

Role of Education in Gender Sensitization

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Abstract

Gender sensitization is the process of changing the stereotype concept or idea to the modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. Gender Sensitization implies accepting the basic rights associated with Gender equality among all persons but, not against women to man. Gender sensitivity helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of sex. Through Gender Sensitization develop a cordial and pleasant environment where there is mutual respect and trust between the sexes, without sexual inferences. Teachers play a very important role in the early upbringing of a child. Their idea and beliefs can change the thought processes of young children. Children in the formative years easily nurture values and virtues taught to them. Gender sensitivity training should be mandatory for teachers. The training will enable them to disseminate the desirable attitude based on mutual respect and trust between girls and boys.

I believe that education or schooling is a process through which society creates the kind of individuals we wish to see in the world. Hence, it's imperative that school curriculum lays strong emphasis on teaching values of equality, inclusivity, sensitivity and diversity, all of which are essential for building a healthy society.

This paper considers that Gender sensitization seeks to question and subsequently change that very thought-process, and it also aims to make people develop a sense of empathy and acceptance towards the other gender. This paper further tries to generate a behavioral change and enabling people examine their own perceptions and attitudes which ultimately help in shaping a just and balanced society.

Key words: Gender sensitization, Education, Gender sensitivity, Gender equality

Introduction:

Gender sensitization is all about changing behavior and imparting empathy into the views that one holds about one's own sex and other sex. It explains men and women with each other's existence and helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of sex. In a patriarchal society like India gender bias begins from the birth, women are discriminated in areas like access to nutrition, childcare, education and work. Patriarchy is a social system which considers male as superiors and gives them more rights and more access to resources and decision making. Traditional roles of women as homemakers and men as bread winners imposed by society have only reinforced the gender imbalance. Many academicians and intellectuals argue that in the modern Indian society there is no devaluation of women and they are considered as equals in each and every field. No doubt there has been a lot of changes regarding the status and rights of women in the Indian society but this doesn't change the mindset of people living in a patriarchal society nor does it increase the value of women in a male dominant society. We must attempt to create a Gender sensitive society to remove Gender discrimination or inequality. We should work out strategies for prevention and control of violence against women as well as change in the cultural mindset about them and create a peaceful world.

Gender sensitization refers to the raising sensitization of gender equality concerns. It helps people in examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the realities of both sexes. Gender sensitization makes people understand the difference between sex and gender, how gender is socially constructed and the stereotypes around gender roles. It helps them determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped. Need of gender sensitization is to create awareness among the working professionals about the importance of gender sensitivity in organization. Without being sensitive to the needs of a particular gender, an individual may refrain from understanding the opposite gender. Gender is Socially Learned behavior, based on social expectation from Men & Women. The women and children are most exposed group of this situation. And it's the undue pressure on Boys and Girls to live up to the established norms of masculinity & femininity. Girls endure unwarranted social control, discrimination & domination. Boys are discouraged from being emotional, gentle or fearful. Gender Sensitization

gives a clear and precise view about gender and help to understand that GENDER is not about “Women” it’s about “People”.

Gender equality is basically linked to the right to quality education for all and to achieve this, we need an approach that ensures that girls and boys, women and men, access, complete and are equally empowered through quality education.

Gender sensitization is very important in these changing times. Women and men both play a key role at home, office and in society. Therefore, it is important that both feel valued in society and lead a gracious life. Gender insensitivity and inequality in terms of difference in salary/wages, organizational culture, etc., are major factors that lead to a decline in productivity and increase absenteeism and staff turnover rate in an organization. When both genders feel sympathetic towards each other, it creates a positive culture at home, workplace and in society. Gender sensitization can lead to gender justice, equality and inclusion.

India and the Gender Gap Index Report 2021

As per the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2021, India slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries. In 2020, India had ranked 112th among 153 countries. As per the report, India has closed 62.5% of its gender gap till date. The report evaluates gender-based gaps based on four areas:

Economic participation and opportunity,

Educational attainment,

Health and survival, and

Political empowerment.

