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## 7. Gender Sensitization – Equality of Opportunity

Gupta Neha Ramakant (TYB.Com)

### Abstract:

Gender sensitization refers to the modification of behavior by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. It is interlinked with women empowerment. Gender sensitization generally refers to theories which claim that modification of the behavior of teachers and parents, etc. towards children can have a causal effect on gender equality. As per the UNESCO document on Gender Sensitization ‘Gender sensitivity is not about pitting women against men. On the contrary, education that is gender sensitive benefits members of both sexes. It helps them determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations. Gender awareness requires not only intellectual effort, but also empathy and open-mindedness. Gender sensitization helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of sex. Gender discrimination is a part of gender sensitization. In our society weaker section women are facing many problems.

### Keywords:

Gender, Sensitization, Awareness, Education, Men, Women.

### 7.1 Introduction:

Gender sensitization presides over gender sensitivity, the modification of behavior by raising awareness of gender equality concerns. This can be achieved by conducting various sensitization campaigns, training centers, workshop, programs etc. Sensitization in the domain of humanities and social sciences is seen as an awareness informed propensity or disposition which claims at changing behavior so that it is sensitive to certain issues. Gender sensitization may be seen as “the awareness informed propensity to behave in a manner which is sensitive to gender justice and gender equality issues.

Gender sensitization is by far the most effective and non-confrontationist approach of reforming the society. Gender sensitization is the process of changing the stereotype mind set of men and women, a mindset that strongly believes that men and women are unequal entities and hence have to function in different socio-economic space. Gender sensitization intends to change perception that men and women have each other. It creates a mindset in men that no longer sees in women the stereotypical image.

Rather they are seen as responsible and equal partners in socio – economic development. Gender sensitization increases the sensitivity of people at large towards women and their problems. In the process it creates a class of responsive functionaries at different level, from

policy making to grass root level, who are convinced that any form of gender bias is an obstacle on the way of attaining an equitable social and economic order and therefore consider addressing gender related issues in their situation as a matter of priority. Gender sensitization is first instance, tends to change the perception that men and women have of each other.

It creates a mindset in men that no longer sees in women the stereotypical image. The impression that women are a weak and unequal entity no more clouds the minds of common man. Rather they are seen as responsible and equal partners in socio-economic development.

The general perception of men and women on the rigid gender division of labor and other orthodox practices related to gender begin to die down. Women also tend to develop the perception that they are no subordinates to men and they have an equally important role to play in decision making at household, community and organization level.

### **7.2 Gender Sensitization at Work Place:**

Gender sensitization training is critical to addressing bias and thus creating a positive and inclusive workplace atmosphere. Facilitating discussion between male and female employees, with the goal of highlighting positive as well as discriminatory workplace practices and policies that need attention. Women are often denied top executive jobs on account of discrimination attitude towards them.

The attitudinal barriers glass ceiling syndrome. The glass ceiling syndrome is caused by: Husband's unwillingness to share family responsibilities, long office hours that put undue stress on women. Women face a lot of sexual harassment at the workplace. Sexual harassment of women is the worst form of discrimination against them, because it not only violates their sense of dignity and the right to living but is also an assault on their sense of self-worth. It belittles them in their own eyes and makes them feel small and helpless.

### **7.3 Gender Equality is Responsibility for all:**

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Gender equality prevents violence against women and girls. It's essential for economic prosperity. Societies that value women and men as equal are safer and healthier. Gender equality is human right. It is the vision that men and women should be treated equally in social, economic and all other aspects of society, and to not be discriminated against on the basis of their gender. Gender equality is one of the objectives of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Gender equality is the goal, while gender neutrality and gender equity are practices and way of thinking that help in achieving the goal. Gender parity, which is used to measure gender balance in a given situation, can aid in achieving gender equality but is not the goal in and of itself. Gender equality is more than equal representation, it is strongly tied to women's rights, and often requires policy changes.

Gender equality means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike.

#### **7.4 Legal System and Gender Discrimination in India:**

The role of constitution in ensuring gender justice is being recognized in modern times. It is most appropriate that the supreme law of the land should meaningfully address the woman question and respond to the challenges by stimulating the whole legal system towards a greater concern for, and protection of women.

But law cannot change a society overnight, but it can certainly ensure that the disadvantaged are not given a raw deal. However the courts can certainly go beyond mere legality insulating women against injustice suffered due to biological and sociological factors. Discrimination against woman begins even before her birth and flourishes in every phase of her life.

The discrimination began with traditional value system has become deep noted monster over the centuries, due to illiteracy. Indian society and family system believe that son is the redeemer only he has to enjoy the property of the father.

