

## Gender and Sex Distinction

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Sex is a phenomenon of life that sustains life forms on the planet earth. The life cycle of every living kind (a sexual population) spreads the advantageous traits in a way that it makes the next generation more capable of meeting the challenges of survival in different conditions. Sexual reproduction involves combining specialized cells (gametes) to form offspring that inherit genetic traits from both parents. Each cell has half the chromosomes of the mother and half of the father.

According to Boccadoro L., Carulli S.(2008), "Human sexuality is not simply imposed by instinct or stereotypical conducts, as it happens in animals, but it is influenced both by superior mental activity and by social, cultural, educational and normative characteristics of those places where the subjects grow up and their personality develops." Human sexuality has many aspects. It involves building up personal identity in a social evolution of individuals in a society. Sociocultural aspect casts human sexuality as a social norm under moral, ethical, philosophical and religious or spiritual framework. Medically, it deals with the physiological or even psychological aspects. Sexuality is also now viewed in the cultural, political and legal context in a society.

The construction of sexual meanings, is an instrument by which social institutions, religion, the educational system, psychiatry, legal system, human rights, etc., control and shape human relationships. Therefore, sexuality is, generally, framed within the context of the institution of marriage. A home is an environment that provides nourishment for the growth of the young ones and guarantees mutual care and safety for all. It instills a moral obligation and individual responsibility for the partner's sexual behaviours. In some countries, sex functions, behaviours and feelings are expressed without any binding relationship among them. Deviant sexual practices are limited by laws in many countries. In some societies, mostly those

where religion has a strong influence on social policy, marriage laws serve the purpose of encouraging people to only have sex with one partner within marriage. To underlying factor is that mature individuals engage in actions for which they own the responsibility and work towards a condition where harmony is established in the society.

Laws also ban adults from committing sexual abuse, committing sexual acts with anyone underaged, performing sexual activities in public, and engaging in sexual activities for money (prostitution). Though these laws cover both opposite-sex sexual activities and same-sex, they may differ with regard to punishment.

Sex Education is a very broad topic that covers a widespread of ideas about our sexuality and reproduction. It not only describes sexual reproduction and sexual intercourse, but also covers topic of abstinence, contraception, sexual behaviours, orientation, sexual pleasures, values, decision making, communication, dating/relationships, and/or sexually transmitted diseases. Sex Education has been a major debate for children under eighteen, because there are some parents that want it taught in schools and others that do not because of different reasons.

### Sex and Gender Distinction

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of and relations between men and women. It implies the social qualities and opportunities involved with being male and female. It also refers to the relationship between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. Gender is a cultural term. It refers to the different roles which the society, assigns to men and women. It distinguishes between 'masculine' and 'feminine' stereotypes. The concept of gender was become popular in the early lives in the field of feminism, sociology and psychology.

Now we must define sex. Sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between men and women. The term sex is a physical differentiation between the biological male and the biological female. The infant is identified as a boy or a girl depending on his or her sex. It refers to biological factors which distinguish man from woman. Judith Butler says "Sex is not just an analytical category. It is a normative category as well. It stipulated what men and women are. It also stipulates what men and women ought to be. It formulates rules to regulate the behaviour of men and women.

Distinguishing between sex and gender is nothing but a debate of nurture our nature. Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women and gender indicates the vast range of cultural meanings attached to that basic difference. The distinction between sex and gender was first emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in the writings of British and American psychiatrists and medical personnel engaged to cure intersex and trans-sexual patients. To distinguish between the two Simon de Beauvoir rightly says "women are made, they are not born". It indicates the cultural aspects of sex. Some of the distinction between Sex and Gender are:

- (I) Sex implies the biological and physiological features which define the difference between men and women.  
On the other hand, Gender implies the social and cultural aspects of roles, behaviours, activities and attributes of a society which distinguish between men and women.
- (II) Sex is natural, whereas Gender is cultural.
- (III) Sex is less social and more scientific. It explains the physical aspect of human being. On the other hand, Gender is social in nature. It stressed on clothing, activities, carrier choices and positions of people in society.
- (IV) Sex divides society into male and female.  
On the other hand, Gender divides society into masculine and feminine.
- (V) Sex is static. There is no variation in the matter of sex in different human societies. On the other hand, Culture varies from society to society according to cultural variance. (VI) Sex is vested biological identity.

