



Indonesian language learning in elementary school: Building gender awareness for 3rd grade students

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Abstract

This research was conducted to provide insight into gender awareness in education. Particularly in the context of Indonesian language learning in primary schools. Through investigating the perspectives of parents, teachers and students as well as the practice of learning Indonesian in the classroom using non-discriminatory materials and learning environments without gender boundaries, this research seeks to contribute to building a more inclusive gender awareness in the educational environment. Survey, interview and observation methods of parents, teachers and grade 3 students were used to provide a comprehensive view of the understanding of gender awareness. The results show that although there is support for the concept of gender equality, parents' and teachers' understanding is still limited. Teachers do not fully understand the importance of gender awareness in learning. This issue is seen as not affecting inclusive learning. In fact, gender awareness is one part of it and teachers have a major role in building this perspective. Synergy is needed to improve parents', teachers' and students' understanding of gender issues in education. Teacher training and professional development, integration of gender equality values in the curriculum, and inclusive education for students can be the next steps to strengthen gender equality in education. Thus, this research provides new insights and contributions to advance gender awareness as a form of creating an inclusive learning environment, especially in primary schools.

Keywords: gender equality; inclusive; Indonesian language learning; primary school; learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

Gender issues in the context of education are still a challenge in influencing students' learning experiences. Education, which should be the initial foundation in shaping students' values, attitudes and knowledge, does not instead form a wrong understanding of this gender issue. In learning activities, especially Indonesian language subjects, it indirectly builds perspectives on the treatment of students and the attitudes of the students themselves. How gender issues help students to grow fully as independent and empowered individuals and shape their views on gender contributions in society. How they are comfortable in carrying out their roles without worrying about violating the views of most people. Stereotypes seen in the surrounding environment are also the background for the inequality of tasks assigned to men and

women in learning. For this reason, this gender issue needs to be straightened out in our education system, especially in the classroom.

Gender issues include materials in learning, gender discrimination, and gender stereotypes. If it is related to Indonesian Language Learning in elementary school, teaching materials are often found related to the duties of women and men in a situation. Although there are some that have left the 'stereotypical' state. Some previous research has been conducted to explore various aspects of gender issues in this school. Agus Wahyudi and Asmaul Lutfauziah's journal (2023), "*Gender Discourse Analysis on Thematic Books for Elementary School Curriculum 2013*", shows that gender representation is reproduced in certain textbooks, by presenting men dominating the

public sphere, and leading the lives of women and their families. Although this is sometimes not in line with reality, gender stereotypes in the 2013 Curriculum Elementary School thematic books can provide a view of the roles of men and women that will ultimately shape student character; and Siany Indria Liestyasari's Journal (2023) "*Gender Sensitivity of Elementary School Teachers in Surakarta City*" found that teachers in Surakarta City's understanding of biological concepts resulted in an attitude of justice towards the duties of men and women in the classroom.

The results of previous studies that have been presented related to these gender issues (Wahyudi, 2023 and Liestyasari 2023) found: (1) Gender discrimination in access and participation is a barrier for girls to fully access education; (2) Academic achievement is an influence on differences in academic achievement between boys and girls due to factors such as interest, motivation, gender expectations, and different treatment from teachers and learning environments; (3) Gender stereotypes in curriculum, textbooks, and teaching contribute to gender issues in learning. These stereotypes can affect students' perceptions of their own abilities and future career choices; (4) Gendered teacher roles can indirectly affect students' motivation and achievement. However, there is limited research on ethnographic studies exploring gender awareness in grade 3 Indonesian language learning.

Based on this study and the results of researcher observations during the span of 2 months in Indonesian language learning activities in grade 3, the following problems were found:

What is the level of gender awareness among teachers, students and parents in relation to the implementation of inclusive learning practices in grade 3?

The essence of the problem is the growth of gender awareness that directly or indirectly affects learning. The results of the research on the problem question are expected to foster awareness of gender equality not only in students but all stakeholders involved in the continuity of learning in schools.

To deal with the complexity of these issues, it is necessary to have new research results on gender awareness in grade 3 SD so that it can be grown into an attitude as a form of paradigm shift with environmental support. The review of previous research that has been presented above can serve as literature in developing the direction of research on this gender issue.

