

Original Research

The Influence of Gender Role Distribution within the Family on Relationship Satisfaction

Kilda Gusha¹, Marsida Tafilica²

¹University “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Shkodër, Albania

²University “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Shkodër, Albania

Corresponding Author: kilda.gusha@unishk.edu.al

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Abstract

The present study examines the relationship between gender role distribution within the family and satisfaction in romantic relationships among young adults in Shkodra, Albania. Particular attention is given to the association between egalitarian attitudes toward family roles and perceived relationship satisfaction. The study also explores possible gender differences in attitudes toward gender roles and relationship satisfaction.

A quantitative research design was employed. The sample consisted of 100 participants, equally divided between women and men, with a mean age of 22.05 years ($SD = 2.79$). Data were collected using two self-report instruments: the Gender-Equitable Men Scale (GEMS), used to assess attitudes toward gender roles and family responsibilities, and the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI), used to measure satisfaction in romantic relationships. The findings indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between egalitarian attitudes and relationship satisfaction. Participants who

reported more egalitarian views regarding the distribution of family roles also tended to report higher levels of satisfaction in their romantic relationships. In contrast, traditional gender role attitudes showed no statistically significant relationship with relationship satisfaction. The results further indicated that no significant gender differences were found either in egalitarian attitudes or in levels of relationship satisfaction.

This study contributes to the existing literature on gender roles and the dynamics of relationships by providing data from the Albanian context, where traditional family norms continue to coexist with evolving social attitudes toward gender equality. The findings suggest that perceptions of fairness and shared responsibility within romantic relationships may positively influence the quality of relationships among young adults.

Keywords: *Gender roles, egalitarian attitudes, relationship satisfaction, romantic relationships, family role distribution, young adults, Albania.*

Original Research

Introduction

Gender roles represent an important component of family and relationship dynamics, influencing how responsibilities, expectations, and social roles are distributed among partners. Traditionally, family structures in many societies have been characterized by a division of labor in which women were primarily assigned domestic responsibilities and the care of the family, while men were expected to serve as the head of the household and an authority figure within the family unit. These patterns have historically been reinforced by cultural norms, social expectations, and broader social institutions.

In recent decades, however, significant social and cultural changes have contributed to the transformation of traditional gender expectations. Increased access to education, women's participation in the labor market, and shifting social attitudes toward equality have influenced the organization of family life and intimate relationships. Consequently, many couples have adopted more egalitarian approaches to the distribution of domestic responsibilities, decision-making, and emotional support.

The relationship between the distribution of gender roles and satisfaction in romantic relationships has become an important topic in psychological and sociological research. Previous studies have suggested that perceptions of fairness and equality within relationships can positively influence relationship quality, emotional intimacy, and overall satisfaction among partners. Conversely, rigid adherence to traditional gender expectations can contribute to tension, dissatisfaction, and inequality within romantic relationships.

Despite the growing body of international literature on gender roles and relationship satisfaction, few studies have examined these issues in the Albanian context, particularly among young adults. The social transformations that have taken place in Albanian society over the past few decades have influenced family structures and interpersonal relationships, while traditional attitudes toward gender continue to exert a strong influence in many contexts.

For this reason, the present study aims to examine the relationship between the distribution of gender roles within the family and relationship satisfaction among young adults in Shkodër, Albania. More specifically, the study investigates whether egalitarian attitudes toward family roles are associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction and whether there are significant gender differences in attitudes toward gender roles and satisfaction in romantic relationships.

The Construction of Gender Roles in Family Dynamics and Their Influence on Relationship Satisfaction

Personal relationships are an important part of human life and have a considerable influence on the way individuals experience themselves, others, and the social world around them (Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, 2011). Although interest in interpersonal relationships has existed for a long time, their systematic study has become increasingly relevant in contemporary psychological and family research. Positive and supportive relationships have been associated with better mental and physical well-being, which makes relationship quality an important area of academic investigation (Mertika, Mitskidou, & Stalikas, 2020; Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, 2011).