In addition, it examines the factors that drive gender gaps and outlines the policies and practices that are required for a gender-inclusive recovery.

Recently, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked India at 135 out of 146 countries in its Global Gender Gap (GGG) Index for 2022.

India's overall score has improved from 0.625 (in 2021) to 0.629, which is its seventh-highest score in the last 16 years. In 2021, India was ranked 140 out of 156 countries.

The gender gap is the difference between women and men as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural, or economic attainments or attitudes.

Need for Gender Sensitization

Gender sensitization is a need of the hour. With the changing times and changing gender roles, it is important to spread awareness about gender issues and take effective steps to create an enabling environment that is considerate towards the feelings and choices of all human beings. Breaking gender stereotypes will help both men and women to live an honorable life. Gender inequalities are learned from a young age and that too at various levels i.e. at school, home/family, community etc. Therefore, gender sensitization cannot take place in a day and is a long term process, which requires consistent efforts. Education can play an important role in gender sensitization. Parents and teachers both have to play a key role in making children gender sensitive from the very young age.

Gender sensitization aims to make students, parents and teachers aware about this field. It helps people in examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the realities they thought they know. For the purpose of achieving equity, it is being stressed that there should be gender sensitization of people. As gender sensitization is a process of behavioral change by teaching empathy into the views that people hold about their own and other sex. The constitution of India provides for equality of status and opportunity to all the citizens in the country.

Constitution of India and Gender Equality

The Constitution of India contains provisions that aim to create gender justice and equality. Some of the important Articles that ensure that all individuals are treated equally and with dignity are:

- **Article 14: Equality before law-** The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Article 15:** Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Article 19: (1)(g)** To practice any profession or to carry out any occupation, trade or businesses.
- **Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty-** No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
- **Article 42: Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief** – The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.
- **Article 51A:** It shall be the duty of every citizen of India: (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women

Laws in India that Help in Gender Sensitization

The Government of India has taken several steps by passing various Acts to create gender equality and teach gender sensitivity. A list of important Acts passed by the parliament are given below:

- Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (POSH Act)
- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956
- The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 (Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 was amended)
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013

Government Policies and Schemes

The Government of India has introduced various schemes and policies for the development and empowerment of women, which will help in creating awareness about gender equality and inclusion. These are given below:

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):** It focuses on the protection, survival and education of the girl child.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK):** It aims to empower rural women with opportunities for skill development and employment.
- **The Working Women Hostel (WWH):** It aims to provide a safe and secure place for working women.
- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls:** Focuses on empowerment of girls in the age group 11-18 and also improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training
- **The National Crèche Scheme:** It aims to ensure that women take up gainful employment by providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment to the children.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandna Yojna:** It focuses on providing maternity benefit to pregnant and lactating mothers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana:** It aims to provide housing under the name of the woman also.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** It aims to enable a large number of Indian youth including women to take up industry-relevant skill training in securing a better livelihood.
- **Deen Dayal Upadhyay National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM):** It aims to create opportunities for women in skill development, leading to market-based employment.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:** Its aim is to empower women and protect their health by providing LPG cylinders free of cost.
- **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojna (SSY):** Under this scheme girls have been economically empowered by opening their bank accounts.

