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## Gender Issues in Early Childhood Education in Indonesia: A Psychological Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

The high level of gender bias coupled with the large number of cases of gender-based violence that have occurred illustrates the dismal portrait of gender equality in Indonesia. This gender bias treatment can occur in all age groups, including in early childhood. This study aims to analyze issues related to gender in early childhood with a psychological approach. This research is a library research or literature study that begins with initial data collection for the formulation of research problems, research data collection, data evaluation, problem analysis with reference to the literature, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study illustrate that gender issues in early childhood include parenting in the family, management of early childhood education institutions, as well as learning processes and play activities. Treatment that is gender biased from early childhood will affect the future development of children, so that the active role of various parties is needed to seek to provide stimulation of growth and development in early childhood that is free from gender bias.

Keywords : gender, gender bias, early childhood, psychology.

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### I. Introduction

Approaching 78 years of Indonesia's independence, the lives of its people are still being overshadowed by various forms of gender-based violence and injustice. This is very unfortunate considering how men and women essentially have equal obligations and rights, but in reality receive different treatment in social life. Knowledge of the concept of gender equality in Indonesian youth is basically not low, but in practice, gender equality is still far from expectations.

In the struggle for life in the midst of society there is a tug-of-war between textual and contextual understandings in viewing men and women from almost all sides. This difference occurs through a very long process which is socialized, strengthened, even constructed socially or culturally, until it is finally considered as nature (Rahman et al., 2021). This illustrates that the gender bias that occurs in Indonesia is the result of social construction that has occurred for a long time, so it

requires real and consistent efforts to socialize the concept of gender equality in Indonesian society.

The condition of Indonesia's gender inequality at the global level can be seen through the value of the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). The GGGI includes four sub-indices, namely participation and opportunity in the economic sector, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. In 2021, Indonesia is ranked 101 out of 156 countries with a GGGI score of 0.688. This illustrates that gender equality in Indonesia has only reached 68.8%. Based on this survey, Indonesia is in 7th position out of 10 ASEAN countries (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2022). This provides data evidence that gender equality in Indonesia is still far from expectations and is below the global and ASEAN average gender equality rates.

The gender equality rate in Indonesia itself is measured through the achievement of the Gender Development Index. The Gender Development Index is an indicator that describes the achievements of men and women in three basic aspects of life which include: long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Indonesia's Gender Development Index in 2021 is 91.27 which means that development between men and women is quite evenly distributed nationally. However, data from the Central Statistics Agency noted that the human development index in 2021 was at 76.25 for men and 69.59 for women (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2020). This illustrates that even though nationally the data obtained says it is quite even, there is still a gap of 6.66 points between the human development index for men and women.

The perception and treatment of gender bias in Indonesian society directly influences the high rate of gender-based violence in this country. In 2021 there were 338,506 cases of gender-based violence against women, which has increased from the number in 2020 of 226,062 cases (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan, 2022). The conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic are touted as one of the reasons for the high rate of gender-based violence against women in 2020 and 2021. Meanwhile, the pandemic conditions also make the services

provided by several community service institutions not optimal, so follow-up on high cases of violence becomes not optimal.

The data above illustrates how the level of public awareness and acceptance of the concept of gender equality in general is still worrying. Even though people's understanding of the concept of gender equality may have increased, the fact is that in real life the rate of gender-based violence is still high. This cannot be overcome simply by conducting surveys that produce data in the form of numbers or percentages, but requires real efforts in the field to overcome them. One of the things that can be done as a preventive and curative effort is through psychoeducation.

Psychoeducation is an educational effort with a psychological approach that can be aimed at individuals with various age groups. It's just that, psychoeducational efforts related to gender equality are still hampered by individual or group perceptions that have been ingrained since they were small. Therefore, it is felt necessary to analyze gender issues in early childhood education so that it can provide stimulation related to the concept of gender equality from an early age, according to the stages of early childhood growth and development. If children understand and are able to apply the concept of gender equality from an early age, it is hoped that in the future they will grow into adults who are able to respect gender equality and no longer show gender-biased behavior. In the long term, it is hoped that this will increase gender equality behavior and reduce the level of gender based violence in Indonesia.

