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Research Paper

# The Influence of Social Networking on Social Freedom Among Young Adult Women

Devika S[1], Pramod S K[2]*

**ABSTRACT**

Due to the impact of Covid- 19 pandemic and the related lockdown, the overall life style of people changed, all around the globe. One significant change is the uprise in the usage of virtual platforms including social networking for a multitude of purposes. Along with the usage, misuse and cybercrime rates have also heightened. Incidences of the use of social media against women liberty has been reported. Within this background the major objective of this study was to understand the influence of social networking on young adult women's social freedom in the pandemic situation where one's time is much spend online on social networking. A sample of 124 young adult women participants, within the age group of 20-25 was taken by purposive sampling method. The study adopted cross-sectional research design that used quantitative assessment to fulfill the objectives. Social networking-social freedom scale developed by the researchers was used to measure the influence of social networking on the social freedom of the participants. Frequency analysis, t- test and ANOVA were the statistical tools employed for data analysis. The results indicated that social networking influences social freedom of the participants in moderate to high ranges. The study also explored the influence of socio-demographic variables and it was found that there was no significant difference in the influence of social networking with respect to the considered demographic variables, that is, employment status, religion, family type, marital status, living area, educational qualification and monthly income. Social networking influences social freedom of women to a great extent.

***Keywords:*** *Social networking, social freedom, young adult women*

Man as an evolving social being explores new possible ways of connecting with others. In the present continuously evolving technical era, social networking and internet has become the new face of communication. Social networking usage refers to usage of online space by people to connect, share, and communicate with others. Social networking allows like-minded individuals to be in touch with each other using websites and other web-based applications (Anis, 2020). The definition of the term "social network" is still very loosely described, as it is still a technology that's subject to rapid changes. Social networking help one to share the knowledge with less hassle and wastage of

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[1]Student, Loyola college of Social Sciences, Trivandrum
[2]Assistant professor, Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum
*Corresponding Author

time and effort as digital media plays a vital and critical role in knowledge sharing with no time.

'Social media' is generally used as an umbrella term for all web-based technologies for social interaction and reaction. Social networking sites (SNSs) are one of the tools in the social media. There are certain differences between social media and social networking sites. Social networking sites are purely based on the networking of similar interest in terms of friendship, family, hobbies, education, research, etc. (Hartshorn, 2010). The social networks can also create something which does not exist or may not be as good as it is presented (Sigman, 2009). Social networks have accounted for the majority of time spent online in the world. About 60 percent of people in the world have become active Internet users (Boms and Romirowsky,2016). Social networking platforms allow organizations to improve communication (Burns, 2011).

Social networking sites are extensively used by the community, especially the younger generation sharing and receiving information related to day-to-day life. Social networking is based on the interdependency of nodes. Nodes are normally individual users and when they come together on a single platform it crafts the social networking (Freeman, 2004). Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site".

Social factors, technical factors, economic and political factors are few factors that aids in the rapid growth of social networking. In the new millennium, the word has witnessed a rapid shift in social interaction into new online mode and social media has emerged as a popular mode of communication. However, governments in some countries have blocked a few of the SNSs presuming threat to the nation and leaving the people more rotten stage (Jacobs, 2015).

Men and women differ in the usage of social networking services (SNSs) differently and with different frequencies. In general, several researchers have found that women tend to use SNSs more than men and for different and more social purposes. Men and women have varying degrees of online activity across different sites. 74% of internet users are using social media, with women (76%) having a slight edge over men (72%) (Varying Degrees of Like In Social Media, 2020). At the same time, it also interesting that women are the one who face many issues in social networking like privacy problems, being a cyber bullying victim etc. During this Covid pandemic lockdown everything has moved into a virtual platform including education and occupation. Rates of social networking and virtual abuse also have increased to a notable degree. A lot different recent incidents where women are being crucially blamed for reacting to the cyber bullying and abuse, they face on social Medias have been reported. The impact of patriarchal society on women is very well reflected on almost all social networking platforms.

