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Universal Metaphors through a Cultural and Gendered Lens in Pakistan



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Abstract: *This paper examines gender differences in terms of conceptualizing abstract cultural notions like success, failure and love among others in a similar cultural background. The study derives its concept of systematic domain mapping proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, and Sharifian model of shared cultural cognition to suggest that the male and female speakers have differences in the salience of metaphorical source domains that are used to organize important experiential targets. The data have been collected by using a structured questionnaire comprising 14 metaphorical statements. The respondents are 25 male and 25 female aged between 20 - 25 from Sargodha. Each statement realizes the underlying conceptual metaphor without citing the use of figurative language. Quantitative analysis shows the fact that both groups draw on the same shared toolkit of cultural metaphors, yet they differ in the salience they assign to specific source domains. The results indicate that gender is a sub-cultural variable that determines priorities taken by individuals in metaphors not depending on whether they are aware of them. The paper substantiates the research on metaphor with empirical findings that prove diversity at the intra-cultural level. It informs how individuals use conceptual metaphor in discourse reflecting the patterned variation in metaphorical conceptualization by culturally driven gendered schemas.*

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Cultural Linguistics, Gendered conceptualization and Metaphorical Intensity.

1. Introduction

The past 40 years have witnessed a radically transformed the insight into the concept of metaphor due to an abundance of studies in cognitive linguistics. Nowadays metaphor is no longer perceived as a figurative style of rhetoric that should be applied to the stylistic enrichment of expressions and ideas. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) argues that metaphor is above all a natural attribute of human cognition and is a big part of organizing human thoughts (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) The theoretical frame postulated by CMT also holds that the spheres of experience that are so abstract are systematically

conceptualized and conceived through the assistance of concrete and embodied ones. Such mapped structures are considered as conceptual metaphors that are used in daily verbal communications in effective interpretation of intricate experiences.

The initial studies made in terms of conceptual metaphoricity proved that metaphorical thinking is a pervasive phenomenon and these metaphorical constructions are marked as primary metaphors. This kind of metaphors is based upon the repetitive processes of the sensory motor experiences (Grady, 1997; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). The metaphoric phrase,

such as 'Happy is up' refers to the physical experience of erect stance that implies vigor and optimism of physical condition that is superimposed on the emotional condition. The same happens to the comparisons made between physical warmth and emotional intensity that utilizes the metaphorical organization in the structuring of 'Affection is warmth'. They purport that the primary metaphors are universal to the cultures. Even though such patterns of uniformity on experience can be universal, they are culturalized differently in different societies.

This has given rise to the Cultural Linguistics, where it was postulated that all human languages are essentially are culturally constructed conceptual systems, which are developed, sustained and passed on in speech communities. Therefore, Cultural Linguistics shows how cultural conceptualizations come to be influenced by cultural cognition, only to be its constituting part, thus forming a metaphorical thought (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). Cultural conceptualizations have cultural schemas, cultural categories and cultural metaphors that will arise as a result of collective experience, values, and belief systems of a speech community. This view makes us see that a conceptual metaphor is not only an individual but also a socially distributed, cognition phenomenon. A collective input, cultural standards, historical practices, and ideological formats contribute to the formation of the way universal experiential patterns could be interpreted, detailed, and expressed in the speech models of a society.

A helpful way for conceptualization of such a process is through the metaphor of a 'culture sieve'. Although the primary metaphors can be based on general body experiences, the cultural models mediate, restructure and re-define such metaphors to make them culturally fit and significant. This means that cultural frameworks are selective in giving focus to some of the features of the embodied experience and ignore others, and in so doing, generate culturally peculiar metaphoric systems.

In Pakistani setting, various spheres of human experience of social life are symbolically systematized in dissimilar ways that mirror both

general experiential tendencies and culture prescribed values. These spheres are entrenched in the cultural traditions and religious perceptions of people who belong to the community. An example of this is 'marriage' that is often perceived as not just an individual romantic relationship but a socially approved institution which constitutes family relations, family ethical obligations and societal demands. On the same note, the measure of success is commonly linked to group honor, social respectability, and moral uprightness as opposed to individual success. Although 'love' is universal, it can be conceptualized in the cultural discourse with references to the principles of modesty, its authority in families, and the ideals concerned with religion. These culturally entrenched attitudes offer an ample platform on which the study of the manner in which universal metaphorical dispositions are transformed by local cultural templates can be approached.

