

Need of Gender Sensitization among Teacher Trainees: Perception of Teacher Educators

Dr. Prerna Mandhyan

Assistant Professor, D. S. College, Katihar (India)

E-Mail: prerna.mandhyan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Gender' is a social construct, which has been strengthened with time by different social institutions, including family, educational institutions, workplace, religion, norms and beliefs. Gender-based discriminations exists in all walks of life and every part of society, including everyday interactions at the workplace and public space. Teachers could play an important role in sensitizing the next generation of country towards gender issues. Without sensitizing teacher trainees, it is impossible to sensitize the younger generation. The present situation of teacher training institutions has encouraged the researcher to conduct a study to understand the perception of teacher educators towards the need of gender sensitization for trainee teachers. The Researcher used descriptive survey research design. All the teacher educators working in government or private institutions are treated as population of the study. After analysing the data, the researcher found that to train pre-service teachers about gender equality is important and can make a difference. The researcher found gender stereotype attitude, gender biasness and institutionalisation of profession in response of few statements and it is more surprised that even females' respondents are become habitual of gender roles like the female respondents with good percentage admits that women's basic task is motherhood and men are naturally not suited for bringing up the children, men stated that women should stick to teaching and nursing profession like.

Key words: Gender, Gender sensitization, Gender roles, teacher training

INTRODUCTION

An article by Kohli (2013, October 09) in the Hindustan Times, triggers the attention of the researcher about the concept of Gender Sensitization, in which she referred it as the “*modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equality concerns*”. She further added that to ensure gender equality, it is the responsibility of teachers and parents to sensitize children. This is an established fact that the ‘Gender’ is a social construct, which has been strengthened with time by different social institutions, including family, educational institutions, workplace, religion, norms and beliefs. The gender identities are considered psychological as well as social. This has been determined historically and culturally. Gendering’

has emerged as a specific process of socialization, through which gender roles are taught. Traditionally, gender sensitization focuses more on changing behavior and instilling empathy about other sex.

India being a patriarchal society, practices gender discrimination towards women in many areas like nutrition, childcare, education and work. Role of home maker has been visualized for women and man is considered as a bread winner. National Commission for Women (2019), acknowledged that gender-based discriminations exists in all walks of life and every part of society, including everyday interactions at the workplace and public space. Giri (2021) argued that gender discrimination is often the result of conscious and unconscious bias acquired through generations of conditioning. Though in past few decades, the outlook has changed, but only in metropolitans up to some extent, larger picture is still not very encouraging. The legal situations have become sound and a lot of rights has been ensured. India being a vibrant democracy started believing in equality, but if the younger generation is not aware, all the efforts may go in vain. Awareness and sensitization are two important tasks, which could not be completed without involving teachers. India is having one of the largest schooling system with nearly 260 million learners and nearly 10 million teachers (u-DISE, 2022). The teacher education system with nearly 18000 teacher training institution and nearly 2.5 million trainee teachers, could play an important role in sensitizing the next generation of country towards gender issues. Without sensitizing teacher trainees, it is impossible to sensitize the younger generation.

Need of Gender Sensitization

Gender sensitization aims to make students, parents and teachers aware about phenomenon of gender and 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 behavioural change by instilling 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 under article 14, 15, 16, 39(A) and 39 (D). Gender equality is necessary not only because of constitutional provision but also to unleash the energy and capabilities of women. Besides, the realization that development of women is necessary for the overall development of nation.

Rationale of the Study

Gender sensitization is not about putting women against men. On the contrary, education that is gender sensitive benefits members of both sexes. It helps them determine which assumptions in matter of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations. The concern for gender equality in and through education, especially in classroom spaces is critical, because of the negative and far-reaching implications that gender disparities and inequalities (reflected through biases, stereotypes and discriminatory practices) have for educational institutions. Education is a major force that will help trigger change but this will occur only when teachers and learners assists in adopting classroom initiatives that effect new images based on a positive gender equity ideology. Gender equality as a strategy has great potential to create desired change because it has the capacity to address both the practical and strategic needs of boys and girls, nations and the

world at large. NCW (2019) believes that introducing Gender Sensitization programmes at school level would facilitate inculcating values of equality, inclusivity and diversity, which are essential for building a healthy society among the adolescent boys and girls. It further added that gender sensitization is not only crucial for balanced development of young minds; it will also help students in building correct values, self-discipline and national spirit. Yuden, et. Al. (2020) found that teachers were not gendered sensitive in pedagogical practices in the secondary education level. Teachers and students, both face challenges in understanding gender in education. They noticed an absolute absence of gender awareness, and also no significant effort is being made by teachers to address gender inequality in the classroom. To overcome this situation, teacher education has to play an important role in it. As it will first sensitize budding teachers, who will sensitize students in the class. In this regard, teachers are strategically positioned to act as agents of change in order to achieve gender equality especially through what they teach, how they teach and how they role model their own attitudes, beliefs and practices in the classroom and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