Although the society has been ever changing since the time it came into existence, one thing that remained forever was human's desire for freedom. Freedom is something that is desired by every single life. It has become an important part of survival along with air, water, food, shelter and clothing (Kaur & Kaur, 2015). In the present study, 'Social freedom' refers to the will of women to obtain freedom from social customs - tradition, religious ritual which is

giving them lower level. This also include financial freedom, political rights, self - reliant, freedom from bonds of cast, freedom from orthodox thoughts, own options for selection of life partner, participation in decision making etc. (Ghosh, S.M, 2016). Social freedom is the desire to be free from social taboos, conventions, rituals and roles, which impose conventional roles and restrictions on women (Mitra,S, 2019). Today the role of women in the society is changing and the change in their traditional role is great demand of time.

The role of women in the society has been influenced by the history of that country, its cultural structure, its economic strength, its political stance *(Öze, N, 2018).* Worldwide, women still lag behind men in access to the Internet, and when they do engage online, women and girls experience more intense harassment, including sexual harassment (Impact: women and media, 2020). The intention of this study is to identify the influence of social networking usage on young adult women's social freedom.

The present study is aimed to find the influence of social networking on social freedom among women. As the impact of Covid- 19 pandemic and the related lockdown, many changes happed in people's lives during the past few months. One significant change is the upturn in the usage of virtual platforms for work, academics as well as for entertainment purposes. The lockdown period has increased the social network usage of people around the globe. Along with the usage, misuses like cybercrime rates have also heightened. Women are the major victims of cyber bullying and cyber-attacks. Recently, it is seen that many cyber-attacks that gone viral too uplifting and undermining women freedom. Such kind of acts happens mainly because a notable percentage of men believes that women have to live according to the patriarchal rules and age-old misogynistic perspectives. These invisible chains of stereotypic thoughts are the same reason that creates things like the glass ceiling effect and confining women to pink collar jobs. Many women struggle hard to gain their social freedom like men experience. The ideology of feminism is increasing to ensure the equality for women but many people even misunderstand the meaning of feminism and twist the term and express it as an extreme misandry. Today in online world, we can see both kind of people who are struggling for women's social freedom and also who are knowingly or unknowingly trying to suppress women's rights. In this world where women are constantly facing emotional, physical and mental abuses, women's equality and freedom are worth to be ensured. So, this research aims to explore the influence of social networking on social freedom among young adult women. It also studies whether there is any impact of demographic variables like religion, marital status and living area on social freedom.

During this Covid pandemic, social media usage has found to increase to a notable extend. Along with this, cyber-attacks against women have also escalated. These kinds of activities happen to many women in present virtual world. The pandemic related lockdown and other restrictions have increased the social networking among people and thus there is a greater chance for people to get influenced by it. Social networking is a powerful tool that can be used by women to ensure their freedom. Therefore, this research is relevant in the present scenario in understanding the extend of the influence of social networking on social freedom among young adult women in modern world. The objectives of the studywere: a) To identify the influence of social networking contributing to social freedom in young adult women. b) To identify whether social networking influence on social freedom is similar in young adult women in different socio demographic variables. From these objectives, two hypotheses were framed for the study: 1. Social networking will not significantly influence social freedom among young adult women. 2. There will not be significant difference in the

influence of social networking on social freedom among young adult women in selected demographic variables.

## METHOD

### Sample

The population of study includes women within the age group of 20-35 who are active in social networking. Sample size of the study is 124 subjects. The sampling method employed in this particular study is purposive sampling. *Inclusion criteria*: 1. Women of age 20- 35 years 2. Women who are active in online social networking. *Exclusion criteria*: 1. Women below the age of 20 and above 35 years. 2. Women who do not have any social media accounts. 3. Women who are not active in online social networking.

### Assessment tools

The assessment tools used for the study are: 1. Informed consent. 2. Personal data sheet - It consist of demographic variables including age, employment status, marital status, family type and area of locale. 3. Social networking- social freedom scale: -It was prepared by the researchers to assess the usage of social networking of each participant and how it influences their social freedom. It consists of questions to understand the perceived social freedom of women in areas of social customs and taboos, equality, economic freedom, freedom from parental control, interference or control of husbands and freedom of choice.