Among the different forms of personal relationships, romantic relationships are especially significant because they involve emotional intimacy, commitment, communication, and shared life expectations. Relationship satisfaction is therefore commonly examined as an indicator of the quality of romantic and marital relationships. In the literature, marital satisfaction has been one of the most frequently studied topics in marriage and family research, particularly in relation to the factors that help maintain stability and happiness between partners (Khezri et al., 2020).

Relationship satisfaction can also be influenced by how family roles are distributed between partners. In many societies, family life has traditionally been organized around clearly differentiated responsibilities between men and women. Women were commonly associated with childcare, domestic responsibilities, and emotional care within the family, whereas men were generally expected to assume the role of economic provider (Bosson et

Original Research

al., 2005). During recent decades, however, social and cultural changes have contributed to a gradual shift in these traditional expectations, leading to more flexible attitudes toward gender roles and family responsibilities (Bartley, Blanton, & Gilliard, 2005).

Changes in gender roles have influenced the organization of work, family life, and childcare responsibilities. Previous studies suggest that these changes may affect relationship quality differently among men and women (Jackson et al., 2014; Kurdek, 2005). Despite a gradual increase in men's involvement in domestic work, women continue to perform a greater proportion of household responsibilities in many families (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). Differences in the distribution of these responsibilities may influence perceptions of equality and satisfaction within romantic relationships.

Several studies have suggested that egalitarian attitudes are associated with better relationship outcomes. Men with more egalitarian views have been found to report higher marital satisfaction and lower likelihood of divorce (Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006; Amato & Booth, 1995). Similar findings have also been observed among both younger and older couples, indicating that egalitarian attitudes may be linked to greater satisfaction across different age groups (Amato & Booth, 1995; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006).

Earlier research suggested that men tended to benefit more from marriage than women (Bernard, 1982; Fowers, 1991). More recent studies, however, indicate that gender differences in marital satisfaction may be changing as family structures and expectations become more flexible (Beam et al., 2018; Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022). These findings suggest that relationship satisfaction should be understood as a dynamic phenomenon shaped by social change, gender expectations, and the organization of family life.

The way household responsibilities are divided between partners may affect satisfaction within the relationship. Amato et al. (2003), in a comparison of national samples from 1980 and 2000, observed that women generally reported higher marital satisfaction when men participated more in domestic tasks. Similar findings were reported by

Stevens, Kiger, and Riley (2001), who found that women's satisfaction was positively associated with their partner's involvement in household responsibilities. These studies suggest that the perception of a more balanced division of domestic work may contribute to more positive relationship experiences.

Gender expectations may also influence emotional expression and communication within romantic relationships. Rochlen and Mahalik (2004) suggest that restrictive male gender roles may negatively affect both men and their female partners. When individuals feel pressured to conform to narrow gender expectations, they may limit the expression of emotions, needs, or vulnerabilities, which can affect intimacy and relationship quality.

The broader social context is also important. Hopcroft and McLaughlin (2012) showed that the relationship between gender equality, family life, and psychological well-being may vary across societies. This suggests that gender roles cannot be understood only at the individual or couple level, but must also be interpreted within cultural, economic, and social conditions.

Overall, the literature emphasizes that equality within romantic and marital relationships is closely connected to intimacy, fairness, and satisfaction. Traditional gender stereotypes may create difficulties for relationship quality, while more egalitarian attitudes can support healthier and more balanced partnerships. Johnson (2003) also highlights the importance of addressing traditional gender role stereotypes in the context of couples' therapy and relationship functioning.

Study questions and Hypothesis:

1. Do individuals with egalitarian attitudes toward family life report higher levels of satisfaction in their romantic relationships compared to those with traditional attitudes?

Hypothesis 1: Individuals with egalitarian attitudes toward family life experience higher satisfaction in romantic relationships. (Are there significant gender differences in egalitarian attitudes toward family life and gender role distribution?)

Original Research

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences between women and men in terms of egalitarian attitudes. (Do women report higher levels of satisfaction in romantic relationships compared to men?)

