

Differentiate between gender studies and women studies. Discuss in detail the multidisciplinary nature of gender studies. (2023)

INTRODUCTION

Gender Studies emerged as a discipline in the 1990's during the third wave of feminism. It seeks to analyze the social, cultural, political constructions of gender.

Gender Studies adopts a broader and holistic approach inculcating the entire, non-binary spectrum of gender. Whereas, women studies focuses entirely on the experiences, achievements, and struggles of women in the society. It emerged as an offshoot of second wave of feminism demanding equal rights for women and end to patriarchy. The theories and findings of gender studies overlap with various other academic fields, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of the subject. It examines the sociological, psychological, political, anthropological, cultural, economical, medical, and educational overtures of gender that directly or indirectly impact the entire spectrum of gender in the contemporary world.

WOMEN STUDIES

GENDER STUDIES

DEFINITION

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| 1) | This discipline focuses on the study of experiences, achievements and struggles of women. | This discipline critically examines the social, cultural, political, and historical constructions of gender. |
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ORIGIN

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| 2) | It emerged as an offshoot of 2 nd wave of feminism | It emerged as an offshoot of 3 rd wave of feminism. |
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FOCUS OF STUDY

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| 3) | Focus on the problems of patriarchy and women participation in men's trade and occupation. | Major focus is on overcoming the social differences between all the genders. |
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INCLUSIVITY

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| 4) | Not inclusive in nature; focuses only on women study | Inclusive in nature; focuses on the study of all the genders |
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WOMEN STUDIES

GENDER STUDIES

GOAL / DEMAND

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|----|---|---------------------------------|
| 5) | Demands equality for women and end to patriarchy. | Demands equity for all genders. |
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THEORETICAL APPROACH

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| 6) | Women in Development
Women and Development | Gender and Development
Postmodern Theory
Queer Theory |
|----|---|---|

NATURE OF SUBJECT

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| 7) | Interdisciplinary in nature | Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary |
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SCOPE OF STUDY

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| 8) | Feminism is integral, aiming to address women rights and equality. | Goes beyond feminism deconstructs gender binaries. |
| 9) | Address historical roles of women in society such as Bettisia Gozadini, first woman to attend university in 1237. | More emphasis on evolving nature of gender norms over time and across cultures. |

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

NATURE OF GENDER

STUDIES

The multidisciplinary nature of gender studies explains its engagement with other disciplines to understand the complexities of gender and its impact on individuals and societies.

1) SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCT OF GENDER

It examines the social structures and institutions that shape gender. It investigates how societal expectations and norms influence gender roles in the society. Judith Lorber in 'The Social Construction of Gender' explains that gender is a social construct. She argues that gender is created and maintained through social processes, institutions, and cultural norms, rather than being an inherent trait to one's sex.

EXAMPLE Women

a)

Women are expected to cover

LUCKY

their heads in front of elder males in the Pakistani society.

- b) 'Men don't cry' explains the societal expectation for males that they ought to maintain a tough personality.

2) PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology explains the individual and collective psychological aspects of gender.

It explains how gender identity is formed and the impacts of gender stereotypes and body image issues. Judith Butler

'Gender Trouble' explains how individuals repeatedly enact gender roles which creates psychological tensions for those whose gender identities do not align with societal expectations.

EXAMPLE

- a) Women ^{develop} indulge themselves in several forms of eating disorders such as **anorexia nervosa** and **bulimia nervosa** in order to fit into the a certain body image created by society.

- b) WHO data shows that nearly 40% of countries have more ^{than} 15 suicide deaths per 100,000 men (1.5% for women). This data clearly shows the mental health problems faced by men due to societal expectations of being the sole breadwinner.

3) ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropologists study the cultural dimensions of human societies. They also explore how gender roles are constructed and performed within different cultural contexts. Jeanne Favret, a French ethnologist, in her book 'Deadly Words: ~~With~~ Witchcraft in Bocage' examines how gendered power dynamics play a role in the interpretations and practices of witchcraft.

4) LITERARY STUDIES

It analyzes how gender is represented and constructed in literature. It explains how narratives shape and reflect cultural perceptions of gender.

a) 'The Bride' by Bapsi Sidhwa, 'Home Fire' by Kamila Shamsie, and 'My Feudal Lord' by Tehmina Durrani explore how patriarchal values in South Asian societies confine women to traditional roles, also presenting women's resistance to these roles.

b) 'Orlando: A Biography' by Virginia Woolf is a classical novel that explores gender fluidity. It is considered an early queer literary work.

5) POLITICAL SCIENCE

Political scientists explore the political dimensions of gender, including issues such as representation, policies, power structure. David Benatar in 'The Second Sexism' explores that political systems often overlook the gender-based discrimination, focusing more on women's rights without addressing the full spectrum of gender identity.

EXAMPLES

- a) Low representation of women and transgenders in the National Assembly of Pakistan.
- b) Persistent gender-based harassment and sexist remarks towards women in politics.

6) ECONOMICS

Economists study the economic implications of gender inequality, such as wage gap, labor market dynamics, and economic contributions of different genders. They also explore the impact of gender on career choices and economic benefits of gender diversity in workspace. Betty Friedan in 'The Feminine Mystique' critiques the economic system that confines women to domestic roles and limits their economic opportunities.

7) MEDIA INDUSTRY

The media, through movies, dramas, and other forms of popular culture reflects and shapes societal views on gender. It also highlights the issues faced by various genders in our society.

EXAMPLES

- a) **Wonder Woman (2017)** portrays a powerful female lead challenging the norms of male-dominated superheroes.
- b) **Kabir Singh (2019)** portrays toxic masculinity and the societal expectations placed on men.
- c) **Joyland (2022)** explores the taboo of same-sex relationships and transgender identity in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Gender studies explores the entire, non-binary spectrum of gender in the social context. Whereas, women studies only focuses on the history, experiences, and struggles of women. Gender Studies is multidisciplinary in nature. It gains insights from other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, economy to explore and investigate gender-related issues.