However hard the daughters & women work both at home and outside the house, they are not allowed to enjoy the property, though women do have their stake in the property of their parents legally. Women, even in the twenty first century, do not have economic independence as they do not have freedom to work outside their family.

The economics depends on the male counterpart itself is a solid basis for gender inequality. The uneven distribution of rights and obligations within a household becomes conflicts between women's new economics and old domestic roles in both rural and urban India. Women devote a large proportion of their time on unpaid long domestic sessions.

Childbearing and rearing consumes major portion of their enthusiasm and energy, which is a major barrier for their career and progress. Not only men, but the elderly patriarchal women of the family try to construct their girls to be homely and acceptable in a patriarchal society.

#### **7.5 Need of Gender Sensitization:**

Though the women in the society are subjected to accomplish multilateral role, yet they are not doubt, discriminated not only in the womb and childhood, but also in every walk of life. Indian women play an impressive role to the development of the country as well as society. In spite of these, they have to face a number of challenges and limitations in their day to day life.

All these challenges and limitations restrain them to comprehend their potential for personal growth and freedom to live a better and respectable life. The challenges faced by women in India context are many like - male dominating society, literacy, domestic violence, putdowns, verbal abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, early marriage, battering, emotional abuse, eve teasing, dating abuse, dowry violence & bride burning, female kidnapping, intimate partner violence, spousal abuse, marital rape, sexual harassment at home & workplace, sexual assault, female & women trafficking, physical & mental harassment, family violence, female infanticide & foeticide, teasing, honour killing, women-inequality in decision making, etc. Generally speaking, all the challenges faced by women and related gender disparities and inequality are the results of perceptions of gender ideology. There are several other causes for gender issue:

- **Individual:** lack of awareness, passivity/resistance to change, degradation of values and ethics.
- **Education:** Low level of literacy among women.
- **Employment:** Time management problem.
- **Legal/Administration/Government:** Ignorance on laws, Insensitivity of police personnel, Lack of trained personnel.
- **Political:** Lack of awareness/participation of women in decision-making.
- **Media:** It gives low priority to the subject of portraying women as equal in the society. The media actually portrays women as consumers rather than as modern liberated women.

Based upon all the above mentioned causes, individual needs to be open minded, rational and sensitive to overcome the various disparities existing in lieu of gender equality.

Without being sensitive to the needs of a particular gender, an individual may refrain from understanding the opposite gender and in some acute cases even him or herself.

The need for this sensitivity has been felt and realized through times immemorial and in almost all kinds of human existence, across the globe.

### **7.6 Literature Review on Gender Sensitization:**

The paper reviews a broad range of micro, macroeconomic and development economics literature on the impact of gender sensitization on economic development and growth. Stylized facts are reported as well as the results of both empirical and theoretical research. Globally women's role are found to be in the midst of change.

Overall the literature suggests that issues in gender inequality as it relates economics development fall into the categories of: values and religion, cultural restriction and roles, legal and inheritance laws and practices, resources allocation within marriage, labor market access, and education.

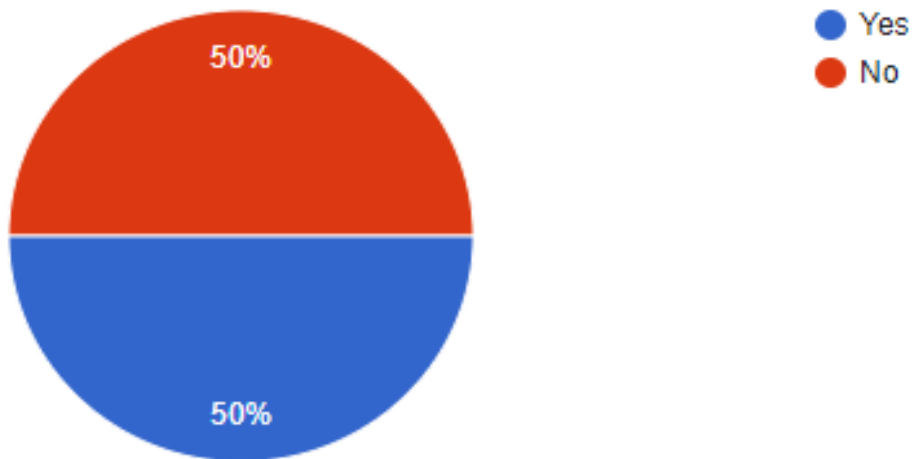
### **7.7 Objectives of Gender Sensitization:**

- To make the young boys and girls gender sensitive and create positive values that supports the girls and their rights.
- To provide overall guidance to the peer group in integrated/mainstreaming gender in all activities of the Institution in the form of focused group discussions, debates, poster making competition etc.
- To provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to understand the social and cultural constructions of gender that shapes the experiences of women and men in society.
- To generate the awareness in regards to equality in law, social system and democratic activities.
- To make people aware of the power relations between men and women in society and to understand the importance of affording women and men equality opportunity and treatment.
- To sensitize the newly induced members regarding prevalent gender inequalities in the society.