Although the growing awareness of cultural difference in the metaphor has increasingly gained some empirical results and much research concerning conceptual metaphor has centered on the Western linguistic situations. As Kövecses (2015) remarks, the topic of cross-cultural difference in the metaphorical systems has not been well studied, especially in the societies, where cultural and religious systems have the powerful impact on the conceptualization in everyday life. Cultural Linguistics has taken a step into this gap by looking at the way that structures of knowledge that are held in common by different cultures influence the metaphorical meaning. The empirical research to explore this phenomenon has been done in South Asian settings to a limited level.

Pakistan is an especially attractive setting to study the issue of universal cognitive patterns and culturally determined conceptualization interaction. The Pakistani culture is described as having a complicated combination of the cultural heritage, Islamic morals, and changing social consciousness. All these influences culminate in the cultural schemas, which are used to direct the way individuals perceive

social relationships, goals in life and the emotional experiences. The university graduates who tend to maneuver between the traditional culture and contemporary influences, such conceptualizations could be seen as a continuation and a change in metaphorical thinking.

In this sociocultural context, the metaphors that will be used in the study are marriage, success, failure, love, life, happiness and struggle. These areas are extremely intertwined with the cultural identity and moral discourse, thus being sensitive to the cultural conceptualization to the maximum. As an illustration, the metaphors about marriage can refer to the thoughts about a journey, contract, or a holy union whereas the success can be expressed through the concepts of success, rise, and divine favor. On the same note, love images can swing between the experiential movements of love that are embodied with emotions as well as those that are governed by the moral aspects of the culture. The analysis of the evaluation and interpretation of such metaphors by speakers may thus shed light on the relationship of cognitive universals and cultural specifics.

The effect of gender is a cultural screen in the metaphorical processing. The experiences we have as Pakistani university graduates, shaped by gender and what we are taught to appreciate, articulate or pursue can compete in determining the metaphorical structures of English that we just find comfortable. It is not as much whether men and women use metaphors in different ways, but which ones they get attracted at. Their preferences, given the choice between two approaches to present such objects as love, marriage or success, might be based on the social reality, which each group has to contend with.

To convert this intuition into empirical data the participants rate paired metaphors (e.g. 'Love is a journey.' and 'Love is a bond.') on a Likert Scale. Instead of abstract evaluations, the design for the study focuses on relative preference which is easier to map using the cultural sieve. It is an easy method to follow the insidious role that gender plays in metaphorical judgment in daily English language.

The study of gender-based difference in such measures is of particular interest in the society where the gender roles are culturally disposed as well as socially salient. The gendered experiences can have an impression on the attitudes to other areas in Pakistan, including marriage and success, which subsequently can affect metaphorical assessment. To take an example, men and women can be different regarding metaphors that they believe are suitable to describe romance relations or career success. These differences can be equalized by larger cultural discourses of accountability, emotional manifestation and social identification.

Although, earlier studies report the gender variance in language use and the production of metaphors, there are very few studies that have investigated how gender affects the preference of conceptual metaphors in certain cultures. It is significant to fill this gap since understanding and evaluation of metaphors are not exclusively of linguistic nature, but also contain cultural knowledge and emotional scale, as well as the sense of social identity. Exploiting these issues in a Pakistani setting can thus help one in achieving a more nuanced perception of the workings of metaphor at the cognition cultural society nexus.

The current study aims to make its own contribution into this emerging field of study by analyzing the influence of Pakistani cultural models and gendered sociocultural experiences in interpreting conceptual metaphor of marriage, success, and love etc. The areas of interest will enable the study to gain both the culturally projected conceptualizations and possible generational changes among the educated young adults. University graduates are a specifically suitable target group since the level of their conceptual framework could indeed capture the interaction of the traditional cultural knowledge with the exposure of modern education.

