

Gender Studies.

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Q2. Write a note on the status of gender studies in Pakistan. Also, write a comprehensive note on autonomy versus integration debate in gender studies.

1. Introduction

Gender Studies, a field dedicated to critically examining gender roles, identities, and relationships, has gained a foothold in Pakistan's academic landscape. This is proven by the establishment of different institutes starting from Quaid-i-Azam University and expanding to over 40 other universities and institutions nationwide that offers various academic pathways in gender studies. This has happened despite the challenges ~~seen~~ faced for instance the problem of funding, social conservatism and the lack of awareness of the discipline. These challenges comes in because Pakistani society is ~~mainly~~ majority communities are deeply rooted in traditional gender norms. However the expansion signifies the growing recognition of critically analyzing gender roles, identities, and relationships.

2. Status of Gender Studies in Pakistan

a. The Formalization and expansion of Gender Studies.

The Gender studies discipline was initially formalized in Pakistan by the development

of women studies center first developed by Allama Iqbal open university in 1997 that was funded by the ministry of women's development. Later on the Gender studies programs flourished, with over 40 universities now offering undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the field that are either publically funded or funded ~~by~~ by international donors. Some popular ~~in~~ universities with robust gender studies departments are Lahore university of management science (LUOMS) and Aga Khan University (AKU) ~~center~~. This shows ~~the~~ the speed at which the Gender Studies as a discipline has been adapted in Pakistan.

b. Gender Studies Curriculum and Research in Pakistan.

The Gender Studies curriculum and research covers array of critical areas, that include but not limited to women's rights, masculinity studies, LGBTQIA+ issues, feminist theories and queer perspectives. The Research output has grown significantly, as Pakistani scholars contribute over 150 publications in gender-related field annually. The 2022 study of the Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies reveals a 20% increase in research publications compared to 2015. This emphasises the growth and acceptance of the discipline nationwide.

C. The Challenges to Gender Studies in Pakistan

(i) Low funding compared to other programs.

A major chunk of Pakistani society is deeply rooted in traditional gender norms. There is a hesitation among them to adopt Gender studies as an academic discipline.

This is evident from the 2023 financial report of HEC Higher Education Commission (HEC) revealing that Gender Studies programs receive 20% less funding compared to social science departments.

This disparity hinders research and outreach initiatives.

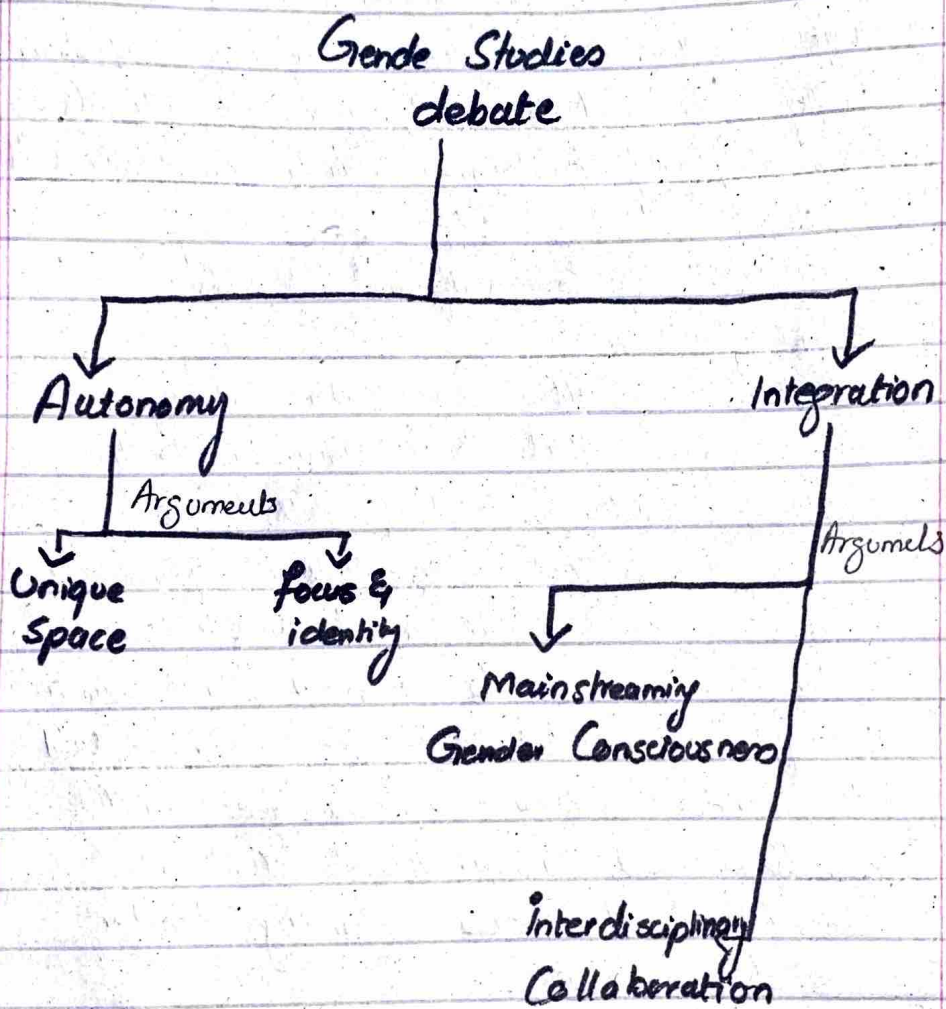
(ii) Societal resistance to faculty and students of Gender Studies.

