Early Childhood Character Education Based on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

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ABSTRACT
The aims of the present study are threefold: (1) portray the parenting style in early childhood in the families, (2) analyze gender issues in early childhood education in villages, in lower and upper-class communities, and (3) formulate a model of early childhood education with a gender perspective and social inclusion. Following the survey method with focus group discussion and in-depth studies, the study involved 8 Early Childhood School in East Java Province, nine schools in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and ten schools in West Java. After analyzing the data, this study arrived at some interpretative points. The points are: (a) character education implemented was appropriate to Early Childhood Curriculum, consists of principal characters and additional characters qualified the school, (b) The parenting style in urban and rural areas show the same pattern which is dominated by authoritative parenting patterns-giving choices to children to decide on something, and (c) the disparity exists in the socio-economic classes that parents treat the children differently, particularly pertinent to freedom of play and an impact on self-reliance. The gender issue in early childhood education, it is argued that learning values do not discriminate between boys and girls. Male students are more active, dominating the classroom, whereas female students tend to be shy. All early childhood education principals are women, and teachers are almost all women. The Character Education Model applied in early childhood education has not yet depicted gender and social inclusion perspective to accept and to attend children with special needs. The findings lead to the possibility to formulate the Logic Model of Early Childhood Character Education based on Gender Perspective and Social Inclusion. The proposed model has taken into account the educational input, teacher and manager resources, curriculum, and learning processes. Additionally, it pays attention to the specific problems and needs of girls and boys, in various conditions related to the marginalization of early childhood families, to achieve gender equality and attract children from the exclusion group into the majority group of child character development.

Keywords: Early childhood education, Character education, Gender equality, Social inclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children are the hope of the future of the nation [1]. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of Indonesia in 2017 was 2464 million people, about 4.605.808 people were early childhood (Anak Usia Dini) or less than five years old. Spread by gender in the early childhood group is almost balanced between girls and boys. With a population of about a quarter of a billion, Indonesia faced various problems includes the areas of population, economy, health, and education. A large number of early childhoods at this time is the potential in the future; nevertheless, socio-economic diversity, gender aspects of boys and girls, villages are variants that require attention.

Gender justice and equality is a global commitment that will be achieved in the development and empowerment of the gender-based community that set out in the formulation of policies at the global level, namely Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [2], [3] where one of the goals is to achieve gender equality in
various fields. The aim is expected to address gender-critical issues as formulated at the world conference for women in Beijing in 1990 that discussed gender and educational issues. To that end, the Indonesian government established the Gender Priority Policy (PUG) 2000 as the strategy to achieve Gender Justice and Equality (Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender) through the development in various fields from planning to monitoring and evaluation.

Studying gender equality and inequality needs to consider variations between gender, across age, exclusivity, and inclusivity, urban and rural, and poverty and wealth. Generally, the category of the structure of the society could be distinguished based on the development level that are exclusive and inclusive communities, namely marginalized, neglected, subordinate, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and other disadvantaged groups [4]–[6]. The children’s community represents an inclusion group in terms of age. They are often placed as objects in the development of powerless human resources. It is necessary to attract the inclusive group to be exclusive to achieve equality. Therefore, through social inclusion, it points marginalized and neglected communities into the main direction of community empowerment.

This research aims to: (1) portray the parenting style in early childhood in the urban and rural families, (2) analyze gender issues in early childhood education in the urban and rural areas, in lower and upper-class communities, (3) identify the educational model for early childhood education in an urban and rural area, and (4) formulate a model of early childhood education with a gender perspective and social inclusion.

2. METHOD

This research was conducted using a participatory design. The primary data were collected through a survey, focused group discussion, in-depth interviews with key informants, and observation, while the secondary data were collected from related agencies. In the second year, the method was implemented online, adjusting to the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic. The activities were online focus group discussions, expert discussions (online), and in-depth studies. Moreover, the data collected were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis.

The selected research settings were East-Java, Special Region of Yogyakarta, and West-Java. Each province was represented by one district, two villages, and two cities selected by specific characteristics of the school, namely the state, Islamic, and international characteristics. The early childhood schools that sampled this research were as follows table.

The informant of each kindergarten consisted of principals, teachers, parents of students, and direct observations to students. The early childhood education model found in the first year was tested in year two. Comparative analysis was also carried out to explain the differences in villages [7]. In the second year, the model of early childhood character based on gender perspective and social inclusion was formulated based on the pilot study. The research procedures were illustrated as follows.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. East Java Province

Education for early childhood in East Java is focused on character education, following the early childhood education (PAUD) curriculum [8]–[10]. Self-reliance, discipline, creativity, honesty are the fundamental characters taught to both female and male students. Other characters are under the characteristics of the school. In religious-based schools, in villages and cities, the pious character is an instilled obligation, while state public schools and public-private schools emphasize cooperation, avoid discrimination. Additionally, international schools enhance English proficiency and use it as the second language and instructional language.

