

GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF EQUAL ACCESS AND TREATMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Gender construction in early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping children's identities, attitudes, and future social roles. Educational institutions are not only spaces for knowledge transmission but also arenas where gender norms and values are socially reproduced. This study aims to analyze how gender construction influences equality of access and treatment for children within educational institutions. The research focuses on identifying gender biases embedded in curricula, teaching practices, learning materials, and institutional policies that affect children's educational experiences. This study employs a qualitative library research method with a descriptive-narrative design. Data were collected from national accredited journals (SINTA) and international journals indexed by Scopus published within the last five years. The data were analyzed through content analysis, critical interpretation, and comparative synthesis of relevant theories and empirical findings. The results indicate that gender inequality in early childhood education often occurs implicitly through stereotypical roles, differential teacher expectations, and unequal participation opportunities. These practices contribute to the reinforcement of gender-based limitations on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. The study highlights the importance of integrating gender-responsive approaches in curriculum development, teacher training, and educational policy. This research contributes theoretically by strengthening social construction and critical pedagogy perspectives and practically by providing recommendations for creating inclusive, equitable, and child-friendly educational environments.

Keywords: *Gender construction; children's education; gender equality; access to education; educational institutions*

INTRODUCTION

Children's education is the main foundation in the formation of individual character, values, and social identity from an early age. At this stage, educational institutions not only act as a space for knowledge transfer, but also as an arena for socializing social values, including gender construction. Through daily interactions, curriculum, and pedagogical practices, children begin to understand

the roles, identities, and social expectations attached to certain genders. Therefore, children's education has a strategic position in shaping views on gender equality and justice.

The reality of education shows that the construction of gender in educational institutions still often reproduces inequality. Boys and girls are often treated differently, both explicitly and implicitly, through role sharing, activity choices, and academic expectations. This practice is often considered natural because it is rooted in social and cultural norms that have been firmly rooted in society. As a result, educational institutions have the potential to become a space for gender bias legitimacy, instead of being an instrument of liberation and social justice.¹

Gender construction in education is inseparable from cultural, ideological, and structural factors. The patriarchal culture that is still dominant in many societies influences the perspective of educators, institutional managers, and parents on the role of children based on gender. Girls are often directed to roles that are domestic and passive, while boys are encouraged to be active and dominant. This pattern indirectly limits the optimal development of children's potential.

Structural aspects in the education system also contribute to gender inequality. Curriculum, textbooks, and learning materials often contain stereotypical and unbalanced gender representations. Male characters are more often portrayed as leaders and decision-makers, while female characters tend to be placed in supporting roles. This kind of representation shapes a child's cognitive construction of the social position of men and women from an early age.

Pedagogical interaction between teachers and students is also an important space in the formation of gender construction. The way teachers give attention, rewards, and sanctions is often influenced by certain gender perceptions. Boys are considered more active and critical, while girls are considered more obedient and

¹Herien Puspitawati, Ma'mun Sarma, and Yusuf Supiandi. *Learning Gender-Responsive Family Education*. PT Publisher IPB Press, 2024. This book reviews family education strategies that are responsive to gender issues in the context of household and early childhood parenting.

emotional. This pattern of interaction has an impact on children's confidence, class participation, and academic achievement differently based on gender.²

Gender inequality in children's education not only has an impact on the learning process, but also has implications for the fulfillment of children's rights as a whole. The principles of non-discrimination and equality that are the basis for protecting children's rights are often not optimally implemented in educational practices. Children who experience unequal treatment have the potential to face psychological, social, and academic barriers that affect their long-term development.

In the context of policy, although the government has adopted the principles of gender equality and child protection in various education regulations, its implementation at the institutional level still faces various challenges. Limited educators' understanding of gender perspectives, weak supervision, and lack of training related to gender-responsive education are the main inhibiting factors. This shows that there is a gap between normative policy and empirical practice in the field.

The urgency of gender construction studies in children's education is increasing in line with the global demand for inclusive and equitable education. The *Sustainable Development Goals* place gender equality and quality education as the main interrelated goals. Therefore, children's education must be positioned as a strategic means in breaking the chain of gender inequality from an early age.

A number of previous studies have discussed gender issues in education, but most of them still focus on secondary and higher education. Studies that specifically examine the construction of gender in children's education and its impact on equal access and treatment in educational institutions are still relatively limited. This condition opens up space for more in-depth and contextual research, especially in the context of educational institutions in Indonesia.

