

## Educational Impact of Participatory Theatre Based Intervention on Gender Equality Attitudes, Youth in Serbia

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**Abstract :** Young people in Serbia, have grown up in turbulent times during the Balkan wars, in a cultural and economic isolation without adequate education on (ethnic, gender, social,...) equality. They often have very strong patriarchal gender stereotypes. The perception of gender in Serbia is still heavily influenced by traditional worldview and young people have little opportunity in traditional educational system to challenge it, receiving no formal sex education. Educational policies have addressed achieving gender equality as one of the goals, supporting all young people to gain better educational opportunities, but there are obvious shortcomings of the official education system in implementation of those goals. Therefore new approaches should be implemented. We evaluate the impact of non traditional approach, such as participatory theatre performance with strong transformative potential, especially in relation to gender issues. Theatre based intervention (TBI) was created to provoke the young people to become aware of their gender constructs. Engaging young people in modern form of education such as transformative gender intervention through participatory theatre could have positive impact on their sex knowledge and understanding gender roles. The transformative process in TBI happens on two levels - the affective and the cognitive. The founding agency of the project and evaluation is IPPF. The most important aim of this survey is evaluation of the transformative TBI, as a new educational approach related to better understanding gender as social construct. To reach this goal, we have measured attitude change in three indicators: a) gender identity/ perception of feminine identity, perception of masculine identity, importance of gender for personal identity, b) gender roles on the labor market, c) Gender equality in partnership & sexual behavior. Our main hypothesis is that participatory theatre-based intervention can have a transformational potential in challenging traditional gender knowledge and attitudes among youth in Serbia. To evaluate the impact of TB intervention, we implement: online baseline and end-line survey with nonparticipants of the TBI on the representative sample in targeted towns (control group). Additionally we conducted testing the experimental group twice: pretest at the beginning of each TBI and post testing of participants after the play. A sample of 500 respondents aged 18-30 years, from 9 towns in Serbia responded to online questionnaire in September 2017, in a baseline research. Pre and post measurement of all tested variables among participants in nine towns would be performed. End-line survey with 500 respondents would be conducted at the end of the project (early year 2018). After the first TBI (60 participants) no impact was detected on measured indicators: perception of desirable characteristics of man  $F(1,59)=1.291$ ,  $p=.260$ ; perception of desirable characteristics of women  $F(1,55)=1.386$ ,  $p=.244$ ; gender identity importance  $F(1,63)=.050$ ,  $p=.824$ ; sex related behavior  $F(1,61)=1.145$ ,  $p=.289$ ; gender equality on labor market  $F(1,63)=.076$ ,  $p=.783$ ; gender equality in partnership  $F(1,61)=.201$ ,  $p=.656$ ; However, we hope that following intervention would bring more data showing that participatory theatre intervention explaining gender as a social construct could have additional positive impact in traditional educational system.

**Keywords :** educational impact, gender identity, gender role, participatory theatre based intervention

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