

The Influence of Working-status and Ego-strength on the Desire of Working-women for Social-freedom

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One vital component of the present study is women's social freedom, which refers to women's desire to be free from social taboos, conventions, rituals and roles, that provide them with lower status as compared to their male counterparts at least in Indian society. To quote M. Norris in this regard—

“For centuries women have been viewed as the weaker, more vulnerable gender. They have been rendered inferior, not necessarily with their consent, but with considerable help from social constructs.”¹

In recent years, desire for social freedom among women has manifested itself in protest and result against the traditional social and moral values, which place them in inferior roles and status as compared to their male counterparts. The post-independence India accompanied with the process of modernism has witnessed status mobility among women. Her traditional roles, which were exclusively limited to domestic chores seems to be changing fast. She is no more exclusively confined to the four-walls of her home as her counterpart a few decades ago was. There has been a massive spread of education among women in our country. But more significant is the fact that there had been a rapid increase in the working women in our country. Realising that the effective status improvement would not be possible unless they are economically independent, Indian woman have acquired a favourable attitude towards her career. To quote Neera Desai and Promila Kapoor respectively in this regard—

“Now women is no longer looked upon as a child bearing machine and a helot in the home. She has acquired a new status and a new social structure.”²

“.....The changed socio-economic conditions, particularly after independence have widened opportunities for women's education and have provided them with new avenues to express and assert their equality.”³

Today, vital changes have taken place in women's life, in their economic conditions and personal status. Though earlier woman had to choose between career and marriage, now both marriage and career are the preferred trend. Once again to quote Promila Kapoor in this regard—

“The new economic pattern had emerged in two

phases.....job and marriage became more common.”⁴

An important question, that arises in the above context is the influence of outdoor work on the behaviour-pattern of women. An overall majority of the employed women feel that as a consequence of their employment there is no conflict of authority between husband and wife. Once again to quote Promila Kapoor in this regard—

“Indian husbands' reluctance to share the responsibilities of the working wife in maintaining home and children is one of the main causes of the marital discord.”⁵

Thus, the principle of equality of women in employment opportunities and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women were sought to be translated into practice through formal policies, legislations and affirmative actions by way of integrating woman in the developmental process. To quote A. E. Morris & S. M. Nott and B.M. Gamadia respectively in this regard—

“It is important to recognize the inevitable restraints on what can be achieved by legislation, so that it is seen in proper perspective, without arousing false expectations or encouraging a sense of complacency.”⁶

“The requirement is.....to prevent it from being opened by a woman or child to get into the press room.”⁷

Ego-strength is another constituent of the present study. Attempt was made to examine the relationship between social freedom of the working and non-working women in the context of ego-strength. So, it was felt desirable to introduce the concept and nature of ego strength and to mention some relevant empirical studies. The term ego was used by Freud to denote the conscious portion of our feelings and cognition, which serve as a mediator between our conscious and reality. It is a perceptual organisation, which regulates our behaviour in day to day life situation.

In the Indian context women's desire for social freedom is manifested in more explicit forms. The growing desire among Indian women for social freedom is being viewed as a new phenomenon here. Hence, it is an urgent need of the time at least in Indian context to ascertain whether it is a boon or curse for the welfare of the family, the society or the nation with special reference to variables undertaken in the present study.

OBJECTIVE—

The study intended to examine the influence of working status and ego-strength on desire for social freedom.

HYPOTHESES—

(1) Working women would be found more prone to the desire for social freedom as compared to their home making counterparts.

(2) Women’s ego-strength would have significant effect on their social freedom irrespective of working and non-working dimensions.

METHODS—

(a) Design : Between group comparative design was used.

(b) Sample used : Working (N = 240) and home making (N = 240) women were used as sample. The sample comprised of working and home making of Patna town. Other than the required condition they were matched so far as

practicable.

(c) Tools Used—

(1) A PDS was used to seek the necessary information about the respondents.

(2) Bhushan’s WSF-Scale was used to measure desire for social freedom of women respondents.

(3) Hasan’s ego-strength scale was used to measure ego-strength of the respondents.

(d) **Statistical Analysis** : t-test was used to analyse the results.

The respondents were administered the scale and data were obtained. The median split was used to divide them into high and low ego-strength groups. Therefore, comparison was made. The results thus obtained have been displayed in tables— 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Results and Interpretation—

Table : 1

Mean SD and ‘t’-value showing the significance of difference between the working and the non-working women in terms of their desire for social freedom.

| Subjects | N | Mean | SD | SE | t | df | p |
|-------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| Working Women | 240 | 17.82 | 6.37 | .41 | 8.68 | 478 | <.01 |
| Non-working Women | 240 | 13.22 | 5.19 | .33 | | | |

The result contained in table : 1 showed significant difference between the working and the non-working women in terms of their desire for social freedom. The mean value of the working women is 17.82 and that of the non-working women is 13.22. Hence, the working women have shown more desire for social freedom than the non-working women. The difference between the two means is highly significant (t

= 8.68; df = 478; P <.01). Therefore, the first hypothesis is confirmed. It was hypothesized that the working and the non-working women would differ significantly in their score on Women’s Social Freedom Scale, which has fully been supported here. The justification of the finding is the fact that working women are more field independent having more frequent interactions with the people of the surroundings.

Table : 2

Mean, SD and ‘t’-value showing the significance of difference between the high ego- strength group and the low ego-strength group of the working women in terms of their desire for social freedom.

| Subjects | N | Mean | SD | SE | t | df | p |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| High Ego-strength Group | 160 | 18.46 | 6.54 | .52 | 8.08 | 238 | <.01 |
| Low Ego-strength Group | 80 | 13.21 | 5.49 | .61 | | | |

The result recorded in table : 2 showed significant effect of ego-strength on social freedom of the working women. The high ego-strength subjects with a mean score of 18.46 have been found having more desire for social freedom than the low ego-strength subjects with a mean score of 13.21 only. The difference between the two means is highly significant (t = 8.08, df : 238, p <.01). Thus, the hypothesis no 2 is retained in the case of the working women. It was

hypothesized that there would be significant effect of ego-strength on women’s desire for social freedom, which has been found true here. The finding is interpreted in terms of greater external exposure and more frequent opportunity to meet with stressful situations on the part of the working women having stronger ego as compared to those having weaker ego leading to higher degree of desire of social freedom.

Table : 3

Mean, SD and ‘t’-value showing the significance of difference between the high ego- strength group and the low ego- strength group of the non-working women in terms of their desire for social freedom.

| Subjects | N | Mean | SD | SE | t | df | p |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| High Ego-strength Group | 100 | 13.69 | 6.11 | .61 | 2.64 | 238 | <.05 |
| Low Ego-strength Group | 140 | 11.71 | 5.20 | .44 | | | |

The result given in table : 3 showed significant effect of ego-strength on women’s desire for social freedom even in the case of the non-working women. The high ego-strength group of the non-working women showed more desire for social freedom (Mean = 13.69) than the low ego-strength group of the non-working women (Mean - 11.71) and the difference between the two means is significant at .05 level of confidence (t=2.64; df = 238; p < .05). Thus, the hypothesis no 2 is retained even in the case of the non-working women. ‘The findings of table : 3 are consistent with those of table : 2 given above.

CONCLUSIONS

- (1) Working women were found having high desire for social freedom as compared to their home making women, or non-working women counterparts.
- (2) Working women group belonging to high ego-strength group excelled in terms of having high desire for social freedom them working women belonging to low ego-strength group.
- (3) Home making women belonging to high ego-strength group excelled in terms of high desire for social freedom than home making women of low ego-strength.

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