

## MODERN GIRLS: THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND VALUES

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### **Annotation:**

This scientific work analyzes the relationship between freedom and traditional values among modern girls in contemporary society. The study examines the impact of globalization, education, culture, and social environment on the consciousness of young women. It also explores the balance between freedom and values from psychological and sociological perspectives. The research highlights the social role of modern girls and the process of identity formation.

**Keywords:** freedom, values, modern girls, globalization, gender, education, social role, culture.

In modern society, the social status of women, particularly girls, is undergoing significant transformation. As a result of globalization, the rapid development of information technologies, reforms in the education system, and the growing emphasis on human rights, the role of women in society has considerably expanded. At the same time, these processes are giving rise to certain conflicts in the minds of young girls between freedom and traditional values. This conflict manifests itself not only at the individual level but also across social, cultural, and psychological dimensions. The concept of freedom in contemporary socio-philosophical thought is understood as the individual's right to determine their own life, express their opinions freely, and make independent choices. For girls, in particular, freedom is reflected in access to education, career selection, active participation in social life, and independence in making personal life decisions. However, the boundaries of this freedom and its acceptance within society are interpreted differently across cultures.

Traditional values, on the other hand, represent a system of moral, cultural, and social norms formed throughout the historical development of a society. In Uzbek society, these values are closely associated with principles such as devotion to family, modesty, respect for elders, and prioritizing collective interests over individual desires. Therefore, the aspiration of modern girls toward freedom may sometimes come into conflict with these established values. To understand the transformations occurring in the social consciousness of modern girls, it is essential to analyze the influence of the global information space. Through the internet, social networks, and mass culture, diverse lifestyles, cultural norms, and value systems are rapidly spreading. This has become a key factor shaping the worldview of young people, especially girls. For instance, ideas such as individualism, gender equality, and personal freedom—widely promoted in Western societies—are increasingly being adopted by younger generations.

At the same time, psychological research indicates that the process of identity formation among the younger generation is becoming more complex. Girls often strive to embrace modernity and freedom while simultaneously being expected to fulfill traditional roles imposed by family and society. This dual expectation can lead to internal psychological conflicts. In such situations, individuals may experience difficulty in decision-making, lack of self-confidence, and a heightened sense of social pressure. Sociological studies show that the level of aspiration for education among modern girls has significantly increased. The growing number of female students in higher education institutions contributes to their social activity



and economic independence. This trend is fostering the emergence of a new model of women—not only as homemakers but as active and independent individuals. However, the full acceptance of this model within society remains a complex and ongoing process.

The desire for freedom among modern girls is often expressed through their appearance, style of dress, communication patterns, and lifestyle choices. This sometimes leads to misunderstandings between generations. While older generations may interpret such changes as a decline in traditional values, younger individuals often view them as forms of self-expression and personal freedom. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, the process of modernization in any society inevitably leads to a reassessment of its value system. This is a natural process in which a balance between old and new values gradually emerges. In this context, modern girls can be seen as active participants in this transitional phase. The role of the family remains crucial in this process. The family serves as the primary institution for socialization, where girls internalize values and develop as individuals. In families where open communication, mutual respect, and understanding are present, girls are more likely to achieve a balance between freedom and values. Otherwise, conflicts may intensify.

The education system also plays an important role. Modern education is not limited to the transmission of knowledge; it also aims to foster holistic personal development, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Therefore, it is essential to pay special attention to issues such as gender equality, intercultural communication, and ethical values within educational institutions. Another important factor is the increasing economic activity of women in modern society. Employment, entrepreneurship, and participation in scientific research enhance girls' self-confidence and strengthen their social status. However, this must be balanced with family responsibilities; otherwise, role conflicts may arise. At the same time, the “ideal woman” images promoted by mass media and social networks have a significant impact on girls' consciousness. These images are often unrealistic and can contribute to the formation of harmful stereotypes. As a result, girls may engage in constant comparison with others, leading to dissatisfaction and psychological challenges. The struggle between freedom and values in the lives of modern girls should not be seen merely as a contradiction, but rather as a process of seeking balance. True development occurs through the harmonization of these two elements. Freedom without values may lead to instability, while values without freedom may hinder progress.