The present study adopts an integrative analytical framework grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Cultural Linguistics. According to the view of CMT, the study deals with the way universal primary metaphors offer the thinking basis of metaphors. Within cultural

linguistics, it examines the way in which these metaphors are restructured in terms of indigenous cultural schemas as well as religious frameworks in a certain cultural setting. The concept of a culture sieve is a valuable conceptual framework in between these perspectives, as it entails the notion that cultural knowledge assimilates and restructures the embodied cognitive patterns.

The proposed research will also make contributions to various fields of knowledge through the combination of the cognitive linguistic theory with the empirical investigation of sociocultural analysis. To start with, it contributes to the research of conceptual metaphor offering an empirical support in a rather underrepresented by the literature cultural setting. Second it has a contribution to the Cultural Linguistics in showing how what is shared in terms of knowledge is culturally and how this interacts with general cognitive patterns. Lastly, it also brings out significance of the sociocultural variables especially gender in manifestation of metaphorical perception and appraisal of meaning.

Research Questions

1. How do cultural models and religious structures in indigenous Pakistani discourse function as a culture sieve?
2. To what extent does gender influence conceptual metaphor preference among Pakistani university graduates?

2. Literature Review

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) provided a groundbreaking publication with the book entitled 'Metaphors We Live by' to change the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphors. Metaphor was also thought of in this masterpiece not as a peripheral tool of human reasoning but as a major tool of human thinking. Most aspects of everyday conceptual systems are quite metaphorical and that abstract reasoning is organized by systematic examples amid conceptual domains (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Through this context, metaphor entails cognitive match in which things in a source domain are mapped on the target domain. As an

example, the underlying conceptual metaphors which are unveiled by the expressions like, a successful career path, falling in love etc. are the things like, life is a journey. and love is a physical force.

Other works that were done on conceptual metaphor theory expanded upon the cognitive basis of metaphor. This view was later extended by Lakoff and Johnson (1993, 1999) who proposed to combine the metaphor theory with results of cognitive science and philosophy, claiming that human cognition is inherently embodied and conceptual metaphors arise due to repetitive correlated findings of the body experience.

Of paramount development of this framework is the concept of primary metaphors, which was put forward by Grady (1997). Primary metaphors are based on the initial ways of experience, like that which connects affection to physical warmth or power to some vertical rise. Owing to the fact that these correlations are based on the fundamental human experience, it is said that primary metaphors are close to cross-cultural universality. As an example, the metaphor, 'Good is up', is widespread in most languages in that there are body experiences which are usually linked to good conditions like standing straight and being physically elevated.

Nevertheless, though the universal patterns of experiences can be considered the primary sources of metaphors, the difference in their linguistic embodiment and conceptual development can be observed among cultures. This has made the observers look at the effect that cultural situations have on metaphorical systems. This point of view incorporates the Conceptual Metaphor Theory into the broader sociocultural contexts.

The connection between culture and metaphor has also been under investigation with more application to the Cultural Linguistics. It encourages exploring the influence of the level of cultural knowledge and shared experience upon the meaning of language (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). The Cultural Linguistics theory suggests that language indicates socio-culturally shared conceptualizations of schemes, categories and

metaphors that are initiated through social experience.

In this approach, the metaphors are not just based on an individual mental action and also on socially spread and the culturally transferred phenomena. As a way of thinking, cultural conceptualizations are utilized by people in a speech community to cognize social relations, emotional conditions and ethical values and meanings. According to Sharifian (2017), these conceptualizations occur because of the historical practices, the traditions of religion, and the shared social norms, and they are instilled into the linguistic system that directs the communication between the members of a cultural group.

Kovces (2015) has also explored cross-cultural diversity widely in the context of metaphor and shown that cultural context has various impacts on metaphor such as, conceptualization of emotions like anger or love differ widely across languages because of differences in cultural beliefs and social behaviors. The result of such difference is the need to study metaphor in particular cultural context and not to look at it as uniform all the time.

This question is especially valid when it comes to the investigation of the culture and religious systems of the societies with strong cultural values. Cultural values might play off with embodied experience in such contexts to give rise to metaphorical structures that constitute local conceptualizations of social life.

The interplay of universal cognitive structures and culture has prompted the scholars to come up with models describing the influence of culture on metaphors. The concept of cultural structures being viewed as a kind of culture sieve i.e. filtering and re-formulation of universal metaphorical likelihoods is one very handy conceptualization. Though primary metaphors can be developed due to similar bodily experience, it is cultural models that formulate such metaphors as dominant and interpret them in a specific society.