On the other hand, Gender is acquired identity based on social and cultural behaviour. Thus, sex is a biological concept whereas gender is the socio-cultural elaboration of biological sex. Feminists are of the view that there is no necessary co-relations between the biology of men and

women and the qualities that are thought to be masculine and feminine. Rather it is child rearing practices which try to establish and perpetuate certain differences between the sexes. For this, from childhood, boys and girls are trained in appropriate, gender specific forms of behaviour, play dress and so on. Men and Women perform different kinds of work both within the family and outside has little to do with biology. Only the actual process is biological, all other work within the home that women must do cooking, cleaning, looking after children and so on. These works are considered 'domestic work' or 'women's work.' So sex is fixed while gender can be changed. Gender is based on ascribed role while sex is based on physical role.

### Importance of Sex Education

Sexual development begins much earlier than most imagine, long before the obvious physical changes start appearing with puberty. Yet many parents find it difficult to come to terms with this aspect of child's growing up. They are often unable to talk about sex to their children either through embarrassment or simply because they cannot find the right words. But sympathetic and informed understanding from the parents is crucial to healthy sexual development in our children and adolescents.

It is heartening to note that the Third Asian Sexology Conference made recommendations which would shatter the sexual myths prevailing at present. Poor knowledge of sex and total ignorance about the union of man and woman in the process of procreation, with attendant pleasures that such union provides, are responsible for a number of misconceptions thriving even in the best decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While children are dependent on their parents, government is reluctant to allow sex education to be included as a part of the curriculum. While the movies and the serials shown on the small screen stimulate the younger generation sexually, in the absence of the right attitude and sound knowledge about sex, they commit mistakes which more often result in running their lives as could be seen from the unwanted pregnancies being on the increase and HIV positive cases and STD-related diseases mounting.

Positive steps and introduction of sex education in schools and colleges in a scientific and healthy manner are necessary to stop all the misconception. Though science has advanced so much, we seem to go on making sex a mystery and

an obscenity, which it is not. Discussing sex in public is not considered polite or in good taste. It is being done only by murmurs and whispers or only by using foul four-letter words. Children are discouraged when they try to probe facts about sex and are even punished. This drives them to acquire knowledge of sex through dubious and ill-informed sources like equally ignorant friends or cheap pornographic books. Even many couples feel guilty that they are doing something undesirable by indulging in sex in darkness inside their bedrooms. This sort of attitude and considering sex as taboo are responsible for a number of crimes like unnatural sex, abuse of children, rape of women, homo-sexuality, etc.

If children and youngsters learn about sex in a scientific and objective way from individuals qualified to impart sex education with the help of illustrations, models, slides, etc., they would be more careful before indulging in clandestine sex. At least they would be careful to take precautions so as to avoid unwanted pregnancies or contracting dangerous diseases like AIDS, STD, etc. They would also be alert when strangers approach them with evil designs.

It is high time that sex education should be introduced in our schools and colleges without any sense of reservation. It would be a step in the right direction, as this would save many youngmen and women from embarrassing situations, in which they find themselves due to poor knowledge about sex.

But one word of caution. The quality and content of sex education to be imparted and the individuals who would be most qualified to teach and explain the highly sensitive subject will have to be very carefully decided. Another important aspect to be kept in mind is whether it is safe to allow both boys and girls in the same classrooms while sex education is being imparted. It would be prudent if classes are held separately, so that they would feel free to get their doubts cleared from the persons teaching such education.

As it is an explosive subject, even if due care is taken, the results may sometimes be disastrous. Introduction of sex education is, no doubt, of paramount importance, but the manner in which it is done needs to be decided by a team of doctors and psychologists working side by side.

### **Should there be Sex Education in Schools**

For the last nearly two decades the children in India are increasingly being exposed to the world through the expansion of the electronic media. In this process, particularly with the growth

of foreign satellite channels, they are exposed to cruder versions of sex along with violence and crimes related to it. In view of these emerging trends, sex education in its psychic and social bearings is of such importance that it can hardly be ignored. But, paradoxically, children are still brought up in ignorance of facts that are vital to them or, worse still, adopt the faulty attitudes of the adults who surround them. Undoubtedly, the refusal to incorporate sex education will result in further damage to the spirit of inquiry. Considering that the foundation of a child's character is laid during his or her school days, a faulty upbringing may be responsible for the development of various forms of sexual deviations later.

Although AIDS in India began relatively late, its spread is alarming. Moreover, despite the nonavailability of comprehensive data on the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among the country's youth, there is evidence that a substantial number of young people in India are having unprotected sex. There is no denying that the ongoing AIDS awareness campaign in the country has been successful to a certain extent. The basic goal should be to produce the next generation of children fully informed about these diseases through sex education.

In a situation where a vast majority of the country's population continues to be ignorant of the ethics of responsible behaviour in human reproduction, it is only natural that various social taboos such as child marriage, preference for sons and large families have been encouraged and have come to contribute to the perpetuation of birth rates which continue to be very high.

