



## Introduction to Gender in Early Childhood Assisted by Flash Card Media

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### ABSTRACT

One of the knowledge that children must know and have is about gender. Gender is the difference in characteristics possessed by a man or a woman. One media that can be used to introduce gender to children is flash card media. The aim of this research is to determine the effectiveness and advantages of flash cards in introducing gender to young children. This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The research was conducted at Aisyiyah 03 Jatipuro Kindergarten, with subjects of 10 group A children aged 4-5 years. The results of the research show that through the use of flash card media for introducing gender to young children, children can better understand each gender characteristic of men and women. Flash cards were chosen because they are easy to make and cost effective, practical in use and storage, can be used anywhere, both at home and at school, and have an attractive appearance so that children are more enthusiastic about learning. The conclusion of the research is that flash card media can be used as an effective medium to introduce gender to young children based on the biological function of sex, how to dress and physical characteristics according to each gender.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are the most perfect creatures created by Allah SWT, endowed with reason and thoughts, which are not possessed by other creatures created by Allah. Based on Islamic history, humans were created into two genders, namely men and women. This is reinforced by the verse of the Qur'an, Surah Hujurat (13) verse 23, which means: "O mankind, indeed We created you from a man and a woman and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. know". From this verse, Allah has explained that since creation, humans have been divided into 2 types, namely men and women who know each other. In the current era, we recognize two types of humans as sex or gender. As time goes by, gender has become a hot topic to be discussed or debated, especially in the last two decades.

The word "gender " is a word originating from English, which in the English-Indonesian dictionary means "sex" (Setiyaningsih, 2015). However (Djamaluddin, 2015) believes that this understanding is still inaccurate because the translation means as if gender and sex are the same, while in the Big Indonesian Dictionary the word "gender" is not yet in the vocabulary. Kartika & Fikri (2020) states that gender is a concept used to identify differences between men and women from a non-biological aspect (social, cultural, psychological and other aspects). Meanwhile (Rosyidah & Nurwati, 2019) concluded that the definition of gender is a characteristic that is used as the basis for identifying differences between women and men from non-biological factors, social and cultural conditions, mentality, as well as values and behavior.

Gender is different from sex or sex. Gender refers more to the differences in character that men and women have based on social and cultural constructions, which relate to their nature, status, position and role in society. Meanwhile, sex refers to gender differences between men and women based on biological factors, especially those related to procreation and reproduction. Gender identity can be displayed and internalized by everyone, but gender characteristics can be possessed by anyone, without exception. In other words, although society considers men to have masculine characteristics and women to have feminine characteristics, in reality today, men can show feminine characteristics and vice versa, women can show masculine characteristics (Khurosan, 2020).

In reality, with the rapid development of time and technology, the role of gender in human life has also begun to change. There are many phenomena where men imitate their appearance, starting from their clothing style, physical shape and voice, like women and vice versa. This will certainly cause confusion for people in the surrounding environment, especially for young children. At early childhood stage, various positive stimulation needs to be carried out to help children achieve all aspects of their development. One of the things that children need to develop is the development of their self-concept and personality to be aware of their gender roles. Hurlock stated that the first years of life are the basis for determining gender roles (Tandayu & Syukri, 2015). Therefore, in order to help children fully understand how to fully understand the concept of themselves as male or female, gender roles need to be introduced to children from an early age.

The majority of children will experience at least three stages in terms of gender development (Bella & Istianah, 2017), namely: 1) Children begin to develop beliefs about their gender identity, 2) Children will develop gender privileges, regarding behavior or attitudes regarding which gender is chosen and desired. 3) After that the child will determine gender, where the child believes that the gender chosen by a person is determined biologically, fixed or permanent, and does not change. There is a scheme for the stages of introducing gender to children, including that children begin to learn directly about the things they experience,

then they will relate them to their own gender. And at the age of 4-6 years, the relevant information that children receive will begin to be developed further indirectly, but only for their own sex, but not for the opposite sex.

