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PERFORMATIVE DIMENSION OF FAMILY SOCIAL CAPITAL IN
MARITAL INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The family social capital is an embedded resource in family networks which can be utilized by spouses in defining and shaping their marital interaction. Family networks can neither be created nor operated in isolation and same is applicable to the marital interaction of spouses. The norms of the society guide the structural and relational dynamics of family networks. These dynamics provide a conducive environment for operating of family social capital within the family networks. The current study aims to explore the normative orientation of the family networks about spousal roles, in detail, to understand the functioning of family social capital in shaping marital interaction. Using the interpretive research paradigm, the chosen methodology of the study is qualitative. 20 married couples were recruited from Lahore using purposive sampling. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and a semi-structure interview guide was used as a tool to tap detailed experiences of the spouses. The results were derived through thematic analysis. The findings of the study showed that role of spouses is clearly categorized in two domains. Private domains, which are specific to housed-hold activities, are considered responsibility of women. Public Domains, related activities as bread earning, are the responsibility of the male spouse. The mothers-in-law were found to be active actor of family networks in conforming the marital performances of the spouses in accordance with normative orientation of family networks. The family social capital is playing a two pronged role. On one side it is acting as a helpful feature for the male to achieve his role expectations whereas the on the other hand, it is acting as a restraining factor against the female. In reinforcement of gender norms in marital interaction, family social

capital is being decapitalized and causing conflict between spouses which is negatively affecting the quality of marital relations.

Normative Orientation of Family Networks

Pakistani society is patriarchal in its normative orientation, hence it creates institutional dominance of males in families (Chauhan, 2014). Gender is not constructed biologically rather it is developed through the social and relational processes and is manifested in mutual interaction of structures, actors and agency (Brickell, 2006). The structural interaction of defining genders in families initiated through parental orientation for having a male child, providing best opportunities to him including physical nourishment (biological) and social nourishment (education and employment) and authorizing public spheres as male spaces. Such practices develop male as a strong and dominant gender and female as a weak and subordinate gender (Bird, 1996). This shared understanding of gender roles lays its foundation in defining family roles and preferences of individuals (Blackstone, 2003). Males become the head of the family and take control of financial resources of the family. The role of women is defined as complementing the role of the males which is to manage home in order to make it a comfortable living place for men. Individuals are bound to align their performances with the framework of being masculine or feminine. Any deviance from the socially accepted gender performances may lead to sanctions (Scott, 2006; Widmer, Constantin, & Carminati, 2010).

The masculine performance aims to achieve hegemony but any deviance from the defined masculine roles may be labelled as subordinate masculinity (Connell, 1995) and may receive disapproval in form of humiliation and isolation. Whereas, the females are to be fragile, submissive and complementing the hegemonic masculinity by reassuring her submissiveness which is labeled as hegemonic femininity (Schipper, 2007). Women are considered to be bound to maintain the hegemonic femininity and any deviance from the assigned roles may be considered as threat to the social domains and be labelled as pariah femininity. It is worth mentioning that it is the whole social process which works to portray men as 'men' and women as 'women'. The preliminary ground of this social process is family. The family networks are critical generative sources of inculcating gender identities and allow these gender performances in their networks which are later practiced in other domains as well (Kempeneers, & Pevenage, 2013).

Spouses are the members of family networks. The interaction of spouses is referred to as marital interaction including romance, intimacy, conflict and power dynamics of the dyad (Gottman, & Notarius, 2000). However, it is important to note that marital interaction is not a closed interaction. Family members including family of origin and in-laws remain active in shaping the marital interaction of spouses. The family networks are neither gender neutral nor power neutral. There exists a hierarchy in the networks on the basis of gender, income and position in the family

networks (Fisek, 1991). The same predefined hierarchy of family networks is manifested in marital interaction of the spouses.

Family Social Capital

The functionality of family networks for couples is determined by the access and mobilization of its embedded resources as family social capital (Lin, 2008). The family social capital is a relational capital that can be utilized by the actors of the family network for the mutual benefit and for the goal accomplishment of its members. The family goals, for its members, may range from social, economic, cultural and political but the principal among all goals is the goal to sustain family system without disturbing its normative orientation. Therefore, the heterogeneity is avoided in the family system and conformity is encouraged.

