

Gender Equality in Schools: Providing Gender Equality Learning Environment

Pebrina Nurwahyuningsih¹, Nurianti HS², Nurlinda²

¹ Department of Management, Universitas Wira Bhakti, Indonesia

² Department of Management, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Manajemen Indonesia YAPMI, Indonesia

³ Department of Architecture, Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia

*Correspondence: febrina@wirabhaktimakassar.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Gender equality implementation in education aspect in Indonesia is still far from the ideal criteria. One of the reasons is affected by the patriarchal culture that constructs society's perspective. The Indonesian government has conducted many studies on gender to promote gender equity and inclusion in Indonesia. As a result, the Minister of Education issued regulation No.84/2008 concerning guidelines for the implementation of gender in education. However, access to education, quality education, and the level of participation of women still lack (Lestariyana, et al., 2020; Lestyoningsih, 2020; Mustofa, et al., 2021; Natasha, 2013; Suwarno, et al., 2021; Tyarakanita, et al., 2021). Thus, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive literature review to illustrate the implementation of gender equality in schools to promote awareness. Through qualitative descriptive study, a variety of publications and journal articles were analyzed. The literature review was divided into three sections, involving the portrayal of gender equality in Indonesia, gender bias in education, and implementation of gender equality in school. The study concludes some aspects that should be implemented to create a gender-responsive school environment and raise the awareness of the students, including the development of curriculum, learning methods, teacher development, and continuous assessment. Developing all these aspects periodically means breaking down the "traditional" cultural concept of gender, which certain genders sometimes excluded. Development needs to be done to ensure the school promotes and facilitates gender equality.

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1. Introduction

Gender equality implementation in the education sector is still far from the ideal criteria. One of the reasons is affected by the patriarchal culture that constructs the thoughts of society (Susanto, 2015). Men and women have been positioned in unequal roles since the colonial era, in which women have to do the household sphere and have limited access to education. Meanwhile, man tends to be a leader, a decision-maker, and responsible for work. The situation shows the discrimination against women's rights and opportunities over their own lives, including in the education aspect.

Studies on gender in the pedagogical aspect have been an interesting topic among scholars and international organizations such as the United Nations. Regulations have been made since it became a topic of discussion among scholars. Through the slogan Education for All, every human being has the right to access education, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, and religion. In Indonesia's context, equality in education is covered in The Law on National Education No. 20/2003, which also states all Indonesian citizens have the right to education.

Mustapha (2013) states that gender studies in education reflect and expose gender practices in communities, schools, and society. Equity in education can be reflected in various ways, such as policies in curriculum, teaching methods, education facilities, and infrastructures, as well as the rights and obligations of educators and students (Fitriyani et al., 2022; Arief et al., 2022; Abbas et al., 2022; Rahman & Weda, 2019).

Gender equality in the pedagogical aspect plays a vital component in the outcome of good quality education. Thus, it is necessary to develop teaching methods, curriculum, etc., that enable male and female students to participate more equally in learning. Teachers must carefully consider the strategies to be implemented in class in order to increase

equal-gender participation. Moreover, teachers become role models and agents of change to construct gender equality. They show an example through behaving and communicating in the school. Kollmayer et al., (2020) state that educators unintentionally bring their teaching activities based on their gender identity. Consequently, it impacts the student's participation in learning activities. Unintentional gender-biased teaching activities highlight the need to increase teacher awareness to facilitate more inclusive and gender equality in a school environment. The inclusive school atmosphere will encourage students to feel empowered and motivated to be involved in learning activities.

In response to this, the Indonesian government has conducted many studies on gender to promote gender equity and exclusivity in Indonesia. As a result, The Minister of Education issued regulation No.84/2008 concerning guidelines for the implementation of gender in education, which ensures all genders have opportunities to get an education. However, equal access to education is still far from achieved since it is faced with various problems, including access to education. Women in urban areas seem to be much better at getting education access than in rural areas, which is strongly influenced by patriarchal culture (Natasha, 2013). Moreover, there is also quality education that still illustrates gender bias (curriculum, textbooks, teaching strategies, teachers development, etc.) and the level of participation of women (Lestariyana et al., 2020; Lestyoningsih, 2020; Mustofa et al., 2021; Suwarno et al., 2021; Tyarakanita et al., 2021; Hasnia et al., 2022). Thus, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive literature review to illustrate the implementation of gender equality in schools. In the following, the study will present the portrayal of gender inequality in the educational aspect, such as textbooks, and what aspects should be considered in promoting awareness of gender equality in school.