From 2014 in India, Gender, School and Society has been introduced as a compulsory course in teacher training programmes, but it has been observed that the course is not being implemented effectively as a larger number of teacher educators. They do not give due importance to the course as they give to courses like pedagogy or teaching-learning. The situation has forced the researcher to conduct a study to understand the perception of teacher educators towards the need of gender sensitization for trainee teachers and entitled the study as “Need of Gender Sensitization among Teacher Trainees: Perception of Teacher Educators”.

Research Questions

Following research questions have been framed to carry out the study:

1. What is the perception of teacher educators towards the need of gender sensitization among teacher trainees?
2. What is the role of teacher educators in nurturing gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees?

Objectives

- To access the perception of teacher educators towards gender sensitization
- To find out the difference in the perception of male and female teacher educators towards gender sensitization
- To analyse the role of teacher educators in nurturing gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees
- To find out the difference in male and female teacher educators towards nurturing gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees

Operational definitions of the terms

Gender Sensitization: Gender sensitization is all about changing behaviour and instilling empathy into the views that one holds about one’s own sex and other sex. It acquaints men and women with each other’s existence and helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of sex.

Teacher Trainees: The student teacher who are pursuing teacher education programme at secondary stage to be teacher.

Teacher Educators: The teachers who teach student teachers of teacher education at secondary stage.

Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited to only secondary teacher education programme.

Review of Related Literature

Schools as places that systematically reproduce gender inequality (Sadker and Sadker, 1986). Girls and boys who sit in the same classrooms, study the same course books and listen to the same teacher can still receive a rather different education. In all stages of education, girls are the invisible members of the classroom. Teachers interact more with boys, ask them better questions, and give them more valuable and helpful feedback. Girls learn to wait in patience, boys learn that they are the main actors of class life (Sadker, et.al. 2009). Researchers like Eccles & Blumenfeld (1985), Duffy, Warren & Walsh (2001), Tsouroufli (2002) and Smith, Hardman & Higgins (2007) have reported less encouraging school climate for female students as compared to their male counterparts. Researchers like Stanworth (1990) Streitmatter (1994), Li (1999) have reported that teachers are more involved with male students while ignore female students in the classroom. UNESCO (2004) reported regarding tasks and responsibilities that female students are mostly put in charge of classroom cleanliness and spatial organization, while boys are given tasks that require more responsibility such as taking care of materials and equipment, or manage the classroom and ensure discipline when the teacher is not there. All these studies are hinting towards the need of gender sensitization, not only in teachers but also on their educators. Vasundhara (2020) emphasized in her study on the importance of gender sensitization and its role in reforming the Society. Masood (2021) in her study to find out the role that a teacher plays in creating an affective attitude and commitment towards gender sensitive environment in students' life. Gillis and Griffin (1982), Sikes (1991) found in their study that pre service teachers are moderately knowledgeable about women and work and moderately accepting of non-traditional, sex-fair roles for women. Bloom and Ochoa (1993) and Lambert and Rohland (1983) studied prospective teachers' attitude on the value of seminars on gender issues. Martin and Lock (1991) examined the behaviours of student teachers in pre service physical education field experience and found that differential treatment of girls and boys is existing.

While reviewing the reaches, the researcher concluded that gender inequity in schools is a reality but the research should be viewed with scepticism. Gender issues receive limited attention on the teacher education agenda because there are so many things to cover in limited time. Pre service teachers lack the skills to effectively deal with gender equity issues.

Methodology of the Study

The study followed a descriptive survey research design. All the teacher educators working in government or private institutions are treated as population of the study. A sample of 100 teacher educators (50 females and 50 male) (government as well as private) has been selected through random sampling technique.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Perception of male and female teacher educators towards gender sensitization: It was hypothesised that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female teacher educators towards gender sensitization.

Women are better cook than men.

Table 1

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	18	9	28	14	24	12	30	15	0	0	100	50
Female	12	6	18	9	30	15	32	16	8	4	100	50

It is clear from the table that 28% male respondents are strongly agree that women can cook better than men and 18% female respondents are agreeing that women are better cook. It is somehow interesting that 32 % female respondents are disagree that female are better cook.

In a Family, Woman should be Responsible for Domestic Work.