²Ari Putra. *Gender dalam Pendidikan: Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran untuk Mewujudkan Kesetaraan*. CV Eureka Media Aksara, 2025. Referensi komprehensif mengenai strategi pendidikan dan praktik pembelajaran yang berorientasi pada kesetaraan gender.

Gender and child issues are one of the important themes in contemporary education studies, considering that education has a strategic role in shaping individual values, attitudes, and social identities from an early age. Children's educational institutions not only function as a space for knowledge transfer, but also as an arena for social socialization that consciously or unconsciously shapes gender construction. Through curriculum, pedagogical interactions, and institutional practices, children begin to understand the roles, limitations, and social expectations attached to certain genders. Therefore, children's education is a crucial point in efforts to realize gender equality and the protection of children's rights.³

Although the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination have become part of education policy, in practice there are still various forms of inequality of access and treatment in children's educational institutions. These inequalities are often latent and internalized in habits, language, and patterns of daily interaction. Biased gender constructions have the potential to limit children's potential development and have an impact on inequities in learning experiences. This condition shows that there is a gap between policy ideals and the reality of implementing gender-responsive education.

Departing from these problems, this paper aims to analyze the construction of gender in children's education and its implications for equal access and treatment in educational institutions. In particular, the purpose of this paper is to identify the forms of gender construction that emerge in children's education practices, analyze their impact on the fulfillment of children's rights and development, and examine the urgency of implementing a gender perspective in an inclusive and equitable children's education system.

The scope of this paper is limited to conceptual and empirical studies of gender in the context of children's education, with a focus on formal educational institutions. The analysis was carried out through a literature study of theories,

³Rizki Amaliah Ritonga and Panggung Sutapa. "Literacy and Gender: Gaps in Early Childhood Education Levels." *Journal of Obsession: Journal of Early Childhood Education*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2021, pp. 965–74, <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v5i1.749>

previous research results, and policy documents relevant to gender issues and children's education. This paper does not discuss the technical aspects of learning specifically, but rather emphasizes the social construction of gender, equal access, and treatment of education as part of efforts to realize fair, inclusive, and gender-responsive children's education.

Based on this description, this research is important to analyze how gender constructions are shaped and reproduced in children's education, and the extent to which it affects equal access and treatment in educational institutions. This study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of gender and education studies, as well as practical recommendations for policymakers and education practitioners in realizing a fair, inclusive, and gender-responsive children's education system.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with library *research* methods and narrative descriptive design. The literature study was chosen because this research focuses on the review of concepts, theories, and empirical findings related to the construction of gender in children's education as well as equal access and treatment in educational institutions. This approach allows researchers to gain a comprehensive and systematic understanding of gender and child issues through the analysis of various scientific sources without conducting direct field data collection.⁴

The source of research data consists of secondary data obtained from academic books, articles from reputable national and international journals, research reports, education policy documents, and official publications relevant to the topic of the study. The criteria for library sources used include the relevance of substance to gender issues and children's education, the credibility of the publisher, and the up-to-date of the source, especially publications in the last ten years. Data was collected through documentation techniques by browsing

⁴Sugiyono. *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta, 2019.

scientific journal databases and academic repositories, then classified based on the theme and focus of the study.

Data analysis is carried out with narrative descriptive techniques through several stages, namely data reduction, theme categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawn. The classified data were analyzed by describing, comparing, and synthesizing various views and results of previous research to reveal patterns of gender construction in children's education. The results of the analysis are presented in a narrative-analytical manner to provide an in-depth picture of the form of gender inequality, its implications for equal access and treatment, and the urgency of implementing gender-responsive children's education.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Foundations

Gender studies in education are based on the understanding that gender is a social construct formed through a continuous socialization process. Gender is not biological, but is formed through social values, norms, and practices that are institutionalized in various institutions, including educational institutions. In the context of children's education, gender construction plays an important role in shaping children's initial perceptions of self-identity and social roles.