The major challenge to gender studies growth comes from societal conservatism. Due to the societal resistance faced by the faculty and students of gender studies departments, the growth and widespread adaptation is hindered. According to a 2021 Aural foundation survey, 45% students and faculty associated with gender studies programs face social resistance and stigma. This is due to conservative ideologies regarding gender and sexuality.

(iii) Lack of Awareness regarding goals and objectives of Gender studies.

Students and parents lack information regarding the goals and objectives of gender studies. Therefore the discipline is majorly misunderstood and hence is socially not accepted.

The 2002 survey of National Institute of Gender Studies shows that 70% respondents did not understand the objectives and value of Gender Studies. This highlights the need for an increased awareness campaign.



3. The Autonomy Debate.

The autonomy debate in gender studies revolves around the perspective that Gender Studies as programs and departments should fully exist independently within the academic institutions as it would grant a unique space along facilitating focus and identity of gender studies. The following are the main arguments and criticism of the debate.

a. Arguments for autonomy

(i) ~~Pro~~ Autonomy provides unique space.

The Advocates for autonomy argues that unique space would allow gender studies to challenge the entrenched social structure and power dynamics, mainly those related to gender, sexuality and identity. As according to McRobbie "An independent department sends a powerful message: gender studies is not just an add-on, it's central to understanding the world" Therefore an autonomous department would allow for specialized faculty, curriculum development, and intellectual depth within the field.

(ii) Autonomy would facilitate focus and identity.

The autonomy debate ~~also~~ argues for separate departments and not-integrating with other subject. This would facilitate focus of the development of distinctive research agendas and a strong sense of community among scholars

and students. Furthermore it would also provide an identity to Gender Studies thus it won't be overshadowed by the priorities of mainstream disciplines.

b. Criticism of Autonomy

(i) Isolation of Gender Studies

Critics argue that autonomous measures would isolate gender studies from the mainstream discipline. This would limit the ~~discipline's~~ reach and impact. Furthermore isolation would reinforce narrative of "us vs. them" and hinder broader societal acceptance of gender issues.

(ii) Autonomy limiting the scope of gender studies.

The autonomy of Gender Studies would limit the scope of the discipline. Gender Studies broader spectrum lays light on gender identities, relations, and expressions.

However an autonomous department ~~would~~ ~~into~~ might only focus on women issues therefore it can limit the field's scope and potential impact.

4. The Integration Debate.

The Integration debate in gender studies advocates for integration of Gender Studies into the broader academic structures or merge it with related disciplines rather than mainstreaming its separate identity. The arguments that base the formation of

Integration debate are mainstreaming gender consciousness and interdisciplinary collaboration. These along the criticism are ~~off~~ discussed below;

a. Arguments for Integration

(i) Mainstreaming Gender Consciousness would raise awareness.

Integrating gender studies concepts into other disciplines like sociology, history, and law can raise awareness and challenge discriminatory practices within academia and society. As Fox Keller says "By integrating gender into existing disciplines, we can challenge them from within, forcing them to confront their own biases and blind spots." This can lead to a more nuanced understanding of social issues and greater progress towards gender equality.

(ii) Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Interdisciplinary collaboration of Gender studies with other disciplines enriches research endeavors and offers diverse perspectives on gender issues. This can lead to more innovative and impactful scholarship in both gender studies and the collaborating disciplines.

b. Criticism for Integration; Dilution of Gender Studies

Integration raises concerns about the marginalization or dilution of gender studies within established disciplines. There is a

risk of tokenistic inclusion, where gender becomes superficially included without due transformation or substantive engagement with its entred insights.