The current study has been conducted using the framework of Claridge (2018) for family social capital. The cognitive dimension of family social capital focuses on shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning among family members thus, ensuring the enforcement of pre-defined gender norms in the practices of marital interactions and arrangements. The structural dimension of family social capital provides the configuration in family network relations in accordance with the larger social system by defining the pattern of connections among members of the networks (Uphoff, & Wijayaratna, 2000). The normative orientation of family networks and the cognitive dimension of family social capital position the actors in the roles and determine the rules to perform these roles within the network. This dimension determines the principles of the interaction of network actors in the light of normative environment of the family networks, which is subsequently reinforced through cognitive dimension of family social capital. These two dimensions further delineate the relational dimension of family social capital which determines the nature and quality of relations. The relational dimension provides individuals with the sense of identity and belonging by owing the membership of the family networks, encourages the actors to fulfill the role expectations by conforming the norms of the family networks, and strengthens the relationship among actors by developing trust through obligations and reciprocity (Lee, & Jones, 2008). The primary aim of relational social capital is associability which binds individuals to keep collective goals ahead of individual goals which may require the sacrifice of personal goals for a larger benefit (Lazarova, & Taylor, 2009). The development of family social capital is a cyclic process. It is difficult to determine the cause and effect relationship. Rather it can be said that there exists a two-way causality in development of family social capital. However, the existence of relational ties and continuous interaction among network member is vital for the existence of family social capital.

Family Social Capital and Marital Interaction of Spouses

It is widely understood that social capital always works for the mutual benefits of its users by increasing information sharing, reducing transaction cost, fostering

reciprocity and increased access to the resources due to networking (Lin, 2008). Considering that family social capital contains all the attributes of social capital, the same positives can be assumed from family social capital for marital interactions. However, the literature also suggests that access and mobilization of family social capital is not on egalitarian basis (Lin, 2000). The existence of gender relations and hierarchies in the family networks also influenced the access and mobilization of family social capital. The configuration of networks is hierarchical with power imbalance among the network actors. The power imbalance can be the manifestations of gender, age, economic status and race of the members. Like family networks, family social capital is not a gender neutral phenomenon. The development and utilization of the family social capital is influenced with social gender norms. The gains and exchange of FSC is different for both genders. There is no equitable exchange or gain of FSC. Rather it is negotiated on the basis of power distribution. The actors are identified with their gender and are assigned their roles and responsibilities in accordance with it. (Julien, Markman et al., 1994; Bryant, Conger, & Meehan, 2001). The hierarchical structure of family networks gives dominant and prestigious position to males as heads of the families and as fathers, husbands and brothers. The females do not have direct access to the embedded power of the family structures, however, they exercise power through their male counterparts of the family like fathers, husbands, brothers and sons (Milardo, & Lewis, 1985). Therefore, majority among women does not challenge male dominance, rather they develop a negotiation to utilize male dominance in their favor with change of relations' title. A woman as wife can be weak but may be as mother-in-law of the girl has vested power to influence (positive or negative) the life of a married couple. On the contrary, women with the same relation title mother-in-law of a boy is at weaker position and may have to always be thankful and obliged of her son-in-law and his family for taking care of her daughter. These are the positional advantages of actors in a particular network which influence the access and utilization of social capital. (Partanen et al., 2008). The family social capital which can be advantageous for one person at a time may be disadvantageous for other person at the same time. For instance, the patrilocal and joint family system is the common residential system in the society of Pakistan which implicitly raises the expectations from women to be more adaptive towards family needs and family is not just limited to husband and kids rather parents in law and iblings in law also become the recipient of women services (Khalil, & Mookerjee, 2019). This increases responsibility on the women and may reduce the responsibility of males towards their families but this burden sharing has increased the caretaking tasks for the women which may influence the marital quality of the spouses negatively. Therefore, aligning with societal norms and defined role of the family networks may be positive for males but for females it will be the decapitalization of family social capital as it will keep on increasing her assessment and evaluation further by other actors in a family network.