Hypothesis 3: Women experience higher satisfaction in romantic relationships compared to men.

Conceptualization

The present study focuses on two main concepts: relationship satisfaction and gender role attitudes within family life. These variables were selected because previous literature has identified them as important factors in the functioning and quality of romantic relationships.

Relationship satisfaction refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality and stability of a romantic relationship. It includes emotional closeness, communication, trust, commitment, and the extent to which personal expectations and needs are fulfilled within the relationship (Hendrick, 1988). Relationship satisfaction is also associated with psychological well-being and emotional adjustment, making it an important concept within studies of interpersonal relationships and family dynamics.

Gender role attitudes refer to beliefs and expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of men and women within the family and society. These attitudes are shaped by cultural norms, socialization processes, education, and personal experiences. Within the context of family life, gender role attitudes influence how individuals perceive the distribution of domestic responsibilities, child-care, decision-making, and emotional support between partners.

In this study, egalitarian attitudes are understood as support for a more equal distribution of responsibilities and decision-making between men and women. Traditional attitudes, in contrast, reflect more rigid role divisions in which domestic and caregiving responsibilities are primarily associated with women, while authority and financial responsibilities are more closely associated with men.

The conceptual relationship between these variables is based on the assumption that perceptions

of equality and fairness within romantic relationships may influence relationship satisfaction. Couples who share responsibilities and decision-making more equally may experience greater emotional support, mutual respect, and relationship stability.

Operationalization

In this research, a quantitative design was employed, where 100 participants were surveyed, consisting of 50 women and 50 men. The average age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 30 years ($SD = 2.79$). Data for the subjects were collected through surveys, using two self-report questionnaires.

Methodology

Sample

The study involved 100 participants, 50 females (50%) and 50 males (50%). The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 30 years, with the average age being 22.05 years ($SD = 2.79$). The majority of the participants (61%) were in relationships or had been in relationships at the time of completing the questionnaire, 7% were married, 20% were engaged, and 12% were single. Regarding their place of residence, most participants lived in urban areas (53%), while the remaining 47% lived in rural areas. The educational levels of the participants varied: 13% were in their first year (Bachelor), 13% in their second year (Bachelor), 52% were in their third year (Bachelor), and 17% were pursuing a Master's degree. The remaining participants did not respond to the question regarding their educational level.

Procedure

Participants were initially informed about the research via social media, and those interested in participating were identified. A total of three meetings were held with participants. In the first meeting, they were provided detailed information about the research and the subsequent procedures. They were then given the questionnaires to fill out in the following days. In the second meeting, the completed questionnaires were collected

Original Research

for analysis. The third meeting took place with participants who were interested in learning about the results of the research.

It was clearly communicated to the participants that their participation in this study was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. Their personal information was kept confidential, and privacy was ensured throughout the study. The data and findings from the study would be shared with the participants and used exclusively for academic purposes.

Instruments

The study used a survey method, utilizing two main questionnaires as the primary instruments. In addition to these questionnaires, demographic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, and education level was also collected. The Gender-Equitable Men Scale (GEMS, 2011) was used to measure attitudes towards the division of gender roles in the family. The questionnaire consists of 24 statements, but the number of statements may vary depending on the cultural context in which it is administered. For this study, 17 statements were used. Twelve of these statements represent "unequal" gender norms, such as: "Changing diapers, washing, and feeding the children is the mother's responsibility," "A woman's most important role is to take care of the house and cook for the family," and "The husband should have the final word in family decisions." The remaining five statements represent "equal" gender norms, including: "A couple should decide together if they want children," "If a man gets a woman pregnant, the child is the responsibility of both," and "It is important for a father to be present in the lives of his children even if he does not live with their mother."

The second questionnaire is The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) which measures couples' satisfaction in romantic relationships. The questionnaire consists of 32 statements in different formats, where the higher the score on a given item, the greater the satisfaction in the relationship.

