



GENDER SENSITIZATION

AZMATHUNNISA BEGUM

Ph.D Research Scholar(English)

KHAJA BANDANAWAZ UNIVERSITY, KALABURAGI, KARNATAKA.

Abstract

The framework of gender studies in the present times is relevant as it is the subject, we all want to know about yet we abstain to discuss either due to lack of knowledge or concern. What we understand from the word Human is that we belong to a certain species called homosapiens, who are the most abundant and widespread primate species on the earth, developed with advanced tools, varied cultures, languages, ethnicities, religions, beliefs, understandings, lifestyles and above all these a common bond called Humanity. Compassion, empathy, acceptance and congruence are keys to humanity. We witness life in all its colors, potentials, diversities and divisions. The celebration of being alive, the colors of ethnicities, the thrill of discovering diversities help us understand what it means to be the greatest wonder of the world called Human. So let us try to comprehend what it means by colors, divisions and diversities.

KEY WORDS: HOMOSAPIENS, LGBTQIA, GENDER INCLUSIVITY, HIERARCHIZATION, GENDER SENSITIZATION.

INTRODUCTION

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.¹

¹Shuvo Ghosh, *Gender Identity Gender role*, Medscape, Meraki health Centre. Dec 09, 2020
<https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/917990>

Gender sensitization is the teaching of gender sensitivity and encouragement of behavior modification through raising awareness of gender equality concerns. The goal of gender sensitization is to address issues in gender equality and encourage participants to pursue solutions.

Sex is what we are born with it may be called inherent whereas gender is how we as individuals live within the society it may be preferential. In simple words you inherit sex and acquire gender. This biological difference has created a basis for social distinction and hierarchization for assigning discriminatory behaviors to people around the world.

Gender is Socially Learned behavior, based on social expectations from Men & Women Gender Sensitization gives a clear and precise view of Gender and helps to understand that GENDER is not about “Women” it’s about “People”. Gender sensitizing "is about changing behavior and instilling empathy into the views that we hold about our own and the other genders." It helps people in "examining their Personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the 'realities' they thought they know. Gender Sensitization is one basic requirement for the normal development of an individual. The women and children are the most vulnerable group in this situation. And it’s the undue pressure on Boys & Girls to live up to the established norms of Masculinity & femininity that creates a vacuum between them.

GENDER EQUALITY²

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Everyone is affected by gender inequality - women, men, trans and gender diverse people, children and families.

Gender equality is achieved when women, men, girls and boys have equal rights, conditions and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to the development of society. It is a matter of equitable distribution of power, influence and resources in society. It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances just because of the way they were born, where they come from, what their beliefs are, or whether they have a disability or belong to different ethnicity.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Simone De Beauvoir in her book “The second sex” had cited ‘one is not born but becomes a woman’. It is the predesigned mental apprehension that women are an inferior being and men are superior which leads to patriarchal mindset. Kate Millet’s work ‘Sexual Politics’ explains the gender concept as “patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological difference between men

² <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

and women, where men play the dominant or masculine roles and women are conferred the subordinate or feminine ones”.

One such admonishing trait is gender role. Normally defined as a set of roles that are forced to be played by different sexes whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Gender roles are prescribed at a very early age by the way we are raised and modelled. Gender roles are defined and raised by many literary writers as well in their works. What a girl should do, wear, eat, cook, wash or any other household chore. In the similar fashion boys are trained to behave in a certain way which makes them feel superior to the other sex. Personality traits like boys don't cry, boys are stronger, they are sole bread earners induce the feeling of patriarchy among them. Jamaica Kincaid's poem 'Girl' highlights such instances where a girl is being reprimanded by her mother to behave in a certain way, walk in a certain way, how to buy groceries even how to wear clothes that doesn't make her look like a slut. It is a kind of an instructional and threatening advice. That's how girls are toned and pruned at a very early stage of their life.

There has been progress over the last decades: More girls are going to school, fewer girls are forced into early marriage, more women are serving in parliament and positions of leadership, and laws are being reformed to advance gender equality. One of the good examples as to how the girls should be reared at a tender age is Chimamanda Adichie's 'Fifteen Suggestions' which are like an advice to the Mothers in the society how to raise their girls, so that there exists no gender disparity and girls learn to live their lives on their own terms.

The European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) are embarking on a new, global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) – **THE SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE.**

Another initiative taken up by The UN was HeForShe campaign. HeForShe is an invitation for men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for gender equality. When women are fighting alone, they are considered radical and strange, but if men and women join together, they will seem a strong force and be strong. Movements are always stronger when people in large fight for the same cause. There will always be people who oppose, but they will not always overtake the majority.