5. A balanced Approach.

The solution to the autonomy vs. integration debate likely lies in a balanced approach that maximises the strengths of both approaches and mitigates the risks. For instance there should be dedicated gender studies departments that actively foster collaboration with other disciplines through joint research initiatives. Furthermore the students and faculty should be empowered while engaging them in community outreach and advocacy. This combined effort would extend the reach of gender studies.

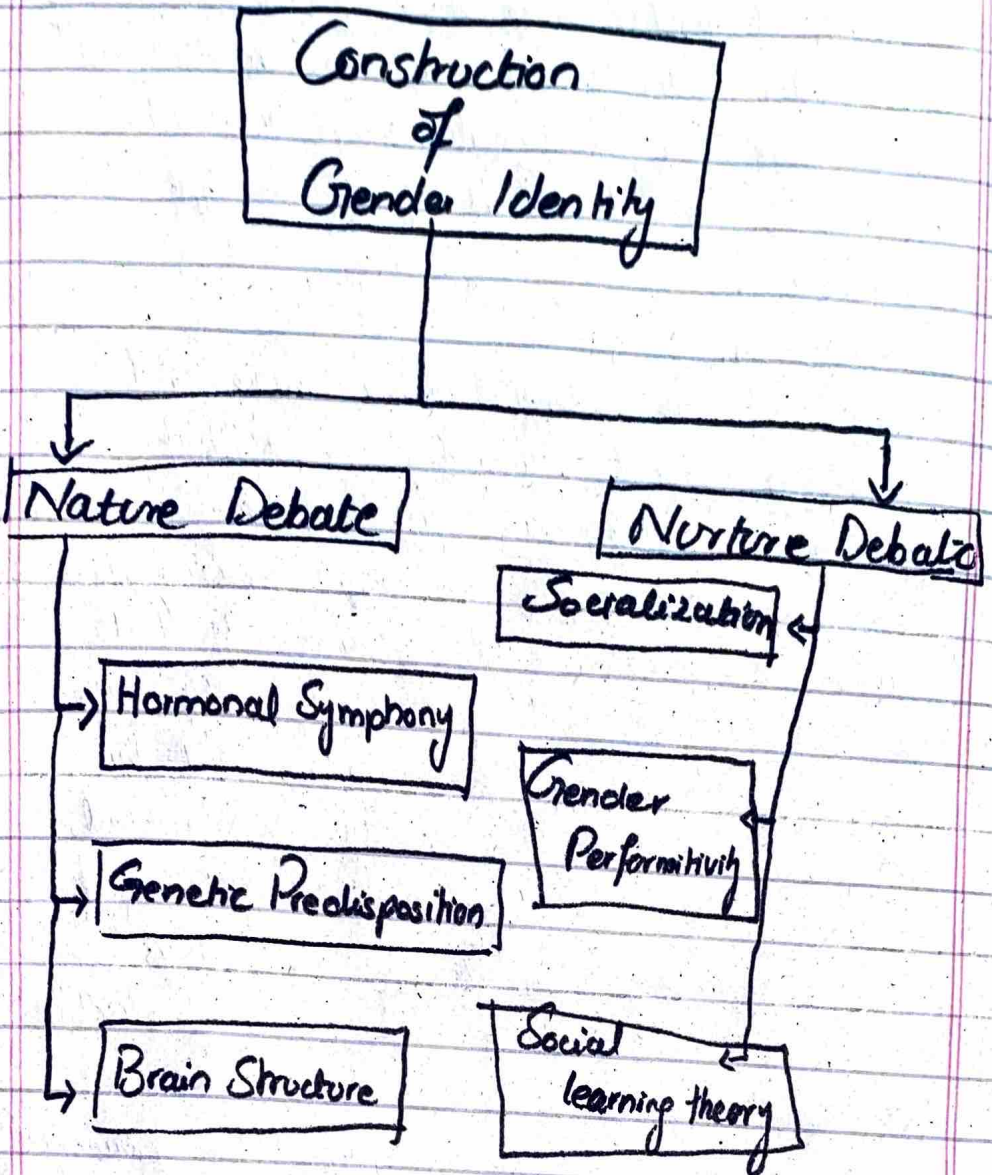
6. Conclusion.

By navigating the autonomy vs. integration debate thoughtfully and embracing a hybrid approach, Gender Studies in Palestine can continue to grow, flourish, and contribute to a more just and equitable society. The field holds immense potential to challenge patriarchal structures, empower marginalized communities, and shape a brighter future for all.

Q3. Different factors are involved in constructing Gender Identity; however, one can also not overlook the biological factors involved. Discuss in the light of Nature vs. Nurture debate.

