

Perceived Multitasking Ability and Preference, Gender Role Attitudes, and Marital Adjustment of Married Working Individuals

Saima Kalsoom and Anila Kamal

Quaid-i-Azam University

This study was planned to investigate the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and preferences, gender role attitudes, and marital adjustment of working individuals. It was also intended to explore the moderating effect of multitasking preference for the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment. Data was collected from a sample of 222 married working individuals i.e., (117 men and 105 women). Their ages ranged between 23-65 years ($M = 38.75$, $SD = 9.20$). Translated version (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2020) of Communication Specific Multitasking Measurement instrument (Kushniryk, 2008), translated (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018) version of Multitasking Preference Inventory (Poposki & Oswald, 2010), translated (Nasreen, 2000) Version of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), and indigenously developed (Anila & Ansari, 1992) Gender Role Attitudes Scale (Kamal & Saqib, 2004); was used to collect the data. Results showed significant positive correlation of perceived multitasking ability with marital adjustment and multitasking preferences. Gender role attitude was found positively correlated with multitasking preference and marital adjustment. The results also revealed multitasking preference as a moderator in predicting the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment. From these findings we may infer that higher multitasking preferences play an important role for perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment of married working individuals.

Keywords. Multitasking ability, multitasking preference, gender role attitudes, marital adjustment, working individuals

Saima Kalsoom and Anila Kamal, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Anila Kamal, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
E-mail: anilakamal@nip.edu.pk; dranilakamal@gmail.com

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Adjustment is vital for healthy and successful interpersonal relationships. Marital adjustment is considered as salient feature of the interpersonal/marital relations. Marital adjustment is defined as mutual cohesion, consensus, satisfaction, and affectional expression in a dyad or may be as an individual experience of spouses (Hashmi, Khurshid, & Hassan, 2015; Spanier, 1989). In this aspect harmony between the spouses is important for constituting healthy and well-adjusted marital life which is a source of happiness for individuals (Çetinkaya & Gençdoğan, 2014). Spouses are expected to meet role related behavioral norms and attitudes to attain marital adjustment. Hence, examining gender role attitudes in relations to marital adjustment is important.

Gender role attitudes reflect the prevailing cultural norms in a given place during a specific time (Aziz & Kamal, 2015). These are viewed as either traditional gender role attitudes, holding the idea of men being provider and giver for economic and safety needs while women as nurturance provider and homemaker, or egalitarian/modern gender role attitudes reflects both men and women as equal in each sphere of life (Kato, 2018). Individuals reflecting more egalitarian gender role attitudes also encourage and view similar roles for men and women as paid roles in labor force and domestic roles. Marital roles and career go a long way in defining gender role attitudes that affect the individuals' ways of life (Aziz & Kamal, 2009). In this sense, these attitudes may influence the quality of marital life. Therefore, researchers have taken the conceptual link of gender role attitudes and marital adjustment into empirical investigations (Çetinkaya & Gençdoğan, 2014; Hengstebeck, Helms, & Rodriguez, 2015; Isaac & Shah, 2004) and found that egalitarian gender role attitudes are positively related with marital satisfaction and adjustment and results revealed that participants who have egalitarian gender role attitudes have higher marital satisfaction than individuals who have traditional gender role attitudes. Gender role attitudes and marital roles impact the quality of satisfaction with marriage and greater participation in housework and childcare is related to higher marital satisfaction (Minnotte, Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon, & Kiger, 2010; Ogletree, 2015).

The concept of multitasking is taken from household where women tend to work on various house chores simultaneously, further this aspect of doing different house chores simultaneously was shifted into jobs and it is considered as an important ingredient for almost every profession (Sanderson, Lee, Viswesvaran, Gutierrez, & Kantrowitz, 2013). Multitasking means simultaneously engaging an individual into several tasks, it refers to the ability to handle multiple

tasks at the same time and switch quickly when required for successful performance (Widyahastuti & Anwar, 2017). However, the tendency to engage in two or more than two tasks simultaneously with frequent shifts and switching of attention is called multitasking preference (Poposki & Oswald, 2010). Kushniryk (2008) defined multitasking as a complete set of jobs/tasks performed within the same time period either simultaneously or with transition time, often and quickly from one task to another task. She also suggested four dimensions of multitasking including (1) general multitasking abilities, (2) computer multitasking, (3) ability to perform two primary tasks simultaneously, and (4) ability to perform primary and secondary tasks simultaneously. However, in the current study we considered three dimensions excluding computer multitasking as it was not thought as much related to the sample (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018). Previously, this concept has been studied more frequently in relation to organizational outcomes including job performance, organizational performance, and productivity (Kantrowitz, Grelle, Beaty, & Wolf, 2012; König & Waller, 2010). However, in a recent study Kalsoom and Kamal (2018) empirically examined the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment of married working individuals. The results demonstrated that perceived multitasking ability is positively related with marital adjustment of married working people. The relationship between agreeableness and multitasking was examined by Widyahastuti and Anwar (2017) and results were reported in a positive direction. Moreover, the findings of Korabik, Rhijn, Donna, Lero, and Leslie (2017) indicated that employed parents having higher multitasking preference exhibited lesser work overload, and lesser work overload was associated with lesser work family conflict which was related with higher family and life satisfaction for married working men and women.