In early childhood, initial knowledge about gender is usually obtained from their parents. Since they were babies, most parents have differentiated the clothes or toys they will give their children according to the child's gender. Through feminine or masculine treatment that is often given and socialized by parents to children, it is one of the factors that can influence the development of children's gender knowledge (Pujisatuti, 2014; Rofiah & Rachmy Diani, 2022). After entering the age of 2 to 6 years, and the child has entered PAUD, introducing and strengthening gender in children can also be carried out by PAUD educators. Parents and PAUD educators must always collaborate to support children's development in various aspects, including the development of self-concept in introducing gender to children. For PAUD educators, learning, especially gender recognition, can be implemented using media that children like and are easy to understand.

The word "media " comes from Latin which means introduction or intermediary (Aprinawati, 2017). Media can come from material in the form of writing, people or events around us as a medium for someone to learn and gain knowledge. Meanwhile (Rupnidah & Suryana, 2022) concludes the definition of learning media as anything that can be used to assist in conveying messages or information so that it can be more easily understood. In early childhood learning, unique and interesting learning media will further increase children's motivation in learning. Currently, providing varied and effective media to improve aspects of children's development is a must for parents and PAUD educators. There are various media that can be used in early childhood learning, including audio media (media that can only be received through the senses of the ear or can only be heard), visual media (media that can be captured by the sense of sight/eyes, namely media that we can directly see), audiovisual media (which is a combination of audio and visual media, which can be seen and can also be heard) and environmental media (place or atmosphere).

Especially in introducing gender to early childhood, the media that can be chosen to be used to attract children's interest and motivation is visual media. Usually, through watching, young children's interest in learning will emerge more. One visual media that can be applied in gender recognition is flash card media. Flash cards are a form of educational media is cards containing pictures and words whose size can be adjusted to suit the students (Sulaiman & Akidah, 2021). Meanwhile (Munthe & Sitinjak, 2018) states that flash cards are picture card media that have two sides, the first side contains images and the other side contains image descriptions. From several definitions (Wahyuni, 2020) it is concluded that flash cards are educational media in the form of picture cards consisting of pictures and information, the size of which can be adjusted to suit your needs and in use you can use ready-made ones or you can make your own.

For gender recognition in early childhood, the flash cards used can depict several characteristics of men and women who are differentiated based on their clothing, physical characteristics and characteristics. And on the reverse side, gender information is given, which can be in writing or with gender markings that differentiate between men and women. Through flash cards, children are expected to be able to recognize and differentiate gender well. The use of flash card media has also been used in several studies to improve children's abilities in various aspects. Based on research, the results showed that the use of flash cards can have a positive and significant influence in increasing vocabulary skills and learning motivation in early childhood aged 5-6 years (Sari et al., 2023). The appearance of the flash

cards themselves is also an attraction for children, so that learning becomes fun, effective and conducive.

Based on initial observations made at Kindergarten Aisyiyah 03 Jatipuro, learning in terms of gender recognition still uses modeling methods such as the teacher pointing directly at one of the students to indicate their gender or sex. Sometimes teachers also put emphasis when asking students, for example when the teacher asks children to count the number of boys, the teacher gives an additional clue so that it is easy for the children to understand, namely by mentioning the boy who is not wearing a headscarf. The teacher also just gave an example that men are like fathers or fathers, and women are like mothers or mothers. From this it can be seen that children's gender knowledge is still very low, because they only focus on a few gender characteristics. In fact, if children are in a crowded place, children will know various differences between the meaning of gender and what they already know. For example, they will see a man with long hair and wearing earrings like mother, or conversely a woman with short hair and riding a big motorbike like father. This will certainly cause confusion for children.

It is of course important for PAUD educators in particular and parents in general to choose appropriate and interesting media as a means of introducing gender to young children, so that there are no gender misunderstandings that children will carry with them when they grow up. For this reason, with the various conveniences and advantages of using flash card media, this research was conducted to introduce gender to young children by using flash card media to determine the effectiveness and success of flash cards in providing recognition and understanding of gender to children.

