

The Role Of Gender Sensitization In Promoting Gender Equality In Society

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Abstract

Gender sensitization plays a crucial role in fostering equality and social justice by raising awareness about gender-related issues and promoting sensitivity towards the experiences and challenges faced by different genders. The strategy aims to challenge and transform ingrained societal stereotypes and biases, ultimately contributing to the creation of a more inclusive environment in educational institutions, workplaces, and communities. Its importance is evident in the reduction of gender-based violence, increased participation of women in the workforce, and the advancement of gender equality across various sectors. However, the implementation of gender sensitization strategies faces several challenges, including resistance to change, lack of awareness and gender based violence. Government schemes have been pivotal in promoting gender equality, empowering women, and providing support to those in need. While these policies have had a significant impact, sustained efforts, awareness, and resources are necessary to overcome the challenges and ensure long-term gender equality in society. The successful implementation of gender sensitization strategies requires a multi-faceted approach involving education, legal reforms, media awareness, and robust government policies aimed at transforming societal attitudes toward gender.

Keyword: Gender sensitization, awareness, education, equality, resistance, violence, empowerment, government schemes

Introduction

Gender Sensitization is a comprehensive process that involves questioning and modifying societal ideas, behaviors, and institutions to promote gender equality and eradicate gender-based discrimination. This entails raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and encouraging empathy for the different experiences and identities of people throughout the gender spectrum.

Gender Sensitization refers to the process of raising awareness and understanding of gender equality, roles, and the impact of gender-based discrimination. It involves educating individuals and communities to recognize and challenge gender stereotypes, biases, and practices that perpetuate inequality. The goal of Gender Sensitization is to promote respect, fairness, and equal opportunities for people of all genders, fostering an environment of inclusivity and social justice. This process can occur in various settings, such as schools, workplaces, and communities.

Process of Gender Sensitization OR Strategies for Gender Sensitization:

The process of Gender Sensitization involves several key steps aimed at fostering awareness, understanding, and changes in behavior regarding gender equality. The outline of the process is as follows:

1. Awareness: To raise awareness about gender roles, stereotypes, and discrimination through workshops, discussions, seminars, and mass media to educate people about issues related to gender inequality.
2. Education and Training: Gender sensitivity training can be provided in schools, workplaces and communities to help individuals identify and challenge gender stereotypes.
3. Encouraging self-reflection: Personal reflection exercises, group discussions, and role-playing can be used to encourage participants to evaluate their beliefs and behaviors related to gender.
4. Promoting positive behavioral changes: Through role models, positive reinforcement, and continuous learning, people are encouraged to adopt more inclusive and respectful behaviors. For example, practicing equal participation in decision-making, sharing household responsibilities, and challenging harmful stereotypes.
5. Institutional and Policy support: Policies and practices within institutions such as schools, workplaces, and governments should support gender equality, such as non-discriminatory hiring practices, sexual harassment policies, and gender-neutral language.
6. Advocacy and Community engagement: Engaging with communities through advocacy campaigns, social media, and local organizations can help in spreading the message of gender equality.
7. Monitoring and Evaluation: Regular monitoring and feedback collection from participants can help in evaluating the impact of sensitization programs.
8. Sustaining change: Continuous education, periodic training and institutional support are necessary to sustain the changes achieved through sensitization.

Through these steps, gender sensitization aims to shift mind-sets and create a more inclusive society in which gender equality is valued and upheld.

Importance of Gender Sensitization:

Gender sensitization is crucial for fostering an inclusive and equitable society. There are several key reasons for this.

1. Promotes Gender Equality:

It helps break down traditional gender roles and stereotypes, leading to equal opportunities for all genders in areas such as education, work, and decision-making. This encourages fair treatment regardless of gender and contributes to reducing gender-based discrimination.

2. Reduced gender-based violence:

By raising awareness of the harmful effects of gender violence (such as domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and discrimination), Gender Sensitization helps people understand the importance of respect and consent. This can lead to a decrease in violence and create safer places for everyone, especially women and marginalized genders.

3. Encourages respect and tolerance:

Gender Sensitization fosters mutual respect among people of different genders by challenging harmful stereotypes and biases. It promotes an understanding of tolerance, and empathy, which are essential for peaceful coexistence.

4. Empowers individuals:

It highlights the challenges faced by marginalized genders (such as women, transgender, and non-binary individuals) and advocates for their rights. This empowerment allows individuals to participate more fully in the social, economic, and political spheres.

5. Enhances social development:

Gender equality is linked to social and economic development. When everyone has equal access to resources, opportunities, and rights, communities and societies become stronger and more resilient. Gender Sensitization helps build a more sustainable and progressive society.