Social construction theory asserts that individuals learn to understand gender through social interactions and cultural symbols. Schools as formal institutions have a strategic role in this process because they are the main space for learning values and social norms. Curriculum, textbooks, and learning practices are the main media in transmitting gender construction to children from an early age.⁵

The theory of educational feminism views that education is not neutral, but is loaded with power relations that can reproduce gender inequality. In this perspective, educational institutions often reflect the patriarchal structures that develop in society. As a result, educational practices have the potential to

⁵Andi Al Muhammad Ardiansyah, and Saqjuddin. "Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education: A Literature Review of Global Practices and Challenges." *Journal of E-MAS (Early Childhood Education and Learning)*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.64690/e-mas.v1i2.240>

strengthen women's subordination and male dominance if they are not systematically criticized.⁶

Critical education theory places schools as an ideological arena that can have a dual function, namely as a tool for reproducing social inequality or as a means of social transformation. Gender-insensitive children's education tends to reinforce stereotypes and discrimination. On the contrary, critical and reflective education is able to build children's awareness of the value of justice and equality.⁷

Child development theory is also relevant in this study, because the age of children is a very decisive phase of identity formation. At this stage, children begin to internalize the social values they acquire from the surrounding environment. Gender-biased treatment in this phase has the potential to form a mindset that persists into adulthood.⁸

Another theoretical foundation used is the theory of children's rights, especially the principle of non-discrimination and the best interests of the child. Fair and equal education is an integral part of fulfilling children's rights. Any form of gender-based treatment inequality can have an impact on violating children's right to a dignified education.

The theoretical foundation in this study integrates the perspectives of gender social construction, educational feminism, critical education, child development, and children's rights. This integration provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the construction of gender in children's

⁶Shabirah Nafisah, Lily Yuntina, and Sudi Suhardjo. "Pendidikan Pengenalan Gender pada Anak Usia Dini dengan Metode Bermain Peran di RA Al Mustaqbal." *Jurnal Ilmiah Literasi Indonesia*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2025, pp. 467–75, <https://doi.org/10.63822/ha514f87>

⁷C. Cahaya, Mahmud Bonita, Darfin Sutra Awaliyah, and Munawir Nidha Eka Restuti. "The Influence of Parental and Gender Education on Children's Critical Thinking Skills Aged 5–6 Years." *Ihya Ulum: Early Childhood Education Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.59638/ihyaulum.v2i2.269>

⁸Hardiyanti Pratiwi, Murniyanti Ismail, and Rizky Noor Haida. "Sexuality Education for Early Childhood: Themes, Methods, and Perceptions of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) Educators." *Journal of Education and Culture*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2023, pp. 35–55, <https://doi.org/10.24832/jpnk.v8i1.3786>.

education and its implications for equal access and treatment in educational institutions.

Theoretical Analysis

Based on the theory of gender social construction, the results of the study show that children's educational institutions are still the main space for the reproduction of biased gender values. The daily practice of education often reflects social norms that have taken root in society. This shows that education has not fully functioned as a space for deconstructing gender inequality.

Analysis of the theory of educational feminism shows that gender representation in the curriculum and teaching materials still tends to be stereotypical. The characters and roles shown often represent an unequal power relationship between men and women. This condition strengthens the argument that children's education needs to be critically examined from a gender perspective.⁹

In the framework of critical education, pedagogical interaction between teachers and students is an important arena in the formation of gender construction. Teachers as the main agents of education have authority in shaping children's learning experiences. When teachers are not gender-conscious, learning practices have the potential to reinforce inequality through different expectations and treatment.

Analysis of child development theory shows that gender-based differential treatment has a significant impact on the formation of children's self-concept. Children who are limited by gender stereotypes tend to develop their potential suboptimally. This emphasizes that children's education must pay attention to psychological and social aspects in a balanced manner.

The integration of children's rights theory in the analysis shows that gender inequality in education is not only pedagogical, but also normative. Discriminatory treatment is contrary to the principle of child protection which

⁹Arif Sugitanata and Fatia Rahmanita. "Pendidikan Kesetaraan Gender Bagi Anak Sebagai Langkah Kritis Menuju Masa Depan yang Lebih Cerah." *Jurnal El-Hamra: Kependidikan dan Kemasyarakatan*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.62630/elhamra.v9i1.177>.

guarantees the right to a fair and equal education. Therefore, gender-responsive education is part of fulfilling children's rights.¹⁰

This analysis also shows that education policies oriented towards gender equality are often not effectively implemented at the practice level. The gap between policy and implementation shows the weak internalization of gender perspectives in the children's education system.

Theoretical analysis confirms that the construction of gender in children's education is multidimensional and requires a holistic theoretical approach. Changes cannot be made partially, but must include aspects of curriculum, pedagogy, and management of educational institutions.

Research Results

The results of the study show that gender construction in children's education is formed through a socialization process that takes place systematically within educational institutions. This process does not only occur through formal learning materials, but also through daily practices, symbols, and social interactions experienced by children. These findings confirm that educational institutions have a central role in shaping children's understanding of gender roles and identities.