METHODOLOGY

Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is concerned about the nature of social realities as its major question is “what” is to know about the world (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2015). Epistemology helps in understanding “how” the reality can be understood and known as it concerns the ways through which we are knowing and learning about the world (Mills, 2000). The ontological stance of the current study is subjective, comprised of multiple and equally important social realities which are constructed through social interaction. For this study researcher assumes that the world is populated by human beings who have their own thoughts, experiences, interpretations and meaning. By using the data collection techniques of interpretive design such as interviews, researcher will interpret the social construction of marital relation guided by the normative orientation of family networks and family social capital. Interpretivism is the epistemological stance of this study because it attempts to explore the social construction and experiences of spouses through the lens of family social capital.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research design is used to explore the multifaceted nature of the current research. This design best compatible for the current research as it helps to deeply explore, elaborate, expand and develop the construction of multiple realities (Mason, 2017) regarding the utilization of family social capital to develop conformity among spouses for the norms of the family from the interactions and diversity of experiences within the informal social networks.

Sample Size and Participant Recruitment

The 20 married males and 20 married females with five years of marriage, living in joint family system with at least one child were recruited for the current study through purposive sampling techniques from Lahore. The minimum marriage duration needs to be five years. The married couples with at least five years of married life with at least one child. The inclusion criterion of the study was developed to exclude issues to childless couples, understanding the role of family networks and family social capital while sharing common household for living and first five years of marriage demands extra efforts to adjust with new family system by both spouses.

Data Collection Method and Tool

The data was collected through the in-depth interviews as it is the best way to gain deeper understanding of individual experiences. A semi-structure interview guide was used as a tool to tap detailed experiences of the spouses.

The interview guide was designed by keeping the research rule. First part of the interview guide was information about socio-demographic information of participants. The purpose of this section was not just getting information but rather making the participants comfortable as well. The second part of the interview guide was about general daily routine activities. This information was quite relevant to the study so questions were posed in the general way but with the aim to extract maximum information from the participants without making them conscious. Third section of the interview guide was about the purpose of the current research. The questions were posed in an indirect manner by making sure to access to the maximum of the information. The last section of the research was about general recommendations to get the understanding about the participants requirements to make the process of marital adjustments a smooth transition from unmarried to a married person. All ethical considerations of the study were fulfilled by seeking informed consent from the participants to participate in the study. The anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of the data were maintained. To follow the detachment process, neutral suggestions were made to participants which could be helpful for strengthening the family social capital and have no direct consequences for their cultural settings. The tool was designed logically and consciously to avoid any harm to the participants. The interviews were conducted in Urdu as English is not understandable to most participants.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded digitally and then transcribed to verbatim transcripts. The transcripts were then translated into English. Data was coded both inductively and deductively, and categorized after stages of open, axial and selective coding. Then data was categorized based on themes which were driven from the responses. A pure qualitative technique of thematic analysis was used to draw conclusion.

Findings of the study

Role of Spouses

The findings of the study evaluated the understandings of spouses about their marital role expectations and associated sanctions in case of compliance or deviance from the assigned marital roles. The findings of the study broadly categorized the role of spouses in two domains namely; (1) Private Domain and (2) Public Domain.

There was clear understanding about the division of labor between spouse. A male spouse voiced out as, Spouses are the wheels of a car, having distinctive role and responsibilities to fulfil. Task of the man is to earn money and address needs of the family. Whereas, the woman has to manage the house, train children and take care of family. An educated woman is good, but her job is to take care of a house. If both spouses work outside home, it will disturb the family system.

The data showed that all participants agreed that earning is the prime responsibility of males and domestic chores management should be done by female spouse (Charlebois, 2010).

