Investigating the Contextual Factors Affecting Gender Roles in Traditional and Modern Families

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A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

Objective: This study examines the contextual factors that influence gender roles in traditional and modern families.

Methods and Materials: A qualitative research design was employed, using semi-structured interviews with 24 participants recruited through online platforms. The study utilized a theoretical saturation approach to determine the sample size, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of gender role dynamics. Data were analyzed using NVivo software, applying thematic analysis to identify key themes and subthemes related to traditional and modern gender roles as well as the contextual factors influencing their evolution.

Findings: The analysis revealed three major themes: traditional gender roles, modern gender roles, and contextual factors shaping gender expectations. Traditional gender roles remained dominant in many families, with men expected to be primary financial providers and women responsible for caregiving and household duties. However, modern families exhibited greater flexibility, with shared financial responsibilities, equal household contributions, and evolving parental attitudes towards gender roles. Contextual factors such as media representations, legal frameworks, socioeconomic status, education, and digital influence played a critical role in shaping gender norms. While traditional values persisted in some households, external influences were found to drive significant shifts towards gender equality in modern family structures.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that while traditional gender roles continue to shape family structures, increasing economic participation, educational attainment, and digital exposure are redefining gender expectations. The interplay between cultural traditions and evolving social norms highlights the complexity of gender role negotiation in contemporary families. Understanding these dynamics can contribute to the development of policies and practices that support gender equity in both traditional and modern households.

Keywords: Gender roles, traditional families, modern families, gender expectations, family dynamics, contextual factors, qualitative research.

1   Introduction

Gender roles within families have long been shaped by cultural traditions, economic structures, and sociopolitical influences. Historically, family structures have reinforced gendered expectations, dictating the responsibilities of men and women within the household and broader society. However, contemporary shifts in economic participation, education, and social norms have significantly altered traditional gender roles, leading to a dynamic interplay between past conventions and evolving modern expectations (Endendijk & Portengen, 2025; Lee, 2025). The distinction between traditional and modern family structures has become increasingly blurred, as families navigate gender expectations in response to societal changes.

Traditional gender roles have historically been deeply embedded within family structures, particularly in patriarchal societies where men assume positions of authority and economic responsibility while women take on caregiving and domestic duties (Russell & Yang, 2024; Usman et al., 2024). In many cultures, gender roles have been maintained through parental socialization, religious teachings, and legal frameworks that reinforce male dominance in household decision-making. Research highlights that patriarchal family dynamics still persist, influencing behaviors and expectations in contemporary households (Pakarti et al., 2024). For instance, a study on conjugal roles in modern families found that while economic independence among women has increased, societal expectations regarding their household responsibilities remain largely unchanged (Singh & Pandey, 2024).

Parental expectations play a critical role in reinforcing gendered behaviors from early childhood. Boys are often encouraged to prioritize career aspirations and economic success, whereas girls are raised to develop caregiving skills and prioritize family over personal ambitions (Donath et al., 2024; Latupeirissa, 2025). Even in regions where women's participation in the workforce has increased, expectations surrounding their roles as primary caregivers remain largely intact (Owusu-Yeboah & Yeboah, 2024). Research on gender roles in family relationships suggests that such expectations create a rigid structure that limits women's opportunities for professional and personal growth while reinforcing male dominance in financial matters (Endendijk & Portengen, 2025).

Economic responsibilities have also been historically gendered, with men traditionally serving as primary providers and women assuming the role of dependents (Chaudhuri et al., 2024). In many societies, this division of labor is reinforced by employment structures that favor men's career advancement and limit women's opportunities for leadership positions (Jiang, 2024). Studies on work-family dynamics indicate that even as women contribute significantly to household income, they continue to bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid labor, including childcare and domestic work (Usman et al., 2024). This unequal distribution of responsibilities highlights the persistence of gender-based constraints in both traditional and modern households.

