

# Estimation of Gender Bias through Specially Developed Learning Material (Interactive C.D.) – A Study in Nashik City

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*Gender discrimination pervades Indian society. Even after 60 years of independence, women in India suffer from inequity and bias. The horrific instances of infanticide and other forms of violence against women has cultural considerations at its root, coupled with failure to enforce legislation. There is a dire need to introduce an attitude of equality and free people from their prejudiced perspective. To address this problem, it was planned to give 'Gender Education' by direct intervention method. An innovative self-learning multimedia package comprised of a 'documentary film' and 'self-learning interactive multimedia package' was devised with a systematic process that disseminated information on gender education. It was implemented with 833 adult men and women in the Nashik city. The experiment proved effective in reducing the bias and communicating concepts important to redefine gender values.*

## Introduction

Discrimination is a global phenomenon. It is prevalent in every nook and corner of the developing world. In most of the third world countries, women suffer from discrimination, injustice and violence, physically and mentally.

India has almost equal number of men and women in its democracy. Even after 60 years of independence the status of both differs a great deal, owing to the gender biases ubiquitous in our country. With all the cosmopolitan pretensions even today girls and women are considered second-class citizens. Violence against women is on the rise. Women are very vulnerable to exploitation and injustice from the society. Unmarried, widowed, separated and divorced women across classes and communities suffer from dependency and are considered burden to the family and the

society. The indications of the secondary position and oppression of women are the obvious forms of violence like rape, abduction, molestation; along with hidden forms of violence like foeticide, discrimination in education and nutritional intakes, school-dropout rates of girls, malpractices of dowry, early marriages, wife battering, male polygamy, eve-teasing, unfair wages, sexual exploitation and harassment, etc.

Gender discrimination pervades Indian society. The government is however attempting to improve the status of women both by making special provisions in the five year plans and by passing legislation such as the 'Hindu Succession (Amendment) Bill', 2004, giving daughters and sons equal right to property. The 'Domestic Violence Act' passed in 2005 also represents the culmination of years of campaigning by women's groups. However, the horrific instances of infanticide and other forms of violence against women has cultural considerations at its roots, coupled with failure to enforce legislation. Social institutions like religion, education, marriage, family, media, etc., work to propagate and confirm these pre-determined gender ideas and stereotype values in the upcoming generations. It was felt that a more direct approach of educating the masses to change their mindsets could help in attempting to tackle the inequalities and injustice in the society.

## Statistical Substantiation

The gender bias is evident and disparity is measurable.

- In the absence of gender discrimination, a population should contain as a norm at least 1,050 women for every 1,000 men, because of the inherent biological superiority of women. However, due to the non-acceptance of a

female child in the society, the deficit of women, in absolute terms, has been rising steadily from slightly more than 2,00,000 in 1901 to nearly four million in 2001, jumping by more than a million in the last decade. A deficit of this magnitude is a sure sign of socio-economic conditions that are so punitive to women as to wipe out their biological advantage (Human Development Report Maharashtra, 2002).

- Despite booming growth rates and rising illiteracy, more girl children are being muffled into the silence of death at or before birth. Statistics of 2001 showed that the capital state of Delhi, with all its cosmopolitan pretensions, has registered a 47-point drop from 915 girls to 868 girls per 1000 boys. (Times of India, 11/12/2006) The most adverse child sex ratios are among the prosperous states of Punjab, Haryana, Gujrat, Maharashtra. It seems to be their prosperity that enables them to exercise the “choice” of preventing the birth of a baby girl (Rustagi, 2003).
- According to UNICEF, 12 million girls are born in India every year out of whom 25% do not survive the 5<sup>th</sup> year. (HRCS, 2003)
- Sterilization accounts for more than 75% of total contraception, with female sterilization accounting for almost 95% of all sterilization (UN-India, 2001).
- A study of the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, India, reveals that between the years 2001-2005, in the renal transplantations 89% recipients were males and only 11% were females. Amazingly in the spousal group, 91% of wives while only 9% of husbands have donated for their spouses.
- The 1999 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2) reveals that 50% women in India marry before the age of 18 years and 47.7% in Maharashtra.
- The number of female sex workers for India is estimated to be over 0.9 million. 30% of these comprise of minor girls. An annual increase in child prostitution is of 8 to 10% (Human Development Report Maharashtra, 2002, Box 7.5, p.111).
- In Maharashtra 49% pregnant women were found suffering from Anemia (NFHS-2, 1999).
- As on today in India, the literacy rate of males is 75% and of females is 54% percent (National Literacy Mission, India. Available online at [www.nlm.nic.in/lsi.htm](http://www.nlm.nic.in/lsi.htm). Accessed 17/11/08).