- **Skill Up gradation& Mahila Coir Yojana:** It is an exclusive training programme of MSME aimed at skill development of women artisans engaged in the coir Industry.
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):** It is a major credit- linked subsidy programme, which aims to **generate self-employment opportunities** through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector
- **National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW):** It aims to strengthen the overall processes that promote all-round Development of Women
- **Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers** (including single mothers): It provides day care facilities for running a crèche of 25 children in the age group 0-6 years from families having monthly income of less than Rs 12,000.
- **Female Entrepreneurship:** In order to promote female entrepreneurship, the Government of India has initiated programmes like **Stand-Up India and Mahila e-Haat** (online marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs/ SHGs/NGOs), **Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESSDP)** etc. **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** provides access to institutional finance to micro/small businesses.
- Several steps and initiatives have been taken up in the school education system such as **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005** and flagship programmes like **Samagra Shiksha** and the subsequent **Right to Education Act (RTE)**. **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)** have been opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs). Gender sensitization is also done which includes gender sensitization Module – part of in-service training, construction of toilets for girls, construction of residential quarters for female teachers and curriculum reforms.
- In order to bring women in the mainstream of political leadership at the grass root level, the government has **reserved 33% of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions for women**. Capacity Building of Panchayat Stakeholders including Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is conducted with a view to empower women to participate effectively in the governance processes.

- **Gender Budget** has been made a part of the Union Budget of India since **2005** that entails fund allocation towards programmes/schemes dedicated to women.

With the help of these programmes and efforts, the Government of India is continuously encouraging gender parity/equality with a focus on alleviating the gender gap in all sectors and at all levels of governance.

Benefits of Gender Sensitization

Gender sensitization can help in the following ways:

- Develops mutual respect and empathy towards the opposite gender
- Can help in decreasing violence and crimes against men, women, transgender and other marginalized communities
- Helps in changing the attitude and mindset of individuals
- Boosts self-confidence of employees in a workspace (especially women).
- Removes gender biases
- It will Advance gender equality
- Improves women's job market participation rate
- Create a more inclusive society
- Will give better decision-making power to women
- Helps in improving the mental health of individuals

How to teach gender Sensitivity?

Gender sensitization should take place from a young age. Parents and Teachers should pay special attention to ensure that children do not follow the gender biases that are generally followed in the community or society. Gender sensitivity and inclusion can be taught in the following ways:

- Conducting Gender sensitization sessions and workshops at schools, colleges, workplace etc.
- Making topics related to gender equality and sensitization part of the school and college curriculum

- Using gender neutral language at home, school/college, workplace etc.
- Training parents and teachers (school and college) about what they should teach children directly and indirectly
- School and college textbooks should be free from gender biases
- To educate and empower both women and men to become more inclusive and empathetic towards each other by making them aware of how to tackle stereotyping and unconscious biases, gender inclusion in the workplace and even aspects of the POSH Act.
- Making use of gender neutral terms or variable or non-binary pronouns like ‘they’ at college, workspace etc. This not only helps in unboxing gender identity but also encourages empathy and makes colleagues non-judgmental.
- Setting up Gender Sensitization and Internal Complaints Committee (GSICC) at workplace, colleges etc.
- Laying down policy to prevent gender discrimination and sexual harassment of any individual.

Role of Teacher in Gender Sensitization

Gender issues are prevailing in society in all areas of life .To minimize these gender issues we need to start changing the mindset of the younger generations of society as they are those who can bring about further change in society with their innovative ideas, thoughts and practices .To do this we need good educated teachers, who have a sound knowledge regarding gender issues. Teachers play a very important role in the early upbringing of the child and their ideas and beliefs can change the thought patterns of young students. A teacher must therefore, constantly be aware of the fact that his or her actions, attitude, behavior, perspective, approach, manner,outlook and mindset will help to shape a Child’s gender role. Teacher may use multiple strategies and interventions to ensure that students have equal opportunities to both create and obtain their goals. Teachers are required to be serious about the gender issue. For the teachers to bring about a change in the society they should be given prehand knowledge over the issue. Teachers need not only gender sensitive curricula and textbooks but also gender equality education. Teachers can serve as a role models for the students.