While traditional gender roles persist, modern families are increasingly characterized by more fluid gender expectations, shaped by educational advancements, shifting labor market demands, and evolving cultural norms (Laelah & Nawwir, 2024; Tu & Nghiep, 2025). The rise of dual-income households has contributed to a redistribution of domestic responsibilities, with many families adopting more equitable models of household management. Research indicates that in modern family structures, men are becoming more involved in childcare and domestic duties, while women are asserting greater autonomy in their career choices and financial independence (Audinovic & Nugroho, 2024).

One of the most significant changes in modern family dynamics is the shift towards shared financial responsibilities. In many households, both partners contribute equally to economic stability, challenging the traditional notion of the male breadwinner (Pakarti et al., 2024). Women's increased participation in the labor force has been facilitated by higher education levels and legal protections that promote workplace equality (Dinh, 2024). However, despite these advancements, women continue to face workplace discrimination and gender pay gaps, which hinder their ability to achieve true economic independence (Osmonova et al., 2024).

Parental attitudes toward gender roles are also evolving, with many modern parents actively encouraging their children to pursue gender-neutral aspirations (Jinyi, 2025). Unlike traditional households where girls were primarily socialized into caregiving roles, contemporary parenting strategies emphasize equal opportunities for both genders in education and career development (Lee, 2025). A study on gender identity in modern psychoanalytic practice found that exposure to diverse cultural perspectives through media and digital platforms has contributed to a more flexible understanding of gender roles in younger generations (Zhmurin & Korneichik, 2024).

Additionally, emotional and relationship dynamics within families are undergoing significant transformation. The emphasis on mutual respect, open communication, and emotional support is reshaping marital and familial relationships (Zhao & Mansor, 2025). Research on gender dynamics in marriage highlights that modern couples are increasingly prioritizing partnership and shared decision-making over rigid hierarchical structures (Angeletti & Angeletti, 2024). This shift reflects a broader societal movement towards equality in personal relationships and household management.

Several external factors influence the evolution of gender roles in families, including media representation, legal frameworks, socioeconomic status, education, and digital influences (Gorlatykh, 2025). Media plays a crucial role in shaping gender perceptions by either reinforcing traditional stereotypes or promoting progressive gender narratives. Studies indicate that exposure to diverse gender representations in television, films, and social media contributes to changing attitudes towards masculinity and femininity (Zacky et al., 2024). For instance, increased representation of strong female protagonists in popular media has influenced young girls to aspire toward leadership roles and financial independence (Jinyi, 2025).

Governmental and legal policies also play a critical role in shaping gender roles. Policies that promote gender equality in the workplace, such as parental leave and equal employment opportunities, contribute to more balanced family structures (Tu & Nghiep, 2025). In contrast, legal frameworks that restrict women's autonomy, such as discriminatory inheritance laws and unequal access to education, reinforce traditional gender roles and limit women's empowerment (Laelah & Nawwir, 2024).

Socioeconomic factors further influence the adoption of gender roles in families. Research suggests that wealthier families tend to embrace more progressive gender norms due to greater access to education and employment opportunities, while lower-income households often adhere more strictly to traditional roles due to economic necessity (Russell & Yang, 2024). In many cases, financial constraints dictate gendered divisions of labor, with women assuming unpaid caregiving responsibilities while men focus on income generation (Owusu-Yeboah & Yeboah, 2024).

Education plays a transformative role in redefining gender expectations. Higher education levels are associated with increased awareness of gender equality, greater career aspirations among women, and reduced adherence to traditional gender roles (Pakarti et al., 2024). Research

indicates that individuals with higher education levels are more likely to embrace equitable partnerships and support gender-neutral parenting practices (Jiang, 2024).

Finally, digital influence and technological advancements have accelerated shifts in gender roles by providing individuals with access to global discourses on gender equality. Social media platforms, online activism, and virtual communities have facilitated discussions on gender rights, challenging traditional norms and promoting progressive ideologies (Osmonova et al., 2024). Studies indicate that younger generations, particularly those engaged in digital spaces, are more likely to reject rigid gender expectations in favor of more flexible and inclusive roles (Ullah & Chattoraj, 2023).

