

# Desire for Social Freedom (DSF) among Working and Non-Working Women in Rural and Urban Areas

## Abstract

This study aims at assessing the impact of urbanisation and work status on the Desire for Social Freedom (DSF) among women. The sample comprised 360 women from Kashmir region of Jammu and Kashmir State in India, selected through multistage random sampling technique. The tool comprised a scale regarding "Women's Desire for Social Freedom" constructed by Bushan, L. I. (1987). The results indicate that women generally have low Desire for Social Freedom (DSF) and moderate desire for freedom from parents/husbands; and economic freedom and social equality. However, there is positive impact of urbanisation on women's Desire for Social Freedom (DSF). Working women have also shown significant DSF than non-working women. Increase in age of women and increased life comfort facilities in their homes have also shown positive influence on their general DSF, freedom from customs, taboos and rituals; freedoms from parents/husbands; freedom from sex and marriage ; and economic freedom and social equality.

**Keywords:** DSF, Working and Non-Working Women, Rural and Urban Women.

## Introduction

Social freedom is the concept philosophers, political scientists, and also economists are often concerned with - often without realizing it - when dealing with the subject of liberty. The definition of social freedom has two parts. First, it means protection against threats to the nation's existence and well-being. Second, it means a search for measures and possibilities to achieve the goals of social development and improvement. Social freedom implies the creation and preservation of conditions in which each citizen can develop as an educated, creative and responsible personality. It is very important to note the difference between the common sense concept of freedom of choice and the social concept of freedom based on economic and cultural measures. Social freedom gives priority to national consciousness and intellectual resources. Such comprehension of identity implies the protection of the vitally important interests of the person from threats arising from internal factors (Jurate, 2007). Social freedom mostly is based on national freedom, dignity, self-respect, self-esteem and responsibility on the part of the people. Social freedom is expressed as knowing and feeling dependence upon society and responsibility toward it, as well as the wish to belong to it. This means that each member of the society is aware of their freedom (is educated), belongs to the society (participates in social life) and can achieve freedom (the social conditions which ensure a worthy human life). The main threat to social freedom is gender inequality. Gender inequality exists within families, society, work places, salaries, and job and career opportunities. The situation of rural women has become especially desperate. Gender disparities also implies in opportunities like less free time and fewer educational opportunities because of the growing share of unpaid household work caused by low standards and reduced childcare facilities (Jurate, 2007).

In fact, different sculptures present various facets of the image of a woman in society. They reveal the high position and esteem that she commanded in her various roles in society and the gradual retrogression in her position from a pursuer of knowledge, connoisseur of art and custodian of culture to a mere object of entertainment (Vashishtha, 1996).

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**Review of Literature**

Jean and Timothy (1985) examined women's contribution to farm household income on small farms in three areas of Zambia. Data collected from a sample of 112 women show that females contribute more than half of the hours of agricultural labor done by their households as well as more than four-fifths of the hours of household labor. In addition, females contribute more than half of the average household's off-farm income (gained from wage labor and small-scale trading). When net farm income is allocated based on hours contributed and this is added to off-farm income, females generate 55% of the average household's cash income.

Watkins, et.al. (1993) found that women's work in farms in Indonesia is important both for the family economy and for the development of the country as a whole, and employment creation projects should focus on the needs of these women. Research carried out in South Sumatra has been used to outline links between women's family responsibilities and the type of paid work they carry out. Trading is more important than agricultural labour, and trading requires little formal education, is flexible in terms of time and place, and brings both an income and prestige.

Abdullah and Mamun (2005) conducted an empirical study in Bangladesh to assess the increase of women's economic opportunity, security and empowerment and their effect on poverty and changes in the traditional rural social structure. Based on both qualitative and quantitative survey research, the study has organized in-depth interviews and focus group discussion with the programme clients of the two NGOs in Bangladesh. The findings suggest that micro credit and its supportive programs have led to a remarkable enhancement in social network formation and development, an improved status in family and community, increased mobility and to some extent also greater self-confidence and feeling of identity for the women. It also has given space to establish and strengthen social ties that reach beyond their familial networks. Emboldened with the awareness of self-identity beyond kinship ties, women have begun to build a collective identity with an extra-familial "face to face" effective group beyond her small locality. These self-identified components of social capital have expanded each woman's life options and introduced new social opportunities for the group. Interaction at the centre has graduated into new and strengthened networks; while mobility has given each woman a socially sanctioned license to move about the village and, therefore, the opportunity to call on and continue to build her networks. Perhaps, social implications of micro-credit lending system are more powerful than the economic implications. Sustainable economic and social prosperity seems to be cultivated by regular and frequent interaction and have enabled women to continue to prosper through trust and community cooperation networks long after the initial acquisition of financial capital. The collective nature of group lending NGO style has proven its far reaching implications on rural women's ability to build social capital.

