

Parenting Patterns in Gender Responsive Education for Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

Gender-responsive education for young children is still poorly understood by parents. This issue is often considered trivial, but it significantly impacts the development of young children. In the community, parents tend to prioritize parenting styles focused on providing sufficient material resources, schooling, and healthcare. This means that parents are unaware of the effects and simple causes of the lack of gender-responsive education. To address this problem, the outreach team organized a seminar in the form of a discussion and approach aimed at parents whose children attend Ra Al-Ikhlâs Konggo School. The goal was to enhance parents' understanding, especially mothers, regarding gender-responsive education for young children. The outreach method involved socializing with parents on the topic of gender-responsive education for early childhood. As a result of this initiative, parents' understanding of gender-responsive education improved through the presentation of the material by the outreach team.

Keywords: Parenting, Gender, Responsive, Education.



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1. INTRODUCTION

In nation-building, gender is a global strategy aimed at enhancing awareness of the aspirations, interests, and roles of both women and men, without neglecting the dignity, nature, and integrity of women and men in all fields. The process of human development in Indonesia through education is not only focused on the aspects of knowledge and intellectual growth of children but also on the development of religious and moral (ethical) aspects. Therefore, the development of these aspects is

expected to lead to the formation of a fully developed Indonesian person. This means that they master not only knowledge and technology but also possess good moral, mental, and spiritual attitudes. (Tambunan, 2023)

In Indonesia, the state has taken an important role in advancing women in all fields, as outlined in Article 28, Paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution on Human Rights, which states that every person has the right to develop themselves through the fulfillment of basic needs, access to education, and the benefits of science, technology, arts, and culture, as well as to improve the quality of life and human welfare. Other legal foundations ensuring gender equality include Law No. 7 of 1984 on the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 on the mainstreaming of gender in policies, programs, and institutions, including in the field of education. More specifically, Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System has introduced several new paradigms that provide broader opportunities for both men and women to participate in education.

Gender equality has become a program and activity aimed at improving the dignity and status of both women and men. In the global era, gender is closely related to awareness, the responsibilities of men, and the empowerment of women, including matters related to reproduction.

Gender equality, as described above, also includes equality in education from a legal perspective. This is evident in the provisions of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System: "Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process that enables students to actively develop their potential to possess spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by themselves, society, the nation, and the state" (Article 1). The article emphasizes equal rights to access education for both men and women. Furthermore, the 1945 Constitution, particularly Article 31 Paragraph 1, also states: "Every citizen has the right to education." The explanation of

this article implies that every citizen, regardless of gender, has the same opportunity to obtain education. Therefore, any form of discrimination against men or women is prohibited, with the aim of achieving gender equality in the field of education.

Attention to gender discourse, particularly in Indonesia, can be considered relatively new and continues to grow with the increasing awareness among women about their human dignity, which has often been suppressed by the deeply rooted patriarchal culture practiced in various regions of Indonesia. Under patriarchal culture, fundamental human rights are often diminished or even completely lost. In recent years, studies on women and gender issues in Indonesia have shown significant progress, reflecting the growing awareness across various sectors, including those involved in education.

Gender-responsive education can be incorporated into the curriculum, ensuring attention to the rights of both men and women. Gender-perspective education is not solely for women but also for men. This curriculum should include gender equality in the daily learning activities of children. Furthermore, equal treatment for all students, both inside and outside the classroom, is essential, including fair treatment in the learning process.

In this context, parents play a crucial role as companions in gender-responsive education, especially when the child is at home. However, there are many factors that contribute to why parents, particularly fathers and mothers, do not actively participate in guiding their children or applying a gender-responsive parenting style. One major factor is the demanding nature of their jobs outside the home. Parents often limit their involvement to ensuring that their children go to school, attend religious studies, eat, and so on. Moreover, parents generally have a low level of understanding regarding gender-responsive education. This is concerning because the foundational education of a child starts with the parents, or more specifically, within the family setting.

In addition to schools, the government has also supported gender equality by drafting legislation that promotes gender equality, particularly in the field of education. However, these aspirations have not been fully realized within the education system. Significant gaps still exist between men and women in education. This underscores the need for gender-responsive education to address these disparities effectively. (Nofianti et al., 2024)

2. METHODS

The approach methods used in the community service activities in collaboration with the partner village include lectures, Q&A sessions, and discussions. The lecture materials were presented using slides to participants, particularly parents whose children attend Ra Al-Ikhlâs Konggo. The topic, *Counseling: Gender-Responsive Education for Early Childhood*, was delivered by the team leader, Rita Nofianti, S.Pd., M.Pd., as part of the community service program.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

When a child is born, their gender can be identified based on their biological sex. If the child has male genitalia, they are conceptualized as a boy; if they have female genitalia, they are expected to fulfill roles traditionally associated with women, such as childbearing. From the moment a child is born, they are simultaneously assigned gender roles and expectations influenced by the cultural environment (gender distribution). Gender is a term introduced by various social scientists to define the differences between women and men as creations of God, viewed from the perspective of roles, values, clothing attributes, and more. These distinctions are shaped by cultural norms, are learned, and can change over time with societal development.