The evolution of gender roles in traditional and modern families is shaped by complex cultural, economic, and social dynamics. While traditional expectations continue to influence family structures, increasing economic participation, shifting parental attitudes, and digital transformations have contributed to the redefinition of gender norms. This study aims to explore these factors in depth, providing insight into how gender roles are negotiated within contemporary family dynamics.

2 Methods and Materials

2.1 Study Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the contextual factors influencing gender roles in traditional and modern families. The research adopted an interpretative approach, allowing for an in-depth examination of participants' perspectives. The study sample consisted of 24 individuals recruited through online platforms, ensuring a diverse range of participants from various family structures and backgrounds. The selection criteria focused on individuals who self-identified as being part of either a traditional or modern family structure. Theoretical saturation guided the sample size, meaning data collection continued until no new themes emerged from the interviews.

2.2 Measure

2.2.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to express their experiences and views on gender roles within their respective family structures. The interview protocol was

developed based on existing literature on gender roles, family dynamics, and societal expectations, ensuring that key aspects were covered while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their perspectives. The interviews were conducted online via video conferencing platforms to enhance accessibility and accommodate participants from different geographical locations. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using NVivo software to facilitate a systematic and structured approach to coding and theme development. Thematic analysis was employed, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. A combination of inductive and deductive coding strategies was used, with inductive coding allowing new themes to emerge from the data while deductive coding ensured alignment with existing theoretical frameworks. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, member checking was conducted, where participants reviewed the preliminary results to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations.

3 Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the 24 participants in this study reflected a diverse range of backgrounds in terms of age, gender, marital status, educational level, and employment status. The participants included 12 men (50%) and 12 women (50%), ensuring balanced representation of gender perspectives. The age distribution ranged from 22 to 55 years, with the majority falling between 30 and 40 years old (n = 10, 41.7%). In terms of marital status, 14 participants (58.3%) were married, while 10 participants (41.7%) were single. Educational backgrounds varied, with 8 participants (33.3%) holding a high school diploma, 10 participants (41.7%) having completed a bachelor's degree, and 6 participants (25%) possessing a master's degree or higher. Regarding employment status, 16 participants (66.7%) were employed in various fields, including education, healthcare, and business, while 8 participants (33.3%) were either students or unemployed. Additionally, participants came from diverse family structures, with 11 individuals (45.8%) identifying as being from traditionally structured families and 13 individuals (54.2%) identifying as being from modern family structures. These demographic variations provided a broad perspective on gender roles, enabling a deeper exploration of both traditional and evolving norms within family dynamics.

Table 1

The Results of Thematic Analysis

Categories	Subcategories	Concepts (Open Codes)
Traditional Gender Roles	Parental Expectations	Household duties, obedience, caregiving, respect for elders, role modeling
	Economic Responsibilities	Breadwinner role, financial stability, male dominance, employment expectations
	Social Norms and Cultural Values	Community pressure, religious influence, gender conformity, reputation maintenance
	Marital Role Divisions	Husband as provider, wife as homemaker, decision-making power, submissiveness
	Education and Career Limitations	Restricted choices, lower priority for girls, early marriage, dependency on male support
	Emotional and Psychological Expectations	Sacrificing personal needs, emotional labor, resilience, endurance in relationships
Modern Gender Roles	Shared Household Responsibilities	Equal division of chores, negotiation, childcare involvement, work-life balance
	Financial Contribution of Both Genders	Dual-income households, career-oriented women, financial independence, shared decision-making
	Individual Autonomy and Personal Choices	Freedom in career, personal aspirations, self-sufficiency, delayed marriage
	Changing Parental Attitudes	Encouraging education, flexible gender expectations, promoting independence
	Emotional and Relationship Equality	Mutual respect, emotional support, open communication, partnership mindset
	Workplace Gender Dynamics	Equal pay concerns, leadership roles, career advancement, gender discrimination