Data Analysis

After administering the questionnaires, the data analysis was conducted using the statistical package SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The study used a quantitative design for data collection, and after entering the data into SPSS, the questions were recoded. To analyze the first hypothesis, descriptive statistics were initially calculated for egalitarian roles, traditional roles, and then for the couples' satisfaction index in romantic relationships. To analyze the correlation between egalitarian attitudes and the level of couples' satisfaction in romantic relationships, Spearman's correlation was used. Additionally, a t-test was conducted to measure gender differences in the egalitarian attitudes variable. Finally, the mean scores of males and females on the couples' satisfaction index were calculated, along with the minimum, maximum, and standard deviation..

Results of the Study

This section presents the results related to egalitarian attitudes and their impact on romantic relationships, gender differences in egalitarian attitudes, and gender differences in romantic relationship satisfaction.

In Table 1, the descriptive data for egalitarian roles and traditional roles are presented

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Egalitarian Roles and Traditional Roles

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Egalitarian roles	100	17.00	25.00	22.9700	2.04720
Traditional roles	100	12.00	56.00	24.9100	8.74336
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Original Research

In Table 2, the descriptive data for the romantic relationship satisfaction index are provided.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the Couples' Satisfaction Index

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Couple's satisfaction Index	100	76.00	150.00	126.6100	18.22303
Valid N (listwise)	100				

In Table 3, the correlation between egalitarian roles and couple's satisfaction index is provided .

Table 3: Correlation between Egalitarian Roles and Couples' Satisfaction Index

		Egalitarian roles	Couple's Satisfaction Index
Spearman's rho	Egalitarian roles	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.217*
			0.030
Couple's Satisfaction index		Correlation Coefficient	0.217*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	0.030
			100

The results indicate that egalitarian attitudes are moderately positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.217^*$. The significance level is $p = 0.030$, which suggests that the correlation is statistically significant. This means that individuals with more egalitarian views tend to report higher satisfaction in their romantic relationships.

Given that the correlation is positive and statistically significant, we can conclude that the first hypothesis (which posits that individuals with egalitarian attitudes in family roles experience higher satisfaction in romantic relationships) is supported by the data.

The findings support the first hypothesis, suggesting a moderate but statistically significant association between egalitarian attitudes and relationship satisfaction within the studied sample.

In Table 4, the correlation between traditional roles and the Couples' Satisfaction Index is presented .

Original Research

Table 4: Correlation between Traditional Roles and Couples' Satisfaction Index

			Traditional role	Couple's Satisfaction index
Spearman's rho	Traditional roles	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.134
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.184
	Couple's Satisfaction index	Correlation Coefficient	-0.134	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.184	
		N	100	100

The results show a negative correlation of -0.134 between traditional roles and the Couples' Satisfaction Index. This negative correlation is weak and not statistically significant ($p = 0.184$). This suggests that as traditional roles increase, satisfaction in romantic relationships slightly decreases, but the relationship is not strong or statistically meaningful.

These results indirectly reinforce the positive correlation found between egalitarian attitudes and couples' satisfaction (as shown earlier in the data). However, traditional roles seem to have a negligible and non-significant effect on relationship satisfaction.

Table 5: Resonances to the Statement "The most important role of a woman is to take care of the house and cook for the family"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree
The most important role of a woman is to take care of the house and cook for the family (%)	48	16	17	7	12

Table 6: Responses to the Statement "A couple should decide together if they want children"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree
A couple should decide together if they want children (%)	0	0	0	4	96

A large majority of participants (96%) completely agreed with the statement, indicating strong support for shared decision-making regarding children. This finding is consistent with the idea of

shared responsibility and joint decision-making between partners.

Original Research

Table 7: Results of the t-Test Analysis, Gender Differences in Egalitarian Attitudes

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean	t	df	p
Egalitarian roles	Male	50	23.08	2.23	0.32	0.535	98	0.594
	Female	50	22.86	1.86	0.26			

Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we reject the hypothesis that there are significant gender differences in egalitarian attitudes. Thus, the data suggest there are no significant differences between men and women in terms of their views on gender

roles within romantic relationships. The standard deviations for both genders are quite similar, further confirming the lack of significant difference.