Ishak and Watiabas (2006) interviewed 1227 Malaysian women to ascertain how their status has changed over the years, and also how their family circumstances has changed. The findings reveal that many Malaysian women devote little time to physical leisure activities. It is felt that more fun could be experienced with their families, problems concerning leaving children at home, the belief that family activities strengthened relationships between members and allowed children to get more attention. The study also examines the reasons why the women do not have more leisure time. The reasons most frequently mentioned are busy working, fatigue, distances to be travelled, lack of facilities, and family commitments. The reason, which may have a bearing on women's access to leisure, is that more and more women are entering the labour force.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study is based on following objectives:

1. To assess the levels of women's Desire for Social Freedom (DSF)
2. To observe Desire for Social Freedom (DSF) among working and non-working women in rural and urban areas
3. To find the impact of socio-personal characteristics on women's Desire for Social Freedom (DSF)

**Hypotheses under the Study**

Following hypotheses are put forth under the study:

1. There are significant differences in Desire for Social Freedom (DSF) among working and non-working women in rural and urban areas.
2. Impact of socio-personal characteristics is highly significant on Desire for Social Freedom (DSF) among women.

**Materials and Method**

This study is based on 360 women selected from all districts of Kashmir valley in Jammu and Kashmir State of India. Out of 360 women respondents; fifty per cent (i.e., 180) were selected from rural areas and other fifty per cent (i.e., 180) were selected from urban areas. In both these areas, again an equal percentage i.e. fifty per cent, were those women respondents who earned cash for their work (working women) and/or fifty per cent were those who did not earn cash for their work (non-working women). Thus, 90 women respondents from urban areas and 90 women respondents from rural areas were working women. Similarly, 90 women respondents in urban areas and 90 women respondents in rural areas were non-working women. Multistage random sampling method was used for the purpose.

The tool comprised a scale regarding "Women Social Freedom Scale" (WSF) constructed by Bhusan, L. I.(1987).The scale included 24 items, out of which 16 were positive items and 8 items were negative. The scoring of the items was done as per the prescribed guidelines. Response of "agreement" to a positive item was scored as 1 and "disagreement" was scored zero. In case of negative items in the scale, the scoring was reversed. The possible scores, therefore, ranged from 0 to 24, higher score indicated

greater desire for "social freedom" on the part of the subject. In addition to 'General Desire for Social Freedom' among women; the four dimensions of social freedom were also studied i.e., freedom from parents or husband; freedom from sex and marriage; freedom from social customs, taboos and rituals; and economic freedom and social equality.

The data collected was analyzed through the statistical software namely SPSS, computing percentiles ( $P_{20}$ ,  $P_{40}$ ,  $P_{60}$ ,  $P_{80}$  and  $P_{99}$ ), percentages,  $\chi^2$  -value, degrees of freedom, and levels of significance, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) and Correlation Analysis. Levels of significance were obtained at the p-values  $\leq 0.01$ ,  $\leq 0.05$  and  $\geq 0.05$ . The p-value of  $\leq 0.01$  was regarded as highly significant. The p-value  $\leq 0.05$  was considered significant, the p-values of  $\geq 0.05$  was calculated as in significant. The reliability of the scale regarding Women Social Freedom (WSF) was tested for its validity and was found reliable by 89 per cent through reliability test. The general desire for social freedom was divided into the categories of very low ( $P_{20}$ ), low ( $P_{40}$ ), medium ( $P_{60}$ ), high ( $P_{80}$ ) and very high ( $P_{99}$ ). The 'Very Low' comprised only up to 20 per cent desire for social freedom and the 'Low' held only 20-40 per cent desire for social freedom. The 'Medium' desire represented 40-60 per cent social freedom; whereas 'High' desire possessed 60-80 per cent and 'Very high' meant 80-100 per cent desire for social freedom. In case of freedom from parents or husband; freedom from customs, taboos or rituals; freedom from sex and marriage; and economic freedom and social equality, their levels were labelled as No Desire (zero score on the scale), Low Desire ( $P_{40}$ ), Medium Desire ( $P_{60}$ ) and High Desire ( $P_{80}$ ). The 'No Desire' meant that the respondents had no desire for freedom regarding any of their specific roles. The 'Low Desire' suggested up to 40 per cent desire for freedom; while 'Medium Desire' depicted 40-60 per cent desire for freedom and 'High Desire' comprised more than 80 per cent desire for freedom from any of their specific roles in life.