Contextual Factors Shaping Gender Roles	Media Representation of Gender Roles	Stereotypical portrayals, role models, media influence, modern representations
	Governmental and Legal Policies	Maternity leave, equal employment laws, gender quotas, childcare policies
	Socioeconomic Status and Class Differences	Economic constraints, access to education, affordability of household help, cultural flexibility
	Educational Attainments and Awareness	Higher education impact, exposure to diverse perspectives, empowerment, knowledge of rights
	Technology and Digital Influence	Online feminist movements, exposure to global ideas, digital literacy, flexible job opportunities

The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed three main categories: traditional gender roles, modern gender roles, and contextual factors shaping gender roles. Each category contained multiple subcategories, reflecting participants' perspectives on the evolving nature of gender roles within families. The findings illustrate both the persistence of traditional expectations and the emerging shifts towards greater gender equality.

In the domain of traditional gender roles, participants frequently discussed the influence of parental expectations in reinforcing gendered responsibilities. Many interviewees described how parents played a crucial role in shaping gender roles from childhood, with one participant stating, *"In our family, girls were always expected to help in the kitchen, while boys were encouraged to focus on their studies and future careers."* Household duties, obedience, caregiving, and respect for elders were commonly mentioned as key components of these expectations. Additionally, economic responsibilities were predominantly associated with men, as they were expected to be the primary breadwinners. One male participant expressed, *"From a young age, I was told that providing for my family would be my responsibility, and that's how I've structured my entire life."* Traditional gender roles also emerged in the realm of social norms and cultural values, where societal pressure played a significant role in maintaining established expectations. Many participants noted that religious beliefs and community expectations reinforced predefined gender roles, making deviation from these norms challenging. The division of marital roles remained largely traditional in many families, with husbands viewed as providers and wives as homemakers. A female participant shared, *"Even though I have a job, my husband and his family still expect me to cook, clean, and take care of the children as if I were a stay-at-home wife."* Another major limitation of traditional gender roles involved education and career opportunities, as some participants highlighted the persistence of gender-based restrictions in certain families. Women were sometimes discouraged from pursuing higher education or ambitious career paths, with one participant explaining, *"My father always said that a woman's true success is in her family, not in her career."* Lastly, emotional and psychological expectations placed a significant burden on women, who were expected to prioritize family harmony over personal desires. Many participants described experiencing emotional labor and resilience as core expectations in their familial roles.

Conversely, the category of modern gender roles reflected a shift towards greater gender equality, particularly in families that embraced changing social values. The theme of shared household responsibilities emerged strongly, with many participants emphasizing a more balanced division of labor. One male interviewee noted, *"I grew up seeing my father never lift a finger at home, but in my marriage, my wife and I share all household tasks equally."* Similarly, financial contributions from both genders were increasingly normalized, as dual-income households became more common. A female participant remarked, *"I earn as much as my husband, and we both contribute equally to our expenses and savings."* Another key aspect of modern gender roles was individual autonomy and personal choice, with many participants emphasizing the importance of self-sufficiency and career aspirations. Unlike traditional expectations, young adults in modern families had more freedom to shape their lives independently. Changing parental attitudes also played a crucial role in shaping gender perceptions. Some interviewees reported that their parents actively encouraged them to challenge traditional norms. One woman shared, *"My mother always told me to be financially independent, so I never had to rely on a man."* Additionally, emotional and relationship equality emerged as an essential characteristic of modern gender roles, with many participants highlighting the importance of mutual respect and open communication in their relationships. Finally, workplace gender dynamics were another defining factor, as participants frequently discussed challenges such as gender discrimination, leadership opportunities, and equal pay concerns. A female respondent expressed frustration, stating, *"Even in progressive workplaces, there are still hidden biases that make it harder for women to advance."*