Social norms that support gender inequality stands as one of the major causes of the backward status of women so-

cially, economically, educationally, politically and health wise. There is a need to introduce a lens that might help people to look at the hidden aspects of social construction of gender and develop a wider perspective of the reality. Hence a multimedia package containing an interactive computer programme and a documentary on Gender Education was devised with a systematic process to tackle the gender biases.

## Research Methodology

- Development of the tool: An interactive multimedia package containing a self-learning computer programme and a documentary film was devised with a systematic process.
- Validation of Tool: Ten experts from various related fields made a critical appraisal of the tool.
- Target Audience: Adult men and women of 18 yrs and above with basic knowledge of computer usage constituted the target audience.
- Sample: A representative sample of 833 individuals (444 women and 389 men) falling in the age group of 18 to 61 years with basic knowledge of computer usage, residing in different parts of the city and having a diverse background was selected by the stratified random sampling method, for the study.
- A survey method and a ‘pre-test and post-test’ pattern of research design were adopted for the current study.
- Pilot Testing: It was planned and carried out on 50 individuals, women as well as men from city of Nashik.
- Enquiry technique: Exhaustive questionnaire of 93 items was administered before and after execution of the tool as pre-test and post-test.
- Pre-testing: This was done to know the existing degree of gender-biased viewpoint among participants. It also highlighted the need for the present study.
- Execution: The tool was administered with target population and observations were made wherever possible.
- Post testing: Effectiveness and retention value of learnt concepts were determined by conducting a post-test.
- Coding and analysis of data was done.

## Conceptual Mapping of Interactive Multimedia and Film on Gender Education

Criteria for rating	Excellent % Int. CD/Film	Very good % Int. CD/Film	Satisfactory % Int. CD/Film	Fair % Int. CD/Film	Poor % Int. CD/Film
Meaningfulness of the content	50/20	50/80	-/-	-/-	-/-
Validity of the Content	50/30	50/60	-/10	-/-	-/-
Comprehensiveness	50/30	20/60	30/10	-/-	-/-
Sequence of topics	20/20	60/60	20/20	-/-	-/-
Presentation	30/10	30/20	30/60	10/20	-/-
Language used	20/20	50/50	30/30	-/-	-/-
Relevance of pictures	-/30	40/10	30/40	30/20	-/-
Time duration	-/10	70/30	30/30	-/30	-/-

**Table. 1.** Experts' ratings of the interactive CD and film

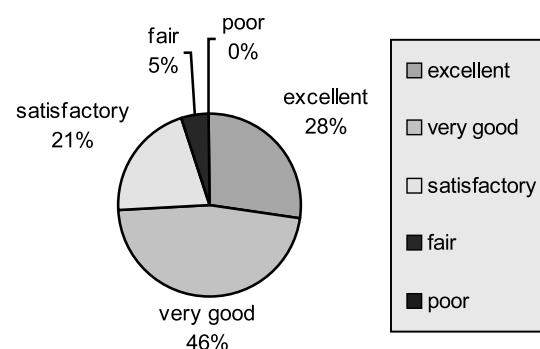
- What is Gender?
- Areas of patriarchal control
  - Woman's Productive and labour power
  - Woman's Reproductive power
  - Sexuality of a woman
  - Woman's Mobility
  - Property and other economic resources
- Institutions supporting gender Biases:
  - The family
  - Religion
  - The Legal System
  - Media
  - Politics
  - Education and knowledge
- Effects of Gender discrimination
- Types of Violence Against Women
- Striking Statistics in India
- Striking Statistics in the World
- Striking Statistics in Maharashtra State
- Women's support to the rule of men
- What do we aim at?

## Important Findings

In the study various learning patterns and interesting learn-

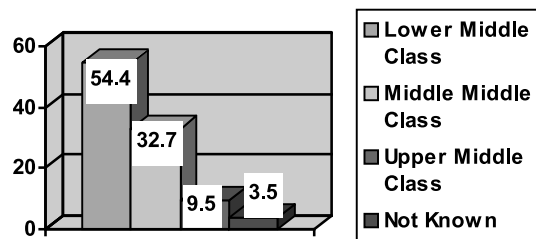
ing outcomes emerged. The younger age group (up to 30 yrs.) took less time to go through the entire multimedia package. Older age group (45 plus) took more time as they scrutinized each and every frame and lingered on sensitive issues, sometimes re-reading and repeating those portions. Discussions with the target audience revealed that the impact of the tool on learning was very positive.