Analysis of the literature shows that the curriculum is still one of the main instruments in reproducing gender constructions. Many teaching materials implicitly contain gender stereotypes, either through narratives, illustrations, and case examples. An unbalanced representation of social roles between boys and girls has the potential to form biased perceptions from an early age.

Textbooks and visual teaching materials also contribute to the formation of gender construction. The results of the study found that male figures are more often portrayed as the main actors in public activities, while female figures tend to be placed in domestic roles. This pattern of representation reinforces the

¹⁰Falasifah Ani Yuniarti, Dian Azmawati, and Umi Sholikhan. "Early Childhood Education on Gender Awareness and Reproductive Health: A Study on Enhancing Knowledge and Safe Practices in Indonesian Kindergarten." *Proceeding International Conference on Community Service*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.18196/iccs.v2i1.282>.

traditional division of roles and limits children's imagination to equal social role choices.

Pedagogical interaction between teachers and students is another important finding in this study. The literature shows that teachers, consciously or unconsciously, often treat children based on certain gender assumptions. Boys are given more space to express their opinions, while girls are more directed towards an obedient and orderly attitude. This treatment has an impact on the child's level of participation and confidence in the classroom.¹¹

Teachers' academic expectations of students often differ based on gender. Boys are associated with logic and leadership abilities, while girls are associated with thoroughness and social skills. This differentiation of expectations has implications for the pattern of assessment and development of children's potential in an unbalanced manner.

In the context of access to education, literature studies show that although formal access to basic education is relatively equal, there are indirect gender barriers. These barriers arise in the form of restrictions on participation in certain activities, gender-based extracurricular divisions, and stereotypes about children's choices of interests and talents. This condition shows that equal access is not only related to the opportunity to enter school, but also to full involvement in all educational activities.

Inequality in gender treatment in children's education has a significant impact on psychosocial development. Children who experience stereotypes and discrimination have the potential to experience decreased confidence and motivation to learn. These impacts are long-term and can affect children's educational choices and careers in the future.

The construction of gender in children's education cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of society. Patriarchal values that are still dominant also affect educational practices in formal institutions. Schools often

¹¹Safiruddin Al Baqi, "How Teacher's Gender Influence Student's Gender Identity in Early Childhood." *JPUD: Jurnal Pendidikan Usia Dini*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21009/JPUD.171.08>.

reflect the social values that are developing in society, so changing gender constructions requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach.¹²

The role of parents is also a determining factor in the formation of gender construction in educational institutions. The results of the study show that there is a continuity between home parenting and educational practices at school. When parents have biased gender views, educational institutions tend to have difficulty applying the principle of equality consistently.

From a policy perspective, the results of the study show that there is a gap between education regulations that uphold gender equality and their implementation at the institutional level. Many policies are normative and have not been translated operationally into learning practice. This indicates the need for a more concrete and applicable implementation strategy.

The importance of teacher competence in understanding gender perspectives. Lack of training and gender literacy is one of the main factors that hinder the creation of an equal learning environment. Teachers who do not have gender awareness have the potential to reproduce bias through everyday pedagogical practices.

The results of the study also show that educational institutions that apply child-friendly principles tend to be more responsive to gender issues. An inclusive learning environment provides space for children to express themselves without stereotypical pressure. This reinforces the argument that gender-responsive education and child protection are two interrelated aspects.

A gender equality-based education approach is able to increase children's overall participation and learning achievement. When children are treated fairly, individual potential can develop optimally without being constrained by narrow

¹²Pipin Afindra Putri, et al. "Male and Female Teachers' Perspectives on Gender Roles in Early Childhood Education." *Journal of Children's Education*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2024, pp. 158–66, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpa.v13i2.447>.

social constructs. These findings reinforce the relevance of applying a gender perspective in children's education.¹³

Gender inequality in children's education is often latent and difficult to identify. Discrimination does not always appear in the form of formal policies, but in micro-practices such as language, symbols, and attitudes. Therefore, the analysis of gender constructs requires a critical and reflective approach.

The transformation of gender construction in children's education requires changes at the level of curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional management. Partial change is not enough to address systemic inequality. Strong institutional commitment is needed to realize gender-fair education.

In the academic context, this research contributes to the development of gender studies and children's education by emphasizing aspects of social construction in educational institutions. The discussion of the results of the research enriched the theoretical perspective on the relationship between gender, education, and children's rights.