This research aims to provide insights as an effort to improve gender equality in education through investigating the development of non-discriminatory learning materials, learning environments without gender restrictions, and assessment activities that are not based on gender stereotypes. It is hoped that with these objectives gender awareness will create a learning environment that is more inclusive, equitable, and respectful of gender diversity in primary schools, especially in Indonesian language subjects so that the paradigm of gender equality in society can also be achieved.

The philosopher Karl Marx (1883) also pointed out in his first work entitled "*Economic and Philosophical Manuscript of 1844*" which is recognized as the first work to elaborate systematically the problems of political economy from the point of view of dialectical materialism and communism. Although superficial, Marx's views on gender issues are valuable. There Marx says the position of women can be used to measure the development of society in general. In other words, equality in gender relations is important in the development of society.

In addition, an Indonesian female warrior who is the most vocal about women's emancipation, *Raden Ajeng Kartini (1908)*, stated that justice for gender equality is none other than for women to advance and develop both in terms of thought and action.

The issue of gender equality is also enshrined in the goals of the *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)*, that all people should have equal opportunities, resources and knowledge and receive equal treatment and not be discriminated against on the basis of their inherent human identity.

French philosopher *Simone de Beauvoir* applied existentialism to feminism and

mentioned in her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, highlighting how women are often positioned as "the other" in gender relations.

John Money (1955), a New Zealand sexologist, first coined the term gender. John Money coined the difference in the use of the terms biological sex and gender as a role. In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, gender identity is a person's personal identification with a particular gender and gender role in society.

Sandra Harding (1986) in her book entitled *"The Science Question in Feminism"*, explores how gender affects knowledge production and voices the importance of criticizing gender bias in science.

Performative gender was introduced by an American philosopher, Judith Butler (1990), who argued that the concept of woman has more difficulties not only as a result of the way society views women as a social category, but also as a sense of self, a subjective identity that is culturally held or constructed. Butler argues that gender is not something that individuals have but rather an action or performance that is done every day.

Based on this, it can be concluded that gender equality is not only about individual rights but also about the progress of the development of a society's civilization as a whole. Gender equal development opportunities have become a global social, political and human rights agenda. In context with education, women get the same opportunity, advancing by getting quality education. This is signaled to increase the value of community progress in terms of potential and views. With gender awareness starting from the world of education, it will help reduce the gender gap so that it will overcome gender stereotypes and discrimination in the order of life in society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a mixed approach, namely qualitative and quantitative with the research design is an ethnographic classroom study in grade 3 elementary school. The research subjects were school stakeholders in one of the public elementary schools in Tasikmalaya city consisting of 13 grade 3 students, 13 parents of grade 3 students, and 1

educator as a grade 3 teacher who has 15 years of teaching experience.

Data collection was conducted over 5 days, starting from April 29, 2024 to May 3, 2024. Data was given and collected within that time span every day. For students, it was done at the end of Indonesian learning activities in one day with a duration of 30 minutes for 3 days from Tuesday to Friday. For parents of students is not bound by time, because the data instrument is in the form of a questionnaire that can be filled in at their respective homes by giving a deadline for 3 days as well, from Tuesday to Friday. For homeroom teachers, data collection is carried out after teaching on Thursdays after data from students and parents is almost entirely collected for confirmation of the findings of the answers of students and parents.

After the data is collected, the data processing (analysis) technique in the quantitative approach uses descriptive statistical techniques to provide an overview of perceptions and awareness related to gender issues. Descriptive statistical techniques are used in this study because they describe and summarize the basic characteristics of a set of data. This technique allows researchers to understand the distribution, patterns, and relationships between observed variables. Meanwhile, the qualitative approach uses thematic analysis, to identify patterns and themes that emerge (coding frequently occurring words using ANOVA).

The research methods used were teacher interviews, student interviews and field observations, and a parent survey on gender awareness of inclusive learning in grade 3.

Data triangulation is carried out to support the data that has been collected. Integrating findings from various data sources, comparing and validating findings from quantitative and qualitative data to strengthen research results.

This research uses researching procedures that are in accordance with the rules and codes of research ethics. The research code of ethics is conducted to ensure that the research is conducted with integrity, honesty, and respect for the rights of individuals involved

in the research. Research permits and consent forms for the individuals involved will be made according to the procedure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of mixed methods to build gender awareness for grade 3 students aims to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the issue under study.