Professionals from various fields related to women's studies made a critical appraisal of the tool on a five-point 'Likert' scale. The criteria were Meaningfulness of the content, Validity of the content, Comprehensiveness, Sequence of topics, Presentation, Language used, Relevance of pictures and Time duration. Their ratings are shown in Table 1 and summarized in Figure 1.



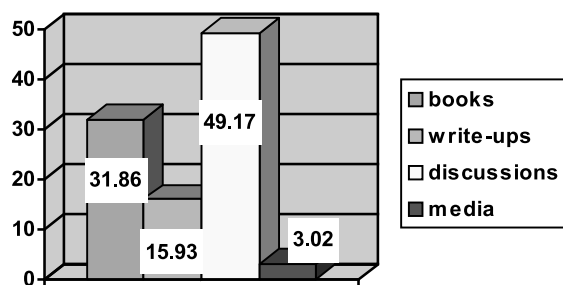
**Fig. 1.** Experts' Overall Rating of Self-learning Interactive Multimedia

The sample was representative of the cross section of our society. More than 50% participants belonged to lower-middle class, nearly 33% were middle-middle class, around 10% upper middle class (Figure 2).



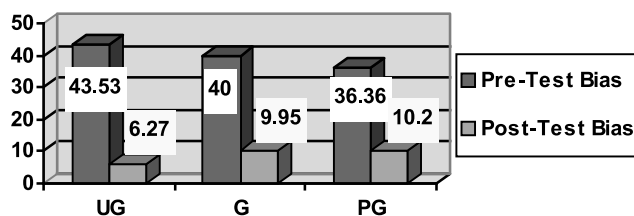
**Fig. 2.** Economic Background of the respondents

Approximately 67% of the participants came from urbanized background being the second or third generation residing in Nashik city.



**Fig. 3.** Sources of Knowledge on Gender Equality

Only 65% individuals were exposed to gender equality knowledge previously and very occasionally. Figure 3 shows the various sources of such knowledge among the participants.



**Fig. 4.** Educational level and Gender Bias

People with lower educational background were found to be the most gender biased among the three categories (Figure 4). As education increased the bias-code went on decreasing. Undergraduates showed more flexibility and readiness to accept new viewpoints. Postgraduate respondents were found least biased and least pliant to new ideas as well.

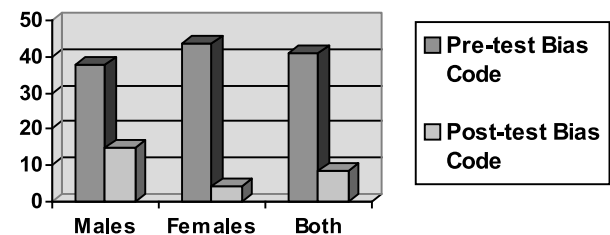
### ***Sex and Gender Bias***

Every gender-biased answer was given one mark while coding the answers. Thus the bias-code was calculated.

Women were found more gender biased than men in the pre-test (Figure 5). However, their bias code dropped drastically in the post-test. Since the facts portrayed in the tool

Individuals	Average Pre-test Bias code	Average Post-test Bias code	Difference
Males	37.75	14.77	22.98
Females	43.58	4.39	39.19
Both	40.86	8.35	32.51

**Table. 2.**



**Fig. 5.** Reduction in Gender Bias

were closer to the lives of women, they showed ready acceptance of the ideas and concepts discussed in the interactive tool. Males too showed a less drastic but favorable effect in reduction of their gender bias.

### **Conclusion**

In India 'Gender Equality' is a very sensitive and volatile issue. People in India are traditional minded. They adhere to their ethnic values and are proud of their culture and heritage. The effort of disseminating 'Gender Education' was therefore a challenging task. However, this attempt has succeeded in changing people's attitudes to make them more gender balanced. Human nature is not intrinsic; it is dynamic. It is possible for us to reconstruct our gender approaches to stress gender equilibrium. This harmony encompasses a wider experiential and awareness base that produces a complete whole which is necessary for bridging gender gap in education, creating a discrimination free existence, achieving social justice and sustainable human development.

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