## 2. METHODS

The method used in this research is a descriptive research method. Descriptive research is a form of research that aims to describe existing events or phenomena, both natural and man-made phenomena (Yuliani, 2018). Through this descriptive research method, the researcher wants to convey and explain directly and in detail how effective and successful gender introduction is in early childhood using flash card media. Meanwhile, the approach in this research is to use a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is research that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects such as attitudes, perceptions, motivations, behavior and so on as a whole (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

This research was conducted at Aisyiyah 03 Jatipuro Kindergarten, taking as subjects 1 the class teacher, 1 school principal and 10 group A children aged 4-5 years, consisting of 5 girls and 5 boys. Next, the triangulation technique was chosen to be used in the data collection technique. Through triangulation techniques, researchers collect different data to get the same results (Alfansyur & Mariyani, 2013). Figure 1 explains how the triangulation techniques used, namely participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

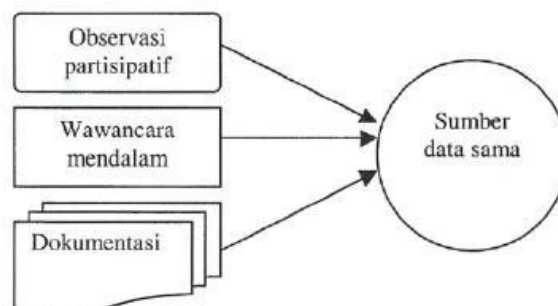
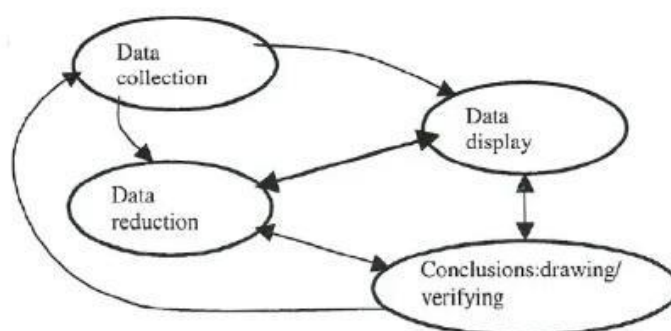


Figure 1. Data Collection Techniques.

Direct observation techniques are carried out by researchers at the location where the incident occurred. The data collection tools used were observation guides and field notes. The direct observation technique was chosen to find out the extent to which teachers provide gender knowledge to children in learning and how much knowledge children have in recognizing gender. After making observations, the next stage is conducting unstructured interviews. Unstructured interview techniques, namely the method of collecting research data only in the form of an outline of the problems to be asked of respondents and do not use systematically structured interview guidelines (Nurdiani, 2014). The interview was conducted by meeting directly between the researcher as interviewer, a class A teacher and the principal and 10 class A students of TK Aisyiyah 03 Jatipuro as resource persons.

The final data collection stage is documentation. Ardiansyah et al., (2023) states that documentation techniques are a way of collecting data through written remains, which can be in the form of archives and also include books about opinions, legal propositions/laws, theories, etc. related to data investigation problems. The data collected includes archives and documents that can be used to support the research process, such as Daily Learning Program Plans (RPPH), Kindergarten profiles, number of teachers and students, documentation during learning activities, and other documents. After three stages of data collection were carried out, the researcher then carried out data analysis using the interactive model from Miles and Huberman. **Figure 2** describes the activities in analyzing data, namely reducing data, displaying data, and conclusions and data verification (conclusions drawing/ verifying) (Rijali, 2019).



**Figure 2.** Interactive model data analysis techniques.

Reducing data is an activity of selecting and summarizing important facts, then looking for themes and patterns. Data that has been collected from observations, interviews, documentation and notes in the field is then selected and focused according to research needs regarding gender recognition in children, while unrelated data can be saved. After data reduction is complete, the next step is to display the data. By displaying the data it will make it easier to understand what happened and then plan the next steps based on what has been understood. To understand and find out everything that happens in the introduction of gender in early childhood, the data is presented in the form of narrative text to make it easier for researchers and readers.