The research, which was planned for 1 week, was only carried out for 4 days at non-consecutive times. This was due to unavoidable academic activities and national holidays.

Parents were surveyed using a google form. Out of 13 parents, only 5 parents filled out the survey. The obstacle was that some parents did not have cellphones, were busy working, and did not understand the questions asked. Interviews with parents were not conducted due to time constraints. The results of the survey:

1. The first question was about the state of the learning environment towards awareness of the roles of men and women. The results showed that 2 parents answered very good, 1 person answered good, 2 parents answered quite good. The score of this question is 4 with a good category.
2. The second question was about experiences/incidents related to injustice in the roles of women and men in classroom learning materials. All parents answered that there were none. The score for this question was 5 with a very good category.
3. The third question was about teacher treatment that makes children comfortable and valued in classroom learning activities. The results showed that 2 parents answered very well, 2 parents answered well, and 1 parent answered quite well. The score of this question is 4 with a good category.
4. The fourth question was about teacher treatment that makes children uncomfortable and unappreciated in classroom learning activities. The results showed that 4 parents answered no and 1 parent answered quite well. The score of

this question is 5 with a very good category.

5. The fifth question was about explaining how teachers provide equal opportunities in learning Indonesian regardless of their gender. The results were 2 parents answered very fair, 2 parents answered fair, 1 parent answered don't know. The score of this question is 4 with a good category.
6. The sixth question was about parents' belief that gender awareness in schools plays an important role in children's development. The results showed that 2 parents answered very sure, 3 parents answered sure. The score of this question is 4 with a good category.
7. The seventh question was about the school's treatment to raise awareness of male and female roles among students in grade 3. The result is 4 parents answered that it plays a role, 1 parent answered that it plays a moderate role. The score of this question is 4 with a good category.

Based on the data obtained:

Mean: $(4+5+4+5+4+4+4):7 = 4.3$

Mode: the value that appears most frequently is 4

Standard deviation: $\sqrt{[(4-4,3)^2 + (5-4,3)^2 + (4-4,3)^2 + (5-4,3)^2 + (4-4,3)^2 + (4-4,3)^2 + (4-4,3)^2] / 7} \approx 0,78$

With this analysis, the mean of parents' responses to gender awareness questions in grade 3 was 4.3 with the most frequently occurring score being 4. The low standard deviation indicates that responses tend to be near the mean which is good.

It can be concluded that parents' perceptions of gender awareness are seen by them in terms of teacher treatment, division of tasks in class, and a sense of being valued as a person, they believe in the important role of gender awareness in the development of their children. There is an expectation from parents that schools provide more education on gender awareness to both students and parents.

Teachers were interviewed about their perceptions of gender awareness, especially in Indonesian language lessons. The results of the interviews with teachers are as follows:

1. The first question was about how important it is to include an understanding of gender roles in Indonesian language learning.

Answer: My understanding of the question, this is not too important because in our environment gender roles are not a big issue because here during my learning I do not discriminate between male and female students.

2. The second question was about what is important in learning Indonesian.

Answer: Perhaps for differentiation, what is important to apply is services according to the abilities of students. Because the ability of students in the class varies so that in learning even though one material cannot be equalized for all students.

3. The third question was about the Indonesian language learning materials used in grade 3 SD that adequately reflect gender equality. Her answer: Yes, so far what I have done in learning is quite reflective. Because there is no difference that I mentioned earlier. So I treat all students the same, not discriminating.

4. The fourth question is about the balance of the roles of women and men in Indonesian language learning media in grade 3.

Answer: For grade 3, the learning material about gender is limited to the general roles and functions between men and women, for example in grade 3 the material about the family between father and mother is general. But it does not describe the roles and functions, maybe in the field of work the rights and obligations are the same in the field. That's the extent of the material coverage, not specific. So it's just general.

5. The fifth question is about assessing the level of teacher readiness in creating an inclusive learning environment that is free from gender boundaries in grade 3.

Answer: Quite ready here means that in the classroom environment that I teach, there is no specific gender issue so it is just general because Selma has no problem so she is quite ready here

because the Indonesian language material that will be taught to students is equalized. So yes there is no problem, because I treat male and female students fairly.

6. The sixth question is about the teacher's strategy to direct students' participation in learning activities regardless of gender.