### Procedure

The research adopts cross-sectional research design and is conducted in an online mode as an opinion survey. Data include the informed consent, personal data sheet which consist of the demographic details, and the social networking- social freedom scale prepared by the researcher to assess the nature and extend of social networking which influence social freedom. After getting consent form the participants, the tools were provided to them for recoding their data. After the data collection, the data cleaning was done and then was subjected to statistical analysis like the t- test, ANOVA, and Frequency analysis. For testing the influence of religion and the area of living of the sample on social freedom, ANOVA was used. ANOVA is applied to determine the significant difference between different religious groups and between different areas of living. t-test was applied to determine the significant difference between the married and unmarried women.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data clearly indicates the extent of social networking social freedom the young adult women face. By using frequency analysis, it was observed that around 90% of the sample's social freedom was influenced by social networking. The influence of social media on different dimensions of social freedom was also found separately to get a clearer picture.

For the second hypothesis, the selected demographic variables were religion, marital status and area of living. These three variables tend to influence the thinking pattern and thus the social freedom of a woman much profoundly.

*Figure 1: Influence of Social Networking on Social Freedom among Young adult Women*

**Influence of Social Networking on Social Freedom**
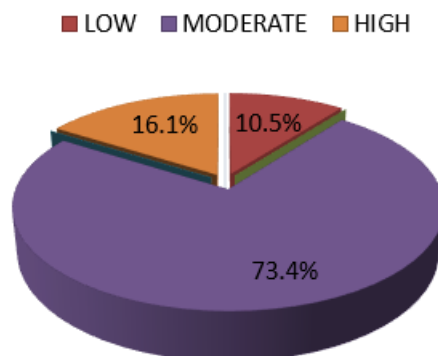


73.4% of the sample (N=124) reported that social networking moderately influences their social freedom. This is a significant result that supports the hypothesis of the study as more than half of the sample stated that their social freedom is moderately influenced by the social networking. It was also found from the result that 16.1% of the sample's social freedom is highly influenced by social networking. 10.5% of the sample stated that social networking does not influence their social freedom much. From this result it can be seen that a total of 89.5% of the sample agree that their social freedom is influenced by social networking in a moderate to high range, which is a very significant result of the study.

*Table 1: Percentage of responses in each dimension of social networking- social freedom scale*

| Influence of social networking on social freedom | Dimensions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Expression of opinion | Feeling for equality | Taboos and traditions | Personal growth/ independence |
| Low | 26.6% | 24.2% | 12.1% | 7.3% |
| Moderate | 60.5% | 58.1% | 60.5% | 59.7% |
| High | 12.9% | 17.7% | 27.4% | 33.1% |

When observing the area wise response, it was found that in the first area, that is, expression of opinion, 60.5% of the selected sample reported a moderate positive influence of social networking in the expression of their opinions in life. 12. 9% of the sample reported a higher influence of social networking on expression of their opinion and 26.6% reported a low influence of social networking. 73.4% of the overall sample stated that they are influenced by social networking in expressing their opinions. As social media has now become a primary tool for reacting and expressing one's opinion, is provides people with easier and greater chance for expressing oneself.

In the second dimension, feeling for equality, 58.1% of the sample stated that they are moderately influenced by social networking in their desire for equality. 17.7% reported a higher influence and 24.2% of the sample reported a lower influence of social networking on their desire for equality. 75.8% have stated that they get influenced by social media on their desire to be equal.

Taboos and traditions are the third dimension where 60.5% of the population stated a moderate influence of social networking on their perception about taboos and traditions related with female roles. 27.4% reported that they are highly influenced by social networking on this dimension and 12.1% reported a low influence. 87.9% of the total sample have stated that social networking influence them in overcoming and fighting against the existing taboos and customs in the society that hinders the growth of women.

In the fourth dimension, personal growth or independence, 59.7% stated that their personal growth is moderately influenced by social networking. 33.1% reported a high influence and only 7.3% of the sample reported a low influence of social networking on their personal growth. Social networking in many ways can aid people in their personal growth. People are loaded with information every day by social networking and they can use them in a positive way to enhance oneself.

*Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and standard error of the sample based on religion*

| Dimensions | Religions | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Networking | Hindu | 89 | 41.1461 | 13.81991 | 1.46491 |
| Social Freedom | Christian | 27 | 41.2593 | 11.83084 | 2.27685 |
| Scale | Muslim | 8 | 47.3750 | 11.33815 | 4.00864 |

*Table 3: Results of one-way ANOVA: Social Networking Social Freedom on the basis of Religion*

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sumof Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| **Social networking-social** | Between groups | 288.185 | 2 | 144.093 | 0.817 | 0.444# |
| **freedom scale** | Within groups | 21346.161 | 121 | 176.415 | | |

It can be observed from the results that there is no significant difference in the influence of social networking on social freedom among participants of different religions. Neither on the four dimensions of the scale that assess the four different areas of social freedom, there is any significant difference in the scores. It can therefore be concluded that social networking influence the social freedom of all women equally beyond the religions. Religion does not bring a notable significant difference in the scores that assesses the influence of social networking on social freedom. Participants from different religious culture (Hindu, Christian and Muslims) experience similar level of influence of social networking in their social freedom. Therefore, it can be said that religion does not affect the influence of social networking in participant's social freedom.

