

CONCEPT OF GENDER

MODULE 2

INTRODUCTION

- Gender identity is defined as a personal conception of oneself as male or female (or rarely, both or neither). This concept is intimately related to the concept of gender role, which is defined as the outward manifestations of personality that reflect the gender identity. Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified, as a result of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors; gender role, on the other hand, is manifested within society by observable factors such as behavior and appearance. For example, if a person considers himself a male and is most comfortable referring to his personal gender in masculine terms, then his gender identity is male. However, his gender role is male only if he demonstrates typically male characteristics in behavior, dress, and/or mannerisms.

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WHAT IS GENDER?

- **Gender** is a socially constructed definition of women and men. It is not the same as sex (biological characteristics of women and men) and it is not the same as women. Gender is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life.
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DIFFERENT APPROACH

- **The Gender approach** is distinct in that it focuses on women and men and not on women in isolation. It highlights:
- the differences between women's and men's interest even within the same household and how these interact and are expressed.
- the conventions and hierarchies which determine women's and men's position in the family, community and society at large, whereby women are usually dominated by men
- the differences among women and among men, based on age, wealth, ethnic background and other factors
- the way gender roles and relations change, often quite rapidly, as a result of social, economic and technological trends
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CONCEPT

- In sociology, we make a distinction between sex and gender. **Sex** are the biological traits that societies use to assign people into the category of either male or female, whether it be through a focus on chromosomes, genitalia or some other physical ascription. When people talk about the differences between men and women they are often drawing on sex – on rigid ideas of biology – rather than gender, which is an understanding of how society shapes our understanding of those biological categories.

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MEANING SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER

- The **sociology of gender** examines how society influences our understandings and perception of differences between **masculinity** (what society deems appropriate behaviour for a “man”) and **femininity** (what society deems appropriate behaviour for a “woman”). We examine how this, in turn, influences identity and social practices. We pay special focus on the power relationships that follow from the established **gender order** in a given society, as well as how this changes over time.

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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

- Gender, like all social identities, is **socially constructed**. Social constructionism is one of the key theories sociologists use to put gender into historical and cultural focus. Social constructionism is a social theory about how meaning is created through social interaction – through the things we do and say with other people. This theory shows that gender it is not a fixed or innate fact, but instead it varies across time and place.
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GENDER NORMS

- **Gender norms** (the socially acceptable ways of acting out gender) are learned from birth through childhood socialisation. We learn what is expected of our gender from what our parents teach us, as well as what we pick up at school, through religious or cultural teachings, in the media, and various other social institutions.
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MEANING OF GENDER EQUITY

- **Gender equity** requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Gender equity does not mean that women and men become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal.
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ROLE

- A **gender role**, also known as a **sex role**,^[1] is a [social role](#) encompassing a range of behaviors and attitudes that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for a person based on that person's biological or perceived [sex](#).^{[2][3]} Gender roles are usually centered on conceptions of [masculinity](#) and [femininity](#),^[2] although there are [exceptions](#) and [variations](#). The specifics regarding these gendered expectations may vary substantially among cultures, while other characteristics may be common throughout a range of cultures. There is ongoing debate as to what extent gender roles and their variations are [biologically determined](#), and to what extent they are [socially constructed](#).

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