The changing nature of the labor force, including increase of women in workforce, and presence of children requires a balance between work and family roles. Individuals who share similar gender role attitudes and hold higher egalitarian gender role attitudes tend to combine more household activities with other paid work-related activities/task (Fahlén, 2014). In this aspect work and family interactions occurs as Ollier-Malaterre and Foucreault (2017) highlighted that work and family interactions are embedded in the broader social, cultural, and economic contexts in which individuals reside. Research from work family domain have examined multitasking in considering role accumulation theory (Sayer, 2007; Sayer, England, Bittman, & Bianchi, 2009) and explained that people

having egalitarian gender role attitudes feel more divorce threat due to the inequality in domestic work (Breen & Cooke, 2005; Craig & Powell, 2011). Gender roles theory and multitasking were jointly taken into investigation by Monisola (2012) who reported that multitasking effect the psychological state and productivity both in career and marital role. Further these results also suggested that presence of children is positively related with marital conflict for career women and preference for employment/career is negatively associated with marital conflict of working women (Monisola, 2012). Multitasking intensify time use and effects the wellbeing of married working parent (Offer & Schneider, 2011). Balaji (2014) also explained that multiple role-playing (multitasking) impacts positively on the mental health and well-being of professionals. Findings of another study (Yüksel & Dağ, 2015) revealed that traditional gender roles are related with overall happiness and satisfaction among spouses. Patra and Suar (2009) studied multitasking attitude, time spent on household work, marital adjustment, overall happiness, and satisfaction in the single- and dual-career families. Their results explained that high level of multitasking attitudes and marital adjustment are positively related with happiness and satisfaction. Based upon all these empirical evidences, multitasking, gender role attitudes, and marital adjustment are quite relatable construct to put together in order to build pragmatic understanding regarding the relationship between these variables.

Preference for multitasking is higher in individualistic cultures in which it is considered a key for time management and coping mechanism for working individuals (Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009; Tausig, Mark, & Fenwick, 2011). Multitasking preferences are important for the ability to perform multitasking activities across context and domains. The studies (Goonetilleke & Luximon, 2010; Hambrick et al., 2011; König, Oberarcher, & Kleinmann, 2010; König & Waller, 2010) have examined the relationship between multitasking preferences and multitasking ability while predicting multitasking performance and organizational performance. The results of these studies have suggested that preference influence behavior and multitasking preferences are related with multitasking ability. Studies have also provided the empirical evidences regarding the relationship of multitasking preferences with multitasking ability as König, Buhner, and Murling (2005) sated that people having preference for working on several things at once have also found themselves to be proficient in multitasking. Similarly, Sanderson et al. (2013) also reported the same direction and highlight the moderating role of multitasking preferences for the relationship between multitasking

ability, multitasking performance, and job performance. In another study Kirchberg and Roe (2015) reported the evidences of moderating role of multitasking preferences and suggested that working people having higher preferences for multitasking also have higher well-being. The results suggested that affective well-being and self-rated performance of people having higher preferences for multitasking were less affected with multitasking as compared to people who had lower preferences for multitasking. Based upon these empirical evidences it is insightful to assume the role of multitasking preferences as moderator for the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment of married working individuals.

In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, people have more traditional gender-role attitudes (Sikandar, Ahmad, Maqsood, & Maqsood, 2018). Pakistani literature on the relationship between gender role attitudes and marital adjustment is silenced and no published study was found on the said relationship particularly. However, marital adjustment has been studied in relation to self compassion (Bibi & Masood, 2017), with perceived social support and mental health (Qadir, Khalid, Haqqani, Huma, & Medhin, 2013), and self-silencing (Ahmed & Iqbal, 2019). There are many other factors like gender role attitudes and multitasking that may impact marital adjustment. Multitasking is relatively a new predictor for the marital adjustment of married working individuals and only one published study (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018) has taken these two variables under empirical investigation. The significance of performing multiple roles and due to this an increasing need for flexibility in these roles that is, work and marital role, have also motivated us to study marital adjustment in relation to multitasking and gender role attitudes. Therefore, the current study was designed to examine the role of gender role attitudes and multitasking in marital adjustment of Pakistani married and working individuals.

Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between multitasking preferences, perceived multitasking ability, gender role attitudes, and marital adjustment of married working individuals.
2. To explore the moderating role of multitasking preferences for the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment of married working people.

Method

Sample

A sample of 222 married working people from various public and private sector organizations of Rawalpindi and Islamabad was selected. Both men ($n = 117$) and women ($n = 105$) were included in the sample. Purposive convenience sampling technique was employed. Age range of the participants was between 23-65 years ($M = 38.75$, $SD = 9.20$). Only those married and working individuals were selected who were living with their spouses and having minimum one child. The duration of marriage ranged between 1-26 years ($M = 11.31$, $SD = 9.50$). Around 81% of the participants ($n = 175$) were having 1-3 number of children and 19% of the participants ($n = 47$) were having 4-7 number of children.

Instruments

Following Four instruments along with demographic information sheet were used to collect the data in this study.

Multitasking Preference Inventory (Poposki & Oswald, 2010). Urdu Translated and adapted version (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018) of this instrument was used as a self-report measure. It included 14 items and two subscales including (1) Preference for Multitask and (2) Preference for Monotask with seven items in each, to be responded on five-point Likert scale. Response options ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) with potential score range of 14-70. The sample item of the scale (*I prefer to work on several projects in a day, rather than completing one project and then switching to another*). High scores indicated high multitasking preference. High reliability has been reported in the previous studies that is, $\alpha = .78$ for overall scale, $.73$ and $.84$ for the two subscales (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018) and $\alpha = .84$ (Kirchberg & Roe, 2015) which indicated the scale is consistent and stable.

Communication Specific Multitasking Measurement Instrument (Kushniryk, 2008). Urdu translated and adapted version (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2020) of scale consisted of 19 items and three subscales including (1) General Multitasking Ability, (2) Ability to Perform two or more than two Primary Tasks Simultaneously, (3) Ability to Perform Primary and Secondary Tasks Simultaneously. This self-reported measure was a five-point Likert scale with response options ranging from *strongly disagrees* to *strongly agree* (5). The sample item of this measure is 'I frequently IM (Instant Message)

while I am performing other work on my computer'. Possible score ranged 19 to 95 and high score indicate high perceived multitasking ability. Satisfactory reliability coefficients reported by the previous authors i.e., $\alpha = .82$, (Kushniryk, 2008) and $\alpha = .81$ (Widyahastuti & Anwar, 2017) designated the instrument is reliable and valid.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). This scale was originally developed by Spanier (1976) and translated by Nasreen (2000) comprised with 26 items and four subscales including Dyadic Cohesion, Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Satisfaction, and Affectional Expression. Response options for item number (1-20, 22-25, & 27) were 6-point rating scale ranged from (0) *never* to (5) *always*. Whereas response options for item number 26 was 4-point scale ranged from (0) *no one* to (4) *everyone*. High scores mean high marital adjustment and reliability of this scale reported by the previous authors that is, .90 (Ahmed, & Iqbal, 2019) and .89 (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018) indicated the scale is sound and stable.

Gender Role Attitudes Scale GRAS (Kamal & Saqib, 2004). This scale is the modified version of Sex Role Attitudes Scale developed by Anila and Ansari (1992). This Likert type scale consisted of 30 items and half of the items were reverse scored and ranged between 30-150 depicting that high scores means high modern/egalitarian gender role attitudes and low scores means more traditional gender role attitudes of respondents. It is five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The alpha coefficients reported in previous studies (Aziz & Kamal, 2009; 2015) showed the measure is reliable to use.

Procedure

Data of this study was collected from married working people. All the participants were approached individually at their workplaces. Formal permission from the concerned authorities of these respective organizations was taken to approach the employees to participate in this study. They were briefed about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained, anonymity, and confidentiality was assured. Written and verbal instructions were provided about filling the demographic information sheet and all the questionnaires. Only willing participants were included to provide the data for this study. Additionally, all the queries by the participants were also answered by the researcher. In the end all the respondents were acknowledged and appreciated for their valuable participation to provide the data for this study.

Results

In order to fulfill the objectives of this study, alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for all the scales used in this study as composite scores. Correlation coefficients were determined to gauge the strength and direction of the relationship among the variables of this study (see Table 1). Following this relationship pattern, two separate models for moderation were tested through SPSS process macro latest version 3.3.

