

What is gender?

This term refers to „Cultural Sex". It means that what causes different perceptions of women and men, femininity and masculinity in society, is not sex (biological) differences but comprehensions within society which do not relate to our bodies. Different cultures characterize masculinity and femininity differently - what is considered feminine in one culture, during one time period, is considered masculine in another time period or country, or it is not in any way related to masculinity and femininity in that society.

The term Gender highlights the fact that the way society treats men and women, how it perceives masculinity and femininity does not relate to our bodies, but our imaginations. The fact that a woman (not a man) gives birth to a child does not mean that a woman (not a man) performs all the chores, visits the doctor with a child and so on. Namely all these activities do not relate to the fact that she has the uterus, but to the idea that these activities are "female". The concept of Gender does not only relate to women and men, but it suggests that feminine and masculine characteristics are attributed to institutions, activities and things. In this context Sandra Harding (HARDING, Sandra. 1986. The Science Question in Feminism. London: Cornel University Press) refers to the three levels of Gender - the three levels at which Gender in society is manifested:

Individual level of Gender - Gender Identities.

This level of Gender refers to individuals. It is about how we, as human beings create our identities (predominantly male and female). They affect our societal expectations, social norms related to masculinity, femininity and heteronormativity of society, but also our own internalized concepts and assumptions, our own personality, sexuality and sexual preferences, as well as our life strategies. It is actually a sort of permanent negotiation of one's own position and own concept of oneself, in the environment we move through.

Gender identity, although it seems binary - male or female, may in fact represent the whole spectrum of different aspects of masculinity, femininity or other Gender characteristics. Individuals create their Gender identity as a mosaic composed of different aspects of masculinity and femininity, as well as their combinations. Some of them meet societal Gender expectations; others express a distinctive "pattern". We refer to them as Queer, Transgender, Gay or Lesbian identities, Transgender identities, etc.

Gender identity is something that is constantly produced through interaction with the environment. We say that Gender "is" not, but rather that Gender "is created" (doing Gender).

In most cases, when talking about Gender equality, people confine its perception to this level. Gender equality violations at this level are manifested mainly as Gender discrimination. The measures, which are intended to remove and address it, mainly relate to anti-discrimination legislation in the field of equal treatment. In states with effective law enforcement and a well-functioning rule of law, the promotion of Gender equality at this level is relatively easy".

Structural level of Gender

Gender structure of human activities refers to assigning Gender characteristics to whole areas of human activity and institutions, regardless of whether they are actually carried out by women or men. Thus the division of labor receives a "natural" character. There is also an element of hierarchy present which relates to the male or female characteristics. When the "male" activities are considered valuable, they are better paid, they have higher social prestige. A good example is the economy, where we see that the work associated with masculinity has higher status - economic and socially, than female work. (Gender Segregation). At this level of Gender, the institutional level of Gender and Gender division of labor - Gender roles, norms are applied.

Gender inequality at this level is manifested by inequalities in the labor market across all sectors of the economy, not just individuals: men in feminized sectors also face the negative impact of the lower value-perception of the "femininity" of these sectors ("female" work is considered to be less demanding, less

responsible, routine rather than creative, more associated with caring and emotionality than with performance, power and rationality) and therefore a man in a "woman's" profession is most likely to earn less and have less social prestige than a woman in a "man's" profession. At this level prevention of Gender inequality is not only comprised of good legislation, but also by positive action - supporting measures (such as quotas, measures for reconciling private and professional life, motivation and support actions ...)

Symbolic level of Gender - language and Gender stereotypes.

Gender symbolism refers to the attribution of connotations of masculinity and femininity to the phenomena that do not refer to sex-related differences in any way. Gender symbolism is present in language and the ways of using it. Language is gendered. The essential fact here is that the implication of a "male" or "female" connotation carries evaluative, hierarchical position and creates the impression of a generally dichotomous structure within society. Value connotations of these words seem to come from unequal perceived value of what is "masculine" and what is "feminine". At this level, Gender is manifested in language and in symbols. The central role played by gender stereotypes here is as an organizational and control mechanism presented in the language.

Gender inequality at this level is indeed reflected primarily in a language and as such, may give the impression that these are only words, symbols that are not directly harmful. In fact, language is precisely the mechanism that influences our thinking, our attitudes - only in language are we able to think. Symbols are what we think of first to identify reality and facts. Therefore, unless we change our perceptions of masculinity and femininity at this level, unless we are able to reflect – to be aware of - restricting images of masculinity and femininity, until then the Gender inequality will persist - despite legislation or policy measures to alleviate its symptoms. Here, in fact, lie its roots.

The concept of Gender is, in this way, not a substitute for the word Sex, does not relate just to individuals but the entire social reality, as is shown by Sandra Harding. It allows a better understanding of how society creates inequalities between women and men, but also why there are feminine and masculine activities or characteristics, which are perceived as unequal.