

# SOCI 221

# Basic Concepts in Sociology

Session 11 –Sex, Gender, Gender Inequality in Society

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# Session Overview

- **Overview**
- Throughout the world a number of distinctions exist between men and women, boys and girls and these distinctions have implications for how people are categorized and treated in society. For instance, in most societies, men are supposed to be aggressive and women passive. In this session, I will introduce you to a number concept and theories that can help us understand gender inequality in society.
- **Objective of Session:** At the end of the session, the student will be able to
- Distinguish between Sex, Gender and Gender Roles
- Explain the concepts of Sexism, Sexual Division of Labour and Patriarchy
- Explain what is meant by Gender Inequality and Stratification

# Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One : Sex, Gender and Gender Roles
- Topic Two: Sexism, Sexual Division of Labour and Patriarchy
- Topic Three: Gender Inequality and Stratification

# Topic 1: Sex, Gender and Gender Roles

- **Sex and Gender:**
- The terms Sex and Gender has much confusion with their daily usage in society;
- **Sex** refers t the biological differences between males and females;
- These differences are seen in the biological features that are present from birth, such as reproductive, hormonal and other physiological characteristics;
- **Gender** however involves those social and cultural distinctions between males and females on the basis of cultural expectations;

# Sex, Gender and Gender Roles Cont.

- What a society defines as masculine or feminine is a component of Gender;
- While **Sex** is biological and given in nature, **Gender** is a socially constructed framework that human beings have created to make sense of and deal with the sex differences;
- In other words, **Sex** is viewed as ascribed status, and **Gender** an achieved status;

# Sex, Gender and Gender Roles Cont.

- **Gender Roles** refers to those expected attitudes and behaviors which a society associates with each sex;
- They are the culturally approved roles that each sex is supposed to perform and are learnt and not biologically determined;
- These includes the rights and responsibilities that are required of each sex in a given society;
- Gender Roles develops into **Gender Identities** which are the conceptions we have of ourselves as being male or female; a product of social interaction

# Topic 2: Sexism, Sexual Division of Labor and Patriarchy

- **Sexism** is the belief or ideology that one sex is superior or inferior to the other; such as females are believed to be inferior to males;
- This belief finds expression in many forms: language used to devalue females and discrimination at workplaces;
- Sexism is the result of **Gender Stereotypes**; the oversimplified conceptions that people have about the various sexes.
- For instances, in some societies females are believed to be passive while males are supposed to be aggressive.

# Sexism, Sexual Division of Labor and Patriarchy Cont.

- Sexism is perpetuated by systems of **Patriarchy**; where male dominated structures and social organizations elaborate the oppression of women
- The family is seen as the place where patriarchy originated and eventually reproduced throughout society;
- Patriarchal structures also leads **Sexual Division of Labor**; where task, duties and responsibilities are assigned to individuals on the basis of their sex and not on the basis of their abilities or capabilities in society;
- Sexism and Patriarchy give rise to gender inequality or stratification in many societies.



# Topic 3: Gender Inequality or Stratification

- **Gender Inequality or Stratification** is the inequality that exists between men and women as a result of gender;
- This results in males' and females' unequal access to property, prestige and power;
- Gender Inequality is reflected in attitude and practices that create and reinforce the subordination of women in society;
- These attitudes and practices results mainly through socialization where individuals internalize norms and values in their society.

# Gender Inequality and Stratification

## Cont.

- **Manifestations of Gender Inequality/Stratification**
- We can identify Gender Inequality in many areas:
  - In the home where women are dependent on men and are thereby powerless and abused;
  - At the workplaces where women are discriminated in the areas of promotion and reward;
  - In education where women are not educated as much as men;
  - In the Economy where women do not own land and other productive assets;
  - In society where women are victimized through traditional cultural practices like widowhood rites and FGM

# Sample Questions

- Identify any Three areas of social life you consider as symptoms of gender inequality or stratification in your society.
- Discuss how we can minimize or correct them.



# Reading List/References

- Refer to students to relevant text/chapter or reading materials you will make available on Sakai
- Henslin, J.M. (2007). *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing. (256-265).
- Hughes, M., Kroehler, C.J. (2005). *Sociology: The Core (7<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Boston: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. (Pages 254-264).
- Schaefer, Richard T. (2004). *Sociology: A Brief Introduction*. (5<sup>TH</sup> Edition) Boston: McGraw Hill Companies, Inc.