### Results and Discussion

Differences between levels of Desire for Social Freedom among women are shown in Table 1. The highly significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) are observed in the mean scores of general desire for social freedom; freedom from parents or husband; freedom from customs, taboos and rituals; freedom from sex and marriage; and economic freedom and social equality. The absolute standard error within all the mean scores is also found very less (almost zero). The mean score within the levels of the each freedom equals the percentage already set for these levels. The highest mean score for general desire for social freedom fall 19.10 and its least mean score comprises 3.77. Similarly, the highest mean scores for freedom from customs, taboos and rituals; economic freedom and social equality; freedom from sex and marriage; and freedom from parents or husband; represent 7.27, 5.82, 5.45 and 3.00 respectively. The lowest mean scores for all these freedoms are zero or around one.

Table 2 depicts rural and urban differences in women's desire for social freedom. Majority of women in rural areas have low desire for social freedom (59.44 per cent); whereas 31.67 per cent urban women desire social freedom at moderate level. Moreover, 25 per cent and 26.11 per cent urban women in urban areas desire social freedom at high and very high levels respectively. About 28.33 per cent rural women do not desire freedom from their parents/husbands; while 62.22 per cent urban women desire it at a medium level. However, 78.89 per cent rural women have low desire for freedom from customs, taboos and rituals; while 30 per cent urban women desire such freedom at high level. Similarly, 78.33 per cent rural women have low desire for freedom from sex and marriage; whereas 41.11 per cent urban women desire freedom from sex and marriage at high level. In case of economic freedom and social equality, 48.89 per cent rural women desire it at moderate level; while 56.11 per cent urban women have high desire for it. Highly significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) are found between rural and urban women in case of their general desire for social freedom; freedom from parents/husbands; freedom from customs, taboos and rituals; freedom from sex and marriage; and economic freedom and social equality.

Table 3 reveals desire for social freedom among working and non-working women. It is found that working women have medium desire for social freedom (32.22 per cent); whereas non-working women have low desire for social; freedom (45.56 per cent). Freedom from parents/husbands is also desired at medium level by 58.33 per cent working women; whereas 49.44 per cent non-working women desire it at low level. Similar is case with desire for freedom from customs, taboos and rituals which is desired by 23.89 per cent and 17.78 per cent working women at medium and high levels respectively but 63.33 per cent non-working women desire it at low level. Working and non-working women (47.78 per cent and 52.78 per cent respectively) desire freedom from sex and marriage almost equally low. However, working women desire more economic freedom and social equality by 56.11 per cent and 36.67 per cent at medium and high levels respectively than 48.33 per cent non-working women, who desire it at low level. There are highly significant differences between working and non-working women for their general desire for social freedom; freedom from parents/husbands; freedom from customs, taboos and rituals; freedom from sex and marriage; and economic freedom and social equality ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Correlation analysis of Women's Social Freedom (WSF) and their socio-personal dimensions are observed in Table 4. This table under analysis depicts that the age of women has a positively significant influence ( $p < 0.05$ ) on general desire for social freedom. No other aspect of women's desire for social freedom is influenced by their age ( $p > 0.05$ ). The earning age of women shows a positive and highly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) effect on all the aspects of women social freedom. However, negative and highly significant relation ( $p < 0.01$ ) is found in the family size of the women with all the aspects of women social

freedom, except the general desire for social freedom, which has significant negative relation at 0.05 with the family size of respondents. The life comfort facilities available in the women's houses have shown the positive and highly significant influence on all aspects of women's desire for social freedom, except on desire for freedom from customs, taboos and rituals.