Table 2

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	6	3	20	10	22	11	36	18	16	8	100	50
Female	6	3	14	7	14	7	38	19	28	14	100	50

The table shows that about same percentage of male and female respondents (male 18% and female 19%) declared that woman solely should not be responsible for domestic work. Here, also applies the theory of equality.

The Father should have the Final say in Family Matters.

Table 3

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	8	4	24	12	14	7	40	20	14	7	100	50
Female	2	1	16	8	16	8	40	20	26	13	100	50

The table reveals that 26% female are strongly disagreeing that father should have final say in family matters and 24% male supports this statement. The reason behind this could be the stereotyping thinking of male respondents.

Women should be attached to jobs like teaching, nursing etc.

Table 4

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	16	8	36	18	10	5	26	13	12	6	100	50
Female	12	6	18	9	14	7	32	16	24	12	100	50

36% male are agreeing with the statement that women should be attached to jobs like teaching and nursing etc. While 32% female respondents showed their disagreement towards this statement. This is institutionalisation of gender where specific jobs attached with particular gender.

Men are not naturally suited for Bringing up Children.**Table 5**

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	8	4	20	10	18	9	44	22	10	5	100	50
Female	0	0	22	11	10	5	40	20	28	14	100	50

The table shows that 40% female respondents are disagree with the statement that men are not naturally suited for bringing up the children while 20% male respondents support this statement. There are biologically differences between male and female like; females can give birth child, breastfeed etc. but male can support in bringing up the children as now government has been allowed paternal leave also which indicates that there is a positive role of father too in nurturing child.

A woman's basic task is Motherhood .**Table 6**

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	18	9	34	17	12	6	22	11	14	7	100	50
Female	6	3	30	15	6	3	34	17	24	12	100	50

It is very interesting to observe that 34% male respondents are agree that woman's basic task is motherhood and 30% female respondents are disagreeing with the statement because evidence proved that in most cases due to family or societal pressure females have to for conceiving child otherwise there are women who are career oriented and they take their career as priority.

A man's main task in the house is Breadwinning**Table 7**

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	10	5	28	14	24	12	26	13	12	6	100	50
Female	8	4	28	14	20	10	34	17	10	5	100	50

28% male and female both respondents agree that a man's main task in the house is breadwinning. However, 34% female respondents disagree with the statement. In the modern era females are equal breadwinner and contributing in household expenditure which shows that only man is not breadwinner.

Men should decide on how to use Family Income .**Table 8**

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	4	2	26	13	10	5	38	19	22	11	100	50
Female	4	2	8	4	16	8	40	20	32	16	100	50

The table reveals an interesting conclusion that about the same percentage (male 38% and female 40%) of male and female respondents unanimously disagree that men should only decide that how to use family income. This outcome somewhere showing that trend is changing, now females are also participating in taking family decision even financial decision too.

Women should not work if the economical position of the man is adequate.

Table 9

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	4	2	8	4	10	5	62	31	16	8	100	50
Female	2	1	4	2	8	4	58	29	28	14	100	50

The table shows that 62% male respondents and 58% respondents are disagreeing with the statement. The collected data is revealing that women are also highly qualified and having strong financial background but still they are working to utilize their education for national development and contributing in GDP too.

Men should be preferred in the top positions in employment because of women's fertility issue.

Table 10

Gender	Strongly Agree (%)	No.	Agree (%)	No.	Neutral (%)	No.	Disagree (%)	No.	Strongly Disagree (%)	No.	Total (%)	No.
Male	2	1	8	4	12	6	42	21	36	18	100	50
Female	0	0	6	3	6	3	52	26	36	18	100	50

42 % male respondents are disagreeing with the statement and 52% (10% more than male respondents) female respondents are disagree that male should be preferred in the top positions in employment because of women's fertility issue. It shows positive change in society as males are accepting the females in top positions in employments. Now the deserving candidate will hold the position irrespective of gender.

Role of teacher educators in nurturing gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees

It was hypothesised that there is no significant difference between male and female teacher educators in nurturing gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees.

Table 11

S. No.	Parameters	Male		Female	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Attitude	4	8	8	16
2	Activities	6	12	2	4
3	Curriculum	10	20	2	4
4	Role model	20	40	12	24
5	Co-education	4	8	8	16
6	Successful stories	2	4	6	12
7	Awareness about constitutions rights	4	8	12	24
	Total	50	100	50	100

The table 11 shows that 4% male respondents and 8 % female respondents said that through positive attitude the teacher educator can nurture the positive gender attitude. Positive attitude here means no discrimination

and gender bias. 6% male and 2% female respondents said that by conducting different activities like; debate, slogan, painting, competition etc. and by making the environment gender sensitive.