6. Improve workplace dynamics:

In the workplace, gender and programs reduce discrimination, harassment and biases, creating a more inclusive and productive work environment. It promotes equal pay, career opportunities, and work-life balance for all genders.

7. Helps in legal and policy reforms:

Gender Sensitization raises awareness about the need for gender-sensitive policies and legal frameworks. This leads to stronger legal protection against gender-based discrimination and violence, ensuring more equitable treatment for all genders.

8. Fosters healthy relationships:

In personal relationships, Gender Sensitization encourages equality and mutual respect between partners, whether in families, friendships, or workplaces. It helps reduce power imbalances and promotes healthier and more supportive interactions.

9. Challenges traditional norms and beliefs:

It helps challenge outdated and restrictive social norms related to gender. By addressing the root causes of inequality and questioning norms that limit people's potential based on gender, gender sensitization encourages a shift toward more inclusive and progressive cultural values.

10. Increases awareness and actions:

Gender Sensitization educates people about the impact of their actions and attitudes towards others. It encourages individuals to take responsibility for their behavior and actively contributes to eliminating gender-based injustice in society.

Challenges related to gender Sensitization:

Some of the main challenges related to gender sensitization include the following:

1. Resistance to change:

Gender sensitization often includes challenging and deeply entrenched attitudes and behaviors. Such gender-related behavior can be met with resistance or opposition. This resistance can arise from individuals or groups invested in maintaining the status quo. They may feel threatened by changes in traditional gender roles and expectations.

2. Lack of awareness:

Many people may not be aware of issues and challenges related to gender and may not see the need for gender sensitization. This lack of awareness can make it difficult to engage people in gender sensitization and can lead to apathy or disinterest in the topic.

3. Limited resources:

Many gender sensitization programs suffer from a lack of resources including funding, trained facilitators, and materials. This limits the reach and impact of these programs, particularly in underdeveloped or rural areas, where gender inequality may be most pronounced.

4. Inequality in access to education:

In some regions, women, girls, and gender minorities still face limited access to education, which hinders their ability to benefit from gender-sensitization initiatives. Without proper education and awareness, gender stereotypes continue to be perpetuated.

5. Gender based violence:

Despite efforts at sensitization, gender-based violence (such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking) remains widespread, often because of the persistent societal tolerance of these behaviors and inadequate legal enforcement.

6. Economic disparities:

Economic inequality, such as the gender pay gap, limited access to resources for women, and marginalized gender, hinders gender equality. Economic dependence, particularly among women, makes challenging the patriarchal system difficult.

Government Schemes towards Gender Sensitization:

In India, several government schemes have been implemented to promote gender sensitization and ensure gender equality. Some key schemes towards gender sensitization are as follows:

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter):

Launched in 2015, this initiative aimed to reduce female feticide, improve the sex ratio, and promote girls' education.

2. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (BMMVY):

This scheme provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating mothers to support their health and nutritional needs.

3. Mahila E-Haat: An online platform to support women entrepreneurs by providing them a space to showcase and sell their products.

4. Stand Up India Scheme:

Aimed at promoting entrepreneurship among women, Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST) providing financial assistance to set up greenfield enterprises.

5. One Stop Centre Scheme:

Provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, offering services such as medical aid, legal support, and counseling.

6. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana:

The savings scheme for the girl child promotes her welfare, education, and marriage.

7. National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW):

This mission works to improve the status of women through training, awareness programs, and creating an environment conducive to women's empowerment.

8. Ujjwala Yojana:

This scheme aims to provide free LPG connections to women in poor households, providing a safer cooking environment, and improved health.

9. Women Helpline:

It provides a toll-free 24/7 helpline for distressed women. Helplines provide counseling, referral services, and other forms of support. Women who experienced violence, harassment, or other gender-based discrimination were the major targets.

Conclusion:

Gender Sensitization is a comprehensive process that aims to raise awareness, understanding, and empathy regarding gender equality, roles, and discrimination. It involves educating individuals and communities to recognize and challenge gender stereotypes, biases, and practices that perpetuate inequality. The process includes steps such as awareness-raising, education and training, self-reflection, promoting positive behavioral changes, institutional and policy support, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, and sustaining change. Gender Sensitization is crucial for promoting gender equality, reducing gender-based violence, encouraging respect and tolerance, empowering individuals, enhancing social development, improving workplace dynamics, fostering healthy relationships, challenging traditional norms, and increasing awareness and action. However, challenges related to Gender Sensitization include resistance to change, lack of awareness, limited resources, inequality in access to education, gender-based violence, and economic disparities. In India, several government schemes have been implemented to promote gender sensitization, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Mahila E-Haat, Stand Up India Scheme, One Stop Centre Scheme, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, National Mission for Empowerment of Women, Ujjwala Yojana, and Women Helpline.

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