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**CERTIFICATE NO : ICRESTMH /2024/C0824888****Gender Sensitization Towards University Students: A Preamble****Vibha Gunderao Nikalje**Research Scholar, Department of Home Science, Mansarovar Global University,  
Sehore, M.P., India.**ABSTRACT**

Gender sensitization is a vital process of creating awareness and understanding about gender equality, equity, and inclusivity among young adults in higher education. University students, being at a crucial stage of personal and professional development, often carry preconceived notions, stereotypes, and cultural biases regarding gender roles. Sensitization programs at this level aim to dismantle these biases, foster respect, and promote a safe and inclusive academic environment. This study explores the significance of gender sensitization among university students, highlighting its role in reducing discrimination, preventing harassment, and encouraging equal participation of all genders in academic, social, and leadership spaces. It also emphasizes the integration of gender-sensitive policies, workshops, and curriculum in higher education institutions to nurture values of mutual respect and social justice. Ultimately, gender sensitization contributes to building responsible, empathetic individuals who are better equipped to contribute positively to society. In this article, gender sensitization towards university students: a preamble has been discussed.

**Keywords:** *Gender, Sensitization, University, Students.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Gender sensitization refers to the process of creating awareness, understanding, and sensitivity towards issues of gender inequality, gender roles, and gender-based discrimination. At the university level, where young adults shape their social, cultural, and professional identities, gender sensitization plays a critical role in fostering inclusivity, respect, and equity among students. (Anand, P.A., 2020)

Universities act as microcosms of society, reflecting prevailing attitudes and practices while also serving as spaces of transformation. Students entering higher education bring with them social values and perceptions influenced by family, community, and media. Without conscious efforts to challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory practices, these perceptions may persist and influence future professional and personal interactions. Gender sensitization, therefore, becomes essential in enabling students to critically examine such biases and adopt egalitarian perspectives. (Advincula, G. B. & Cayabat, C.V., 2020)

Gender sensitization for university students is a process that raises awareness about gender inequality, stereotypes, and their harmful effects to foster an inclusive environment and promote equal rights and opportunities for all genders. University programs introduce students to the social construction of gender, challenge gender-based biases, and cultivate empathy and critical thinking



about power dynamics, ultimately equipping them to become agents of positive social change and contribute to a more equitable society beyond campus. (Jha, S.S., 2020)

By encouraging dialogue, workshops, and curriculum integration, universities can help students recognize the importance of gender equality, respect for diversity, and mutual dignity. Moreover, sensitization equips students with the skills to prevent and respond to issues such as harassment, exclusion, and gender-based violence. In this way, higher education institutions contribute not only to academic growth but also to the creation of a just and equitable society.

### **GENDER SENSITIZATION TOWARDS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

An advanced stage of human learning is higher education. Anyone who completes school and enrolls in a college or university is then put in a setting with developing adults. Historically, women have been compelled to restrict their engagement with the external environment. However, women are able to go beyond the conventional constraints placed upon them when they are placed in diverse contexts, such as those found in colleges. Women's self-esteem problems are successfully addressed as they engage in a variety of activities and social interactions. (Khandave, K.B. et al., 2020)

Women shouldn't be the only ones undergoing the process of gender sensitization in higher education. Numerous academic institutions have implemented curricula that concentrate on the narrow-minded beliefs that have permeated patriarchal society. It is important to emphasize that we have accepted patriarchy and misogyny to such an extent that we frequently overlook their subtle manifestations. Men must be educated and trained in these areas in order to raise awareness of the problems that women experience just because they are women. Through extensive training, they must be made aware of the difficulties unique to women.