*Table 4: Results of t- test: Difference in social freedom according to marital status due to the influence of social networking*

| Variable | Sample | N | Mean | Standard deviation | t - value | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Networking | Unmarried | 120 | 41.5583 | 13.38493 | -.065 | |
| Social Freedom Scale | Married | 4 | 42.0000 | 10.23067 | | 0.948# |

*#not significant*

In comparing the married and unmarried people of the selected sample, no significant difference can be observed in the scores. Married and unmarried women reported similarly in the influence of social networking that influence their social freedom. Therefore, it can be concluded that marriage does not affect the influence of social networking on social freedom of women. Married and unmarried women's social freedom equally gets influenced by social networking.

In a research conducted by Hemangi N Narvekar in 2014 about the Expression of Social Freedom experienced by Married and Unmarried Women in Goa, the results were contradictory. The study found that married women felt a lower level of social freedom with significant differences observed in women from the rural and urban areas. However, research conducted by Rajni Bala in 2016 studied the social freedom of female prospective teachers in relation to locale, marital status and socio-economic status. The result stated that there is no significant difference in the social freedom of married and unmarried female prospective teachers. This result is similar to the findings of the present study.

As technology is developing day by day, the extend of social networking is also increasing to a notable degree each year and as time pass by more people are getting influenced by it. This could also be a possible explanation for the sudden change in results in similar studies as reviewed above.

*Table 5: Results of one-way ANOVA done among young adult women based on their area of living*

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Social Networking Social Freedom Scale | Between Groups | 946.388 | 3 | 315.463 | 1.830 | 0.145# |
| | Within Groups | 20687.959 | 120 | 172.400 | | |

*#not significant*

From the results of the one-way ANOVA test it can be observed that there is no significant difference in the scores of participants coming from rural, semi-rural, urban and semi urban areas. This means, all participants irrespective of their area of locale experience same influence of social networking on their social freedom. As internet is available in every corner of the world, there is no restriction for people to connect with others through social networking. Therefore, they may be influenced almost equally by social networking. It is

also evident that most participants desire for social freedom irrespective of their place of living. These results were contrary to a study conducted by Rajni Bala (2016), that there is a difference in the social freedom of rural and urban female prospective teachers and urban participants enjoy more social freedom than rural ones, although the married and unmarried women enjoy similar degree of social freedom with no significant difference.

## CONCLUSION

Social networking social freedom is a right to every woman. The following finding of the present study indicates the extent and nature of social freedom experienced by young adult women. Social networking significantly influences the social freedom among young adult women. There is no significant difference in the influence of social networking on social freedom among women of different religions. There is no significant difference in the influence of social networking on social freedom among married and unmarried women. There is no significant difference in the influence of social networking on social freedom among women of different locale. The results indicated that a significantly higher percentage of participant's social freedom was influenced by social networking. It was also found that there is no difference in this degree of influence of social networking in people from different religion, marital status and area of living.

Therefore, it can be concluded from the study that social networking influence social freedom in the participants irrespective of their religion, marital status and area of living. It can be because the easy accessibility of internet and smart phones made people more exposed to the usage of social networking. The pandemic was also a key factor that escalated the online social networking among people as virtual communication was the only way to connect with the world. This easy accessibility could be one reason why almost all participants were similarly influenced by social networking irrespective of their difference in religion, marital status, occupational status, area of living, type of family, educational qualification and monthly income. There were also some limitations in conducting the study. The study was conducted in an online mode using Google forms due to the inability to approach each participant directly due to Covid pandemic situation. Data was not able to be collected from all selected age groups in a uniform manner and the assessment tool used for data collection was prepared by the researcher to meet the objectives of the present study only. Therefore, this result cannot be generalized into a larger sample.

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