Majority of women have low desire for general social freedom; freedom from customs, taboos or rituals; and freedom from sex and marriage; while the majority of women have medium desire for freedom from parents or husband; and for economic freedom and social equality. Gandotra (2001) reveal that majority of women in Jammu city have a medium desire for social freedom. It is further found by her that age, income and level of education do not affect their desire for social freedom. Gandotra (2001) also found that 66.6 per cent women in Jammu city desire for freedom from control or interference of parents or husbands. As per her study, 55.5 per cent desire for freedom from conventional roles and restrictions on girls/women; 41.6 per cent show desire for freedom from sex and marriage; and 58.3 per cent desire for economic freedom and social equality. On an average, women in Jammu desire an average social freedom and employment seems to have no effect on this.

The family and society, at times, consider women as second-class citizens. The rituals relating to birth and marriage reflect a son-preference. A related phenomenon of son-preference in the modern context is the amniocentesis test to abort the female fetus. This unfortunately is more prevalent in urban India. The sex selective test has increased the male-female ratio between 1981 and 1991 in a significant manner. The prevalence of dowry has increased a great deal and has spread to the low caste groups, which earlier practiced bride price. So much so that the ideal Kerala practice of husband's staying in wife's house has changed to demanding dowry. This phenomenon of taking dowry has increased considerably after the young men started going to Gulf countries and needed a lot of money to buy tickets and other things. Another important point with regard to marriage practices is that parents arrange the majority of the marriages. Love marriages are not encouraged even in urban areas though acute violence against women in recent years compel the parents not to consider arranged marriages particularly in the metropolitan cities like Delhi and Bombay etc. The assumption that the urban population is more modern in outlook and hence the traditional bias would be reduced there is proved wrong (Mohanty, 1998).

#### **Summary and Conclusion**

The present study shows that the number of non-working women with 'very low' as well as 'low'

desire for general of social freedom is more than working women. The number of working women with 'medium' and 'very high' desire for social freedom is higher than non-working women. However, no working women or non-working women in rural areas enjoys high level of social freedom. With the increase in age; the general desire for social freedom among women, also increase. As the size of the family decreases; the desire for all aspects of social freedom increases. The women's social freedom desire also increases with increase in their earning age. The increase in life comfort facilities in houses lead to an increase in all aspects of desire for social freedom, except for desire of freedom from customs, taboos and rituals.

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Table 1: Difference between Various Levels of Desire for Social Freedom among Women (ANOVA)

Desire for Social Freedom	Mean	S.E	F-Value
<b>General Desire for Social Freedom</b>			
Very Low	3.77 (35)	±0.08	569.75**
Low	6.83 (135)	±0.17	
Medium	11.57 (91)	±0.16	
High	17.65 (52)	±0.20	
Very High	19.10 (47)	±0.53	
<b>Freedom from Parents/Husband</b>			
No Desire	0.00 (52)	±0.00	Zero
Low	1.00 (114)	±0.00	
Medium	2.00 (186)	±0.00	
High	3.00 (8)	±0.00	
<b>Freedom from Customs, Taboos and Rituals</b>			
No Desire	0.08 (25)	±0.05	130.75**
Low	1.82 (215)	±0.05	
Medium	5.90 (65)	±0.63	
High	7.27 (55)	±0.07	
<b>Freedom from Sex and Marriage</b>			
Low	1.61 (181)	±0.03	1620.69**
Medium	3.32 (96)	±0.05	
High	5.45 (83)	±0.05	
<b>Economic Freedom and Social Equality</b>			
No desire	0.17 (17)	±0.12	50.95**
Low	1.60 (100.00)	±0.06	
Medium	3.50 (132)	±0.05	
High	5.82 (111)	±0.46	

