also showed good reliability.

2.4 Procedure

Before participation, informed consent was taken from the participants. They were informed about the purpose of the study, and instructions were provided for their participation. Secondly, participants were given a demographic sheet to gather information about their age, birth order, qualification, marital status, geographical affiliation, ethnicity, family system, current employment status, job category, job duration, monthly family income, and number of dependents on income (see Table 1). Finally, they were provided with the scales mentioned in the instruments section to fill out, and they were thanked for their participation.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the departmental ethics committee, and informed consent was taken from the individuals before their participation. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw

from the study at any time during their participation or to withdraw their data after the submission. Furthermore, the anonymity of the participants was ensured by keeping their identifying information confidential, and

their data was used only for the current study. Their participation involved minimal risk; however, they were also given the option to skip any distressing items in the scales.

3 Results

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Sociodemographic Variables (N=200)

Characteristics	n	%	Characteristics	n	%
Birth Order			Employment Status		
First Born	48	24.0	Employed	60	30.0
Middle Born	92	46.0	Unemployed	140	70.0
Last Born	49	24.5	Nature of Employment		
Only Child	11	5.5	Public	8	4.0
Marital status			Private	52	26.0
Married	15	7.5	Unemployed	140	70.0
Unmarried	185	92.5	Job Duration		
Geographic Affiliation			Full Time	7	3.5
Urban	105	52.5	Part Time	53	26.5
Rural	95	47.5	Not Working	140	70.0
Ethnicity			Monthly Family Income		
Punjabi	128	64.0	Below 50k	18	9.0
Non-Punjabi	72	36.0	50k-100k	116	58.0
Family System			100k-150k	31	15.5
Joint	112	56.0	150k-200k	12	6.0
Nuclear	88	44.0	More than 200k	23	11.5

Table 2
Correlation Matrix for Study Variables (N = 200)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Gender Stereotypes	66.37	13.47	-	-.15*	.29**
2 Self-Efficacy	29.71	5.45		-	-.27**
3 Attitude towards working women	25.80	5.45			-

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship across gender stereotypes, self-efficacy, and attitudes towards working women in young adult men (see Table 2). Results showed that self-efficacy was negatively related to attitudes toward working women and gender stereotypes. Additionally, attitudes toward working women were positively related to gender stereotypes.

Table 3
Stepwise Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Gender Stereotypes Predicting Attitudes towards Working Women in Young Adult Men (N=200)

Variables	B	95% CI		SE	β	R ²	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.09	.09***
Constant	17.43	13.49	21.36	2.00			
Gender Stereotypes	.13	.07	.18	.03	.29***		
Step 2						.13	.05***
Constant	25.96	19.83	32.09	3.11			
Gender Stereotypes	.11	.05	.17	.03	.26***		
Self-Efficacy	-.25	-.39	-.11	.07	-.24***		

***p < .001.

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine whether gender stereotypes and self-efficacy predicted attitudes toward working women (see Table 3). In Step 1, gender stereotypes accounted for 9% of the variance in attitudes toward working women ($R^2 = .09$). In Step 2, the

addition of self-efficacy explained an additional 6% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .06$), bringing the total explained variance to 13%.

To test if self-efficacy acted as a mediator between gender stereotypes and attitude towards working women, mediation analysis was run (see Table 4). Results revealed that the total effect of gender stereotypes on attitude toward working women was significant ($B = .13, p < .001$), with the model accounting for 9% of the variance in attitude toward working women. The direct effect of gender stereotypes on attitude toward working women remained significant after including the mediator ($B = .11, p < .001$), with $R^2 = .13$. For the mediation pathway, gender stereotypes significantly predicted self-efficacy ($B = -.06, p = .03$), and self-efficacy significantly predicted attitude toward working women ($B = -.25, p < .001$). The indirect effect of gender stereotypes on attitude toward working women through self-efficacy was $B = .02$ (95% CI [-.03, .00]).