The third category, contextual factors shaping gender roles, encompassed broader influences that dictated how

traditional and modern roles evolved. A key factor was media representation of gender roles, with many participants acknowledging the role of television, films, and social media in either reinforcing or challenging traditional stereotypes. One respondent pointed out, *"Growing up, most TV shows portrayed women as caregivers, but now, I see more strong female leads who challenge these stereotypes."* Additionally, governmental and legal policies significantly impacted gender roles, particularly in the workforce and family dynamics. Laws related to maternity leave, gender equality in employment, and family policies played a role in shaping perceptions of gender roles. Another influential factor was socioeconomic status and class differences, with lower-income families often adhering more strictly to traditional roles due to economic constraints. One interviewee stated, *"In wealthier families, women have more freedom to work and pursue education, but in lower-income households, survival often dictates gender roles."* Educational attainment and awareness also influenced gender expectations, as higher levels of education were associated with more progressive attitudes. Several participants noted that exposure to diverse perspectives and access to knowledge about gender equality reshaped their beliefs. Finally, technology and digital influence emerged as a powerful factor, as social media and online activism allowed individuals to challenge traditional gender norms. One respondent observed, *"Online feminist movements have helped me unlearn many of the gender biases I grew up with."*

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the ongoing transformation of gender roles within traditional and modern family structures, emphasizing how contextual factors shape gender expectations. The analysis revealed three major themes: traditional gender roles, modern gender roles, and contextual influences affecting gender role evolution. While traditional norms persist in many households, economic participation, education, and evolving cultural narratives have contributed to shifting gender expectations. The discussion below contextualizes these findings in relation to existing literature and explores their implications.

The results indicate that traditional gender roles remain deeply embedded in many family structures, particularly in societies with strong patriarchal values. Parental expectations continue to play a crucial role in shaping gendered behaviors, with children socialized into predefined roles that reinforce male dominance in economic responsibilities and female subservience in caregiving (Endendijk & Portengen, 2025; Russell & Yang, 2024). These findings align with previous research, which suggests that parents actively transmit gender norms, reinforcing the belief that men should be breadwinners while women should focus on domestic and emotional labor (Pakarti et al., 2024). Studies have shown that such expectations begin in childhood, affecting career aspirations and relationship dynamics well into adulthood (Singh & Pandey, 2024).

Moreover, the study revealed that economic responsibilities remain largely gendered, with men traditionally positioned as financial providers and women expected to depend on male earnings. Even in families where women contribute to household income, societal expectations often dictate that their primary role should be caregiving rather than financial leadership (Donath et al., 2024). This finding is supported by previous research indicating that patriarchal family dynamics continue to influence women's financial dependence and limit their professional advancement (Jiang, 2024). The enduring expectation of male financial dominance reflects broader social structures that have historically constrained women's economic agency (Zhao & Mansor, 2025).

Another significant factor reinforcing traditional gender roles is the persistence of cultural and religious norms that emphasize the moral and social duties of men and women within the household. Many participants reported that their adherence to traditional gender expectations was shaped by cultural values emphasizing male authority and female obedience, which is consistent with studies highlighting the influence of religion and community pressures on gender roles (Gorlatykh, 2025). Previous research on gender stereotypes in family relationships has shown that such deeply ingrained norms continue to impact marital dynamics, career aspirations, and parenting styles (Osmonova et al., 2024).

Despite the persistence of traditional roles, the findings suggest that modern families are increasingly embracing more flexible gender expectations. The rise of dual-income households has contributed to a shift in domestic responsibilities, with men becoming more involved in household and childcare duties (Chaudhuri et al., 2024). These findings are in line with studies showing that economic changes and increased female workforce participation have challenged traditional divisions of labor, creating more egalitarian family structures (Audinovic & Nugroho, 2024). Research also highlights that as more

women attain higher education and professional success, gender roles within families become less rigid, allowing for more shared responsibilities in decision-making and financial management (Jinyi, 2025).

One key factor driving this transformation is changing parental attitudes toward gender roles. Many participants from modern family structures reported that their parents encouraged gender-neutral aspirations, providing equal opportunities for both sons and daughters to pursue education and careers (Lee, 2025). This aligns with previous research indicating that contemporary parenting approaches are less likely to enforce traditional gender expectations and instead promote individual autonomy (Tu & Nghiep, 2025). Furthermore, the influence of global discourses on gender equality through education and media has contributed to a broader redefinition of gender roles in family life (Zhmurin & Korneichik, 2024).