The pattern of early childhood parenting styles in families in villages and cities in East Java shows a slight difference [1], [11]. In the village, the parenting style tends to be more permissive compared to the style in the city. Values are taught in the classroom and outside the classroom are respecting parents and helping each other. However, students are lack confidence. The reward and punishment model is also used.

The pattern of parenting styles of fathers and mothers shows no difference. They balance the treatment to the children. The pattern is dominated by the authoritarian that provides a choice for male and female children, yet there is a small percentage of authoritative parenting style.

The comparing between classes, the upper-middle class and lower-class families, there are differences in parenting to girls and boys. Boys get more freedom to play, while girls should stay at home more help parents to look after younger siblings. The children are independent in eating, learning, preparing school stuff.

Principals and teachers do not distinguish between parenting style, grade, learning activity, and punishment. They give the same treatment to children [3], [12]–[14]. A noticeable difference is noted to the left-behind children as their mother's work of the women migrant workers. The students become very active or shy but often neglect to do the assignment. Also, it was found in kindergarten in the village (Betak) and the city (Pojok), the teachers are almost all women. It shows gender bias that partly happens due to the low
wage that men are less interested in, and women are more patient and caring. The parents also confront if female students are cared for by male teachers. Moreover, for children with special needs, teachers take a personal approach. It indicates responsiveness to social inclusion but still gender-neutral.

Access to get early childhood educators shows no difference [1], [10], [11]. Girls and boys have equal opportunities to obtain an education. Additionally, school management for early childhood is dominated by women. The principals and teachers in Tulungagung are all women. It happens due to cultural reasons and parental concern.

Notwithstanding, quality and relevance are observed in the early childhood education curriculum. The gender perspective is only implicitly taught and/or not yet included. It is necessary to raise children's inequitable treatment and gender equality. In Malang, one Islamic-based school has a male teacher, yet the interaction with the students is not as free as the female teacher.

The facilities and infrastructure of kindergarten schools in Tulungagung are still simple. Study rooms, seating, props, and playgrounds are set together between female and male students. Toilets have not been provided separately between female and male students. On the other hand, kindergarten schools in Malang have the right to ownership of the building, and the toilet is provided.

The participation of stakeholders in schools in the village and the city is significant. It is rarely found state kindergarten because almost all the schools are managed by private institutions such as Dharma Wanita, Muslimat, Yayasan, with individual donations in the form of school buildings and playground courtyards.

The perspective of social inclusion in early childhood education is not yet visible[12], [15]–[17]. In Tulungagung and Malang, children with special needs such as disabilities are educated together with other early childhood, in the hope that they can be as ordinary children in obtaining an education. There are children with disabilities who can take lessons, but some are unable to adjust. The teachers also tend to pay more attention to the majority of students.

3.2. Special Region of Yogyakarta

Some characters need to be instilled in early childhood students in the city. First, respecting others by telling the children to apologize when others or they commit a mistake. Second, the value of decency, including physical contact across sexes such as the prohibition of sitting too close. Third, the teachers need to teach the children to keep the neatness. Fourth, teachers need to teach children to share and help others. Fifth, character discipline should be taught. The parents also share that the children should know some overall values such as moral values, religious values, mutual love, mutual respect, respect for difference, and honesty.

In the village areas, the characters instilled are: (1) cleanliness, by teaching and reminding the child to dispose of garbage in its place; (2) religious tolerance by teaching different religions and how to respect the religious values to others; (3) respect others, by getting used to using the word "sorry, thank you, please, and excuse me"; (4) order, by teaching children to queue in an orderly manner when performing activities together that must take turns, and (5) the value of religious teachings, by getting used to praying before doing various activities between eating and travelling. Besides, other values instilled are (1) self-reliance, (2) love, (3) sharing, (4) decency; (5) responsibility, (6) bravery, (7) discipline, (8) honesty, (10) respect others, and (12) order.

Various positive values or characters are taught in the school for early childhood who participate in the activities in the school [9], [13], [16], [18]. These positive values or characters are spell out in the school discipline, as well as spell out by principals and teachers. Some of the positive values or characters that appear in all schools are (1) religious values, including ethical standards of association between boys and girls as well as dress codes, (2) standard of social behaviours, including love, respect, sharing attitudes, decency, ethics, and hygiene, and (3) standard of conduct related to self-management and development, including courage, confidence, honesty, and creativity.

Authoritative is the dominant parenting style both in the village and in the city. It shows the highest percentage (98%) in nine kindergartens.

Gender-responsive schools, in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, are implemented by school principals and teachers by not treating male and female students physically the same, but similarly in treating them as students. Additionally, some stereotypes are occupied by male and female students. Male is considered as stubborn, annoying, active, and healthy, while the female is more adorable, sensitive, and independent. The gender stereotype should be followed by an appropriate approach and learning method for the students.