2. Methodology

The study implemented qualitative descriptive research. The literature review was conducted through a variety of publications and journal articles. In order to identify related articles, a systematic search was done by using search terms such as "gender," "gender in school," "gender and education," and "gender-responsive in school." The articles and other publications were taken through search engines in well-known publication platforms, such as Scopus, Elsevier, and Springer Link. The exploration was extended to Google Scholar since it facilitates wider research articles, both in English and Bahasa Indonesia. Through these platforms, it was expected to gain richer and more comprehensive data. There were some criteria of publications or articles that were taken, such as (a) studies published between 2013 and 2023 in English and Bahasa Indonesia, (b) studies published in scholarly journals, studies connected with gender equality implementation in school, teaching materials, gender policy in education, and teachers involvement; (c) selected data were in line with the focus of the present study. The literature discussions were divided into three sections, involving the portrayal of gender equality in Indonesia, gender bias in education, and implementation of gender equality in school.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Portrayal of Gender Equality in Indonesia

Gender equality is a non-discrimination treatment to ensure equal opportunity for men and women in contribution, entitlements, and freedom, including participating in education, politics, economics, etc. The United Nations (2020) defines it as equal opportunities regardless of the person's sex, the allocation of resources and benefits, and all access to services. This issue has become a priority for governments, civil society, and multilateral organizations at national and global levels. It can be shown through the commitment of two points of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the 2030 agenda, Gender Equality (Goal 5) and Education Quality (Goal 4), to ensure the right inclusive and equitable quality of education. Moreover, through the development of Indonesia's regulation on education access for all within The Law on National Education (No.20/2003), Indonesia has been showing progress in gender equality for the past decade. It can be shown through the improved rates of literacy, school enrollment, employment, as well as policy (Afkar et al., 2020).

The gender equality movement has become an issue since before the independence of Indonesia. One of the well-known figures who voiced equality in education is Raden Ajeng Kartini. In her era, the movement was very limited. Women were not allowed to have education since society referred them into three roles "masak, macak, manak" or cooking, touching up, and giving birth (Yuspin & Aulia, 2022). Three roles in one term are called Konco Wingking, or the presence of women in the domestic sphere. There is also another phrase in the Java language, "Suwargo nunut neroko katut" that means a wife's happiness and suffering depend on the husband. These traditional beliefs show that there is no involvement of women in life except in domestic matters. The era before the independence of Indonesia reflects how gender ideology in Indonesia was significantly influenced by the patriarchal culture constructed by society, in which

males dominated every aspect of life. Meanwhile, women are connected into one role, domestic spheres, since they are considered feminine, diligent, and hardworking (Nurwahyuningsih et al., 2023).

The letters of Raden Ajeng Kartini that were published in a book entitled "Letters of a Javanese Princess" in 1911 were the beginning of the movement of women's involvement in public, particularly in the education sector. The book talks about how women's attitudes are regulated by culture and customs. In this era, there has been an increase in the number of native noble women who have studied in European educational institutions (Amar, 2017). Through their involvement in education in European educational institutions, schools for women began to be established with their assistance. However, parents preferred to send their daughters to special schools that shape their skills to prepare them to be wives and mothers, such as sewing. It was because of the strong customs and traditions that were still upheld by the society. Meanwhile, the number of women who received higher education was very limited (Ningrum, 2018).

The influence of modern or Western culture slowly changed the role of women in society. During independence, men's role was in politics, while women gave birth and educated the children. The woman's role in the domestic realm was considered to be essential to support her husband during independence. The peak of women's involvement grew around the 1920s to 1940s. In this era, they began to be involved in various organizations, such as social, religious, youth, and women's organizations (Ningrum, 2018). They also began to voice out equality in some aspects, such as education, marriage laws, politics, etc.