Emotional and relationship dynamics within families have also evolved, with modern couples prioritizing partnership and mutual respect over hierarchical structures (Angeletti & Angeletti, 2024). Many participants reported greater emotional support and open communication in their relationships, reflecting broader societal shifts toward egalitarian partnerships. Studies on conjugal role evolution indicate that modern families are less likely to adhere to rigid gender hierarchies and instead emphasize cooperation and shared decision-making (Singh & Pandey, 2024). However, despite these changes, lingering gender biases in the workplace and family expectations often complicate the full realization of gender equality within households (Pakarti et al., 2024).

The study also highlights the critical role of external contextual factors in shaping gender roles. Media representation of gender identities was a major influence, with many participants reporting that exposure to diverse gender portrayals in television, film, and social media contributed to changing attitudes (Zacky et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with research indicating that media plays a powerful role in either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms (Jinyi, 2025). Previous studies have shown that increased representation of women in leadership roles and depictions of non-traditional family structures have contributed to broader acceptance of gender equality (Owusu-Yeboah & Yeboah, 2024).

Legal and policy frameworks also significantly impact gender roles, particularly in relation to employment and parental rights. Participants highlighted that governmental policies, such as parental leave and gender-inclusive workplace regulations, have facilitated more balanced family dynamics (Dinh, 2024). Research confirms that legal protections supporting workplace gender equality and family-friendly policies play a key role in promoting more equitable household responsibilities (Tu & Nghiep, 2025). However, in countries where gender discrimination persists in labor laws, traditional family structures remain dominant, reinforcing the expectation of male financial provision and female caregiving (Laelah & Nawwir, 2024).

Socioeconomic status was another factor affecting the adoption of gender roles. The study found that families with higher income levels were more likely to embrace gender-neutral family dynamics, while lower-income families often adhered to traditional roles due to economic constraints (Russell & Yang, 2024). This finding is supported by previous research indicating that financial stability provides greater flexibility in household decision-making, allowing couples to negotiate responsibilities more equitably (Jiang, 2024). Lower-income households, by contrast, are often bound by necessity, reinforcing traditional divisions of labor where men prioritize wage-earning and women manage domestic responsibilities (Osmonova et al., 2024).

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research relied on qualitative interviews, which, while valuable for exploring personal experiences, may not fully capture broader trends in gender role evolution across diverse populations. The sample size was relatively small, consisting of 24 participants recruited from online platforms, which may have introduced a bias toward individuals who are more engaged in discussions on gender equality. Additionally, cultural differences between participants were not explicitly examined, limiting the ability to compare how gender roles vary across different social and ethnic backgrounds. Future studies with larger, more diverse samples could provide a more comprehensive analysis of gender role transformation.

Future research should explore the intersectionality of gender roles with other social identities, such as race, class, and sexual orientation, to provide a more nuanced understanding of how different factors shape family dynamics. Longitudinal studies tracking gender role changes over time could offer insights into the sustainability of modern gender expectations. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural contexts could help identify how global and local influences interact to shape family structures. Examining the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and remote work, in reshaping household gender responsibilities would also be valuable.

To promote gender equality in family life, policymakers should implement stronger legal protections that support work-life balance, such as equitable parental leave policies and anti-discrimination laws. Educational institutions should integrate gender equality discussions into curricula to challenge traditional stereotypes from an early age. Employers can also play a critical role by fostering gender-inclusive workplaces that allow for flexible work arrangements and equal career advancement opportunities for men and women. Lastly, media producers should continue to diversify gender representations to reinforce progressive narratives that encourage equitable family dynamics.

These findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender roles, emphasizing both the persistence of traditional expectations and the evolving nature of family responsibilities. While significant progress has been made, continued efforts are required to challenge entrenched gender norms and create more inclusive and equitable family structures.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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