The main goal of gender sensitization is to alter behavior and instill empathy in one's beliefs about one's own and other sexes. It serves to foster respect for people of both sexes and explains why men and women exist together. Gender bias starts at birth in patriarchal societies like India, where women face discrimination in sectors including labor, education, childcare, and nutrition. A patriarchal societal structure views men as superior and grants them greater privileges, access to resources, and decision-making authority. The societally enforced traditional roles of men as breadwinners and women as housewives have only served to perpetuate the gender gap. Many scholars and thinkers contend that women are valued equally in contemporary Indian society and are regarded as equals in all spheres of life. The status and rights of women in Indian society have undoubtedly changed significantly, but this hasn't altered the attitudes of those who live in patriarchal societies or raised the status of women in societies where men predominate. To eradicate gender inequality or prejudice, we must work to establish a gender-sensitive society. In addition to changing the cultural perception of women, we should devise methods for preventing and controlling violence against them and fostering international peace. (Sharma, R., 2017)

Raising awareness of issues related to gender equality is known as gender sensitization. It assists people in challenging the realities of both sexes and in analyzing their own attitudes and ideas.



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People who have undergone gender sensitization are able to comprehend the distinctions between sex and gender, the social construction of gender, and the preconceptions around gender roles. It assists them in distinguishing between stereotypical and legitimate gender-related presumptions. The goal of gender sensitization is to raise working professionals' knowledge of the value of gender sensitivity in the workplace. A person may avoid comprehending the other gender if they are not sensitive to the demands of that gender. Based on what society expects of men and women, gender is a socially acquired habit. The groups most at risk in this scenario are women and children. (Malavi, J., 2016)

It's the excessive pressure placed on boys and girls to conform to the traditional standards of femininity and masculinity. Girls experience unjustified discrimination, dominance, and social control. It is discouraged for boys to be sensitive, kind, or afraid. A clear and accurate perspective on gender is provided by gender sensitization, which also aids in understanding that gender is about "people" rather than "women." The right to high-quality education for everyone is fundamentally tied to gender equality, and in order to accomplish this, we need a strategy that guarantees that both men and women, as well as girls and boys, have equal access to, completion of, and empowerment from high-quality education. In these evolving times, gender sensitization is crucial. Both men and women have important roles in the workplace, at home, and in society. As a result, it is critical that both live a courteous life and feel appreciated by society. One of the main causes of a decrease in productivity as well as an increase in absenteeism and staff turnover in an organization is gender insensitivity and inequality, including disparities in compensation and wages, organizational culture, etc. Positive cultures are produced in the home, workplace, and society when both sexes are empathetic toward one another. Gender justice, equality, and inclusion can result from gender sensitization. (Mittal, R. & Kaur, J., 2019)

The development of empathy and respect for the other gender, as well as a reduction in violence and crimes against women, men, transgender people, and other oppressed groups, are potential benefits of gender sensitization for college students. It also eliminates gender prejudices, improves workplace morale for workers (particularly women), and aids in altering people's attitudes and mind-sets. Gender equality will be promoted, women's employment rate will increase, a more inclusive society will be established, women will have greater decision-making authority, and people's mental health will be improved. (Sarkar, S., 2017)

Sensitization to gender issues is urgently needed. As times and gender roles change, it's critical to raise awareness of gender issues and take concrete action to establish a supportive atmosphere that takes into account the feelings and preferences of every person. Both men and women will be able to live more dignified lives if gender preconceptions are broken. Early exposure to gender inequality occurs in a variety of settings, including the home, community, school, and family. As a result, gender sensitization is a long-term process that calls for constant work and cannot be completed in a single day. Gender sensitization can be greatly aided by education. Gender sensitivity must be instilled in children from an early age by both parents and educators. (Srinivas, V. & Chinta, P.K., 2017)



Gender sensitization is necessary given the current circumstances. Raising awareness of gender issues and taking proactive steps to create a supportive workplace that respects everyone's opinions and preferences are crucial given the changing times and gender roles. Gender conventions must be dismantled in order for both men and women to lead moral lives. Gender inequality is taught from a young age in a variety of settings, including the home, community, school, and family. Consequently, gender sensitization is a continuous process that cannot be completed in a single day and calls for constant work. Education can play a major role in gender sensitization. (Vyas, A.N., 2020)

Gender sensitization for university students is a process that creates awareness about gender equality issues, aiming to modify attitudes and behaviors to foster a respectful, inclusive, and unbiased environment on campus and in society. Through workshops, lectures, discussions, and support cells, these programs challenge gender stereotypes, promote equal opportunities, empower individuals of all genders, and ensure safety and dignity, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and just society. (Najjar, O.Y. & Shahin, S., 2015)

### **Key Aspects of Gender Sensitization**

**Understanding Social Construction:** It explains that gender roles are not biological but are learned through societal norms and expectations.