However, there is still a gender gap in the learning process that occurs in early childhood education in Indonesia, including: (1) teaching materials that still contain gender bias, (2) the learning process in the classroom does not fully encourage active participation in a balanced way between male students -men and women, and (3) the physical environment of the school which is not yet in accordance with the specific needs of boys and girls (Putri, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to analyze in more depth and comprehensively related to gender issues that exist in early childhood education in Indonesia. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide an overview regarding gender issues that exist in early

childhood education in Indonesia as well as efforts that can be made to follow up on these issues so that gender equality can be stimulated in early childhood.

The creation of this article was carried out using the method of literature study or library research. Research with literature study is a study whose preparation is the same as other research but the sources and methods of data collection are carried out by collecting data from the library, reading, taking notes, and processing research materials. Literature study research is included in the scientific work category because data collection is carried out with a strategy in the form of a research methodology. The variables in the literature study are not standard, and the data obtained is analyzed in depth by the authors (Zed, 2014).

In this research, the researcher begins with the initial data collection to sharpen the background and formulate the research problem. After formulating the problems to be studied, the authors collect relevant literature in the form of scientific articles, books, theses, data reports, and other scientific publications. The author then evaluates the data, namely determining the relevant literature and will be used in analyzing the problem. Next, an analysis of the problem is carried out with reference to the literature used as a reference, followed by interpretation, and ends with drawing conclusions based on the results of the analysis and interpretation.

## **II. Discussion**

### **Gender in Psychology**

Webster's New World Dictionary defines gender as the visible difference between men and women in terms of values and behavior. Women's studies encyclopedia defines gender as a cultural concept that develops in society that seeks to make a distinction between men and women in terms of roles, behavior, mentality, and emotional characteristics. Gender here is a concept used to identify differences between men and women in terms of socio-cultural influences (Sovitriana, 2020).

Psychology is the science that studies human behavior and the mental processes that lie behind it (Hurlock, 2005). Psychology views gender and sex as two different things. Gender and sex have differences in terms of dimensions.

Gender refers to the biological dimensions of a man and a woman, while gender refers to the socio-cultural dimensions of a man and a woman. Gender is a sociocultural construction that distinguishes masculine and feminine characteristics (Santrock, 2008). The term gender was put forward by social scientists with the intention of explaining the differences between women and men who have innate characteristics (God's creation) and cultural formations or social construction (Sovitriana, 2020). So it can be concluded that psychology views gender as different roles, functions and responsibilities between men and women which are the result of social construction and can change according to the times.

Discussions related to gender will generally lead to gender identity and gender roles. Gender identity refers to a person's sense of being male or female which is mostly acquired when a child is three years old (Santrock, 2008). Another opinion says that gender identity is a person's awareness of their gender and the gender of others which usually develops between the ages of 2-3 years. While gender roles refer to behavior, attention, attitudes, skills, and consideration of appropriate social personality traits of men or women (Papilia et al., 2009). Meanwhile, Santrock interprets gender roles more as an expectation that contains how a man or woman should think, act, and feel (Santrock, 2002).

### **Gender Issues in Early Childhood Education in Indonesia.**

Gender is a global and national issue that is being fought for, especially in the field of education, including in early childhood education (Rahman et al., 2021). Early childhood education is an effort to foster early childhood from birth to the age of six which is carried out by providing growth and development stimulation to support the achievement of the tasks of the stages of child development so that they are ready to take part in the next stage of education (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a). Characteristics of early childhood development can be seen more clearly through the description of developmental aspects and developmental tasks.