The final step in qualitative data analysis according to Miles and Huberman is drawing conclusions and verifying. At the start of the research, the conclusions are still vague and do not have concrete evidence, but after carrying out the data reduction process and presenting the data, the pattern of relationships between the problems that occur in the research will appear increasingly clear and real. Conclusions in this research were drawn based on analysis of data collection originating from observations, interviews, documentation and field notes.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender introduction was carried out at Aisyiyah 03 Jatipuro Kindergarten. Previously, researchers made initial observations at the institution and witnessed the learning process taking place. Then, to obtain initial conclusions about the children's knowledge about gender, the researcher conducted an interview with a class a teacher and Principal. **Table 1** presents the results of interviews with teachers and principals.

**Table 1.** Results of interviews with teachers and school principals.

No	Question	Subject	Answer
1	Do students know gender well?	Headmaster	Students can already differentiate between boys and girls from the clothes they usually wear. Girls wear the hijab while boys do not wear the hijab.
		Teacher	Children have started to recognize gender, every day during the opening activity, the teacher always asks one of the children to take turns to count how many male or female friends have entered. And they can do it right.
2	Is gender recognition material included in the Learning Program Plan?	Headmaster	The introduction of gender is included in the MPLS Program and in the RPP with the theme Myself, sub-theme Identity.
		Teacher	The introduction of gender is included in the RPPH theme Self and the discussion is in the sub-theme Identity.
3	Is there any special media that teachers use to introduce gender to students?	Headmaster	In introducing gender, there is no special media, only media available at school.
		Teacher	To introduce gender, the media commonly used are dolls and story books.
4	Have students previously been introduced to flash card media?	Headmaster	Flash cards have often been used with children to introduce numbers and letters.
		Teacher	Flash cards are very close to children, because they are usually used in learning.
5	What are the results of using flash cards on children's development?	Headmaster	It becomes easier for children to learn the material presented by the teacher.
		Teacher	By using flash cards, it is easier for children to remember and memorize learning material.

From the results of interviews with teachers and school principals, it is known that children's knowledge of gender is still low. This can be implied from the teacher's statement that children know gender from the clothes they wear. At school, girls wear the hijab and boys don't wear the hijab. In fact, children's surroundings do not only consist of these gender characteristics, but there are still many other gender characteristics that children are not yet aware of. Meanwhile, in gender recognition media, teachers use dolls and story books. Teachers have never used flash cards in gender recognition, but children are used to using flash cards for other learning.

To explore the extent of children's knowledge about gender, researchers also asked the 10 children who were research subjects several questions about the extent to which they knew about gender. Some of these questions include:

**Question 1:** Do you guys know what gender is?

From this question, the majority of children answered that they did not know and some just shook their heads.

**Question 2:** Do you guys know what a woman is like?

Conclusion from the children's answers: The woman is like a mother, wears a headscarf, has long hair and can cook.

**Question 3:** Do you know what men are like?

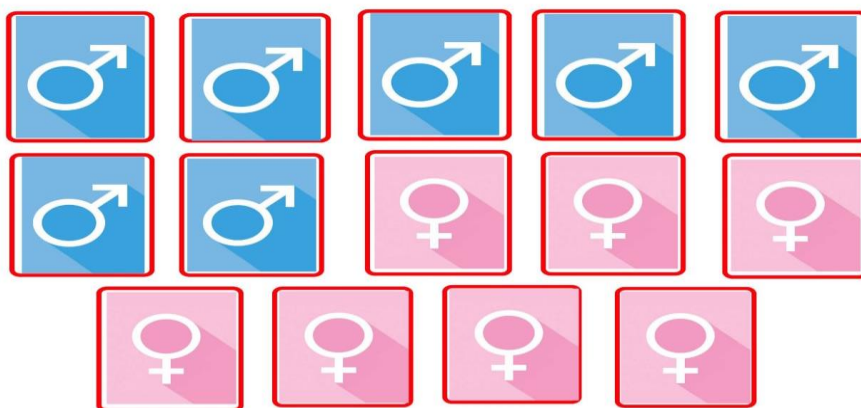
Conclusion from the children's answers: The man is not wearing a headscarf, his hair is short, he is wearing trousers.