Role of School in Gender Awareness and Gender Equality:

A school is the first society for the students and a school plays an essential role in creating gender awareness and gender equality among its students. A student learns the basic lessons for life only in the school. Hence teachers have to play a crucial role in bringing this awareness among the students. First of all it is essential for the teachers to believe in gender equality and they have to put it in practice in the class. The teachers need to be conscious of their behaviour in the classroom while dealing with the boys and girls. They should try to develop a sense of equality and respect in the students for the opposite sex. By providing equal opportunities to both girls and boys and by not discriminating them on the basis of their gender, the teachers can develop mutual respect among the girls and boys for each other. Class activities or competitions in classrooms should be carried out in combined groups and not on the basis of sex. Sufficient opportunity should be provided to both boys and girls to work together and study together in a friendly atmosphere in a classroom so that they are sensitized about gender equality and they understand the importance of both the sexes in social circumstances. Both boys and girls should be taught to appreciate and respect each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Role of Higher Education Teachers in Gender Awareness and Gender Equality:

Higher Education is an advanced stage of human learning. Once you finish school and join a college and university, you are placed in an environment composed of growing adults. Women have been traditionally forced to limit their interactions with the outside world. However, when women are placed in varied environments such as those in universities they are able to explore beyond the orthodox limitations imposed on them. Self-esteem issues that wave the women population are effectively dealt with as they interact with people and engage in diverse activities.

The process of gender sensitization through higher education should not be restricted to women. Many universities have introduced programmes that focus on the parochial ideas which have become entrenched in the male society. It is imperative to highlight that we have come to terms with patriarchy and misogyny so much that we often ignore the subtle displays of the same. In order to create a world

aware of the issues faced by women simply because they are women, men are needed to be taught and trained in these matters. They must be made sensitive to the issues peculiar to women through comprehensive programs.

Government policy also outlines the importance of gender sensitization, why shouldn't it be made mandatory?

The importance of gender sensitization in schools has been recognized and given due importance in all policy outlining quality education. The Right to Education Act 2009, and its operating arm, the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**, has clearly mentioned that gender equality is one of the expected outcomes of elementary education in the country. Schools need to address unequal gender roles at a critical stage, when children are growing up. Shouldn't we insist that schools give due importance to gender sensitization and ensure that it is very much a part of our children's schooling process?

If you want to see a society devoid of discrimination, one where women and girls are not treated as inferior, and where equal opportunities and rights are given to all women, then I urge you to, emphasize on the importance of gender sensitization and do your part to ensure that over time, we move towards a more equal and inclusive society.

Conclusion and suggestions

Despite that nowadays voices of all women everywhere have been acknowledged, human rights have been developed in favor of them, societies have been subject of democratization and changing values processes international gender equality agendas have been settled, the World Economic Forum (2010) assures that we still need a true gender equality revolution. From the UNESCO viewpoint—other of the international organizations that have been especially effective in the areas of advocacy and aims to foster a gender-inclusive culture-, this revolution implies, in more or less, a public recognition that infinite obstacles and challenges exist and need to be tackled (UNESCO, 1998c). In conclusion, it can be said for eliminating gender disparities we need to consider the followings-

- Strong political commitment to support women in both development and education.
- Related to this, policy development has been informed and influenced by demands of strong women's networks and other key stakeholders such as teachers and parents.
- Along with key and universal access for all groups, comprehensive policies are implemented which tackle the key cause of gender inequalities in education. Gender sensitization is possible with the help of education.

Education helps in changing the mind of a person by teaching and training in the following way:

1. Enhancing self-confidence level by participation in various social, political and economic areas.
2. Education rise the status of the family and society.
3. Reducing dependability by performing self-activities in various fields.
4. Education develops the leadership quality among women by self-confidence and self-esteem.
5. Social awareness, political awareness, health awareness can be better understood at the higher level with the help of higher education.
6. As the students studying in colleges are more aware and educated, they as pioneer of this campaign would become the foundation of society.
7. Curriculum related to gender sensitization needs to be added.
8. Awareness drive should be started by educational institutions in society especially in rural areas
9. The workshops, seminars, debates should be organized so that more students become active participants.
10. Gender sensitization cell should be established to organize various events.

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