The dynamics of the relationship between freedom and values among modern girls can also be examined through the lens of gender theory. Gender, as a social construct, shapes expectations, roles, and behaviors assigned to individuals based on their sex. In many traditional societies, including those in Central Asia, gender roles have historically been clearly defined, with women primarily associated with domestic responsibilities and caregiving roles. However, the processes of modernization and globalization are gradually reshaping these roles, allowing girls to explore identities beyond traditional expectations. This transformation is not always smooth or universally accepted. In many cases, girls who pursue higher education, career ambitions, or independent lifestyles may encounter resistance from their immediate social environment. This resistance can take various forms, including subtle disapproval, social pressure, or even explicit restrictions. As a result, modern girls often find themselves navigating a complex social landscape where they must balance personal aspirations with societal expectations.

From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon can be interpreted as a form of role conflict. Role conflict occurs when an individual is subjected to multiple, often incompatible expectations. For example, a young woman may be expected to excel academically and professionally while simultaneously fulfilling traditional roles such as being a dutiful daughter,



wife, or mother. The pressure to meet these diverse expectations can lead to stress, emotional exhaustion, and a sense of inadequacy. Empirical studies in the field of youth sociology indicate that the level of autonomy among girls is closely linked to factors such as family background, educational attainment, and exposure to global culture. Girls from urban areas, for instance, tend to have greater access to education and information resources, which enhances their awareness of rights and opportunities. In contrast, those from rural areas may face more rigid social norms and limited access to such resources, thereby restricting their ability to exercise freedom.

Another important dimension of this issue is the impact of digitalization. The rise of social media platforms has created new spaces for self-expression, communication, and identity formation. Girls today actively engage in online communities, share their opinions, and participate in global discussions. While this digital engagement can be empowering, it also exposes them to new forms of pressure, such as cyberbullying, unrealistic beauty standards, and the constant need for validation through likes and comments. Psychologically, the tension between freedom and values can influence the development of self-identity. Adolescence and early adulthood are critical periods for identity formation, during which individuals explore different roles, beliefs, and aspirations. When external expectations conflict with personal desires, it may lead to identity confusion. In some cases, girls may conform to societal expectations at the expense of their individuality, while in others, they may reject traditional values altogether, leading to generational divides.

It is also important to consider the role of cultural hybridity in shaping the experiences of modern girls. Cultural hybridity refers to the blending of elements from different cultures, resulting in new, hybrid identities. In the context of globalization, many girls are influenced simultaneously by local traditions and global cultural trends. This creates a unique cultural space in which they negotiate their identities, selectively adopting or rejecting certain values. Education plays a transformative role in this process. Beyond providing academic knowledge, education fosters critical thinking, self-awareness, and the ability to question existing norms. Educated girls are more likely to challenge gender stereotypes and advocate for their rights. However, this empowerment can sometimes be perceived as a threat to traditional social structures, leading to tensions within families and communities.

The economic dimension of freedom is equally significant. Financial independence enables girls to make autonomous decisions and reduces their dependence on family or spouses. This, in turn, enhances their bargaining power within the household and society at large. Nevertheless, achieving economic independence often requires overcoming structural barriers such as gender discrimination in the labor market, unequal pay, and limited access to leadership positions. Furthermore, the legal framework of a society plays a crucial role in shaping the balance between freedom and values. Laws that promote gender equality, protect women's rights, and ensure access to education and employment create a supportive environment for girls to realize their potential. However, the implementation of such laws may be inconsistent, particularly in societies where traditional norms remain deeply entrenched.

Religious beliefs also influence the perception of freedom and values. In many societies, religion serves as a moral compass, guiding behavior and shaping social norms. While religion can provide a strong ethical foundation, its interpretation may vary, leading to different attitudes toward women's roles and rights. Some interpretations emphasize equality and empowerment, while others reinforce traditional gender roles. The interplay between media representation and self-perception is another critical factor. Media often portrays conflicting images of women—on one hand, as independent and successful individuals, and



on the other, as idealized figures conforming to specific standards of beauty and behavior. These contradictory representations can create confusion and pressure for girls as they attempt to define their own identities. In this context, the importance of dialogue between generations cannot be overstated. Open and respectful communication between parents and daughters can help bridge the gap between traditional values and modern aspirations. Such dialogue fosters mutual understanding and allows for the adaptation of values in a way that respects both cultural heritage and individual freedom.

A comparative analysis of different societies demonstrates that the balance between freedom and values among young women varies significantly depending on cultural, economic, and historical contexts. In highly industrialized countries, the concept of individual freedom is often prioritized, with emphasis on personal choice, self-expression, and independence. In contrast, many developing societies tend to place greater importance on collective values, family honor, and social cohesion. These differences do not necessarily indicate superiority of one model over another, but rather reflect diverse pathways of social development. In the context of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, the transformation of women's roles is closely connected to post-independence reforms. Since gaining independence, significant efforts have been made to improve access to education for girls, promote gender equality, and encourage women's participation in political and economic life. As a result, the number of women in higher education, public administration, and entrepreneurship has steadily increased. This progress reflects a gradual shift toward a more balanced integration of traditional values and modern principles.