Training pre-service teachers about gender equality clearly is important and can make a difference. Yet, it is hard to suggest that the positive opinion and attitude changes this training will create during the pre-service period will be maintained in the long run (Erden, 2009). Therefore, instead of focusing on the efforts that would create one-time awareness, teachers should be supported with in-service training activities for sustainable gender sensitivity (Chisholm & McKinney, 2003). These activities should help teachers to develop practical solutions, accompanied by monitoring and follow-up support.

10 % male and 2% female respondents argue that by making the curriculum gender specific. 20% male and 12 % female respondents support the role model of teacher educators. The teacher educators should be sensitive towards gender by their behaviour towards colleagues as well towards teacher trainees. 4% male and 8% female respondents promote the co-education. They proclaim that by providing co-education we can nurture the gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees. By depicting stories of successful females' teacher educators nurture the gender sensitive attitude. 2 % male and 6% female respondents support this activity. 4% male and 12 % female respondents agreed that making aware students about the constitutional rights related to gender, teacher educator can nurture the gender sensitive attitude of teacher trainees.

Findings of the Study

Perception of male and female teacher educators towards gender sensitization

28% male respondents are strongly agreeing that women can cook better than men. 18% female respondents are agreeing that women are better cook. 32 % female respondents are disagreeing that female are better cook. 30% female responded neutral too towards the statement that women can cook better than men. 18% male and 19% female respondents declared that woman solely should not be responsible for domestic work. 26% female are strongly disagreeing that father should have final say in family matters and 24% male supports the statement. 36% male agreeing with the statement that women should be attached to jobs like teaching and nursing etc. While 32% female respondents showed their disagreement towards the statement. 40% female respondents are disagreeing with the statement that men are not naturally suited for bringing up the children while 20% male respondents support the statement. 34% male respondents are agreeing that woman's basic task is motherhood and 30% female respondents are disagreeing with the statement. 28% male and female both respondents agree that a man's main task in the house is breadwinning. However, 34% female respondents disagree with the statement. The same percentage (male 38% and female 40%) of male and female respondents unanimously disagree that men should only decide that how to use family income. 62% male respondents and 58% respondents are disagreeing with the statement that women should not work if economic position of the man is adequate. 42 % male respondents are disagreeing with the statement and 52% (10% more than male respondents) female respondents are disagree that male should be preferred in the top positions in employment because of women's fertility issue.

Role of teacher educators in nurturing gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees

4% male respondents and 8 % female respondents said that through positive attitude the teacher educator can nurture the positive gender attitude. 6% male and 2% female respondents said that by conducting different activities like; debate, slogan, painting, competition etc. and by making the environment gender sensitive. 10 % male and 2% female respondents argue that by making the curriculum gender specific. 20% male and 12 % female respondents support the role model of teacher educators. 4% male and 8% female respondents promote the co-education. They proclaim that by providing co-education we can nurture the gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees. By depicting stories of successful females' teacher educators nurture the gender sensitive attitude. 2 % male and 6% female respondents support this activity.

4% male and 12 % female respondents agreed that making aware students about the constitutional rights related to gender, teacher educator can nurture the gender sensitive attitude of teacher trainees.

Discussion of the Results

The results are showing that the trend is changing. The institutions are promoting gender equality and gender equity. The teacher educators are emerging as role model for the teacher trainees by their gender sensitive attitude and gender concern behaviour. However, the researcher found gender stereotype attitude, gender biasness and institutionalisation of profession in response of few statements and it is more surprised that even females' respondents are become habitual of gender roles like the female respondents with good percentage admits that women's basic task is motherhood and men are naturally not suited for bringing up the children, men stated that women should stick to teaching and nursing profession like. However, there are some responses from the respondents those are quite interesting like; women admit that men could be better cook than women, men stated agree that because of fertility issue women should not avoided to hold the top position. Hamdani (2020) stressed on adopting a gender-responsive approach to teacher training ensures that issues of gender inequality are incorporated into everything a teacher does. It builds on the core foundations of child-centered learning and pedagogies of empowerment by adding a critical lens onto the gendered nature of the learning environment, and how it reflects and responds to gender-inequalities in the wider society.

It could be concluded on the basis of analysis, that teacher educators can nurture the gender sensitive attitude among teacher trainees by conducting different activities, imparting knowledge, promoting co-education, role model, no discrimination, no gender bias, successful stories, making the teacher trainees aware about constitutional rights, collaborations and equal opportunities.

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