Private Domain Norms

In the light of assigned tasks in the private domain to women, the responsibilities of women can be categorized as:

1. Care of family (in-laws)
2. Care of kids and husband
3. Care of domestic chores

Domestic Chores/Household tasks:

The domestic chores were identified as cleaning house, managing kitchen related tasks with highest importance to cooking and laundry. The domestic chores were considered the sole responsibility of daughters in law. The associated pressure with domestic chores for women is just not completion of task, but time and the way of doing it was also important. The gravity of domestic tasks made a woman realize that she is just the replacement of a maid as a female spouse reported,

In simple words we consider wives and daughter-in-law are a full time maid which will not even ask for a salary. Maid can leave a job but a wife cannot. A maid can give her conditions of working but a daughter-in-law cannot. She is not even allowed to say that it is her house because the house always belongs to the mother-in-law. This reflected frustration and bitterness of women against the burden of the domestic tasks. Mother in law, being the elder lady of the house was noted to be on a stronger position in the family network. Her role was identified as a monitor and evaluator of all the household related tasks conducted by daughter in law. The daughter in law considered her task evaluation as biased and a mere process to exert pressure on daughter in law and keep control over their sons by poisoning him against his wife. As reported by the female spouse, My husband sees with the eyes of her mother and never tried to evaluate what I have done. My mother in law keeps complaining about my work even if it is up to the mark to show her supremacy on me and control her son. On the contrary, males do not consider it a controlling tactic rather they consider it appropriate and rightful as members of their family of origin are not strangers and would never want anything wrong for their married life. As quoted by a male spouse, Sharing any domestic issue with me is the right of my mother. She never poisoned me. In fact, she avoids saying things directly to my wife to keep a relation of mutual respect. I tried to be polite with my wife, but whenever I tried convince her about the requirements of my family her reaction would always be very loud and she used derogatory remarks for my family. The judgement of mother in law was not questioned by the son, firstly she is the mother and children have faith in their mothers. Secondly, they have seen her go through the same assessment process and continuation of her marriage is the qualifying

certificate of the assessment. She is considered to be more aware about family norms and is responsible for the continuation these norms hence her check and balance over daughter in law is considered vital. As stated by male spouse, All women go through this evaluation. My mother has also been through this. Now she understands what is appropriate for our family so she is guiding us, I want my wife to follow her in this process and be an expert as my mother.

There is no written evaluation criterion for the domestic chores. The complaints about domestic work were considered as a controlling tool for female spouses by the in laws and they exert power to create subordination of the other members towards one's own self (Woolley, & Greif, 2019). Female spouses found it undue interference due to boundary ambiguity but the male spouses considered it a right and duty of their family of origin. Fights and complaints of family about women's house management reinforces the enrooted norm of women as home makers. These household task related role expectations were reinforced further when 16 out of 20 respondents reported that failure to fulfil the domestic tasks by females annoyed the husbands' family. The situation worsened to a level that they got into the filling of divorce. As stated by the respondent, "All times complaining of my in-laws and fights with me made the situation worst for me to the level that I had to leave my house and my husband sent me a divorce notice".

It seemed to be one of the major causes of fights among couples and is also a source of conflicts (Lim,1997). Mother in law being the focal person of the family network reported to be controlling and using FSC, as her son, against his spouse to manipulate her for aligning with the pre-defined norms of the family (Bryant, 2001).

Family care

Family care with special focus to the care of mother in law and father in law, was identified as a separate responsibility of women. The care of family included giving company, serving timely meals, obeying, maintaining friendly relations, entertaining guests, visiting extended family and important of all, living in a joint family. The extended care giving responsibilities made a female feel less satisfied from her marriage (Bulanda, 2011). The husband's happiness and satisfaction from the marital relation is directly related to the happiness of his family as reported by a male spouse, "*The way to my heart for my wife is the satisfaction of my family from her*". Whereas, wives found this criterion of her evaluation as her humiliation her and the humiliation of her relationship, as narrated by the female spouse, "My husband just gives importance to his family only. For him, his mother and siblings are the most important personalities. His nephews should be treated like kings and I exist nowhere."