The term gender is often associated with sex. While sex is a gift or innate attribute granted by God that is permanent and cannot be changed, representing an individual's biological characteristics, gender refers to the socially constructed

behavioral differences between men and women. These behaviors are shaped by specific cultural or group norms. Jagtenberg and D'Alton stated that "gender and sex are not the same thing. Gender specifically refers to social meaning attached to biological differences. The way we see ourselves and the way we interact is influenced by the internalization of our values and assumptions about gender." Gender is created and reinforced through assumptions and behaviors, where a person's position is expressed within a gender identity that can be communicated to others. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender is a systematic social construct or role that defines an individual's behavior and is recognized as having an identity linked to their biological sex. (Ritonga et al., 2024)

Based on the results of the community service activity titled *Counseling: Gender-Responsive Education for Early Childhood*, it was conducted smoothly, effectively, and successfully. This was evident from the preparation phase up until the conclusion of the event. The parents showed great enthusiasm and were eager to participate, as they wanted to enhance their understanding of gender-responsive education for early childhood.

In general, gender-responsive education for early childhood should start within the family environment. Parents need to understand the social roles of both boys and girls. This goes beyond biological sex differences and includes social responsibilities. For example, during the community service session, we highlighted that boys should be able to do household chores like sweeping or helping their mothers, and likewise, girls should also be able to perform tasks typically done by boys, while still adhering to their natural roles—boys as boys and girls as girls. Although this might seem taboo for some parents, especially fathers and mothers, the role of the community service team is to educate them about gender-responsive education for early childhood.

The community service session lasted for two hours, covering both the delivery of material and a discussion. Before starting the session, we distributed a questionnaire

asking parents whether gender-responsive education should be instilled in children. The initial responses from the parents (participants) were mostly negative, with answers such as "unnecessary," "not good," and so on. This indicated that the initial understanding of the topic was negative. However, after the material was presented and the discussion was held, the parents filled out the questionnaire again, and the responses changed to positive.

This indicates that, overall, the parents understood and grasped the importance and nature of gender-responsive education for early childhood. (Parapat et al., 2023)

2.1. The concept of gender equality and gender equity

Gender Equality refers to the equal conditions for men and women to access opportunities and exercise their rights as human beings. This enables them to contribute to and participate in political, legal, economic, socio-cultural, educational, and national defense and security (*hankamnas*) activities, as well as to equally enjoy the benefits of development. The realization of gender equality and equity is marked by the absence of discrimination between men and women, ensuring that both have equal access, opportunities to participate, control over development processes, and fair and equal benefits from development.

The most appropriate efforts to socialize gender equality can be carried out in the following ways:

- a. Standardizing gender terminology based on the existence of all aspects of society traditionally, while considering various socio-cultural, economic, and political factors in the context of access to development resources.
- b. Gender analysis approaches should no longer merely refer to biological distinctions or sex (male or female) or individual traits (masculine-

feminine) but should adopt a socio-cultural perspective on gender dimensions.

- c. Development planning should be conducted by considering the differences in gender roles and the interdependence between men and women as factors that can be changed. These changes should align with the socio-cultural conditions of the community in question. If this approach is implemented, it is expected that the process of dissolving rigid sex-role stereotypes will take place.

2.2. The Importance of Gender-Responsive Education for Early Childhood

Children are one of the key subjects in development because they represent the generation that will continue the progress made today. Therefore, children play an important role in the development process. As the nation's future generation, they must be protected. This protection can be pursued through habituating them to an environment that instills values of gender equality and equity.

Gender-responsive education for children is considered crucial in achieving gender equality and equity in the field of education. Therefore, empowering women in the education sector must be carried out simultaneously so that women can actualize themselves according to the potential they possess. (Utami et al., 2020)

Education is the key to transferring knowledge, behavior, and even culture to students. In this context, when gender-biased information is conveyed to learners, the mindset developed in the students will also be gender-biased, and vice versa. Schools play an important role in changing students' mindsets, including behaviors considered gender-biased. Therefore, schools have a strategic function in preparing students to develop their multiple intelligences optimally, without being hindered by socio-cultural values.

The process of raising awareness about gender equality through gender-responsive education must begin early for each individual, starting from infancy, through non-discriminatory treatment towards gender-specific human values. Children are the ideal group to nurture gender-responsive education because they have a high capacity to absorb information and develop thinking. What is taught at an early age will become the foundation for their future behavior.

Human rights (HAM) are inherent rights that belong to every individual, granted by God Almighty since birth, and must be protected, respected, and upheld by individuals, society, and the state. Human rights are universal, not based on ethnicity, religion, gender, or race. Article 17, paragraph 3 of the 1945 Constitution, which serves as a legal foundation for human rights, states that there must be equal protection against discriminatory actions. Therefore, the position of both men and women is equal in the fields of education and other areas.

Gender-responsive education in educational institutions is expected to raise awareness among children (students) to respect and appreciate gender equality. As a result, students in social environments will become accustomed to respecting others and valuing every individual, regardless of their gender.

4. CONCLUSION

Gender refers to the differentiation of roles, functions, and responsibilities between women and men, shaped by sociocultural constructions that can change over time. Meanwhile, sex refers to the biological differences inherent to males and females. Gender-responsive education emphasizes active involvement across genders, ensuring no barriers exist between males and females. The goal of gender-responsive education is to achieve gender equality by fostering an understanding among students of the roles of both women and men. Children are the ideal recipients for cultivating gender-responsive education because they have a high capacity for absorption in

learning. What they are taught at an early age becomes the foundation for their future behavior. A model for gender-responsive education can be implemented through cultural approaches and folklore. Children typically enjoy folklore, making it an effective medium to embed gender-responsive values within the stories

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