**Challenging Stereotypes:** Gender sensitization encourages students to question traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity, and how these stereotypes can lead to discrimination and unequal treatment.

**Promoting Equality and Rights:** The goal is to foster an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and afforded the same rights, opportunities, and respect, irrespective of their gender.

**Developing Empathy:** Through discussions and educational programs, students learn to be more sensitive to the experiences and perspectives of different genders.

**Influential Stage of Life:** University is a critical period where students form their identities and beliefs, making it an ideal time for fostering positive attitudes towards gender equality.

**Building Future Leaders:** Educating students in this area prepares them to enter workplaces and society as informed, empathetic, and responsible citizens who advocate for fairness.

**Creating Inclusive Campuses:** It helps to establish a university culture that is inclusive, respectful, and welcoming to people of all genders, which is crucial for well-being and social progress.

**Addressing Societal Issues:** By changing mindsets and behaviours, gender sensitisation contributes to long-term social change and helps to reduce gender-based violence and discrimination within society at large.

**Awareness and Understanding:** It's about making students understand the importance of equal opportunities, rights, and treatment for all genders.



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**Challenging Stereotypes:** The process helps individuals examine their own beliefs and challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

**Behavioral Change:** The ultimate goal is to modify behaviors by raising awareness of gender equality concerns, leading to more respectful and equitable interactions.

### **Key Objectives for University Students**

**Promoting Equality:** Fostering equal opportunities and treatment for all genders within the university and beyond.

**Creating a Safe Environment:** Ensuring that the campus is a welcoming and supportive space for people of all genders and sexual identities.

**Addressing Harassment and Discrimination:** Raising awareness about gender-based issues like sexual harassment and providing avenues for redressal.

**Empowering Students:** Building confidence, self-respect, and leadership qualities in all students, regardless of their gender.

**Fostering Dialogue:** Creating platforms for open discussion to understand and resolve gender-related issues.

### **Methods of Implementation**

**Workshops and Lectures:** Interactive sessions and lectures to educate students on gender equality, power dynamics, and related issues.

**Discussions and Debates:** Encouraging active participation in discussions and debates to foster critical thinking and empathy.

**Gender Grievance Cells:** Establishing dedicated cells or committees to handle complaints and provide support and counseling for gender-related issues.

**Curriculum Integration:** Incorporating gender-related topics into academic courses and programs.

**Campaigns and Events:** Organizing awareness campaigns, poster-making competitions, and other events to promote gender sensitivity.

### **CONCLUSION**

Gender sensitization among university students is essential for creating a balanced, inclusive, and respectful academic environment. Universities serve as crucial platforms where young adults develop values, attitudes, and perspectives that influence their future personal and professional lives. Promoting awareness about gender equality not only helps dismantle stereotypes and discriminatory practices but also fosters empathy, mutual respect, and cooperation among students of diverse backgrounds. (Baruah, B., 2019)



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By integrating gender sensitization into university curricula, workshops, and campus activities, institutions can encourage critical thinking about social norms and empower students to challenge inequality. This process nurtures responsible citizens who can contribute positively to building a just and equitable society.

In conclusion, gender sensitization is not a one-time initiative but a continuous effort that requires active participation from students, educators, and administrators. Universities must recognize their responsibility in shaping gender-sensitive attitudes, ensuring that the values of equality, dignity, and respect become integral to the lives of young individuals.

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