Protection of Women

Students’ Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, students will be able to:
1. Define gender.
2. Get sense and awareness of gender discrimination.
3. Learn about social activities on the basis of gender.
4. Learn about the status of men and women in Islam.
5. Understand gender-related problems and their solutions.
7. Understand the functions of Violence against women center (VAWCs) established for the protection and rehabilitation of women.
Gender Sensitization and its Awareness

Introduction to Gender

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a society considers appropriate for men and women. Societal norms dictate what a man and a woman can or cannot do, and to which resources they can get access to. Different societies approve different levels of activities for women and men. In some societies, the social bonds between women and men are stronger that is why they have access to equal opportunities in education, healthcare, employment and other departments. However, in other societies, these opportunities are not available on an equal level. On the other hand, sex refers to the predetermined biological and physiological differences categorize men and women.

Men and women are equally capable of doing tasks such as cooking, cleaning, driving etc. They perform their roles according to the behaviour which they learn from their society, community or other social groups. These social groups allocate the activities, aims and social duties between men and women. While these roles are affected by age, race, moral values and religions, they are also influenced by geographical, economic and political environments.

Social Development of Gender

Social development of gender refers to the social process by means of which men and women learn to play their specific social roles. For example, a boy is usually given a bat or hockey to play with, whereas a girl is usually given a doll. Boys are expected to do outdoor jobs while girls are expected to engage in housekeeping activities.

The important point is that in the process of character building, both boys and girls should be given equal opportunities to take part in different kinds of activities.

Institutions for Social Development of Gender.

The parents, home, colony, society, school, educational institutes, communication resources, workplace, state, government, political and religious institutes serve as the institutions for social development of gender.

Activities on the Basis of Gender

1. Economic Activities

Economic activities include the production of goods and services for sale and purchase. Examples include working in the agricultural sector or in a factory. These activities are the means of earning money and resources for daily expenditure.
Social construction of gender roles has made men responsible for these activities. However, it is important to understand the fact that women also play an equally productive role in economic activities. For instance, women play a key role in agriculture and are also working shoulder to shoulder with men in diverse fields such as education, healthcare and the industrial sector.

2. **Political Activities**

Women are also playing an important role along with men in decision-making. The number of women in the Provincial Assemblies as well as the National Assembly is much greater now (33%) as compared to before.

3. **Social and Cultural Activities**

Both men and women take part in different kinds of social and cultural activities and contribute towards them equally. Examples of such activities include attending social events such as get-togethers and weddings, visiting patients, offering condolences and helping others in times of need etc.

4. **Promotion of Gender Development**

An analysis of national statistics makes it clear that in several sectors, there exists an imbalance in progress on the basis of gender. This is because institutions have traditionally favoured men and as a result, men have been able to progress far more than women. Most women have no access to high-ranking managerial positions in the fields of healthcare, technology and industry etc. This necessitates the conclusion that the government should give as much importance to the rights of women as to those of men.

Women have an extremely pertinent role to play in society. They play an important role in every sphere of life by working as pilots, teachers, nurses, engineers as well as by providing political and social leadership.

The names of a few prominent women in Pakistan must be mentioned as they serve as role models for every Pakistani citizen. One example is of Muhtarma Fatima Jinnah who worked untiringly during the Pakistan Movement along with her brother, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Similarly, Benazir Bhutto served as the first female Prime Minister of a Muslim country. Moreover, Arfa Karim was the youngest Microsoft-certified professional, and Malala Yousaf Zai is the youngest person who has been awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. Other examples include Shehnaz Leghari, the first female pilot of Pakistan and Maryam Mukhtiar, the first female pilot to have embrace martyrdom for the country.
**Islam and Gender**

**Nikkah – From an Islamic Point of View**

A family is the building block and foundation of any society. Every society develops with family as its basic unit. A family is based on the relationship between husband and wife. With regards to our society, an important question is whether a man and a woman have an equal right to decide who they want to marry. In general, in the case of men, this authority is acknowledged. However, in the case of women, several restrictions are placed on their right to marry according to their own choice. Ideally, the families of the man and woman should approve of their relationship. However, in the absence of such an ideal situation, each man and woman has the right to decide who they want to marry independently. This is because according to the Holy Qur’an, Nikkah is an agreement which is reached between two adults. It is they who live together and accept all the responsibilities related to their life after marriage. Therefore, it is imperative that both of them should be acknowledged in finalizing this agreement. In the light of the teachings of the Holy Qur’an, it is incumbent on parents to marry their children according to their volition and assent.

