

## Madras School of Social Work

### Annual Celebration of International Women's Day 2020

**Topic** – Gender Sensitivity in everyday life

**Facilitator** – Ms. Kirthi Jayakumar

**Time** – 03 PM to 04 PM

Story: A story was told to the audience & asked to guess 'from whose perspective' the story was told (gender)

A refugee boy was schooling in England. At that time, the Queen of London passed an order to stop accepting refugees anymore. Unfortunately, the refugee boy's parents were in France & yet to reach London as refugees. A classmate of the refugee boy, knowing & understanding the situation, gathered up a group & decided to meet the Queen & request to accept the refugees until his parents arrive.

Now the classmate identity was guessed by many from the audience. Yet, the real identity was a girl from Indonesia which made all of the audience to wonder.

The guesses made were basically by the unconscious bias people have. Unconscious biases are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional, deeply ingrained, universal, and able to influence behavior.

#### 1. Biological sex – Basically 3

Male, Female & Intersex (includes all other types)

Primary sex is determined by anatomical features

Secondary sex is developed during puberty

#### 2. Gender

Man-made, social construct, roles allocation, labelling & self-identity. Science cannot explain gender.

Marketing of products pertaining to particular products is an example. Like jewellery ad for women, bike or car ad for men, etc

#### 3. Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is an enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes or more than one gender.

#### 4. Essentialism

A belief that things have a set of characteristics which make them what they are, and that the task of science and philosophy is their discovery and expression; the doctrine that essence is prior to existence.

- a. the view that all children should be taught on traditional lines the ideas and methods regarded as essential to the prevalent culture.
- b. the view that categories of people, such as women and men, or heterosexuals and homosexuals, or members of ethnic groups, have intrinsically different and characteristic natures or dispositions.

It is subjective to conformity. Ascribing particular set characteristics being expected from people irrespective of their own desire or originality. It is a kind of forcing individuals to follow the societal untold norms. It paves way for social depression affecting physical & mental health. It causes gender dysphoria which is characterised by feeling strongly that their gender does not match their biology, feeling that your body does not reflect your true gender can cause severe distress, anxiety, and depression.

#### 5. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. It takes into account people's overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.

#### 6. Microaggression

everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. This is very common in terms of sex, gender & sexual orientation groups.

Game activity:

12 volunteers from the audience were split into 3 teams 4 into each team. They are asked to bring whatever materials they had at the moment. In addition, bonus items were given. They were asked to build a tower on following conditions:

Team 1 can use both hands

Team 2 can use only right hands

Team 3 cannot use hands

Each team built their respective towers. The moral was to help each other in their respective tower building or to even build a single tower as a single team since no restrictions or other rules have been laid to them. Hence, as a society, it is very important to help each other & live.

We should always acknowledge the need to speak up about our issues either on a forum or in a personal discussion.

The session paved way to be non-judgemental, to practice no microaggression, to respect everyone irrespective of their sex, gender or sexual orientation, to stop unconscious bias & make this a world a better place to live for every human being and gender sensitization.