Table 1
Mean, Standard Deviations, Alpha, and Correlation Coefficients (N = 222)

Scales	<i>k</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>	1	2	3	4
1.CSMMI	19	55.14	9.00	.75	-	.48**	.19**	.16**
2.MPI	14	39.25	6.76	.72		-	.05	.12*
3.DAS	26	95.66	17.96	.90			-	.16*
4.GRAS	30	93.53	13.32	.76				-

Note. CSMMI = Communication Specific Multitasking Measurement Instrument; MPI = Multitasking Preference Inventory; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; GRA = Gender Role Attitudes.

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

The results in Table 1 demonstrate that alpha reliability coefficients for all the scales are of adequate level of internal consistency. It is evident from these results that perceived multitasking ability, marital adjustment, multitasking preference, and gender role attitudes are significantly and positively related with each other while multitasking preference is not correlated with marital adjustment.

Moderating Role of Multitasking Preference for the Relationship Between Perceived Multitasking Ability and Marital Adjustment

In order to test the second objective of this study, moderating role of multitasking preferences for the relationship between perceived multitasking ability as independent variable with marital adjustment as dependent variable was tested in SPSS through process macro 3.3. The results are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2
Moderating role of Multitasking Preferences in the Relationship Between Multitasking Ability and Marital Adjustment (N = 222)

Variables	Marital Adjustment		95% CI	
	β	<i>p</i>	LL	UL
Constant	94.48***	.000	91.89	97.07
Multitasking Ability	.20	.23	-.12	.51
Multitasking Preferences	-.06	.75	-.42	.30
Multitasking Ability x Multitasking Preferences	.04**	.01	.00	.07
<i>R</i> ²	.03*			
<i>F</i>	6.00**			
ΔR^2	.02**			

Note. CI = confidence Interval, LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.

*** *p* < .001. ** *p* < .01. * *p* < .05.

Table 2 demonstrates the moderating role of multitasking preferences for the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment of married working individuals. These results exhibit that perceived multitasking ability and multitasking preferences have a significant interaction effect on marital adjustment. Further slop was computed, and mod graph was established.

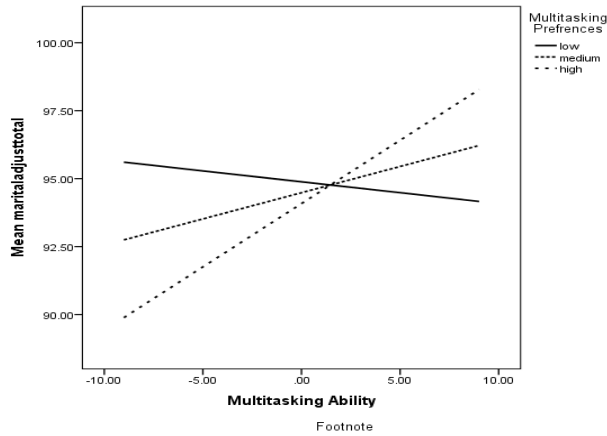


Figure 1. Moderating role of multitasking preferences between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustments.

In Figure 1, graph displays the interaction of multitasking preferences for the relationship between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment. Modgraph demonstrates significant interactional effect of multitasking preferences with perceived multitasking ability for predicting marital adjustment. This conditional effect is significant on the higher level of predictor (perceived multitasking ability) at the value of moderator (multitasking preference) in predicting the outcome (marital adjustment) into the positive direction.

Discussion

This study was undertaken to explore the association of multitasking preferences, perceived multitasking ability, gender role attitudes, and marital adjustment of married employed individuals. For this, alpha reliability coefficients showed that all the measures were reliable and valid to further draw the results from the data collected for this study. These results are consistent with the previous researches (Ahmed, & Iqbal, 2019; Aziz & Kamal, 2012; Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018; Kirchberg & Roe, 2015; Widyahastuti & Anwar, 2017) in which all these instruments have been used and established these measures as valid and reliable.

First objective of this study was achieved through the estimation of inter-scale correlations and these correlation coefficients demonstrated a significant positive relationship between multitasking preferences with perceived multitasking ability. Which means individuals exhibited higher multitasking preference also displayed higher perceived multitasking ability. Previous studies have also gauged similar evidences (Kirchberg & Roe, 2015; König et al., 2005; Sanderson et al., 2013). The results of this study also indicated a significant positive association between perceived multitasking ability and marital adjustment. These findings are in accordance with the previous researchers (Kalsoom & Kamal, 2018) who have studied the link of perceived multitasking ability with marital adjustment and reported multitasking ability as significant positive predictor for marital adjustment across both genders. Moreover, the findings of current study also extend empirical support from the study conducted by Balaji (2014) who have reported the positive impact of multitasking on mental health and wellbeing of professionals. Moreover, the results of this study indicated significant positive relationship between gender role attitudes and marital adjustment. These results were also found in accordance with the previous studies (Çetinkaya & Gençdoğan, 2014; Falconier, 2013; Minnotte et al.,

2010; Rakwena, 2010) which reported positive relationship between gender role attitudes and marital adjustment.