**Khula and Divorce**

Even though ‘khula’ and divorce are not encouraged in Islam, a man is given the right to divorce his wife and similarly, a woman has been given the right to obtain ‘khula’ in case she feels it is necessary for her to do so.

**Violence**

The term “violence” constitutes causing either physical or mental harm. This includes domestic violence, psychological abuse, economic exploitation and abuse as well as stalking and cybercrime (crimes or threats carried out through a computer or the Internet).

**Present Condition of Women**

In the 21st century, women have been given certain rights, but their condition remains less than satisfactory. Discrimination against women in the distribution of bequeathed property, unfair treatment at workplace, ill-treatment by their husbands, low wages despite equal rank, dowry-related violence, narrow-mindedness of parents regarding girls’ education and not being given basic human rights are extremely common experiences for women. To some extent, laws have been passed to safeguard their rights. However, despite this, their access to the courts of law for the recovery of their rights is extremely restricted.
Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016

Keeping in mind the less than satisfactory condition of women in the status quo, the Punjab Government recently introduced the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016. This act was unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on 24 February, 2016. The purpose of the Act is to ensure the timely dispensation of justice to female victims and survivors of violence. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, women have been granted complete protection through this Act against the following offences:

1. Domestic violence
2. Emotional and psychological abuse
3. Economic injustice
4. Stalking and harassment
5. Cybercrime (criminal activities carried out by means of a computer or over the Internet)

Through this Act, several steps have been taken for the protection of women such as:

- Establishment of a universal toll-free-dial-in-number for the aggrieved women in addition to the already existing number, 1043.
- Establishment of Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) and Shelter Homes for women in all districts.
- Appointment of Women Protection Officers (WPOs) and necessary staff in Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) for facilitating mediation and reconciliation between the victims and the offenders.
- Arrangement of a publicity campaign in Urdu for raising awareness regarding the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 and the Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) among the general public.
- Use of GPS-tracked electronic bracelets and anklets to enforce Protection Orders for aggrieved women.
- The aggrieved women may contact the Women Protection Officers (WPOs) or the court for Protection or Residence Orders.
- The court is bound to address the grievance/ petition filed under this Act.
- On receipt of a complaint, the court will issue a notice to bind the defendant to be present before the court within seven days.
- The court shall settle the grievance within 90 days.
Functions of District Women Protection Committee (DWPC)

Under the Act, the newly-formed District Women Protection Committee will:

- Supervise the working of the Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs), Shelter Homes and toll-free- helpline and take necessary steps to improve their services.
- Develop liaison with other departments and agencies in the district so that the Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) can perform their tasks satisfactorily.
- Mediate between parties to resolve their disputes under Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016.
- Ensure that the cases of violence registered in any police station are referred to the Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) for investigation.
- Discuss problems being faced by the Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) and Shelter Homes in order to solve them.

Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs)

These Centers will provide the following services under one roof:

- Police investigation of Violence Against Women (VAW) cases, medico-legal examination and collection of evidence.
- Provision of immediate protection for aggrieved women as well as rehabilitation through trained psychologists and Shelter Homes.
- Establishment of an effective system for the receipts and redress of complaints.
- Mediation between the parties for the resolution of disputes under the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016.
- Working as a Community Centre for the guidance of women regarding all government-related inquires.
Exercise

(Part-1)

Four options are given for each question. Tick (✔) the correct option.

i. Which thing linked to the GPS has been made for the protection of women?
   (a) garland       (b) ring
   (c) bracelet      (d) watch

ii. Within how many days does the court settle the complaint of the aggrieved woman?
    (a) 70           (b) 80
    (c) 90           (d) 100

iii. Which is the universal toll free number for the aggrieved woman?
     (a) 1040         (b) 1041
     (c) 1043         (d) 1042

iv. When was the “Punjab Protection of Women against violence Act” passed?
   (a) 5 March, 2016 (b) 24 Feb, 2016
   (c) 10 April, 2016 (d) 16 June, 2016

v. Cyber crime means crimes committed through
   (a) TV           (b) telephone
   (c) mobile and computer (d) radio

Give short answers the following questions.

i. Define the term “gender”.

ii. What is meant by the term “violence”? 

iii. Give a few examples of violence against women in the society.

iv. What notable achievement has the Punjab Government made regarding the protection of women?

Give detailed answers to the following questions.

i. What services are provided in Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs)?

ii. Describe the salient points of the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016.

iii. Describe the functions of District Women Protection Committees (DWPCs).
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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Organize a debate contest on the topic: “What role do women play to ensure the progress of a society?”</td>
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<td>2. Organize a discussion regarding the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016.</td>
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<td>3. Arrange a study tour of the Violence Against Women Center in your district.</td>
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