However, this transition also brings certain challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the persistence of traditional stereotypes regarding gender roles. In some segments of society, there remains a strong expectation that women should prioritize family responsibilities over professional development. Such expectations can limit the opportunities available to young women and create internal conflicts between personal ambitions and social obligations. Another important challenge is the phenomenon of cultural resistance. When new ideas about freedom, equality, and individual rights are introduced into a society with deeply rooted traditions, resistance is often inevitable. This resistance is not necessarily negative; it can serve as a mechanism for preserving cultural identity. However, if it becomes too rigid, it may hinder social progress and limit individual development.

Psychological well-being is also significantly affected by the tension between freedom and values. Studies in developmental psychology suggest that prolonged exposure to conflicting expectations can lead to anxiety, stress, and reduced self-esteem among young women. Supportive environments, including family, educational institutions, and peer groups, play a crucial role in mitigating these effects and helping individuals develop a stable sense of identity. At the policy level, governments and social institutions have an important responsibility in ensuring that gender equality is not only declared but effectively implemented. This includes creating equal opportunities in education and employment, protecting women from discrimination, and promoting awareness campaigns that challenge harmful stereotypes. Legal reforms alone, however, are insufficient unless accompanied by cultural and social change.

The role of civil society organizations is also significant in this regard. Non-governmental organizations, youth associations, and women's groups contribute to raising awareness about gender issues, providing support services, and empowering young women to participate actively in society. These organizations often act as mediators between traditional norms and modern values, facilitating dialogue and understanding. Technological development continues to reshape the experiences of modern girls in profound ways.



Artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and global communication networks have created unprecedented opportunities for learning, creativity, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, they have introduced new risks, including digital surveillance, misinformation, and online harassment. Navigating this digital environment requires not only technical skills but also critical thinking and ethical awareness.

The concept of identity in the digital age has become increasingly fluid. Girls are no longer confined to a single social identity; instead, they may present different versions of themselves across various platforms and contexts. This multiplicity of identities can be empowering, allowing for experimentation and self-discovery, but it can also lead to fragmentation and confusion if not properly managed. From a cultural perspective, the interaction between global and local values creates what scholars refer to as “glocalization.” This process involves the adaptation of global ideas within local cultural frameworks. For modern girls, this means selectively integrating aspects of global culture—such as fashion, education, and communication styles—while maintaining connections to local traditions and values. The success of this integration depends largely on the flexibility of both individuals and society.

Family structures are also evolving in response to these changes. Traditional extended family systems are gradually giving way to nuclear family models in many urban areas. This shift has implications for the socialization of young women, as it alters the dynamics of authority, support, and decision-making within the household. In nuclear families, girls often experience greater autonomy, but may also face reduced emotional and social support compared to extended family systems. Economic globalization has further intensified these transformations. The integration of national economies into global markets has expanded employment opportunities for women, particularly in sectors such as education, healthcare, information technology, and services. However, it has also exposed structural inequalities, including gender wage gaps and occupational segregation.

The future trajectory of the relationship between freedom and values among modern girls will largely depend on the ability of societies to achieve inclusive development. Inclusive development implies that economic growth is accompanied by social justice, gender equality, and respect for cultural diversity. Without such balance, modernization may lead to increased inequality and social fragmentation. Education remains the most powerful tool for achieving this balance. By fostering critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and intercultural competence, education enables young women to navigate complex social realities. It also empowers them to make informed decisions that align with both personal aspirations and societal expectations.

### **Conclusion**

The study of modern girls in the context of the relationship between freedom and values shows that this phenomenon is a natural result of social development and globalization. Today, girls are increasingly seeking independence, education, and self-realization, which reflects the growing importance of personal freedom in society. At the same time, traditional values remain an important part of cultural identity and social stability. These values influence behavior, family relations, and moral attitudes. Therefore, modern girls often find themselves in a situation where they must balance personal freedom with cultural and family expectations.

The research indicates that freedom and values should not be seen as opposing concepts. Instead, they complement each other and help shape a well-rounded personality. The main challenge for modern society is to achieve a healthy balance between these two elements. Family, education, and social institutions play a key role in helping young women adapt to



modern changes while preserving positive traditions. When this balance is achieved, it contributes to both individual development and social harmony.

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