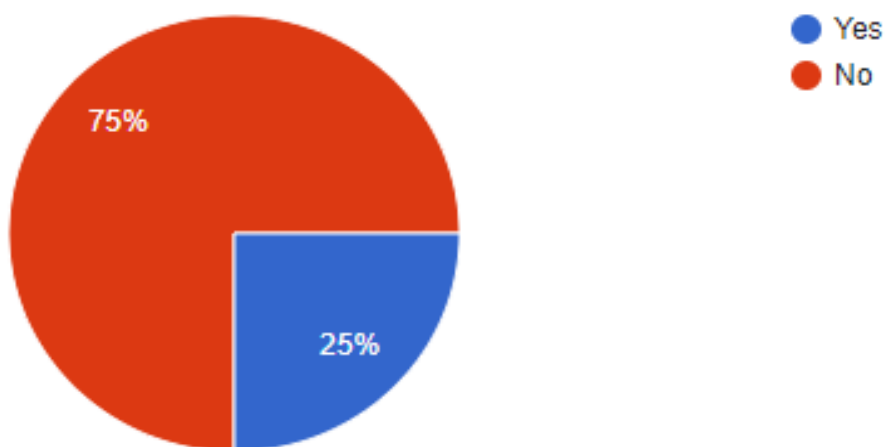
- To enable them to reflect upon their own socialization process and attempt to break that influence.
- To educate them on the status of women and the impact on development of the nation.

### **7.8 Gender Sensitization - Data Collection & Analysis:**

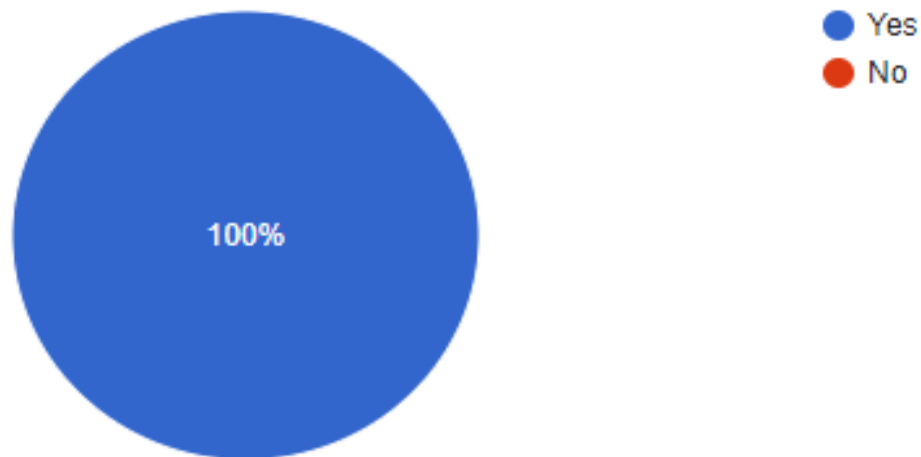
a. Do you think men and women have same rights in our country?



b. Do you think female employees get a fair opportunity as male employees?



c. Have you ever experienced gender inequality/gender discrimination?



### 7.9 Conclusion:

We can conclude that gender sensitization through education can be as a forceful, effective and primary tool to bring change in the thought process of student through formal school education. The main focus should be on breaking the stereotypes and set patriarchal notions prevalent in the society. Gender has been accepted as a category in the formulation of policy and curricula framework in India. Gender, Equality and Empowerment of girls have been used as key words in education document for long. Gender has primarily been viewed:

- As concerning only girls and women (a biological category)
- As an isolated category, not related to other issues
- In terms of provision of equal facilities

A focus on Equality has led to strategies focusing on:

- Increasing representation of these notions of gender in educational material – sensitive portrayals of discrimination that girls/women face
- Portraying positive role models and enacting role reversal of stereotypes
- Neutralizing text of any gendered references

Thus we can conclude that gender sensitization through education can be as a forceful, effective and primary tool to bring change in the thought process of students through formal school education. The main focus should be on breaking the stereotypes and set patriarchal notions prevalent in the society.

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