Cultural models are also predominant in organizing the metaphorical representations of the socially important spheres in family,

relationships, and personal accomplishment. The anthropological linguistics has been quite aware of meeting such concepts such as marriage and success are ingrained within culturally particular regimes of meaning (Quinn, 2005). They are systems that offer interpretive models that shape the way people perceive the social roles, duties, and dreams.

The theme of a culture sieve, therefore, makes the focus on the co-evolutionary interplay between universal cognitive inclinations and culturally different interpretations apparent. This viewpoint does not treat metaphor as being universal or culture specific, but rather there is an interrelation between embodied thoughts and cultural knowledge.

The cultural conceptualizations within the Pakistani society lie in the middle of the interdependent system of indigenous traditions, Islamic morality as well as the changes in the social values that are developing. These factors aid in culturally shared schemas that define the way individuals constitute conceptual frameworks of core components in life such relationships, self-aspirations and emotional lives.

For example, marriage also takes one of the leading places in the Pakistani cultural discourse. It is generally perceived as both a romantic relationship and social structure that takes place within the family circles, moral commitments as well as the community anticipations. The cultural discourses of marriage are found to emphasize responsibility, honor and stability and this can shape metaphors individuals use to understand and explain marital relationship.

On the same note, social respectability, academic studies, and moral uprightness are often linked with achievement in terms of success. Success in most situations is not considered purely in an individualistic manner but also associated with family pride. Such cultural priorities can influence the metaphorical portrayal of success in a specific way and cause the conceptualizations driven by focus on the elevation, progress or divine approval.

Much cultural influence is also evident in the

field of love. Although romantic love is a universal human experience, its social interpretation and expression in modern society is different in various cultures. In the Pakistani society, the aspects of cultural norms which concern modesty, authority of the family, and religious values usually affect the conceptualization and communication of love. Such norms can promote metaphorical phrases, which strike a balance between the level of emotion and the culture of containment and moral decency.

Even though these cultural systems are rich, empirical studies of metaphor in the context of South Asia are also very sparse. A lot of literature in conceptual metaphor has concentrated on the western society and languages, thus there are very significant gaps in the literature regarding how metaphor works across different culturally diverse settings. Exploring the conceptualizations of metaphor in the Pakistani cultural contexts hence offers a chance to broaden the scope of existing research on conceptual metaphor theory.

The other significant aspect that is relevant in studying metaphors is the presence of the sociocultural variable of gender. Gender differences between language use, communication styles and discourse strategies have been recorded in sociolinguistic studies over a long period of time (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2003). Such distinctions tend to represent more of the prevalent cultural anticipations and societal roles revolving around gender in a society.

In metaphor research, studying gender as socio-cultural variable that shapes how metaphorical language is produced and interpreted can contribute to broaden the insights into how cultural sieve influence metaphor use. According to Cameron (2003), the context of social interaction and discourse determines the use of metaphors, which are, in turn, the products of the gendered norms of communicative practices. People can be inclined to use some metaphorical phrases as it is related to their social life and cultural identities.

The research of conceptual metaphors has

grown to be more intricate to examining the occurrence of differences in individuals when it comes to producing and understanding figurative understandings, especially the gender element. The review that follows focuses on the studies, which were conducted recently and explored the convergence between gender, cognitive aspects, and the sociocultural ideologies in the field of metaphor.

The basis of research in this area is the question of whether some of the metaphorical source domains are universally seen as masculine or feminine. In the article, Lopez Maestre (2020) used the analysis of the source domain of the hunt as a hunter. Although traditional androcentric view simply presents men as hunters and women as prey, according to Lopez Maestre, recent change is where women are portrayed in a contemporary state of being active and strategizing as huntresses. Nevertheless, this hunt by the woman is not always single-handedly. When the women are seen to be too aggressive the metaphors change to the negative archetypes such as the man-trap.