Based on interviews with 10 children who were research subjects, it is known that children do not yet know the term gender and only know the differences between girls and boys based on clothing and physical characteristics. In fact, if you look at the current reality, many men imitate women in the way they dress and their physical characteristics and vice versa.

After carrying out the interview stage, the researcher then began to introduce gender terms to the children and began issuing flash cards to explore children's knowledge in distinguishing between men and women. The flash cards used measure 8.5 x 6.5cm and consist of 14 cards, 2 cards with gender markings, 6 cards with images of men and 6 cards with images of women. On the back of the card there is an image stating gender. The images of men and women on the cards are selected based on differences in age, clothing, physical characteristics and additional characteristics. for more clarity, can be seen through **figure 3 and 4**.



**Figure 3.** Front flash card.



**Figure 4.** Rear flash card.

By using flash card media to introduce gender to young children, children can know more about the gender characteristics of men and women. Not all women have long hair and always wear skirts or dresses, but there are also women who have short hair and like to wear clothes like men. However, there are other characteristics that can indicate that they are women, for example the use of earrings and make-up. Through flash cards, children learn that not all the characteristics of women or men are always the same as what children have always known. But with the development of time and technology as well as emancipation, there are many women who have an appearance like men or vice versa, but this will not change their gender. Children can also learn that women do not always have weak qualities and men have strong qualities. A person will still have these two genders regardless of their physical characteristics, way of dressing or behavior.

Gender is a topic that is currently being discussed by most people. Many phenomena that occur in society are related to gender, such as gender bias and gender inequality. Therefore, to avoid confusion and misunderstandings, it is important to give knowledge about gender to children from an early age. Because at this time, children are in the phase of wanting to learn and easily accept any new knowledge they obtain. Shepherd-Look states that children experience at least three stages in gender development, namely first, children are in the stage of developing beliefs about their gender identity, second, children begin to develop attitudes about which gender they want, and third, children finally acquire gender determination, and child that a person's gender is determined biologically and is permanent or fixed (Bella & Istianah, 2017).

At an early age, parents and family become the first school for children to know what they are like and how they should be. Early childhood education experts have agreed that one good way to meet children's educational needs is through the family, whatever the form of family (Nizar & Eliza, 2021). Parents will be examples or role models that children will imitate. Meanwhile, the family is a means of socialization for children to teach feminine attitudes to girls and masculine attitudes to boys. There are three things that influence gender development in children, namely biological, social and cognitive influences (Ummah, 2021). Biological is an understanding of the influence of heredity and social influences that will emerge from the interaction of the child with the surrounding environment, while cognitive provides an understanding that gender is formed after the child goes through the process of thinking that he or she is a boy or a girl. When discussing gender, there are two specific aspects of gender, namely gender identity and gender roles. According to (Azizah, 2014) gender identity is the feeling of being a woman or a man which usually appears in children at the age of 3 years, while gender roles are thoughts and expectations about how a woman or man should feel, think and behave (Harahap, 2019).

Once a child knows the gender identity and roles he believes in, parents and those closest to the child can provide in-depth knowledge about gender. When providing knowledge or introduction to gender in early childhood, appropriate media and strategies are needed to convey the importance of gender by always paying attention to factors that can influence it so that later the child's understanding of the concept of gender will be in line with the expected goals. Flash card media is one of the alternative visual media that can be chosen. to be used in introducing gender to children. Flash card media has many advantages compared to other media, including: 1) its size is not large, so it is easy to carry and use in various places, 2) its use is flexible according to students' needs, 3) in terms of appearance, Flash cards have attractive shapes, colors and images so that they increase children's enthusiasm for learning.

