

6.10 TOPIC: GENDER AND RIGHTS

This session focuses on concepts of sex and gender and explores socialisation and family of origin issues. It aims to address the difference between the two concepts sex and gender, and assists the counsellor in understanding how general gender norms, values and perceptions support intimate partner violence and also influence attitudes and behaviour. Information is provided about commonly held beliefs surrounding survivors and perpetrators of intimate partner violence. We also discuss the counsellor’s ability to relate gender to intimate partner violence. Through self-reflection, a general awareness of own norms, values and perceptions are developed.

The session terminates with an opportunity for self-reflection by the counsellor.

Overall Learning Outcomes 6.10		
Knowledge –	Attitude –	Skills –
Knowledge about social norms, roles and expectations of men and women in society	Acknowledge that there is a link between gender and DV	Ability to describe impact of gender norms on male and female identity
Knowledge of the relationship between DV and gender	Openness to a new way of looking at masculinity	Explaining the relationship between gender and domestic violence
Knowledge about the change in male and female identities	Willingness to consider new forms of gender identities	

ACTIVITY 6.10.1 Clarification of gender values

The link between being male and being violent is the product of society and history, not biology. Boys and men are capable of being loving, caring human beings. It is masculinity that creates this intimate link between men and violence.

Men’s use of violence is the product of a lifetime’s training in how to be a “real” man. The dominant model of masculinity offers to boys and men qualities like aggressiveness, control, a sense of entitlement to power and emotional callousness, as well as a series of myths justifying men’s violence and men’s domination. In many societies, to “be a man” means to

be tough, self-reliant and dominant. Many males are taught to adopt an aggressive and violent masculinity, to be repressive of empathy and extremely competitive. One of the central images of masculinity is the murderous hero, the specialist in violence – Rambo, the Terminator, James Bond and many others (Connell, 1985, p. 6). Thus, boys and men who are violent are in part acting out the dictates of what it means to be a “normal” male.

Many men are not violent. On an individual level, some men are more likely to be violent to women than others, especially those men who believe that hitting their wives is acceptable in some circumstances.

The following activity introduces the counsellors to the concepts of gender and sex and examines their attitudes and beliefs about these concepts.

Specific Learning Outcomes 6.10.1		
<i>Gender values clarification – Exploring counsellors’ attitudes and beliefs about gender and gender issues.</i>		
<i>Materials – Consult Facilitator’s Preparation Sheet</i>		
<p>Knowledge –</p> <p>Knowledge of own and general gender norms, values and perceptions (masculinity and femininity)</p> <p>Knowledge about the link between gender and intimate partner violence</p>	<p>Attitude –</p> <p>Acknowledge different perceptions of masculinity and femininity</p> <p>Acknowledge that there is a link between gender inequality and domestic violence</p>	<p>Skills –</p> <p>The ability to recognise how gender can be used to maintain power and control</p>
Time – 50 minutes		
Method – Card game, small and large group discussion (Use <i>Worksheet 18: Gender statements</i> and “agree statements” on disc)		

In large letters, print each of the following titles on a separate card:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Display the cards around the room, leaving enough space between them to allow a group of counsellors to stand near each one.

Review the statements provided below, and choose five or six that you think will generate the most discussion. When the statement is read aloud, ask counsellors to stand near the card that represents their response to that statement. If others come up with stronger arguments, allow counsellors to change their position.

Note for the facilitator: In the discussion, address the issue of the stereotypes, false assumptions and myths that the statements below represent, and how they are damaging to both women and men.

Statements

- It is easier to be a man than a woman
- Women make better parents than men
- Family planning is a woman's responsibility
- A man is more of a man once he has fathered a child
- Sex is more important to men than to women
- It is okay for a man to have sex outside the marriage as long as his wife does not find out about it
- A man cannot rape his wife
- A woman cannot rape her husband
- Men are smarter than women
- Only a circumcised man is a 'real man'.

The facilitator explains the difference between **SEX** and **GENDER**. **SEX** refers to the biological differences between men and women. **GENDER refers to the differences between men and women as defined by society and which are always changing.**

The facilitator puts a paper on the wall and writes 'SEX' and 'GENDER' on top of it. Counsellors will be asked to make a whole list of what they associate with 'SEX' and 'GENDER'. A discussion follows on the differences, the myths and stereotypes.

Conclusion

These activities demonstrated the differences between men and women based on biological characteristics and due to cultural influences. We could say there are actually few biological differences and that the influence of society on how to behave as a man or as a woman is much stronger. Often these differences are characterised by unequal power relationships.

ACTIVITY 6.10.2 Understanding gender and gender roles

This activity focuses on the impact that factors such as patriarchy, misinterpretation of culture and religion, social norms, roles and expectations of men and women, etc., have on the formation of gender.

Specific Learning Outcomes 6.10.2

Understanding gender and gender roles.

Materials – Consult *Facilitator’s Preparation Sheet* and *Counsellor’s Workbook*

Knowledge –

Knowledge of the factors that contribute to the formation of gender

Knowledge about social norms, roles and expectations of men and women in society

Knowledge about the benefits and consequences for those who embrace traits that are outside the gender box

Attitude –

Challenge existing gender roles and expectations

Skills –

Ability to recognize how gender shapes own identity

Explaining the difference between sex and gender

Time – 50 minutes

Exercise – The Gender Box/Act like a Man/Act like a Woman

The facilitator asks the men and women “TO ACT AS A MAN” or, respectively “TO ACT AS A WOMAN”, following the questions mentioned in **The Gender Box/Act Like A Man/Act like a Woman** below.