Ahrens et al. (2024) covered this point with three rating experiments in which over 1,000 participants were involved in the experiment. The methodology used by them confirmed that key words were related to five general source domains such as Building, Competition, Journey, Plant and War. Their analysis found out apparent gendered patterns. Words that were associated with War, Competition, and Building were always perceived to be more masculine, and feminine oriented keywords i.e. Plant and Journey was rated more feminine by women than their male counterparts. This study gives the concept of metaphors and gender stereotypes having an empirical foundation by the mere choice of domains of the metaphor source.

Engin (2025) chose a phenomenological approach to investigate the metaphors applied to male and female referees by fans. The results stated a very clear dichotomy that the female referees were frequently presented in the form of sexist objectification. they were referred to such metaphors as flower and rose or were restricted to the traditional social role, such as a mother. On the one hand, male referees were represented

in the metaphors of power and domination, i.e., lion, king or leader. This suggests that the metaphoric literature present in the eyes of the observers is likely to favor the traditional gender codes over the titles of professional competency even in a professional context.

Regarding the production of metaphors in writing, Fattahi and Nushi (2021) disputed the idea that the gender is a significant determining factor when producing the metaphor. They have made an observation on the case of TEFL students, that language proficiency was much stronger predictor of metaphorical density than gender. Even though according to some sociolinguistic theories, there could be a lexical advantage of females in learning L2 at an early stage, this result has not found such a statistically significant variant between the use of metaphor among male and female students in the university level.

The study by Reid et al. (2023) examined the effect of semantic neighborhood density (SND) and interpretive diversity. In their study, they have found that the poetic metaphors generally use concept vehicles that occupy the sparse semantic spaces, in effect, the words that have fewer neighbors, and this leads to the flexibility and emergent meaning in the interpretation. Their study did not show any importance of gender differences in the context of rating of the goodness of metaphors, but this sets a cognitive ground upon which some innovative metaphors are more favored than others in literary settings.

Matishak (2021) investigated the variety of effects of shyness as a personality characteristic on visual and verbal metaphors interpretation. Interestingly, the authors conducted a study and determined that both sexes liked the use of verbal metaphors the most as visual metaphors caused a lot of ambiguity and thus varying interpretations. Although high-shy individuals were predicted to have a negativity prejudice, the outcomes were insignificant, but females in the framework did exhibit superior general shyness scores, which might be the cause of their involvement with more ambiguous visual portrayals on the social level.

Ding (2009) places a warning that one should

not place too much trust in using universal conceptual metaphors. Regarding the Chinese culture of contriving well-wishes and the plants used by the Chinese scholars as their favorite motives, Ding makes his argument that the metaphors are considered sub-culture and accidental. Indicatively, a bat would remind one of fear in the western society, but in Chinese culture, a bat is a sign of good fortune because of sound resemblance. This highlights the fact that in any research that seeks to discuss gender based metaphors, it is important to consider the structures of the cultural and subcultural context, in which the members of the participants belong.

The existing studies are effective in determining that particular domains of metaphorical source are perceived in terms of gendered clines, such as War, Competition, and Building domains are considered masculine, whereas Plant and Journey scorecards are considered feminine (Ahrens et al., 2024). Moreover, research has shown that using metaphors as a means to enact gender norms is occasioned by sociocultural circumstances, and in most instances, women are victims of the sexist objectifying metaphors (Engin, 2025). Regardless of these insights on what is being used, the literature does not contain much on how the cultural conceptualizations determine the structural biases of metaphors of both the sexes. According to Ding, the metaphors are often subcultural and arbitrary and are based on a certain cultural unit (Ersu Ding, 2009). The researchers who focus on the cognitive goodness of the poetic metaphors in terms of semantic proximity or visual and verbal modality integration, tend to think of gender as a fixed demographic entity, but not as a dynamic cultural identity.

Cumulatively, the available literature indicates that, notwithstanding that gender might not have a radical impact on the frequency of source domains use (Fattahi and Nushi, 2021), it has a significant effect on the selection and perception of source domains (Ahrens et al., 2024; Engin, 2025). Critical assessment shows that in general, the metaphors become rather powerful ideological instruments, which may either support the traditional hierarchies or offer a platform of new socialized selves (López

Maestre, 2020).