Through flash card media, the concept of gender that we want to emphasize for children to know includes children's understanding of the biological functions of each gender, the way



they usually dress and the physical characteristics according to their gender. The biological function of sex is one of the first labels that people will learn about themselves. When children are in preschool, children can have attitudes and stereotypes about how they should look, think and behave as girls and men (Rahmayanty et al., 2023). Through flash cards, children can find out that there are only 2 genders, namely male and female, which through gender can influence the gender they believe in. In terms of clothing or fashion (Kameswari & Malini, 2023) states that fashion is non-binding so that anyone can freely express themselves regardless of one's age and gender.

Since childhood, girls are usually accustomed to wearing pink clothes or pretty dresses while boys are accustomed to wearing clothes in colors other than pink. Until children understand that boys cannot wear pink clothes so they are not considered feminine men or girls cannot wear pants so they are not considered tomboys and remain feminists. As time goes by, there is also a shift in meaning in terms of fashion, such as the freedom to choose the color of clothing to be worn, where men can wear pink clothes and women can wear blue pants and clothes. On the flash card media used, there are pictures of several women dressed like men and vice versa, men dressed like women, but the way they dress does not change their gender so that children can easily differentiate them.

The next gender concept that we want to apply through flash cards is physical characteristics according to gender. (Wiasti, 2017) provides an explanation of the characteristics of men and women which are then linked to the current reality as follows: men have short hair and often wear trousers while women have long hair, often wear earrings and skirt. Meanwhile, the current reality is that there are men who have long hair and wear earrings and there are also women who wear trousers long and short hair. Through flash cards, children are invited to observe pictures of men with long hair and women with short hair, to clarify children's understanding that the length or shortness of a person's hair does not affect their gender.

In previous research entitled "Development of Gender Identity Recognition Media through the Lift The Flap Book in Early Childhood" (Handayani & Anisa, 2023) based on the results of product implementation and evaluation carried out using questionnaires, observations, documentation and interviews, the results were obtained that the media the lift the flap book can be used as a medium for introducing gender identity with a percentage of 80.54% with very good criteria for media, language and material indicators. Meanwhile, through this research, flash card media can be used as an effective medium for introducing gender to young children, in order to provide children with an understanding of the concept of gender based on the biological function of sex, how to dress and physical characteristics according to each gender. Apart from that, flash card media also has many advantages, including being easy to make and cost-effective in making, practical in use and storage, can be used anywhere, both at home and at school, and has an attractive appearance so that children are more enthusiastic about learning.

This is in line with the results obtained through the previous use of flash cards, where the application of flash card media in learning can increase student learning outcomes on the theme "my activities" compared to the previous conventional learning model (Wahyuni, 2020). And the use of flash cards has a positive and significant influence on learning motivation and increasing vocabulary skills in children aged 5-6 years (Sari et al., 2023). In this case, with the various advantages of flash cards, children will be more interested in focusing attention and deepening their understanding of gender recognition, so that children's knowledge and understanding will increase.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

At an early age, one of the things that children need to know and develop is the development of their self-concept and personality to realize and determine their gender. The role of parents and early childhood educators greatly influences the gender recognition process so that children can gain the understanding that is expected. One of the media that can be chosen to be used in introducing gender to young children is flash card media. Flash card media is a picture card media that consists of pictures and descriptions, the size of which can be adjusted to suit your needs and when used, you can use ready-made ones or you can make your own. As a medium for gender recognition, flash cards consist of 14 cards measuring 6.6 x 8.5 cm, with details of 2 gender marking cards, 6 cards with pictures of men and 6 pictures of women. On the back side of the flash card there are pictures of different gender signs according to gender, namely male and female.

The concept of gender that we want to emphasize for children to know using flash card media includes children's understanding of the biological function of sex, the way they usually dress and physical characteristics according to their gender. Through flash cards, children can find out that there are only 2 genders, namely male and female, which through gender can influence the gender they believe in. Children can also learn that based on the way they dress or the length of a person's hair, it does not affect their gender. Flash card media also has many advantages, including being easy to make and cost-effective in making, practical in use and storage, can be used anywhere, both at home and at school, and has an attractive appearance so that children are more enthusiastic about learning. With its various advantages and practicality, flash cards are a medium that can be used to introduce gender to young children, both at home and at school

#### 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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