It is not only about women and girl child, this situation leads to unwarranted pressure on both the sexes to live upon the established conditions of masculinity and femininity. Girls endure unnecessary social control, discrimination and domination whereas boys are discouraged from being emotional, gentle or fearful.

There are many films and literary works which have contributed towards the awareness of gender inequality issues, films such as battle of the sexes, Hidden Figures, Mulan, Ki and Ka, Pink, Dil Dhadakne Do all show gender equality as their core subject.

EDUCATION

Justice Verma committee 2013 reports “Education to correct gender bias and to cure the mindset of the prejudices.....has to begin at birth in the home, in formal education at school level, personal behavior, social interaction and must continue lifelong. The process may be time taking and tedious for completion but it should commence forthwith”.

Educating girls saves lives and builds stronger families, communities and economies. An educated female population increases a country's productivity and fuels economic growth. Girls' education strengthens economies and reduces inequality. It contributes to more stable, resilient societies that give all individuals – including boys and men – the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Among 775 million illiterate adults in the world 2/3rd are women. The statistics are alarming yet the challenge can be overcome with better opportunities and initiatives for women. Education is a key area of focus. Although the world is making progress in achieving **gender parity** in education, girls still make up a higher percentage of out-of-school children than boys. Approximately one quarter of girls in the developing world do not attend school.

Investing in girls' education transforms communities, countries and the entire world. BUT many economically backward and conservative families spend the limited sources that they have on boys' education and the girls' education takes a backseat. This thought may have its roots in the upbringing of the children, and stems from the idea that boys are the sole bread earners of the family and women are labeled as child-bearers and homemakers. That is the patriarchal/venerable mindset and subservient attitude of women.

Mary Wollstonecraft's book “A vindication of the rights of women” is considered the first great manifesto of women's rights based on the education of women. It argues that the education system deliberately trained women to be frivolous and incapable only to be coy wives. Her book is also one of the earliest foundational work of feminist political thought.

THE CHALLENGES

There are many other issues and cruelties that go unnoticed against women because we are systematically raised in a certain manner to follow up on the norms of the society in which we are raised. Male domination is an age-old custom of our patriarchal organization. Women have accepted this disgrace and ignominy since the time immemorial without any qualms and inhibitions. The institutionalized and hypothetical social structure in which men dominate and have absolute authority over the family group esp the females have to change in order to accommodate a respectable position for females in the society. The man is not superior to woman due to some natural law but because of the privileges given to him and denied to a woman. This unequal power distribution between men and women created a wide void which has taken centuries to be equalized to some extent. Globally, women have fewer opportunities for economic participation than men, less access to basic and higher education, greater health and safety risks, and less political representation.

The atrocities against women start right before the birth of a child in the form of sex selection although banned in many countries around the world.. female infanticide, physical, sexual and psychological abuse during infancy..... child marriage, FGM, incest, child prostitution, pornography during girlhood.....adolescence and young age may result in courtship violence (Acid throwing, date rape) sexual harassment at workplace, forced prostitution, partner violence, marital rape, dowry abuse..... elderly women horror as forced suicide, homicide of widows, economic disparity..... categorically mentioning domestic violence, sexual abuse, forced marriages, honor killings..... including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence, gender wage gap, and other oppression tactics.

Micro aggressions are common at workplace as we notice indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group or race or ethnicity that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes. It can be a compliment or joke with a hidden insult.

LGBTQIA³

Sigmund Freud father of psychoanalysis claimed “*Anatomy is Destiny*” but the belief that gender is composed of only two distinct and opposite sexes is a myth which neither is scientifically nor medically proven. Personalities and behaviors are conditioned not by physiology and body but by the socio-cultural environment. UNICEF offers a comprehensive definition of gender as “A social and cultural construct which distinguishes differences in the attributes of men and women, girls and boys and accordingly refers to the roles and responsibilities of both.

Commonly referred to as The Third Sex by many critiques and analysts. They stand for a specific group of people and encompasses the entire spectrum of gender fluidity and sexual identities.

³ Jaclyn Diaz, *Significant problem for LGBTQ*, The NPR daily Newsletter. May 10, 2021

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for the umbrella term Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (cisgender), Asexual. Queer is a concept that originally means strange or peculiar. The "plus" represents other sexual identities including pansexual and Two-Spirit. The first four letters of the acronym have been used since the 1990s, but in recent years there has been an increased awareness of the need to be inclusive of other sexual identities to offer better representation. The purpose of the acronym is to represent the tremendous diversity of people who are same/similar gender attracted and transgender. The addition of the plus is better able to fully capture that diversity among the specific group.