Youngsters, in particular, who constitute almost 40 per cent of the country's total population, suffer from inaccurate information and misconception regarding sexuality. A recent study conducted in Bhubaneswar suggests that out of 256 post-graduate students surveyed, a majority were not fully aware of the concept of family planning and different birth control measures.

To undermine the importance of sex education, a fallacy has been created by its opponents that the biology course in school can serve the purpose of instruction in sex. It is a misleading approach since in most cases teachers have been found to linger too long with the reproduction of plants and lowly organisms before taking up provocation methods in animals. By that time teachers feel awkward and children sense this. This is not surprising since most teachers

themselves were brought up avoiding open references to the sexual process.

It has also been argued that at the present stage of socio-economic development, population education may be an appropriate alternative to sex education. In some schools initiatives have already been taken in this direction. Nevertheless, population education primarily deals with size, distribution and composition of population. It does not aim at giving any insight into the totality of issues connected with sexual behaviour. Treating it as an alternative to sex education would, therefore, be incorrect.

A child's desire to know where babies come from is not a sign of perverted sexuality, but a desire to discover an important fact. It is as natural as his desire to know where the sun goes when it drops below the horizon. And the answer should be given as simply and as ready as possible. The child will then learn and assimilate, what he wants to know and what he needs to understand, long before he has reached adulthood.

Given the opposition that sex education is facing in the country, the main challenge lies in advocating it as a discipline integrated with other school subjects. It must be drawn into some general philosophy of education and learning. For this, we have to get rid of all the ridiculous ideas which surround it. The government is especially expected to play an active role by doing away with the prejudice against sex education.

Here it is important to mention that a recent International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, while recognising equal rights for women and men in the family and at all levels, set before all governments three immediate goals: education, specially for girls; reduction in infant and maternal mortality and universal access to family planning and health services for women. However, during the deliberations on these issues it was made clear that in the coming years sexual health, reproductive rights, responsible sexual behaviour and family planning are going to be the major themes of discussion on population and sustainable development.

The world is changing at a fast pace and so is the new generation. The youth today is smart, confident and liberal. They get exposure to the world outside at a very early age. Therefore, it is significant to prepare the youth to face the world and its challenges in every possible way. Hence, it is necessary to provide them the sex education at the right time. Educating them about sex and safer

sex practices can begin at home as well as in school. Sex education would teach that sexuality is a natural, normal part of life. The youth needs comprehensive sex education so that they are empowered to make informed decisions relating to their bodies without fear, shame or guilt.

The youth, and the young children are much exposed to the media and television and media provides enough libidinous titillation to evoke curious questions about every possible aspect of carnal wisdom. To get the answers of all these curiosities that the youth has, they sometimes fall in the trap and get themselves involved in the unhealthy practices. Teenagers are very curious, and curious minds will experiment. It is well said that 'the half knowledge is always dangerous'. Comprehensive sex education may not corrupt young minds, but that the lack of information may lead young people to access false, incomplete and harmful information.

Thus, here the role of sex education to the youth becomes important. The primary goal of sex education in the schools should be to help young people to build a foundation before they are physically and psychologically ready and so they mature into sexually healthy adults.

In our country, sex is still considered as taboo and people, especially parents do not talk freely to their children on this topic. Due to the ignorance and hesitation, many children fall victims of sex abuse and sexually transmitted diseases.

Sex education in schools constitute a valuable source of information for young people. Sex education is a process of building a strong foundation for sexual health. It includes sexual development, reproduction, intimacy, gender roles and relationships. It also focuses on important topics such as puberty, sexual health and hygiene, reproductive systems, pregnancy and contraception, etc. This provides proper information about human sexuality, protection, along with the values and attitudes about sex, and cultivates interpersonal skills that will enable students to counter the pressures of sexual involvement. Sex education in schools also counteracts the misinformation about sex from media and peers. Sex education should be mandated in schools as it provides accurate information to students; decreases risky sexual behaviour; minimizes the adverse consequences of risky sexual behaviour; and ensures social equality.

The children of 12-20 years of age undergo various physical and mental changes and

providing sex lessons will enable the juveniles to understand why and how their bodies develop. Many children find it difficult to cope up with these changes. In addition, they will realize some strange feelings that emerge such as affection or passion towards the opposite gender. It is also the only saviour for children whose parents are always away from them and that is why sex education is needed. Through sex education, students will be able to learn the truth about sex and they will be able to refrain and control themselves. If children and youngsters learn about sex in scientific and objective way, they would be more careful before indulging in sex secretly. At least they would be careful to take precautions so as to avoid pregnancies and diseases.