Answer: By giving equal rights to students in terms of services in learning and providing equal opportunities. All are equally appreciated.

7. The seventh question was about students' responses to the involvement of men and women in learning activities.

Answer: The response from students is good, they do not choose friends to be involved. In learning in class, the liveliness between men and women is not because it is male and female but more towards their intelligence. Not because it's a boy or a girl, there is no special factor in terms of activeness. It is not seen because he is male or female. It's more like that because that's their nature. There are men who are quiet, there are also women who are active. It's not seen from gender.

8. The eighth question was about trends in changes in students' behavior or perceptions related to gender.

The answer: No

Regarding student behavior, for example, in sweeping activities, which are considered to be women's tasks, I noticed from class picket activities, those who sweep are seen from whether they are clean or not. Because not all girls are good at sweeping, some don't sweep. Maybe it's because of the habits at home. So it's not because it's a boy or a girl. In terms of sweeping on the class picket, so maybe because of the intensity of habits at home, not because men or women are good at sweeping or so on. So they can carry out the task. There is no rejection or view of a task. Maybe their parents didn't get used to it at home.

9. The ninth question was about teachers' experiences in overcoming gender stereotypes in Grade 3.

The answer: Nothing. Because it doesn't matter and it doesn't really matter. She emphasized that tasks are not gender-based.

10. The tenth question was about the extent to which teachers discuss with parents the importance of gender equality in the school environment.

11. Answer: So far, we have not discussed this with the guardians because there are no problems. No parents have asked about schoolwork in relation to gender roles. What they ask is about the tasks.

12. The eleventh question was about what schools can do to support teachers to build gender awareness in learning.

The answer: By providing teachers with an understanding of the attitude that should be taken in concrete learning. How important is gender understanding of differentiation in the classroom and how to put it into practice.

Based on the data presented above, some interesting answers were obtained. First, teachers do not see the importance of including gender awareness in learning (question number 1). After being traced, the meaning of the statement is that teachers feel that they treat students in class not based on gender. Because of this treatment, teachers argue that gender equality is not seen as significantly important to be included in learning. Secondly, teachers consider themselves quite prepared to create a learning environment that is inclusive and free from gender boundaries (question number 5). The researcher finally explored the meaning of this statement when it contradicted question 1. The teacher explained that the readiness to create an inclusive learning environment here means that the teacher does not discriminate in the treatment of students. There are no views from students towards gender stereotypes. So this makes the teacher feel ready to implement inclusiveness in the classroom. Third, in her statement about the lack of socialization of gender awareness with

student guardians (question number 10). In fact, in an inclusive learning environment, gender awareness is one of the elements of diversity so there needs to be socialization to parents.

The three answers show conflicting teacher statements between understanding and readiness for an inclusive learning environment. Teachers do not have a good understanding of the concept of gender, gender issues, and the impact of a lack of awareness of gender awareness on an inclusive learning environment, not just a momentary impact in the classroom. The difference in statements that do not support each other, namely on the one hand seeing the importance of inclusive teaching but on the other hand not seeing the importance of gender awareness included in learning and the absence of support in the form of socialization to student guardians. Teachers' understanding of gender awareness and fair treatment of all students regardless of gender is suspected to be the cause of the differences in statements that do not support each other.

Observations were also conducted directly in the classroom to observe learning practices and interactions between teachers and students related to gender issues using content analysis in the form of a fictional reading text for Indonesian language subjects for grade 3 students entitled "*Anak Hebat di Desa Bintang*". This fictional reading text tells the story of two boys and a girl who live in Bintang Village. In the story, it is described that the female character is not given the opportunity to participate in competitions by the residents. Observation was conducted for two days. It was conducted to observe the interaction between teachers and students in classroom learning activities related to gender issues and how students' views in answering questions from the content of the reading text containing gender equality. How students behave in learning activities obtained the following results:

1. Aspects of in-group interaction.

Teacher action: not selecting members in groups of only one gender. It can be seen that in one group there are two male students and two female students.

Student actions: Both male and female students actively engaged in group interactions. There is no indication of males favoring males in interactions.

2. The aspect of responding to the teacher's questions.

Teacher action: The teacher asks questions classically and is fair in giving both boys and girls the opportunity to answer.

Student actions: Male and female students responded equally. The silence of students is not due to gender, but to their character. There is no pattern or difference based on gender, as both boys and girls are quiet when asked by the teacher.