In Pakistani society, kids are the investment of older age. People consider males important not just for increasing their race or for carrying their inheritance but they consider boys as an important support to spend their old age. They keep feeding

their children that good boys don't leave their parent's alone in the old age. This norm for male child to be a support of old age was instilled in their mind so strong that they started evaluating their wife as good only if they took care of his parents and agreed to live in a joint family system. As stated by a respondent that, "My parents raised me through many hardships. Now it's my turn to return the favor by taking care of them. One can get more spouses but there is no replacement of the parents".

This approach of a male spouse put his wife and his family in dominating opposition. It was observed that wife and family of the husband were treated as opponents of each other and male as husband or son will be given as a trophy to the one chosen by him. Speaking in the favor of one party may be considered as an insult and failure of the other party. The same was discussed by Silverstein (1992). The strong pull of loyalties towards families of origin put the spouses in the opposition of the family of origin of their spouses for their attention, love and care. This is not just troublesome for the candidate but for his/her partner too. As narrated by the spouses,

Honestly, after marriage, I got stuck between my family and my wife. Pointing any of their mistakes was considered as I was being controlled by one party and insulting the other party. It is really frustrating as I don't know what to do?

Care of husband and kids

It was found that respondents did not mention kids as a responsibility. Both spouses were very clear that kids are women responsibility and as mother she is managing them well. As reported by a male spouse, "We might have many issues as couples but as a mother she knows what is better for the kids. My responsibility is to manage financial matters only. She is raising the kids". While talking about the wives' responsibilities towards husbands, they identified tasks including, managing his clothes, preparing and providing meals in time and giving him good company. As voiced by the male respondent, "It is women's responsibility to take care of husband's comfort. I wanted to spend a good time with my wife when I returned back but she is busy in the kitchen. She should be finishing all tasks before my arrival". Mothers in law proved to be strict administrators. They were found monitoring and evaluating domestic chores as well as the spousal relation. In fulfilling marital responsibilities, the women were expected to take care of all needs of the husband. Any mistake in these tasks was not ignored. The tasks related to husbands were highlighted by the in-laws and family-centric care by wife was reinforced through son. As echoed by the male respondent, Now obviously if my mother continues doing my tasks as well like washing my clothes my family will surely think that why did they get me married? Then if they will ask her directly or ask me to talk to my wife about it, they will be justified. My wife should not get angry on it rather focus on her tasks.

It showed that after marriage, the responsibility of fulfillment of husband needs was the sole responsibility of the wife. The family kept showing ownership over man as 'my son' and 'my brother' against wife but they all set themselves free from the responsibilities of a man and showed zero tolerance against wives in case of any negligence due to other domestic responsibilities. Non-compliance of the expected roles leads to the extreme sanctions including; violence, separation or divorce (Nielson et al., 2020). As reported by the male respondent, At last, when these quarrels started increasing, my family started saying that I should leave her if she cannot manage the house and my needs. They also offered that I did not need to worry as my mother could take care of kids.

Public Domain Norms

The public spaces are associated with males whereas women earning is considered complimentary. The glimpse of patriarchy which considers only man as bread earner can be traced in the findings which also reinforces that man's role is to fulfil the financial needs of the family (Kandiyoti, 2005). The identified roles of men as bread provider, controller and protective for wives and family are the reinforcement of traditional hegemonic masculinities which suggest that male should be earning while controlling and leading the females (Kandiyoti, 2005). The strict division of gender was criticized by female respondents because husband being earner controlled women choices of life as a wife stated, "Husband is considered as a king and superior and he should be treated like this. A husband's role is to earn only. Rest of the tasks are for female." Being at the leading roles, meeting needs of the family has raised the expectations of males towards females. In exchange of their earning services, they wanted their wives to be more grateful and submissive towards their demands. As stated by one respondent that, "I earn for her and my family. I really work hard whole day and she even cannot do house chores effectively and make my parents happy so that when I came back, I should be happy, relax and care-free." It is reiteration of capitalism which overtly creates the role of master and slave between spouses due to control over income.

