

Explore nature vs nurture debate in gender studies?

1. Introduction:-

The nature vs nurture debate is a question of whether human behaviour is determined by biology or by environmental factors. On the side of nature, people believe that human characteristics are hereditary, that they are carried in our genetic code. On the side of nurture, people believe that human minds are like a blank slate, that psychological characteristics are influenced by one's environment.

2. Nature debate in gender studies.

It suggests that genetic, hormonal and neurobiological elements play pivotal role in the construction of gendered related traits.

2.1. Theories supporting nature debate.

There are many theories that support nature debate.

a. Prenatal Hormone theory.

Prenatal exposure to hormones like testosterone and estrogen is believed to play an important role in the development of gender.

Example:- Studies have shown that individuals with Congenital Adrenal

Hyperplasia (CAH), particularly in women, tend to exhibit behaviours and interests that align more closely with masculine traits. This is an scientific evidence for nature debate.

b. Organizational activation hypothesis:

The organizational - activation hypothesis stresses the role of early hormonal influences on behavior and development. This hypothesis aligns with the idea that biological factors, specifically hormonal exposure during sensitive development periods (such as prenatal) have lasting effects on behaviour and brain organization. It suggests that these early organizational effects contribute substantially to an individual's later behavioral patterns.

c. Klinefelter syndrome:

Klinefelter syndrome is a genetic condition where males are born with an extra X chromosome (XXY instead of typical XY). Individual with the syndrome might experience variations in physical traits (such as taller stature, less body hair, and infertility). They can potentially have different patterns of cognitive

development or behavioral tendencies compared to males without this syndrome.

d. Androgen Insensitivity syndrome (AIS)

Androgen Insensitivity syndrome (AIS) is a genetic condition where an individual with XY chromosomes is partially or completely insensitive to androgens particularly testosterone.

This insensitivity affects the body's response to androgens leading to varying degrees of a typical development of sex characteristics.

Despite the genetic makeup (XY chromosomes) individuals with AIS might identify as female due to their physical appearance leading to a female gender identity in many cases.

2.2 Nurture Debate in Gender studies.

It suggests that gender is largely a product of environmental factors such as socialization, historical traditions, legal and political systems, media expectations, cultural beliefs, religion etc.

In Locke's philosophy tabula rasa was the theory that at birth the human mind is a blank state without rules for processing data and that data

is added and rules for processing are formed solely by one's sensory experiences.

2.3 Theoretical approach of Nurture Debate.

Doing gender

They challenged the idea that gender is an innate quality or a fixed characteristics. They argue that individuals do gender by engaging in activities, behaviors, and presentations that align with societal norms and expectations associated with masculinity and femininity.

Tabula rasa.

John Locke's theory of tabula rasa or blank state is a concept that posits that individuals are born without innate ideas or predetermined knowledge. He argued against the existence of innate ideas and instead proposed that individuals acquire knowledge through sensory experiences and perceptions as they interact with the world around them.

2.4 Factors that contribute to the nurture debate.

a. Role of Historical traditions:

Historical traditions have played a significant role in shaping and reinforcing

gender roles across various cultures and societies.

Example:

In the early to mid 20th century societal norms often dictated that men are the primary breadwinners while women were expected to stay at home and take care of the household. However with the world war II as men went off to fight women entered the workforce in large numbers taking on job traditionally held by men.

b. Reinforcement of gender roles by family and peer groups:

Family and peer groups often reinforce gender roles through various means such as socialization, expectations etc. Families and peers often have certain expectations based on gender. This can involve how one dresses, behaves or even career choices.

Example:-

From a young age children observe and learn behaviors, norms, and values associated with their gender from their families and friends. For instance boys might be encouraged to play with toy trucks, while girls are given dolls.

c. Cultural beliefs play a crucial role:

Cultural values and beliefs significantly shape the development of gender identities. Across various cultures, distinct expectations for men and women influence how individuals perceive and understand different gender roles.

Example:-

In some middle eastern countries there are values and beliefs surrounding modesty and dress codes. These norms indicate that women should dress modestly by covering their heads while men have less strict dressing rules.

d. Role of media in constructionism:-

Media representation of gender can reinforce gender roles and stereotypes. Media portrayal can shape how people perceive and adopt gender roles.

Example:-

Advertisers often reinforce gender roles by predominantly featuring women in household product ads and men in automotive industry commercials, shaping societal expectations regarding expected gender roles.

2.5 Conclusion:-

Experts agree that most human traits have both genetic and environmental components. In fact, nature and nurture often work

together interacting in complex ways
to affect human development.