Table 8: Differences between Males and Females on the Relationship Satisfaction Index

Gender	M	N	SD	Min.	Max.
Male	123.4400	50	18.44148	79.00	150.00
Female	129.7800	50	17.61642	76.00	150.00
Total	126.6100	100	18.22303	76.00	150.00

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between gender role distribution within the family and satisfaction in romantic relationships among young adults in Shkodra. The findings indicate that individuals with more egalitarian attitudes toward family roles tend to report higher levels of satisfaction in their romantic relationships. The correlational analysis showed a positive relationship between egalitarian attitudes and relationship satisfaction ($r = .217^*$), supporting the first hypothesis of the study. These findings are generally consistent with previous literature suggesting that equality and fairness within relationships are associated with healthier relationship dynamics and greater emotional satisfaction (Glenwright & Fowler, 2013).

Previous studies have emphasized that the division of domestic responsibilities may significantly

influence relationship quality, particularly in relation to perceptions of fairness and mutual support. Glenwright and Fowler (2013) found that egalitarian attitudes were positively associated with relationship satisfaction for both men and women. Similarly, research examining household labor has shown that greater male participation in domestic responsibilities may positively affect women's relationship satisfaction (Stevens, Kiger, & Riley, 2001). In this regard, the findings of the present study further support the idea that shared responsibilities and balanced family roles may contribute to more positive relationship experiences.

The study's findings also indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between women and men regarding egalitarian attitudes. This finding contrasts with earlier theoretical perspectives suggesting that women tend to express more egalitarian attitudes than men (Wood, 2008). According to Wood (2008), traditional gender stereotypes have historically associated men

Original Research

with hierarchy, authority, and competition, while women have been more closely associated with cooperation and egalitarian values. However, the absence of significant gender differences in the present study may reflect changing social attitudes among younger generations, particularly among individuals with higher levels of education.

No statistically significant gender differences were found in relationship satisfaction levels, although women reported slightly higher average scores than men. Earlier studies often suggested that men benefited more from marriage and reported higher levels of satisfaction than women (Nordenmark, 2017). More recent research, however, has shown that relationship satisfaction is shaped by multiple interpersonal and social factors, including communication, emotional intimacy, trust, and perceptions of equality within the relationship (Gottman et al., 2017).

When interpreting the results, it is also important to consider the social and cultural context in which the study was conducted. Albanian society has historically been characterized by relatively traditional family structures and gender expectations. However, social and cultural changes in recent decades, including increased educational opportunities and evolving perceptions of gender equality, may influence young adults' attitudes toward romantic relationships and family roles.

Conclusions and Limitations

This study examined the relationship between the distribution of gender roles within the family and relationship satisfaction among young adults in Shkodër. The results indicate that egalitarian attitudes toward family roles are positively associated with relationship satisfaction. Participants who expressed more favorable views toward shared responsibilities and equality within relationships tended to report higher levels of satisfaction in their romantic relationships.

The study did not identify statistically significant gender differences either in egalitarian attitudes or in levels of relationship satisfaction. Both women and men expressed relatively similar views regarding family roles and the dynamics of romantic relationships. These findings may reflect

a shift in the social attitudes of younger generations toward gender equality and roles within couples.

The findings contribute to the existing literature analyzing the relationship between gender roles and the dynamics of relationships, particularly in the Albanian social context, where traditional family norms continue to coexist with broader social and cultural changes. The findings suggest that perceptions of fairness, mutual support, and shared responsibilities can positively influence the quality of relationships among young adults.

It is important to highlight some limitations of this study. The research was conducted on a relatively small sample, consisting mainly of college students and young adults, which limits the extent to which the findings may be generalized beyond the studied group. In addition, the data were collected through self-report instruments, a method that may be influenced by participants' personal interpretation of the questions and their tendency to provide socially acceptable responses. Further research conducted on broader and more heterogeneous samples could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender role attitudes and relationship satisfaction across different social and demographic contexts.

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Original Research

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