The Gender Box/Act Like A Man-Act Like A Woman

This widely adapted exercise is a good starting point for conversations on gender socialisation and violence. Through this exercise you can open up discussions about gender roles and how they are enforced, about masculinity and its connection to violence etc. The exercise can be adapted for different groups – young men, young women, mixed youth groups or adults. It can also be used to discuss other issues, such as sexual and reproductive health.

Objectives –

- To identify and examine traditionally masculine and feminine traits
- To connect traditional masculinity and power with violence
- To open a discussion about gender roles and how they are enforced
- To discuss the benefits and drawbacks of conforming to traditional gender roles from both the male and female perspective
- To explore the benefits and consequences for men and women who embrace traits that are “outside the gender box”
- To explore how you can support each other when you step out of the box.

Man/Woman in the Box guidelines –

1. Divide the mixed group into a male - and a female group. Ask the respective groups to brainstorm a list of words that come to mind when they hear the phrase “**Act Like a Man**”, or “**Act like a Woman**”. Explain that this is not a list of things they think are true, but the messages boys and girls are given about what they must do ‘to act like boy/man’, ‘to act like a girl/woman’.
2. Write the words on flipchart paper as they are spoken.
3. Keep repeating the phrase “Act Like A Man!” and ‘Act Like A Woman’ with different expressions in your voice to encourage participants to think of more words.
4. Continue to write these messages on a flipchart or chalkboard.
5. If there is time, you can –
 - discuss where these messages come from (Who is the messenger?).
 - discuss the earliest influences in boys’ and girls’ lives and how socialisation occurs. (When do we first receive these messages?)
 - draw a box around the list, and say “**This is the man box**”, and “**This is woman box**”.Optional points for discussion –
 - ask, “Does this seem familiar? Do you visit this box?”
 - ask participants to share experiences and feelings related to the messages.
6. Ask, “What are the advantages to following these rules and fitting into the box?” Write the responses to this question on flipchart paper under the heading “**Advantages** of staying in the box”
7. Ask, “Are there any disadvantages to staying in the box?” Write the responses on flipchart paper under the heading “**Disadvantages** to staying in the box.”

8. Ask, “What happens to a man, or to a woman who does not fit into this box, or chooses to **step out of the box?**” Write the responses to this question around the outside of the box.
9. Ask, “Are there any benefits to stepping out of the box?” Write the responses on flipchart paper under the heading “**Benefits** to stepping out of the box.”
- Finally, ask, “Are there any costs to stepping out of the box?” Write the responses on flipchart paper under the heading “**Costs** to stepping out of the box.”
10. Conclude with a comment about how this activity demonstrates how men are trained to fit into a box by rewarding certain kinds of behaviour and punishing other kinds of behaviour.

Conclusion

The roles of men and women are changing in today’s society. However, it still remains extremely difficult for men and women to live beyond the expectations of society.

Conforming to traditional roles, social norms and expectations remains a challenge for those men and women wanting to step outside the box. Through this exercise, counsellors should recognise how difficult society makes it be either male or female, and also how difficult it is for the client to challenge his own set of cultural beliefs and practices without the necessary skills, knowledge and support.

ACTIVITY 6.10.3 Shifts in male and female identities

In order to promote behaviour change, counsellors must take cognisance of how violence is related to traditional gender roles which give authority and power to men to control women. However, violence can also be provoked by the change in the traditional roles of men and women in society. This change may result in a perceived loss of power and control by men. This phenomenon may cause fear and frustration among men. In order to restore the loss of power and control, men may use violence against women out of frustration.

Specific Learning Outcomes 6.10.3

Shifts in male and female identities.

Materials – Consult *Facilitator’s Preparation Sheet* and *Counsellor’s Workbook*

Knowledge –

Attitude –

Knowledge about the changes in male and female identities

Willingness to consider new forms of gender identities

Time – 30 minutes

Method – Presentation

Use the following material –

Hand-out 13: Journey to Healthy Manhood

Worksheet 19: Concepts of masculinity and femininity

The facilitator opens the session by linking it to the activity that looked at the difficulties experienced by men and women in “stepping out” of the box. With the change in roles today, many women started working outside the home and frequently earn equal or more money than men. This change in economic power has brought about shifts in the balance of power between men and women. In order to maintain power over women, men have resorted to the use of violence. This is just one example of the relationship between role expectations and intimate partner violence. With the progression of time, the roles of both men and women have changed. However, many men feel bound to their roles and what is culturally expected of them. It is therefore important that the counsellor acknowledges this, and that (s)he promotes the re-building of a new identity.

Talk through the overview of shifts in male and female identities and ask the counsellors what they see as possible benefits for men when they are leaving behind their dominant role as a man.

At the end, open a discussion and prompt counsellors to ask them to give examples of how the shift in identities could be used in the counselling context to promote behaviour change.

Conclusion

It is clear that the roles of men and women are changing. While women find it easier to step out of the box and take on roles culturally perceived to be those of men, men on the other hand find it extremely difficult to “step out of the box”. Men are challenged to take up new roles which are perceived culturally as weak or inferior, while women take up new roles and tasks already more valued by society. For the counsellor, it would be worthwhile to explore with the client what would make it easier for him to live “outside the box”. Violent behaviour may come out as a reaction of frustration of men. Here, the counsellor has to help the client to identify what the benefits of challenging and changing would be for him.