In general, both principals, teachers, school committees, and parents of students argue that there should be no difference in the treatment of boys and girls due to differences in the role of the type, except for things related to religious rules. However, most principals, teachers, school committees, and parents still have stereotypical concerns about boys and girls. In the case of early childhood, boys tend to get negative judgment (aggressive, unruly) than girls (diligent, neat). Although principals, teachers, and parents admit that
there is no difference in treatment, these stereotypical perceptions make their natural responses more likely to distinguish between boys and girls.

### 3.3 West Java Province

The urban middle-class sites show that parents who are categorized in an underperforming economy tend to be firmer in educating the children[7][11], even they give physical contact toward male children parents who are categorized in reasonably economic foster daughters in a permissive approach and authoritative to sons.

Meanwhile, in the Islamic based kindergarten, parents with special needs children have different parenting styles patterns. Fathers and mothers have distinguished traits, like mothers are more assertive, while fathers are more pampering to their children. Parents with single parent status tend to give more freedom to their children and fulfill the children want.

Interestingly, almost all fathers threaten children to make the discipline. Besides, fathers tend to be more passive by waiting for the children to tell their experience rather than asking directly what the children have passed especially shows at private kindergarten cases in the city. Parents with a lower-middle category implement an authoritative parenting style, and often give physical play both to boys and to girls.

Schools give special treatment to children with special needs. They provide special handling in the classroom and a helper. Based on the observation, most of them are in the middle and upper economic classes. However, it was found in one kindergarten that gives different treatment for students in the middle and lower economic status. The school differentiates the school hours and the meal for the students.

Kindergarten school in Sumedang district can be considered as an early childhood gender-responsive school. It depicts equal treatment given by the teachers during the teaching and learning process. Kiddie World kindergarten, for example, in folding activities, the division of colour paper is not distinguished by gender. It also happens in ball-playing activities. Both males and females can play together in a group. PGRI Triyuda Sakti kindergarten also gives the same opportunities for students to do some activities, including playing ball. Some schools have implemented the same activities for students, both male and female; however, those who do not instil gender models tend to discriminate against the students, like boys are stronger than girls. The environment of several kindergartens varies; the playground of each kindergarten game is not specific to games for boys and girls, so boys and girls can use it.

Regarding social inclusivity, principals, teachers, school committees, and parents agree that children with special needs and children from different backgrounds can be accepted in school[19]. Especially for children with special needs, improving teacher skills, and understanding, all parents about children with special needs are still a challenge to realize social inclusivity.

![Figure 1. Logic Model for Early Childhood Character](image)

Based on the results of expert discussions in three universities, it was formulated as a Logic Model for Early Childhood Character Education based on the Gender perspective. The figure above illustrates the components, process-output-outcomes, that should be
fulfilled by considering the situation and condition of each school of early childhood and their families.

4. CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the findings on early childhood parenting style based on gender perspective in three provinces, namely East Java, Special Region of Yogyakarta, West Java, can be drawn the following conclusions:

1. The same pattern of early childhood parenting style in families is depicted in villages and in cities, which is dominated by traditional parenting patterns. It implies that in educating girls and boys, parents give choices. Variations are also seen in three provinces. In East Java, a small number of parents apply an authoritarian (imposing) and permissive parenting pattern (giving freedom); girls are more authoritative while boys are more permissive. In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the authoritative parenting pattern becomes the prominent parenting style. Moreover, in West Java, differences are seen in socio-economic and gender classes. Parents treat boys harshly and firmly, while girls are more permissive.

2. Regarding the gender issues in early childhood education, it is suggested that learning values are not distinguished between boys and girls in East Java, Special Region of Yogyakarta, and West Java. There are some prevalent and additional values in establishing children's characters. Prevalent values consist of religious values, love, respect, sharing attitudes, decency, ethics, and cleanliness, while the additional values include management and self-development, namely courage, confidence, honesty, and creativity.

3. Gender issues in early childhood education are male students more active and dominating classes, while female students tend to be shy. All teachers and principals of kindergartens are women (there is only one male kindergarten teacher in Malang). The school curriculum is socially inclusive but not gender-responsive.

4. Kindergarten schools in the three provinces have not been gender-responsive as seen from the school curriculum. Supporting infrastructure is still limited and has not been concerned with gender-specific needs. The equality only can be seen from the school access and equalization for girls and boys and gender-neutral stakeholder support.

5. The educational model applied in kindergarten is Character Education Model. GESI perspective has not been seen, especially in kindergarten schools located in the village, whereas in the city, there is a perspective of social inclusion by accepting and paying attention to children with special needs.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Sukses, Contributed as the research's coordinator of across the locations as well as to the research design and implementation. It is to the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript. Malihah performs research in West Java Province, analyzing the result and writing the manuscript. Setiawati researches East Java Province, analyzing the result and writing the manuscript. Kisriyani leads the Special Region of Yogyakarta team to perform the research and to analyze data also writing the manuscript and Nurhadi perform FGD and writing the manuscript.

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