Nowadays, gender equality is stated through regulations or policies issued by the government. It refers to the fulfillment of the rights of every human being, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. It can be seen in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that the education system guarantees equality through education opportunities for every human being. Moreover, Law Number 39 of 1999 Article 48 concerning human rights states that women have the right to access all education levels with terms and conditions. However, the regulations or policies do not guarantee the implementation of equality in society has met the ideal criteria. Advocating gender equality continues since the strong patriarchal culture influences it in society. It directly impacts on gender inequality in accessing education.

As Ningrum (2018) states, although women have achieved the right to education, society still demands that they attach to their traditional roles as mothers and wives. The thought that there is no point in sending girls to higher education since they will end up getting married, being a wife and mother, and taking care of the household is still strong in society. In addition, a society that adheres to a partial understanding of religion also causes gender inequality. Women in urban areas seem to be much better at getting education access than women in rural areas because they still hold that strong patriarchal culture (Natasha, 2013). In the midst of more people becoming more aware of voicing out for gender equality, the government issued some regulations and policies; there are still societies, particularly in rural areas, that still uphold old cultures that weaken and strengthen the role of certain gender in society. This belief that is still inherent in society can further strengthen gender bias in public and domestically.

3.2. Gender Bias in Education

Education has an essential role in transforming unequal gender and social practice into gender equality. A safe and positive learning environment that involves students, regardless of girls and boys, and the involvement of all parties in school can facilitate gender equality in school. Gender ideology is constructed through learning and interaction, both in school and at home. Children begin to understand the concept of gender between the ages of three to seven (Ruble et al., 2007), and gender stereotypes also influence children's self-perceptions and interests from this age (Bian et al., 2017). If they see their mother do household chores, like cooking, washing, and sweeping, then the children may believe that women should do household chores. Furthermore, learning materials, such as textbooks, play a critical role in constructing norms, values, and social behavior and transmitting knowledge and skills. Learning materials may facilitate gender bias through how specific gender is strengthened or weakened in textbooks, posters, etc. The issue of gender bias arises in education since curricula do not explicitly include gender equality materials (Mustofa et al., 2021).

The image of education is gender-biased as the impact of curricula, including learning materials that did not explicitly involve gender equity. These are some findings on how learning materials illustrate gender bias. Junior high school textbook *When English Rings a Bell*, which was analyzed by Tyarakanita et al., (2021), shows how the male role dominates the illustration in the textbooks, particularly in grades seven and eight. Meanwhile, Suwarno, Sulis Triyono, Ashadi, and Wening Sahayu (2021), who studied junior high school textbook grade nine, found that males are illustrated as having more power than females. Females are also illustrated as doing feminine activities, including domestic chores. Moreover, a study done by Lestariyana et al., (2020) analyzing English textbooks in grades seven and eight shows

unequal gender illustration in school achievement. Female students are illustrated as more successful than male students since they are portrayed as more diligent than male students. Thus, although gender fairness has been encouraged in the education sector, there is still gender inequality in learning materials. The findings reflect the 'traditional' concept of gender, in which patriarchal values and male roles still dominate. This traditional concept should be accommodated to construct knowledge and awareness of gender equality in society practice.

3.3. Implementation of Gender Equality in School

The concept of gender based on pedagogy in Indonesia is still dominated by patriarchal values held by Indonesian society, and it has become a major obstacle to promoting gender equality. Iqhrammullah (2018) states that unequal gender in education considers girls inappropriate to be leaders but requires them to behave perfectly. Moreover, the development of curricula is still far from explicit about gender equality in its learning materials. Until today, the curriculum provides "character-oriented with a religious frame often negates women and even rejects gender equity." (p.189) (Mustofa et al., 2021). This reflects the essential role of curricula and school parties in spreading, reinforcing, and constructing gender equality.

