

Q. No. 2 :

Write a note on the status of gender studies in Pakistan and give your views on the autonomy vs. integration debate in gender studies.

Answer:

In Pakistan, gender studies has grown with feminist activism and awareness of women's rights. However, it faces cultural, social and religious challenges which are limiting its widespread acceptance.

In 1980s, at University of Karachi Women's studies center was established which laid foundation for future prospects of gender studies in Pakistan (University of Karachi).

Give the main heading first and relate headings to the qs

## Institutional Development:

Various Pakistani universities are offering gender studies programs, though the field is underfunded. Institutions like Lahore College for Women University and Fatima Jinnah Women University are offering program to explore gender from various perspectives. LUMS' Center for gender studies offers interdisciplinary research on gender equality and feminist theory.

## ii- Government Initiatives and Policies:

The government has implemented policies like the National Policy for Women (2002) to promote gender equality. UN Women, 2022 has highlighted improvements in education and health but persistent challenges in political and economic empowerment.



### iii- Cultural and Religious Barriers:

Cultural and religious conservatism often resists gender equality initiatives in Pakistan. In Pakistan, 56% of Pakistanis believe that women should not work outside the home (Pew Research Center, 2018)

### iv- Challenges faced by Women:

Despite advances women still face significant challenges. In 2023, 70% women faced violence while 44% faced workplace discrimination (Aurora Foundation, 2023). Gender based violence, limited healthcare and unequal work opportunities are major issues.

### v- Gender Studies in Rural Areas:

Rural women still face numerous challenges. In rural areas there is 35% literacy rate while in urban areas

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literacy rate is 72% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). So, in rural areas gender studies is underdeveloped with limited education access.

### VI- Role of NGOs in Promoting Gender Studies:

Non governmental organizations are working gender equality through legal support, advocacy and educational programs. The nationwide campaigns of Aurat Foundation have reached over 10 million people, raising awareness on gender equality.

### VII- Future Prospects:

Despite challenges, gender studies growing support from civil society, but cultural and institutional barriers remain. According to Pakistan Gender Gap Index, 2023 female literacy



rate has increased from 42% in 2001 to 72% in 2023.

### VIII- International Collaborations and Support:

International organizations and foreign universities are partners with Pakistani institutions to support gender studies programs. The British Council is in collaboration with over 100,00 people with projects aimed at promoting gender equality.

### Autonomy Vs. Integration Debate

The autonomy versus integration debate in gender studies concerns whether the field should remain independent or be integrated into other disciplines. Autonomy advocates argue for a focused gender analysis

while integration supporters believe gender perspectives should span various academic fields.

i- Arguments for Autonomy:

In gender studies autonomy allows for focused gender analysis, critical of power structures often overlooked in mainstream disciplines. Bell hooks, 1984 advocates for GS's autonomy, emphasizing the need for a space to dismantle systems of oppression.

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ii- Arguments for Integration

Integration advocates argue that gender perspective should permeate all disciplines to offer more inclusive societal solutions. Global Gender Gap Report, 2023 of World Economic Forum supports integrating gender equality across sectors for more inclusive solutions.



### iii- Need for Interdisciplinary Approaches:

A balanced approach combining autonomy and integration enhances gender analysis by integrating various academic fields. **Gender and Sexuality Studies Program** of Harvard blends law, sociology, and history to enrich gender studies. According to **American Council of Education, 2022** universities offering interdisciplinary gender studies have seen a 20% rise over the last decade.

### iv- The Risk of Marginalization:

There is a concern that in broader spectrum gender studies may marginalize gender issues. Despite research on the gender pay gap, **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development** studies show

women still earn 16% less globally for similar roles, emphasizing the risks of insufficient attention to gender issues.

#### V- Gender Studies as Transformative Discipline:

Autonomous gender studies can challenge societal norms and advocate for gender equality, pushing boundaries and fostering change. According to Inter Parliamentary Union, 2023 over 60% female participation in politics in Rwanda influenced by gender studies programs.

#### VI- Challenges in Integration:

Institutional resistance and a lack of understanding of gender analysis hinders integration. According to American Association Economic Association 2022 only 2% of economics



departments globally offer gender-focused courses, despite its utmost importance for economic development.

### vii- A Balanced Approach:

The ideal approach combines the autonomy and integration. The UN's SDGs call for integrating gender perspectives across all sectors to achieve gender equality by 2030.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, the debate between autonomy and integration in gender studies highlights the need for a balanced approach that both preserves focused gender analysis and promotes its integration across disciplines. In Pakistan, progress in female literacy & gender awareness is evident but cultural barriers persist, continued efforts are needed to empower marginalized groups.