Aspects of early childhood development in Indonesia cover six aspects, namely: religious and moral values, Pancasila values, physical-motor, cognitive, language, and social-emotional (Kemendikbudristek, 2022b). While aspects of child development in psychology are explained as follows:

1. Physical development. Directly, the child's physical development will determine the child's skills in moving. Indirectly, physical growth and development will affect the way children see themselves and others. This will be reflected in the child's general adjustment pattern.
2. Motor development. This refers to the development of control over bodily movements through the coordinated activity of the central nervous system, nerves and muscles.
3. Speech development. Speech development is related to the need to be part of a social group. Before the child is able to talk to members of other social groups, the child's role in the group will be very small.
4. Emotional development. Emotions play a very important role in everyone's life so it is necessary to know how children's emotional development and the influence of emotions on children's social and self-adjustment abilities.
5. Social development. Social development refers to the acquisition of the ability to behave in accordance with social demands.
6. Moral development. Moral development has aspects of intelligence and impulsivity. Children should learn to be able to know the difference between right and wrong.
7. Gender role development. Learning to play a role according to gender is part of the process of growth and development of children so that they will be able to carry out their roles as they should (Hurlock, 2005).

The description of aspects of early childhood development above illustrates how the development and understanding of gender roles needs to be taught from an early age so that early childhood can understand and act according to their respective gender roles without judging or demeaning other gender roles. This is considered important because when children are accustomed to gender-equitable concepts and behaviors from an early age, it is hoped that in the future they will grow into mature individuals who are no longer gender biased and do not engage in behavior that harms others under the pretext of gender.

Shepherd-Look states that the majority of children experience at least three stages in gender development, namely:

- a. Children develop beliefs about gender identity.

- b. Children develop gender privileges, attitudes about which sex one wants.
- c. Children acquire gender determination, namely a belief that a person's sex is determined biologically. These three stages play a role in the formation of children's general knowledge about gender roles expected by society, which are often referred to as gender roles or gender stereotypes (Hadianti, 2010).

Gender issues in early childhood education include three major issues that are interrelated with one another, namely:

- a. Gender issues in upbringing in the family.

Family is the most important primary group in society. Children are educated, raised, cared for, and given stimulation starting in the family. The behavior of children as adults is largely a reflection of the education received in the family. The majority of regions in Indonesia adhere to a patrilineal kinship system, most of which place men as a central role in their families. Decisions in the family are generally more dominantly made by men, especially the father as the head of the family. This interaction pattern is then internalized in the child's mind so that it will be applied later when the child becomes an adult and builds his own family.

Some of the main issues in family upbringing that show a tendency towards injustice and gender inequality include:

1. Parenting is synonymous with the mother (female), so that all issues related to child development are "considered" to be the most appropriate to be controlled and carried out by the mother (female).
2. The game tools provided are mostly based on gender stereotypes. Boys are usually given toys that represent public areas such as cars, while girls are identical with household play tools such as cooking tools and dolls.
3. The father who is placed as the "super" person has placed the man as the superordinate of the woman, so that the decision making in the family is dominated by the father as the "head of the family".
4. From childhood boys and girls are involved in different roles. Girls are conditioned from the start to get to know various jobs in the household, while boys are invited to recognize the outside (public) area.

5. Various forms of physical, economic, psychological and sexual violence which generally place women and children as victims.

Gender bias in parenting styles for early childhood tends to be more practiced by parents who adopt authoritarian parenting styles. Some of the effects of gender bias in parenting styles on children's growth and development are: the emergence of jealousy in children, children comparing themselves to their siblings, lack of self-confidence, emotional disturbances (bad mood), being a rebellious child, and behavioral disorders such as aggression or hyperactivity (Sofiani et al., 2020).

b. Gender issues in the management of early childhood education institutions.