N=360

S.E Denotes Standard Error of Mean

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

Sample in parentheses

Table 2: Desire for Social Freedom among women in Rural and Urban Areas

Desire for Social Freedom	Dwelling						X <sup>2</sup> Analysis
	Rural Women		Urban Women		All Women		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
<b>General Desire for Social Freedom **</b>							
Very Low	3	1.67	32	17.78	35	9.72	150.84 <sub>4</sub>
Low	28	15.56	107	59.44	135	37.50	
Medium	57	31.67	34	18.89	91	25.28	
High	45	25.00	7	3.89	52	14.44	
Very High	47	26.11	-	-	47	13.06	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Freedom from Parents/Husband **</b>							
No Desire	1	0.56	51	28.33	52	14.44	63.98 <sub>3</sub>
Low	59	32.78	55	30.56	114	31.67	
Medium	112	62.22	74	41.11	186	51.67	
High	8	4.44	-	-	8	2.22	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Freedom from Customs, Taboos and Rituals **</b>							
No desire	1	0.56	24	13.33	25	6.94	117.77 <sub>3</sub>
Low	73	40.56	142	78.89	215	59.72	
Medium	52	28.89	13	7.22	65	18.06	
High	54	30.00	1	0.56	55	15.28	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Freedom from Sex and Marriage **</b>							
Low	40	22.22	141	78.33	181	50.28	120.76 <sub>2</sub>
Medium	66	36.67	30	16.67	96	26.07	
High	74	41.11	9	5.00	83	23.06	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Economic Freedom and Social Equality **</b>							

No Desire	2	1.11	15	8.33	17	4.72	110.77 <sub>3</sub>
Low	33	18.33	67	37.22	100	27.78	
Medium	44	24.44	88	48.89	132	36.67	
High	101	56.11	10	5.56	111	30.83	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	

N=360

Column Percentage

Degree of Freedom (d. f) at subscript of Chi-square values

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 3: Desire for Social Freedom among Working and Non-Working Women**

Desire for Social Freedom	Women						X <sup>2</sup> Analysis
	Working Women		Non-Working Women		All Women		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
<b>General Desire for Social Freedom **</b>							
Very Low	8	4.44	27	15.00	35	9.72	32.87 <sub>4</sub>
Low	53	29.44	82	45.56	135	37.50	
Medium	58	32.00	33	18.33	91	25.28	
High	27	15.00	25	13.89	52	14.44	
Very High	34	18.89	13	7.22	47	13.06	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Freedom from Parents/Husband **</b>							
No Desire	43	23.89	9	5.00	52	14.44	65.75 <sub>3</sub>
Low	25	13.89	89	49.44	114	31.67	
Medium	105	58.33	81	45.00	186	51.67	
High	7	3.89	1	0.56	8	2.22	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Freedom from Customs, Taboos and Rituals **</b>							
No desire	4	2.22	21	11.67	25	6.94	20.60 <sub>3</sub>
Low	101	56.11	114	63.33	215	59.72	
Medium	43	23.89	22	12.22	65	18.06	
High	32	17.78	23	12.78	55	15.28	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Freedom from Sex and Marriage **</b>							
Low	86	47.78	95	52.78	181	50.28	12.60 <sub>2</sub>
Medium	39	21.67	57	31.67	96	26.67	
High	55	30.56	28	15.56	83	23.06	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	
<b>Economic Freedom and Social Equality **</b>							
No Desire	-	-	17	9.44	17	4.72	112.85 <sub>3</sub>
Low	13	7.22	87	48.33	100	27.78	
Medium	101	56.11	31	17.22	132	36.67	
High	66	36.67	45	25.00	111	30.83	
Total	180	100.00	180	100.00	360	100.00	

N=360

Column Percentage

Degree of Freedom (d. f) at subscript of Chi-square values

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Women's Social Freedom (WSF) and Socio-Personal Dimensions**

Desire for Social Freedom	Socio- Economic Dimensions			
	Y i	Y ii	Y iii	Y iv
	[r]	[r]	[r]	[r]
General Desire for Social Freedom	0.11*	-0.35*	0.50**	0.23**
Freedom from Parents/Husband	-0.00	-0.24**	0.17**	0.15**
Freedom from Customs, Taboos and Rituals	0.09	-0.20**	0.34**	0.09
Freedom from Sex and Marriage	0.09	-0.32**	0.40**	0.14**
Economic Freedom and Social Equality	0.03	-0.21**	0.27**	0.15**
	Chronological Age	Family Size	Earning Age	Life-Comfort Facilities

N= 360

\* Significant at 0.05 level

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level