1. Introduction.

The Gender identity is a complex and deeply rooted personal concept that refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female, or somewhere in between. There have been many arguments that this personal sense come biologically within a person while some argue that this internal sense is socially constructed. These never ending arguments have sparked the long standing nature vs nurture debate in the academic discourse of Gender Studies. Where on the nature side of the debate, theories like hormonal influence, genetic predisposition and brain structure theories comes into play. While on the other side theories of socialization, Gender performativity and social learning theory support the proponents of the nurture debate. Nevertheless both sides of the debate have their limitation and a conclusion on which everyone agrees has still not been reached.



2. The Nature debate.

The proponents of the nature debate argue that ~~at~~ Gender Identity is formed from the biological factors and such as a person's genetics, their hormones and the neurological differences in shaping and influencing one's understanding, expressions, and identification with a particular gender.

a. Supporting theories of Nature debate.

i. Hormonal influences.

The Hormonal influences theory, given by Simon LeVay and Dick Swaab, suggests that ~~per~~ prenatal and postnatal exposure to various hormones, particularly testosterone, plays a crucial role in shaping brain development and influencing gender-related behaviors such as the behaviors associated with masculinity and femininity. This theory highlights the potential impact of biological factors on gender identity formation. Therefore favoring the nature debate.

ii. Genetic Predisposition.

The influence of ~~per~~ prenatal and postnatal hormonal exposures, particularly testosterone, is a prominent aspect of the nature perspective. Proponents argue that exposure to varying levels of hormones during critical stages of development might impact brain structure and functions, potentially influencing an individual's gender identity. The differential hormonal exposure during gestation and early life stages is believed to influence the development of gender specific behaviors and cognitive patterns.

iii) Brain structure

This perspective asserts that differences in brain structures, particularly in regions associated with spatial ability and emotion processing, exist between individuals of different genders. This theory

13
suggests ~~that~~ a potential biological basis for some gender-related disparities, emphasizing the nature debate.

b. Criticis of Nature debate

Critics argues that the nature perspective oversimplifies a complex interplay of factors, neglecting the impact of social and cultural influences as noted by Juliet Mitchell, furthermore, the emphasis on biological determinism raises concerns about potentially reinforcing harmful stereotypes and ignoring individual agency as criticized by Juliet Butler in her book the gender trouble.

3. The Nurture debate

The Proponents of the nurture debate argues that social, cultural and environmental factors wield significant influence in shaping individual's understanding, expression, and identification with a particular gender.

Theories of socialization, Gender performativity and social learning theory backs the arguments of the nurture debate

a. Supporting theories of the Nurture debate

i. Socialization

Central to the nurture perspective is the concept of socialization, which emphasizes how societal norms, cultural expectations, and familial influences shape an individual's perception and performance of gender roles. As children are exposed to societal expectations regarding gender from any early stage

boys are given toy pistols to play with while girls are given toy kitchen thus children learning and internalizing these norms through interaction with family, peers, educational institution, and media. showcasing how societal expectations and experiences shape understanding and expression of gender.

ii) Gender Performativity

The influential theory, proposed by Judith Butler, posits that gender is not an inherent identity but a performance shaped by societal expectation and pressure. Where women are expected to do the reproductive labor and men be the provider and protector. According to Judith Butler, we continuously "perform" gender through our interactions with the world, even though there is no fixed or essential core to our gender identity. ~~The~~

iii) Social learning theory

The theory developed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes how individuals learn and model behaviors through observation and reinforcement. It suggests that children learn gendered behavior by observing and interacting with others, particularly family members. This theory supports the nurture argument by highlighting the power of social environment and learning in shaping gender roles and behaviors. However, it acknowledges that biological factors might influence individual receptivity to those social influences.

b. Criticism of Nurture debate.

Critics point out that the nurture perspective might underestimate the influence of biological factors, particularly pre-social experiences like prenatal hormone exposure, as Lisa Diamond noted. Additionally, overemphasis on social construction can create a false dichotomy between "fixed" biology and "fluid" social constructs, as Anne Fausto-Sterling points out. Lastly, disregarding individual differences in how ~~the~~ people interpret and internalize social influences overlook the unique tapestry of each individual's gender identity.

4. Conclusion

The tapestry of gender identity is woven from multiple threads, where the complex interplay of nature and nurture creates a unique pattern for each individual. As both perspectives offer valuable insights, sticking to either of the ~~two~~ extreme risks obscuring the intricate reality. Therefore, a nuanced understanding that acknowledges both sides is crucial to foster a more inclusive and understanding world where diverse gender identities are embraced and celebrated.