In order to promote gender awareness in pedagogical, there are many ways, such as curriculum documents (textbooks and modules), neutral gender vocabularies used during interaction (Widodo & Elyas, 2020), and learning methods. These are some following areas that need attention to provide gender equality in school, including:

a. Curriculum

The Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) defines curriculum as the subjects that are included in a course of study or taught in a school or college. To support gender-responsive instruction, curricula, including textbooks, should reflect gender equality. Textbooks are important since they facilitate the students' learning, perception, and shaping of their role in society through the illustrations or things that are represented in the textbooks. However, gender bias still exists in curriculum documents, such as textbooks as learning material (Suwarno et al., 2021; Lestariyana et al., 2020). The materials need continuous evaluation and revision. The UN Human Rights Council (2017) explains that the state is obliged to review and revise curricula, textbooks, programs, and teaching methods regularly to ensure free gender inequality illustration in textbooks.

One should be added that school parties should also develop school-level policies for free violence and discrimination through curriculum gender-responsive. Gender-responsive learning gives an equal portion of men and women the opportunity to participate in the education process. It can be through providing equal attention to male and female students and the use of gender-responsive language by ensuring the use of language during classroom interaction does not explicitly or implicitly refer to a specific gender. The use of gender-responsive language may bring gender equality in language, both oral and written (Educationalists) (2006). The policy can also be implemented by providing equal access to school and learning facilities for male and female students.

b. Learning methods/activities

Learning activities are also essential to shape the students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills, including their perspective toward gender. To facilitate gender equality awareness in students, teachers can bring gender concepts into the classroom. The principle of gender-responsive learning activities in class is equal opportunities for all students to participate in learning activities and equal access to learning. A mixed seating arrangement and mixed group work during learning can be made to increase equal participation of both male and female students. A mixed seating arrangement can position all students at the same level (N/A, 2018). Moreover, Febrianti and Malihah (2021) state that citizenship education can be one of the methods to be implemented in class. It is a learning concept that helps one understand the rights and obligations of a citizen. The teacher may connect the concepts of human rights and equality in class. The students may learn to identify their obligations and rights as human beings as well as their roles in society. Teachers must consider carefully the learning method to be implemented in class since studies show the different ways of learning between males and females. For example, female students prefer to discuss and do group work in class than male students (Fitriyani et al., 2022). Thus, the lesson plan must contain clear instructions for non-biased activities in class. The activities should represent all groups of students and all sexes. No activity is only suitable for a certain group.

c. Teacher development

The teacher's understanding of the concept of gender equality and their attitude are essential points that must be considered. Teachers need to raise their awareness in developing learning strategies or approaches and learning

materials to be more gender equal so that students and teachers can achieve the learning goals. It is important to educate teachers on gender equality through training and practical materials since it will shape their perspective and stereotypes about gender, which consequently affects the students' beliefs through learning activities. Teacher training can help teachers to reflect and overcome biases on gender. Erden (2009) states that teacher candidates in Turkey must join a course for a semester to develop their attitude toward gender equity.

d. Methods of evaluation and assessment

Continuous assessment should be done on the three aspects above, including curricula implementation, learning methods, and teacher development.

4. Conclusion

Gender equality in the pedagogical landscape of Indonesia remains distant from ideal standards due to the pervasive influence of patriarchal ideology entrenched within society, often leading to the neglect of women's rights. To address this issue effectively, several measures must be undertaken to cultivate a gender-responsive educational environment and enhance student awareness. These measures encompass various areas such as curriculum design, teaching methodologies, teacher training, and ongoing evaluation processes. By consistently evolving these facets, it becomes possible to dismantle entrenched gender norms and foster inclusivity within educational settings, challenging traditional cultural constructs that tend to marginalize certain genders. Continuous development efforts are imperative to ensure that schools actively promote and facilitate gender equality.

Implementing gender-responsive practices within the educational system of Indonesia necessitates a comprehensive approach that transcends mere acknowledgment of disparities. It involves proactive steps aimed at restructuring pedagogical frameworks to prioritize equity and inclusivity. This entails revising curriculum content to reflect diverse perspectives and experiences, adopting teaching methodologies that accommodate different learning styles and needs, and providing continuous training for educators to foster a culture of respect and equality within classrooms. Furthermore, integrating mechanisms for ongoing assessment and feedback enables institutions to monitor progress and address any persistent inequalities effectively. Through concerted efforts focused on fostering an environment conducive to gender equality, Indonesian schools can play a pivotal role in challenging societal norms and promoting the empowerment of all individuals, irrespective of gender.

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