Gender is a multifaceted social objectification which is created by stratified identities and codes of culture. These dynamics in the structures have to be analyzed. This solution goes beyond the level of stereotype testing to create a comprehensive perception of the role of gender in the experience, and interpretation of the use of metaphorical language.

The modern research on conceptual metaphors shifted the focus of examining the universal structure of cognition to the research of how the various variables of a specific person such as gender affect the process and choice of figurative language.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative survey-based design to examine how Pakistani cultural frameworks influence the conceptualization of metaphor and how gender functions as a sociocultural variable affecting metaphor evaluation. It combines insights from Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Cultural Linguistics (Sharifian, 2017). It investigates participants' preferences reflecting their gender oriented cultural affinity for metaphorical expressions

related to the domains of marriage, success, failure, life, love, happiness, and struggle.

The study utilizes 7-point Likert-scale instrument to measure the conceptualizations of the selected constructs. This approach is productive enough for systematic comparison of metaphor preferences across gender groups. It also allows to conduct statistical testing of differences in metaphor choice. The design, therefore, combines cognitive linguistic theory with quantitative empirical analysis. The research facilitates to examine how cultural models and sociocultural variables influence metaphor interpretation.

Participants

An analytical sample with 50 participants (25 male and 25 female university graduates) was selected. This balanced sample was used to ensure equal gender representation in inferential analysis. This population was selected because university graduates represent a social group that carries the features of traditional cultural frameworks as well as modern educational environments. This increases their suitability as representatives of culturally shaped conceptualizations. The table below describes their characteristics:

Table 1. Participant Characteristics (Sample, N = 50)

Variable	Category	n	%
<i>Gender</i>	Male	25	50.0
	Female	25	50.0
<i>Age</i>	20–22	33	66.0
	23–25	17	34.0
<i>Academic level</i>	BS	50	100.0

Sampling

For the recruitment of suitable candidature, a purposive sampling strategy adopted. The participants were adults aged 20-25 and as university graduates were proficient in English as second language. It was also observed that these participants must have real-time engagement with such domains as career development, marital roles and interpersonal

relationship. Gender is regarded as an independent sociocultural variable.

Research Instrument

Data collection was completed with the help of a questionnaire used as primary instrument. Abstract target concepts were structured in metaphorical statements. The responses were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from

1 = Does not fit at all with and 7 = Fits extremely well. The participants were required not to produce figurative expressions but to choose one construction representing their cognitive interpretation. The survey instrument also collected a brief background information of the participants; these variables were treated as grouping factors rather than as a core metaphor comprehension measure.

Reliability Analysis

To ensure the comprehensibility of the questionnaire items, a pilot study was conducted. The feedback from that small group was used to make minor changes in the wording of the statements. Cronbach alpha was used for assessing the internal consistency of the instrument. It also helped in evaluating the reliability. The value demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha was 0.74 that indicated the satisfactory level of consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey link for the Google form was shared with the participants via WhatsApp groups. Participation was voluntary. The participants were pre-informed about the purpose of the study. They were assured that their responses and would be kept confidential. They were presented with metaphorical statements with alternative conceptual framings of the same abstract construct within a specific domain. The participants were asked to rate the degree to which each statement fit their understanding. The responses were stored on a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted with help of Python-based tools. First, descriptive statistics were calculated to underscore the relative salience of each metaphorical expression.

Second, descriptive statistics were calculated separately for each gender group i.e. male and female. Third, independent-samples *t* tests were conducted for each item to test gender differences in mean rating. To be in line with the established practice in linguistics Likert-scale responses were treated as continuous variables.

4. Results and Discussion

The results are demonstrated in three stages. The first stage comprises descriptive statistics to show the relative salience of the metaphor preference items. The second stage reports descriptive statistics by gender to highlight differences in mean ratings between male and female participants. The third stage shows independent-samples *t* tests leading to determine whether those gender-based differences are statistically significant.