3. Aspects of task selection and distribution.

Teacher actions: Teachers are evenly distributed when assigning tasks. Not based on gender.

Student actions: Students were happy to carry out the tasks given by the teacher. Since the tasks are given classically, students work simultaneously.

4. Aspects of language use.

Teacher actions: The teacher does not use language that supports gender stereotypes. The teacher reminds students only because of their negligence not because of their gender.

Student actions: Students in interacting with their peers do not use language that leads to gender stereotyping.

5. Aspects of participation in class activities.

Teacher action: The teacher involves all students equally in class activities of reading, writing and discussing without differentiating assignments based on gender.

Student actions: the participation of male and female students in class activities of reading, writing and discussing did not appear to be a selection of friends of the same gender. They blend in without any awkwardness. Among the three class activities, there was no difference in interest and motivation between male and female students. They are equally active. Even if there is, it is because of the learning barriers that these students have.

6. Aspects of response to learning materials.

Teacher action: The teacher reads the learning material without favoring one of the characters. Occasionally the teacher explains words that are not understood by students.

Students' actions: out of 5 questions asked related to the content of the reading, all students felt touched by the content of the reading. There were no different reactions to gender injustice. All agreed that women need to be treated equally. Gender equality is new material as the topic of a reading passage. Although the overall answer was not appropriate, the essence of gender equality could be understood.

The observation results found that the teacher's treatment of students was fair. It can be seen from giving equal opportunities to both men and women. Reprimands are given to students who are negligent and do not pay attention, not because of their gender. The overall character description of male and female students is active. There is no reflection of character because of gender. Activeness is due to the student's character, not their gender.

From the three respondents, namely parents, teachers, and students whose data was collected through various methods, an understanding of gender issues from various perspectives was obtained, namely:

1. Parents did not understand the concept of gender equality but understood its application in schools. There is a desire to include this issue in learning and a hope that the school will provide an understanding of the issue;
2. Teachers who should be more aware of the issues related to differentiated and inclusive learning have not yet understood the importance of gender awareness in the subject matter. They are only ready to create a learning environment without preparing the essentials of inclusive learning itself;
3. The character of grade 3 elementary students who are still innocent and do not have views on gender issues is a perfect opportunity to start understanding the inequality of gender roles in society.

Incorporating the value of equality and practicing it in the classroom is a qualified step in educating the public about gender equality. Seen in learning activities that present stories of inequality of gender issues, all students feel the injustice of the role of women;

The results of the data in the field are associated with the previous theoretical basis that gender awareness is very important in raising the civilization of a society. It is said that according to gender experts (*Marx, Kartini, Beauvoir, Money, Harding, and Butler*) the increase in the value of community progress in terms of potential and views with gender awareness is very influential. With the lack of understanding of this issue by educational practitioners, there are concerns about the reduction of the gender gap that is expected to overcome gender stereotypes and discrimination in the order of life in society.

CONCLUSIONS

This research still requires socialization with all school stakeholders about issues that support inclusive learning in schools, and one of them is gender awareness. This can be seen from the limited understanding of parents and teachers about the concept of gender equality in the educational environment, especially in the context of Indonesian language learning in primary schools. Although overall the research results provide insights from various perspectives on gender awareness in the context of education, the educational approach to raise gender awareness needs to be strengthened in schools by actively involving parents, teachers and students. Teachers' self-development on understanding and applying the concept of gender awareness in learning is also important. Including the integration of gender equality values in the curriculum will help form a generation that is more aware of gender issues and able to change the paradigm in society.

The implication of this research is the need for concrete efforts from schools to increase gender understanding and awareness of parents, teachers and students. Teacher training and self-development need to be

prioritized to strengthen gender understanding and how to integrate it in learning practices to create an inclusive and non-discriminatory learning environment.

Therefore, the utilization of learning communities as well as KKG (Teacher Working Groups) both in the school and cluster environment on a regular basis can be done to improve teachers' understanding and skills in applying gender concepts in learning. Encourage parental participation by providing a forum for communication and discussion on the importance of understanding gender equality. Making gender awareness issues part of the school program to increase understanding and support for the importance of this issue. So that we as part of educational practitioners can form a new civilization by better understanding the entire school order towards gender equality.

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