Discussion

The current study aimed to examine the relationship among gender stereotypes, self-efficacy, and attitudes towards working women in young adult men, as well as the mediating role of self-efficacy within this association. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between gender stereotypes and traditional attitudes towards working women among young adults. And, self-efficacy would be negatively related to the gender stereotypes and traditional attitudes towards working women. Results supported the predicted relationship among the study variables (see Table 2) and showed that men who scored higher in gender stereotypes also scored higher on traditional attitudes towards working women. This result is consistent with earlier studies that have shown the prevalence of gender stereotypes in impacting perceptions about women in the workforce (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Heilman, 2012). Additionally, Eagly and Karau (2002) showed that adherence to traditional gender roles often leads to skepticism regarding women's capabilities and roles in professional settings. Results also showed that gender stereotypes predicted the traditional attitudes

Table 4
Mediation Analysis for Gender Stereotypes, Self-Efficacy, and Attitude towards Working Women (N =200)

Path	B	SE	t	p	95%CI		β	R^2	ΔR^2
					LL	UL			
Model									
Total Effect								.09	.09
GS → AWW	.13	.03	4.30	.00	.07	.18	.29		
Direct effect								.14	.058
GS → AWW	.11	.03	3.82	.00	.05	.17	.26		
GS → SE	-.06	.03	-2.18	.03	-.12	-.01	-.15		
SE → AWW	-.25	.07	-3.52	.00	-.39	-.11	-.24		
Indirect effect	.02	.01			.00	.03	.03		

towards working women and self-efficacy (see Table 3). This shows that firmer beliefs in gender stereotypes predict more traditional attitudes towards working women and reduced self-efficacy in young adult men.

Mediation analysis revealed that the self-efficacy of men acted as a mediator between gender stereotypes and traditional attitudes towards working women (see Table 4). Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory can be used to explain these results. It suggests that individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to have optimistic attitudes. Therefore, men who think they are capable and have higher self-efficacy are more inclined to support women joining the workforce, perhaps because they view it as a reflection of their skills. On the other hand, men with lower self-efficacy may view working women as a challenge to traditional gender standards. Similar results were reported in a study by Betz & Hackett (2006) showing the importance of self-efficacy in mitigating the detrimental effects of stereotypes. Additionally, Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995) found that self-efficacy is linked to a person's willingness to adopt unconventional roles and behaviors, further supporting the results of this study.

The demographic differences were also revealed in the current study. It was found that participants from a joint family scored lower in gender stereotypes than those from the nuclear family system. It highlights the association between societal elements and gender role attitudes among men. Although joint families have been shown to have more collaborative and collectivist dynamics as compared to nuclear families, participants from nuclear families scored higher in gender stereotypes in the current study. These results are consistent with a study that showed that the lack of support from extended family members in nuclear families who hold traditional views about gender roles may result in stronger adherence to traditional gender norms (Bianchi and Milkie, 2010).

This study has a few limitations that should be considered before the interpretation or generalization of its findings. First, the scales used in this study were not culturally adaptive instruments specifically for Pakistani men. While relying on non-indigenous instruments, cultural relevance, accuracy, and generalizability of the results can be affected. Secondly, the participants were selected only from the public-sector educational institutions in a single geographical area via convenience sampling due to limited time and financial resources, which should be considered while interpreting the results of the study. Future researchers should gather a more diverse sample to achieve results with higher generalizability. Furthermore, to enhance the external validity of the results, researchers should also create culturally adapted scales for the study. Third, instead of a correlational research design, qualitative research could further clarify how self-efficacy interacts with gender

stereotypes and attitudes towards working women. Finally, due to the cross-sectional research method, the current study cannot be used to establish causal inference. Longitudinal designs would also allow for an understanding of how young adult men's attitudes towards working women shift over time as they encounter different life experiences, career paths, and changing social expectations.

The findings of the current study have several implications. First, the relationship between young adult men's attitude toward working women, their self-efficacy, and their endorsement of gender stereotypes has been rarely explored in previous research. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by exploring an area that has received relatively limited attention. Previous research has mainly focused on the association of gender stereotypes or attitudes towards working women on the self-efficacy of the women; however, this study reveals the mediating role of the self-efficacy of the men themselves. These observations highlight that gender-based presumptions not only impact women, but they may also impact young men's attitudes and behaviors. These findings can help organizations that are engaged in workplace development, educational settings, and legislators as well, to incorporate these factors while developing or introducing interventions aimed at making an egalitarian workplace.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the results of this study revealed that young adult men who endorsed traditional gender role values were more likely to have negative opinions about women working and lower self-efficacy as compared to those who did not have strong adherence to gender stereotypes. Findings further revealed the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relation between gender stereotypes and attitudes towards working women. Participants from the nuclear families showed a stronger adherence to the gender stereotypes as compared to those from the joint-family system. These findings highlight that to reduce the negative attitudes towards working women, not only should the gender stereotypes be targeted, but the self-efficacy of men as well. Incorporating these factors, organizations and legislators can improve the workplace environment and reduce the negative attitudes held by men towards women in the workplace, and make the workplace safer for both genders.

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