Descriptive Statistics

The table 2 below shows the descriptive statics for metaphor preference across gender oriented cultural cognition. The mean values reveal the agreement for the metaphorical structures selected for the constructs of life, love, happiness and struggle. Life is a continuous struggle against challenges ($M = 5.96$, $SD = 1.18$), Life is a journey full of different paths and destinations secures ($M = 5.90$, $SD = 1.27$), for 'Love is a powerful force that brings people together' ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.32$), Love is a deep emotional bond between two people ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.34$), and Happiness is a light that brightens life ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.21$) show receive high ratings. By contrast, the lowest arithmetic scores are noted for 'Failure is hitting a barrier that stops progress' ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.84$) and 'Failure means falling down after trying to move forward' ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.64$) and this suggests weaker endorsement by the participants.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Metaphor Preference Items (Overall Sample)

Item	Statement	N	M	SD	Min	Max
1	Marriage is a gamble where two partners stake their future	50	3.56	1.74	1	7
2	Marriage creates a bond between two families	50	5.56	1.36	1	7
3	Success means reaching the top after hard effort	50	4.76	1.78	1	7
4	Success is achieving a goal after a long journey	50	4.88	1.39	2	7

Item	Statement	N	M	SD	Min	Max
5	Failure means falling down after trying to move forward	50	3.62	1.64	1	7
6	Failure is hitting a barrier that stops progress	50	3.52	1.84	1	7
7	Life is a journey full of different paths and destinations	50	5.90	1.27	2	7
8	Life is a continuous struggle against challenges	50	5.96	1.18	3	7
9	Love is a deep emotional bond between two people	50	5.64	1.34	1	7
10	Love is a powerful force that brings people together	50	5.60	1.32	1	7
11	Happiness feels like being lifted up inside	50	5.54	1.31	1	7
12	Happiness is a light that brightens life	50	5.64	1.21	2	7
13	Struggle is a battle that requires strength and persistence	50	5.68	1.25	2	7
14	Struggle is a difficult path that one must travel	50	5.34	1.35	2	7

Note. The responses are calculated on a 7-point Likert scale with: 1 = *Does not fit at all*, 2 = *Fits minimally*, 3 = *Fits somewhat*, 4 = *Neutral*, 5 = *Fits moderately well*, 6 = *Fits very well*, 7 = *Fits extremely well*

Descriptive Statistics by Gender

The table 3 below offers descriptive statistics specifically from gender perspective. The group means show that female participants generally reported slightly higher levels of agreement than

that of male participants on several items, particularly those related to life, happiness, and love. For example, the rating for ‘Life is a journey full of different paths and destinations’ (M = 6.28, SD = 0.94) is higher than that of male (M = 5.52, SD = 1.45). In the same way, female associate higher ratings to ‘Life is a continuous struggle against challenges’ and Happiness is a light that brightens life’. These statistical results demonstrate the patterns reflecting the presence of variation based upon gender.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Metaphor Preference Items by Gender

Item	Statement	Male n	Male M	Male SD	Female n	Female M	Female SD
1	Marriage is a gamble where two partners stake their future	25	3.28	1.67	25	3.84	1.80
2	Marriage creates a bond between two families	25	5.64	1.11	25	5.48	1.58
3	Success means reaching the top after hard effort	25	4.32	1.93	25	5.20	1.53
4	Success is achieving a goal after a long journey	25	4.56	1.23	25	5.20	1.50
5	Failure means falling down after trying to move forward	25	3.80	1.53	25	3.44	1.76
6	Failure is hitting a barrier that stops progress	25	3.52	1.85	25	3.52	1.87
7	Life is a journey full of different paths and destinations	25	5.52	1.45	25	6.28	0.94
8	Life is a continuous struggle against challenges	25	5.60	1.26	25	6.32	0.99
9	Love is a deep emotional bond between two people	25	5.48	1.39	25	5.80	1.29
10	Love is a powerful force that brings people together	25	5.36	1.47	25	5.84	1.14
11	Happiness feels like being lifted up	25	5.28	1.10	25	5.80	1.47

Item	Statement	Male n	Male M	Male SD	Female n	Female M	Female SD
	inside						
12	Happiness is a light that brightens life	25	5.32	1.31	25	5.96	1.02
13	Struggle is a battle that requires strength and persistence	25	5.60	1.26	25	5.76	1.27
14	Struggle is a difficult path that one must travel	25	5.32	1.35	25	5.36	1.38

Note. Male group $n = 25$; female group $n = 25$

Inferential Analysis: Gender-Based Comparison

Independent t tests for each metaphor preference were used to measure the gender related differences. Table 4 below reveals the results showing that female responses carry higher mean agreement score than male. Two items in this regard are notable i.e. 'Life is a journey full of different paths and destinations', $t(48) = -2.20$, $p = .032$, and 'Life is a continuous struggle against challenges', $t(48) = -2.25$, $p = .029$.