The results of correlation analysis provided the support to formulate another objective of this study. Correlation analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship of multitasking preference with perceived multitasking ability whereas multitasking preferences with marital adjustment was found nonsignificant. Based upon this evidence it was important to see the conditional effect of multitasking preference along with multitasking ability on the marital adjustment of married working individuals. For this reason, moderation analysis through process macro was employed and the results exhibited significantly positive conditional (moderating) effect of multitasking preferences for predicting marital adjustment from perceived multitasking ability of married working individuals. From these results we may explain that individuals who exhibited higher perceived multitasking ability also expressed higher marital adjustment and multitasking preference also played a role of positive contributor for predicting marital adjustment from perceived multitasking ability. The interaction between the perceived multitasking ability and multitasking preference was turned out as significant. The conditional effect of perceived multitasking preference through perceived multitasking ability predicted marital adjustment of married working individuals. These results are in accordance with the previous work (Kirchberg & Roe, 2015; Sanderson et al., 2013) done on multitasking preference and multitasking ability in relation to job performance. Patra and Suar (2009) also conducted a study to explore the role of polychronicity/multitasking with marital satisfaction and happiness and provided empirical support for the findings of current study. These results are important and relatively new especially for Pakistani literature on marital adjustment. Pakistani culture is collectivist and traditional in nature where household and childcare activities are generally related with feminine role and this is might be due to the traditional gender role attitudes of people. In this context, role of multitasking preference and perceived ability for achieving better marital adjustment is very important because both married working men and women as spouses and as an individual have to fulfill multiple roles and responsibilities. Multitasking preferences and perceived multitasking ability of individuals may help to manage and utilize their time adequately across various roles and responsibilities. Moreover, egalitarian gender role attitudes may also play significant role in understanding marital adjustment especially in relation to multitasking preference and perceived ability of married working individuals, because egalitarian

gender role attitudes embed the idea of equality across gender and across domain for performing different tasks. Perhaps this is the reason that the findings of this study have revealed the significant and positive association of egalitarian gender role attitudes, multitasking preference, and perceived multitasking ability with each other and higher egalitarian gender role attitudes and perceived multitasking ability predicted the marital adjustment of working and married individuals having children. From the findings of this study, we may infer to conclude that multitasking preferences are vital for predicting marital adjustment from perceived multitasking ability of married working individuals.

Limitations and Suggestions

Cross sectional data and the use of self-report measures do not assure the causality of the relationship; therefore, this might be a protentional limitation of this study. Replication of the model tested in this study through longitudinal design should be done in future studies. Another limitation might be the selection of married working individuals both men and women. Larger data set and couples' data should be used in future studies to study marital adjustment, multitasking preference, ability, and gender role attitudes. However, for future researchers these results would be very beneficial to study multitasking along with gender role attitudes and interpersonal relations related outcomes such as satisfaction.

Implications

The findings of the current study would be effective and useful for professionals from various domains; for example, human resource managers/professionals can design training programs based upon the awareness and implementation of multitasking and adjustment abilities of employees. These findings can also be helpful for occupational health professionals in framing the human resource policies especially in the socio-organizational context of Pakistan.

This study may also offer implications for interpersonal and marital counselors especially working in Pakistan. From the findings of this study, they can infer an insight to develop and implement counseling programs for individuals in order to extend the role of multitasking abilities and marital adjustment skills. Therefore, it is very important for professionals and policy makers to pay attention and invest resources in this direction of socio-organizational growth and development.

Conclusion

Overall, this study documented that multitasking plays an important role in building and adjusting the interpersonal relations especially marital adjustment. The findings of this study are quite important as multitasking is also a relatively new construct and first time examined with reference to marital adjustment and gender role attitudes of married working individuals. In addition to this, it is pragmatic to conclude that multitasking preferences played an important moderating role for predicting marital adjustment from perceived multitasking ability of married working individuals. The evidences established from the findings of this study may also contribute in the development of empirical grounds for testing multitasking in relation to other relevant constructs like job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and quality of life.

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