School life remains an integral part of every child's development. School is an institution which takes care of the overall development and thus, providing sex education is equally significant. School-based sexuality education complements and supplements the sexuality education children receive from their families, religious and community groups. Along with the academic subjects, sex-education should be given equal importance in schools. Trained teachers, psychologists and medical consultants should deal with the subject. There are various reasons of why this needs to be taught in the school.

Sex education can supply our young people with the tools to report and resist abusive behaviours, and provide them with a forum for expressing their fears and feelings honestly and openly. In a world, full of exploitation, children are the most vulnerable section of our society. They need to be taught the difference between gentle touch and bad touch in order to protect themselves from various forms of child abuse.

The most important objective of sex education is to make students aware of Sexually

Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and to prevent them from occurring. In our country, largely new HIV infections being contributed by unsafe sex practices, some more education on that front would certainly curb some of those HIV infections.

Teenage pregnancy is becoming a popular phenomenon. Now a days, teenagers are sexually active and think nothing could ever happen to them. However, many of them are misinformed about the risks that are involved in sex. Teens also don't always know the best ways to protect themselves. Sex education given by teachers at school is the most reliable way to give kids the

right information about sex. In schools sex education information is given by professional and has been proven by many reports all over the country and world. If these students were educated from their entrance into the high school program with a sexual education class, the outcome might have been different.

It is important to teach about abstinence, which is a better way and to inform the students about sexual orientation and homosexuality. These programs of sex education should help young people to develop relationships and interpersonal skills and help them to exercise and take responsibility regarding sexual relationships which includes addressing abstinence, pressures to become prematurely involved in sexual intercourse and the use of contraception and other sexual health measures.

The generation today just keeps on getting too much of exposure of everything. The media and technology played a big role on this. Students can now access any site on the internet that contains adult content or pornographic materials. That is why sex education should be implemented in schools. It is better for children to be informed earlier because they will still know about it when they grow up as they will be more exposed to it through their peers and the media.

Students have to be encouraged to accept the shared responsibility of pregnancy prevention by teachers explaining the consequences of premature and unprotected sexual activity, urging responsible decisions about sexual intercourse and encouraging healthy, respectful and safe male and female relationships.

The sex education in the schools should assist young people in understanding a positive view of sexuality and provide them with appropriate information and skills about taking care of their sexual health. The education given to them in school over sex should also help them to make decisions about solving problems now and in the future. Sex education should provide an opportunity for the young people to develop and understand their values, attitudes and beliefs about sexuality.

Sex education is essential in avoiding social problems from emerging among those ages of children. Such problems are early marriage, pregnancy and rape crimes are triggered from casual sex. By allocating these lessons, the children will know how to deal with their affection safely so that they can continue their life normally.

It is of great importance for parents and teachers to change with time and understand the call of the time. Apart from the sex education to be imparted to the youth and teenagers in the friendly way, it is equally significant to understand their psychology and maintaining healthy relations with the child. The objective of sex education is for the child's benefit and this needs to be communicated effectively. Counselling done by parents and teachers are of great help and taken in correct manner by the children.

## II. CONCLUSION

Sex education should be taught in schools as it is better to consider health than beliefs and we should consider reality. Since immorality cannot be eliminated and teenagers cannot be stopped from becoming sexually active, we should implement sex education in schools. The objective of sex education are to help children understand the body structures of men and women and acquire the knowledge about birth. Teach children to establish and accept the role and responsibility of their own gender by acquiring the knowledge of sex. Understanding to differences and similarities between two genders in terms of body and mind will set up a foundation for the future development in their acquaintance with friends and lovers and their interpersonal relationship. Sex education is a kind of holistic education. It teaches an individual about selfacceptance and the attitude and skills of interpersonal relationship. It also helps an individual to cultivate a sense of responsibility towards others as well as oneself.

There are about 190 million adolescents in India- a demographic in which over 30% of people are illiterate. Disparities in gender at this age can often be explained by relatively poor access to reproductive health care and the fact that girls often have less access to food, which adversely affects their growth patterns. Additionally, adolescent girls often work long hours in the home with no opportunity for employment.

Adolescents, both both males and females, tend to not be informed about sexuality. This is often caused by lack of education in general (but sex education in particular) and conservative attitude towards sex.

Parents are often reluctant to teach accurate and relevant information about sex to adolescents because of the stigma associated with the topic. More than taboo, mothers especially feel like talking about sex is embarrassing and dirty.

This same attitude is held by teachers. When the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) initiated sex education, they structured it as a part of existing studies, rather than a separate subject. However, teachers tried to avoid teaching the topic.

Therefore, as a part of their commitments under the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda, governments are obliged to provide for free and compulsory comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and young people.

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