The other items do not exhibit statistical significance suggesting that common metaphorical salience across gender groups.

However, the expression 'Happiness is a light that brightens life' reaches $t(48) = -1.92$, $p = .060$ that reflects the female strong inclination towards this metaphorical foregrounding.

These results substantiate that the preference patterns chosen by respondents in the conceptualization of abstract domains are rooted in shared cultural schemas. Gender as socio-cultural variable influences the degree of agreement and prominence of metaphorical framing. The analysis shows that male and female participants do not use different metaphorical system. It indicates how each gender prioritizes the specific metaphorical mappings for the same concepts.

Table 4. Gender-Based Comparison of Metaphor Preference Items (*Independent-Samples t-Test Results*)

Item	Male M	Male SD	Female M	Female SD	t	df	p
1	3.28	1.67	3.84	1.80	-1.14	48	.259
2	5.64	1.11	5.48	1.58	0.41	48	.681
3	4.32	1.93	5.20	1.53	-1.79	48	.080
4	4.56	1.23	5.20	1.50	-1.65	48	.105
5	3.80	1.53	3.44	1.76	0.77	48	.443
6	3.52	1.85	3.52	1.87	0.00	48	1.000
7	5.52	1.45	6.28	0.94	-2.20	48	.032*
8	5.60	1.26	6.32	0.99	-2.25	48	.029*
9	5.48	1.39	5.80	1.29	-0.84	48	.403
10	5.36	1.47	5.84	1.14	-1.29	48	.203
11	5.28	1.10	5.80	1.47	-1.41	48	.164
12	5.32	1.31	5.96	1.02	-1.92	48	.060
13	5.60	1.26	5.76	1.27	-0.45	48	.656
14	5.32	1.35	5.36	1.38	-0.10	48	.918

Discussion

The results show that metaphorical structures related to the concepts of love, happiness and

struggle were given highest levels of rating whereas, the conceptual metaphors for failure received lower rating. The construction of conceptual metaphor i.e. 'Life is journey full of different paths and destinations.' and 'Life is a continuous struggle against challenges.' are observed with higher ratings by the female participants. Other items receive commonly shared ratings however, gender driven salience indicate the difference. This affirms the sameness of metaphorical system used by male and female participants, the emergence of difference is tied with how each group activates the same conceptual metaphor.

The findings indicate that metaphoricity is culturally charged phenomenon. The significance of gender in yielding variation of structural mapping is notable. The co-occurrence of shared as well as divergent patterns adopted by both the gender groups suggests that metaphorical cognition is collectively anchored and socially varied. Shared cultural schemas are accessed across genders in the same way however, gender specific experiences impact how each group map the source domain on to the emotional concept. This supports the view gender acts as a significant subcultural filter that influences the relative salience without requiring a separate cognitive metaphor system.

The analysis also confirms that the users of English in Pakistan make their metaphorical preferences by drawing on both collective cultural knowledge and intra-cultural models of gender identity. The findings also carry implications for cultural linguistics and discourse analysis particularly in showing that metaphorical meaning may be foregrounded differently within the same cultural context.

5. Conclusion

The study substantiates the fact that conceptual metaphors are hardly experienced or judged by the person in the same category of culture where it is shared. It illustrates the way they are inequitably valued between genders that works as a socio-cultural variable. Based on the cultural Linguistics approach, the results show that variation does not reside in presence of

differentiated metaphor system but is brought about by the prominence, conceptual density as well as epistemic-moral loading of common metaphors. This supports the opinion that gender is an important variable to mediate embodied experience. Therefore metaphor is not cognitive in its purest sense but it is a formation that is cultural. Overall, the study contributes to a dynamic conceptual and cultural shift in the perception of conceptual metaphor as a relative and context-specific phenomenon that can be empirically further investigated to clarify the influence of other socio-cultural factors that have a role in metaphorical cognition.

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