

Understanding Gender: Some Definitions

IPHU – Gender Stream
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Sex

The classification of people as male or female at birth, based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitalia.

Gender

- It refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. It translates into a set of economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements and obligations, associated with a person's biological sex. It also becomes a source of culturally defined power relations.

Masculinity (Masculine)

- It refers to the behaviors, social roles, and relations of men within a given society as well as the meanings attributed to them. It stresses gender, unlike the corresponding biological sex that it is associated to.

Femininity (Feminine)

- It refers to the behaviors, social roles, and relations of women within a given society as well as the meanings attributed to them. It stresses gender, unlike the corresponding biological sex that it is associated to.

Intersex Variations

- Human bodies have many variations, and these could be at multiple levels – reproductive, hormonal, physical, etc. These are congenital differences in reproductive parts and/or secondary sexual characteristics, and/or variations invisible to the eye such as chromosomal and/or hormonal differences.

Cis-gender

- This term refers to people who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their gender identity. In other words, those who have a gender identity or perform a gender role that society considers appropriate for their sex. It is a complement to the term 'transgender'.

Transgender

- This term refers to all persons whose sense of their gender does not match the gender assigned to them at birth.

Patriarchy

- A hierarchical social system of thinking where a dominance of men in society results in a marked inequality between them, women and others in the political, economic and social domains, to name a few. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that others are deprived of access to such power (though they are not rendered totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources).

Heteronormativity

- The assumption that heterosexuality and heterosexual norms are universal and normal, and that these norms are the standard for legitimate social and sexual relations.

Queer

- It is an umbrella term for people who have diverse sexual and gender identities.

Gender Discrimination

- Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of gender which has the effect or purpose of curtailing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Gender Bias

- Prejudiced actions or thoughts arising from gender-based perceptions.

Gender equality

- The state or condition that affords people of all genders equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities, and resources. In genuine terms, it means more than parity in numbers or laws on the books; it means expanded freedoms and improved overall quality of life for all people.

Gender equity

- The process of being fair to people of all genders. To ensure fairness, measures must be taken to compensate for cumulative economic, social, and political disadvantages that prevent some from operating on a level playing field.

Gender Perspective

- A theoretical and methodological approach that permits us to recognize and analyze identities, viewpoints, and relations, especially between women and women, women and men, and men and men.

Gender Mainstreaming

- Process of incorporating a gender perspective into organizational policies, strategies, and administrative functions, as well as into the institutional culture of an organization.

Gender transformative approach

- An approach adopted in programmes and Interventions that create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms and address power inequities between persons of different genders.