A person's gender identity is their internal sense of gender, whether that is a woman, man, or nonbinary gender. A person's gender identity does not necessarily correspond to their sex assigned at birth or with their gender expression.

It is also important to understand that gender is not the same as sex. Sex is biological, while gender is influenced by social, cultural, and environmental factors.

GENDER INCLUSIVITY⁴

“But in truth society is not a species, for it is in a society that the species attains the status of existence — transcending itself toward the world and toward the future. Its ways and customs cannot be deduced from biology.” SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

The use of the acronym is intended to be an all-encompassing way to recognize different gender identities and sexual orientations. The addition of other identities to the LGBT acronym also plays an important role in recognizing and connecting them to a larger community.

It also means that these individuals are able to gain greater recognition by society as a whole. Rather than being erased, ignored, or denied, acknowledgment can help foster greater visibility of marginalized identities. From a societal standpoint, a trans person can be victim to the stigma due to lack of family support, issues with health care and social services, police brutality, discrimination in the work place, cultural marginalization, poverty, sexual assault, assault, bullying, and mental trauma.

Killing of transgender individuals, especially transgender people continue to rise yearly. 2020 saw a record 350 transgender individuals murdered, with means including suffocation and burning alive.....

All these problems mostly goes unnoticed and treated as "An Invisible Problem".

⁴ <https://genderspectrum.org/articles/what-is-a-gender-inclusive-world>

Research and statistics suggest that LGBTQ+ youth also have an increased risk of a range of mental health and social issues, often due to or exacerbated by isolation, marginalization, and discrimination based on their orientation or identity. They can't be subjected to alienation or subjugation just because they choose to be different. Fostering inclusivity and acceptance may be one way to help combat some of these issues.

SELF-IDENTITY

Research has found that offering inclusive and affirmative environments is important for LGBTQ+ youth. Indigenous people created the term Two-Spirit to separate themselves from Western descriptions of gender and sexual identities, and some feel it is disrespectful to attach Two-Spirit to the acronym because of that.

Regardless of what terms people choose to use, what matters is that people have a choice in self-identification and that others acknowledge that identity. If someone tells you how they identify, focus on honoring their individual identity.

The rainbow flag is a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and queer pride and LGBT social movements. Also known as the gay pride flag or LGBT pride flag, the colors reflect the diversity of the LGBT community and the spectrum of human sexuality and gender. Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag for the 1978 San Francisco's Gay Freedom Celebration. In the original eight-color version, pink stood for sexuality, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for the sun, green for nature, turquoise for art, indigo for harmony and violet for the soul. However pink and indigo were removed from the flag, resulting in the present-day flag which was presented at the 1979 pride parade which is cited as Gay Liberation Movement.

Research also suggests that despite safety concerns, being visible as a member of the LGBTQ+ community can be an important way to feel a sense of pride in individual identity. Affirming self-identity can help people feel greater self-esteem, self-worth, and boost overall mental well-being. This can be particularly important since representation has long been lacking in mainstream media.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE⁵

Research suggests that while attitudes have shifted towards greater acceptance, LGBTQ+ people still face considerable homophobia and discrimination. Harassment, bullying, and workplace discrimination are not uncommon. Lesbians and gays are often portrayed inaccurately in television, films, and other media leading to widespread misunderstanding about their community.

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/05/forcibly-displaced-lgbt-persons-face-major-challenges-search-safe-haven>

One advantage of utilizing a unified terminology is the ability to engage in political advocacy. Social solidarity can be used to improve visibility, combat discrimination, and advance causes including anti-discrimination and equality laws. The term can sometimes seem to imply that there is a single, homogenous group when there are actually many individual communities made up of diverse individuals. These communities have some things in common, but each identity has its own unique experiences and needs.

The community has been referred to by many words over the years, including many that were intended to be hurtful. So it's not unusual that the self-descriptors that people use can vary, particularly when it comes to issues related to self-expression, sexuality, and identity.