The management of gender-responsive early childhood education institutions refers to issues in the context of school-based management, which cover the organization and culture of early childhood education units, facilities and infrastructure, administration of early childhood education units, and early childhood education unit management policies. Several gender issues related to the management of PAUD institutions include:

1. Hierarchical and dominative communication patterns of one gender.
2. Verbal and nonverbal behavior that shows a tendency to degrade one of the sexes.
3. Expressions/jokes that are demeaning, mocking, and give negative labeling to one gender.
4. Displays that tend to be labeled and derogatory to either sex.
5. Work arrangements tend to be dominating and marginalize the aspirations of one gender.
6. Stereotypes or image standardization of male and female roles that are detrimental to other genders.
7. Discrimination against certain genders that hinders them from getting their rights and carrying out their roles in the school environment.
8. The facilities and infrastructure provided do not show representation to meet specific needs based on gender.

c. Gender issues in the learning process and play activities.



Learning is a key activity in implementing the values of gender equality and justice. However, the fact remains that the learning process and play activities in early childhood education are still gender biased (Rahman et al., 2021). The results of previous studies indicate that gender roles influence children in choosing daily activities and choosing areas playing in kindergarten (Ritonga & Sutapa, 2020). Several gender issues in the learning process and play activities in early childhood education that can be identified are as follows:

1. There are still stereotypes in play activities, for example girls play using tools and household roles while boys use tools and public roles. There is a positive and significant relationship between parenting styles in the family and early childhood institutions with the selection of play activities in early childhood (Muafiah & Fadly, 2019).
2. There are still textbooks, story books, or teaching materials used by teachers/tutors that do not yet reflect gender equality and equity.
3. There are still unbalanced roles played by teachers/tutors for boys and girls in play activities (Direktorat Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2014).

Implementing education with a gender perspective in early childhood requires planning as a first step to provide the right direction in the implementation of the process learning in early childhood education (Bastian & Novitasari, 2022). Therefore, the description of gender issues in early childhood education above can be followed up with the active role of various components in early childhood education units. An overview of the role of the components of early childhood education units in creating a gender-sensitive culture is as follows:

Table 1.

The Role of the Early Childhood Education Unit Component  
in Creating a Gender Sensitive Culture

No	Element	Activity
1	Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide an example of gender equality</li><li>• Implement gender-equitable learning</li><li>• Provide a non-discriminatory assessment</li><li>• Building non-discriminatory gender relations</li></ul>
2	Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set an example of gender equality and</li></ul>

		<p>fairness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carry out gender equal and fair policies</li><li>• Enforce regulations without gender discrimination</li><li>• Develop gender equal and fair school community relations</li></ul>
3	Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Behave in a way that does not insult a certain gender</li><li>• Comply with gender responsive school policies</li><li>• Implementing gender equality by placing oneself according to its position</li><li>• Equal social relations among friends without gender discrimination</li></ul>
4	Education Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting an example that is equal and gender fair</li><li>• Providing services without gender discrimination</li><li>• Carry out work without gender stereotypes and impartiality</li><li>• Execute regulations without gender discrimination</li><li>• Implementing gender equality in the work environment</li><li>• Supporting school policies that are oriented towards equality and gender justice</li></ul>
5	Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting an example in gender equality and justice</li><li>• Encouraging the birth of gender responsive policies</li><li>• Getting used to granting equal access, decision-making roles or control between men and women</li><li>• Encouraging the realization of participation of marginalized groups in school activities</li></ul>

Source: Guidelines for Gender Responsive Early Childhood Education (Directorate of Early Childhood Education, 2014).

### III. Closing

Introducing the concept of gender equality from an early age is expected to be one of the solutions to address the high rate of gender-based violence in Indonesia. However, there are still practices of gender bias in early childhood education in Indonesia, both at school and at home. Parenting patterns at home

and education in schools that are not gender equal can have a negative impact on the future growth and development of early childhood. Therefore, awareness and active participation from various parties are needed to be able to create early childhood education that supports gender equality so that it is able to stimulate early childhood to become children who are able to understand and show behavior that upholds gender equality.

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