Women earning and working in public spheres is not being valued by families. There is a glass ceiling of domestic responsibilities, when it comes for her opting a career after marriage. The data showed a clear role conflict and role strain for her as being wife, daughter in law and professional. Her accepted master status is housewife so when there is role conflict, husband demanded her to leave a career to pay proper attention to the house. As stated by a female spouse about the acceptance of her job, I sometimes think that I shouldn't have studied as I always have to face the taunts of education and job in case of negligence towards my job. Though, I am managing both domains properly, my in-laws always consider that I am focusing more on my job which is disturbing house routine. Due to their brainwashing, my husband wanted me to quit the job and when I didn't listen, he sent me to my parents followed by a divorce notice. This showed that the patriarchal norms are reinforced and being practiced in marital interaction among couples and through families. The non-compliance with traditional roles was not supported.

DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to understand the in depth normative orientation of the family networks about spousal roles to understand the role and functioning of family social capital in shaping marital interaction. The findings of the study showed that the patriarchal orientation of the society is also clearly reflected in family networks while defining the role of spouses. In line with societal norms, there is a clear and defined division of labor for males and females in spousal relation. Private domains are associated with females, whereas males take lead in the public spaces. This norm was found to be the basis of marital interaction as the spouses develop, evaluate and label their relations with this demarcation of activities. These norms of the society form the basis for the role expectations in a spousal relation and any deviation from these defined roles, results in conflict and a poor quality of marital relation. Due to these predefined spousal roles a working woman was considered to cross the defined boundaries of a spousal relation. Due to this stepping out, such woman faced role conflict despite managing both roles in an amicable way. The role expectations from a female include provision of family centered services so that the husband can proceed in his assigned role without any hindrance or distraction. These role expectations play a very positive role for the male to achieve his tasks whereas the same expectations become an excessive burden for the role of women. Therefore, the same family social capital, when performing for a male, provides a conducive environment for fulfilment of the role expectations of a male whereas the same family social capital, plays a negative role by restricting the opportunities of life for a female. This reflects a gender based positional advantage for a male.

The actors in a family network act to maintain the homogeneity of norms of the family so that cognitive family capital can be utilized at its maximum in order to achieve mutual benefits for the network actors. The mother of the husband was found to be an active and approved evaluator for daughter in law in the family network who was assigned the duty to safeguard the role performance of the spouses. She was assigned with the task to ensure that the traditional family set-up should not be disturbed and the spouses do not show any deviance from the set roles. In this regards, profession of a women was considered a threat for the wellbeing of the family hence various controlling tactics were used to discourage any heterogeneity of family norms by the female spouse. Despite being a woman herself like daughter in law, the mother in law was found to be the focal actor in domestic domain. Being mother of a son, she found to exercise as a proxy patriarch to control daughter in law and make her submissive towards her husband and in-laws.

Husbands were also found restricted by the norms of gender performance and they played active role by supporting their mothers and family of origin in making their wives conform with the family norms. The male spouses showed loyalties towards their families as a return to their efforts in raising them. This loyalty seemed to be dwindling the spousal bound as female spouses considered it as a feeling of being outsider in the family network. The non-compliance of expected gender roles of

spouses may lead to sanctions like taunt, humiliation and isolation from the families. These informal social control tactics were used the actors in a family network to ensure the role performances of the spouses. These tactics in their extreme form even included threats of divorce.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the principles of interaction are being guided by the normative orientations of society in general and family network in specific. The family social capital is playing a two pronged role. On one side it is acting as a helpful feature for the male to achieve his role expectations whereas the on the other hand, it is acting as a restraining factor against the female. In reinforcement of gender norms in marital interaction, the family social capital is being decapitalized and causing conflict between spouses which may also lead towards the breaking of marital relations through divorce. The families should learn to provide a reduced and conducive adjustment period to the spouses in a marital relation by providing advice and helping spouses internalizing family norms without causing any conflicts. Therefore, it needs to be realized that family social capital should play its role in a positive manner for the betterment of the martial relation. The families need to learn to be adaptive with the ever changing trends of the society so that the family social capital can be utilized in accordance with these trends and positive results can be achieved.

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