Research has documented significant relationships between sexual and gender minority stress and higher rates of suicidality (i.e. suicidal ideation and attempts) and substance use problems. Nuanced gender differences revealed that substance use problems did not significantly mediate the relationship between victimization and suicide attempts for sexual minority men. Substance use problems may be one insidious pathway that partially mediates the risk effects of sexual and gender minority stress on suicidality. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people present poorer mental and physical health results compared to the heterosexual and cisgender population. There are barriers in the healthcare system that increase these health inequities. Health disparities were detected in the LGBT community, which exhibited higher rates of mental health problems, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, self-harm, and suicide. These inequalities were related to minority stress, and each of them differently impacted individual populations within the broader LGBT community depending on their sexual orientations and gender identities.⁶

The impact of these factors was, in turn, modified by the intersections of race/ethnicity, geographic region, and socio-economic factors. LGBT people described discriminatory experiences by health professionals, as well as their distrust and fear in this setting. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals who are also racial/ethnic minorities are a multiply marginalized population subject to **micro aggressions** associated with both racism and heterosexism. To date, research on this population has been hampered by the lack of a measurement tool to assess the unique experiences associated with the intersection of these oppressions.

Homosexuality was considered a mental disorder up until the 1980s, but even after the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reversed the claim, people who identified as part of the LGBTQ spectrum stayed in hiding. The World Health Organization reclassified "gender incongruence" so transgender people would no longer be deemed mentally ill.

In September 2018, India's Supreme Court unanimously decriminalized gay Sex and ruled that gay Indians be given all the protections of the country's constitution.

⁶ *Social Media and LGBTQ Community*, Hawke Media. Nov 4, 2020.

Finding a community was not easy as fear of discrimination and hate crimes was still very common. With the rise of social media, the LGBTQ community was able to find different ways to use this as an outlet. Unrestrained by physical boundaries or lack of resources, a person who is questioning their identity in the Midwest without any accessible support groups, can find solitude through various social media platforms. Social media provided the means to connect with other folx who have had the same experiences; it showed how vast and varied the community was! Social media still plays a role in providing community and a safe space for the LGBTQ community, but it also has had a positive effect on the culture. LGBTQ youth tend to have smaller online social networks than their straight peers. We found that LGBTQ youth were significantly less likely than their straight peers to engage with their online friends.

ORIENTATION AROUND THE WORLD

The aim here is to confirm that progress is far from being sufficient and that we must continue to promote awareness and prevention actions to fight against homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia. The International Labour Office has conducted a survey examining issues of discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and is recommending the inclusion of sexual orientation in a new protocol to extend an application of its 1958 Convention.

80% of people worldwide identified as heterosexual, 3% as homosexual, 4% as bisexual, and 1% each as pansexual, asexual, and other.

The survey found that men are more likely than women to identify as homosexual (4% vs. 1%). The survey found that Sweden was the country with the highest rate of individuals identifying as transgender.

Estimates shows that about 1.4 million American adults now identify as transgender. More Indians are also coming out openly to declare their sex preferences. Anne Hathway American actor has been appointed as UN Goodwill ambassador in 2016 to raise awareness on the issue of unequal burden of work and in support of equal pay between all the sexes.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing the difference between sex and gender is crucial because it enables us to see that gender inequality is not a natural but a socio-cultural phenomenon. It is not an absolute given authority but a premise that needs to be challenged and changed.

The scenario is changed now a day as more and more people are coming out in the open to declare their sexual preferences. The direction of a person's sexual interest, as towards people of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both sexes has changed for a better living. The people in and around the world are more concerned about the well-being and humanity rather than prejudices and incongruence.

We have more writers coming up today with this novel form of characters that are gender-specific and denounce the whimsical and weird representation of gender disparity. Novels such as "The

Color Purple” by Alice Walker, “The book of pride” by Mason Funk, bring to us the everyday life of these characters. The people like Indian Gay prince of Rajpipla Manvendra Singh Gohil, Demi Lovato, Billy Porter, Miley Cyrus, Kristen Stewart, Rickey Martin and many other celebrities have made their choices public regarding their sexual preferences. Not just celebrities many indian authors are coming up with themes and characters related to this community. Writings such as ‘The Boyfriend’ by R Raja Rao, ‘ The Pregnant King by Devdutt Patnaik, ‘Me Hijra Me Laxmi by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, and why not a a mention of ‘Lihaaf’ by Ishmat Chughtai which was considered to be one of the most controversial short story published in 1942. Many films also highlight this genre such as moonlight, happy together, Philadelphia all highlighting the LGBTQ lives and the prejudices. Even popular hindi films like Kapoor & sons, Shubh Mangal Zyada Savdhan, Margarita with a straw, and why not a mention of Fire by Mira Nair all these films also catering to the lives and disillusionment of these communities. Thus we have to make the road clear and vivid through our conscience paving way for a more affluent amiable and conducive world for HUMANITY.....conforming to the idea HUMANITY HAS NO GENDER.....

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