Practical implications for education policymakers. The integration of gender perspectives in the planning and evaluation of children's education is an urgent need. Gender-responsive policies can be a strategic instrument in preventing discrimination from an early age.

Children's education is a strategic space in building awareness of gender equality. Educational interventions at this stage have a more effective impact than interventions at the next age level. Therefore, children's education must be a priority in the gender mainstreaming agenda.

The limitation of this study lies in the use of library sources that may not be fully representative of educational practices in all local contexts. Nevertheless, the findings obtained remain relevant as a conceptual and reflective basis in understanding the construction of gender in children's education.

¹³Sri Wachyunni Heriberta, Mukhlash Abrar, and Zulkarnain. *Gender-Responsive Education: An Introduction*. Deepublish, 2024. A guidebook that provides the basic concept and application of gender-responsive education in the formal and non-formal education systems.

The results and discussion of this study confirm that gender construction in children's education is still a serious challenge in realizing equal access and treatment in educational institutions. Transformation efforts require synergy between policies, pedagogical practices, and social awareness to create a fair, inclusive, and gender-equitable children's education system.

The Impact and Contribution of Research in the World of Education

This research has a significant theoretical impact by emphasizing that children's education is a strategic space in the formation of gender construction. The research findings reinforce the argument that educational values, norms, and practices from an early age play an important role in building awareness of gender equality and justice. Thus, this research contributes to enriching the study of gender theory in the context of children's education.

In the academic realm, this research expands the perspective of education studies by integrating gender approaches and children's rights. This integration provides a more comprehensive analytical framework in understanding the relationship between gender construction, educational practices, and the fulfillment of children's rights. This contribution is relevant for the development of interdisciplinary studies in the fields of education, social, and public policy.

Practically, this research has an impact on the development of a more gender-responsive children's education curriculum. The results of the study can be used as a reference in reviewing teaching materials, learning methods, and educational media so that they are free from gender stereotypes and biases. A gender-equitable curriculum has the potential to create an equal learning experience for all children.

For educational institutions, this research contributes to encouraging the creation of an inclusive and child-friendly school culture. The research findings confirm the importance of a learning environment that is safe, equitable, and respects diversity. A gender-responsive educational environment allows children to develop their potential optimally without the pressure of discriminatory social construction.

This research also has an impact on improving the professionalism of educators. Teachers and education staff are expected to be able to increase literacy and gender awareness in learning practices. With adequate understanding, educators can act as agents of change in preventing the reproduction of gender inequality in the classroom.

In the context of policy, this research contributes to the formulation and implementation of education policies that are more applicable and contextual. The resulting recommendations can help policymakers bridge the gap between normative regulations and educational practices in the field, especially related to gender mainstreaming and child protection.

Broadly, this research contributes to the transformation of the world of education as an instrument of social change. By placing gender equality and child protection as fundamental values, children's education can be the foundation for building a just, inclusive, and sustainable society. This impact confirms the relevance of research in answering educational challenges in the modern era.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that gender construction in children's education is still taking place systematically through curriculum, pedagogical interactions, and institutional policies. Children's educational institutions act as agents of value socialization that not only transmit knowledge, but also reproduce gender norms and expectations that develop in society. This condition shows that children's education is not completely free from gender bias.

The next conclusion shows that gender inequality in children's education is often latent and internalized in daily practice. Different treatment of boys and girls affects learning participation, confidence building, and the development of children's potential. These impacts are long-term and have implications for children's educational choices and social roles in the future.

This research emphasizes that efforts to realize equal access and treatment in children's education require a comprehensive and sustainable approach. Children's education must be positioned as a strategic space to build the value of

gender justice and equality from an early age through the integration of gender perspectives in all aspects of education delivery.

The theoretical implications of this study reinforce the relevance of the theory of social construction of gender, critical education, and children's rights in analyzing children's educational practices. This research shows that gender inequality is not natural, but is formed through an educational process that takes place continuously. These findings enrich the treasures of scholarship in gender studies and children's education.

Practically, this research implies the need for gender mainstreaming in the planning and implementation of children's education. Educational institutions and educators need to review curriculum, teaching materials, and learning practices to be more gender-responsive and child-friendly. The implementation of gender-fair education is expected to be able to create an equal learning experience for all children.

The policy implications of this study emphasize the importance of translating gender equality regulations into concrete and applicable educational practices. Policymakers are expected not only to set normative rules, but also to provide a monitoring mechanism and strengthen the capacity of educators in implementing inclusive and gender-equitable children's education.

Researchers are then advised to develop this study through empirical approaches, such as field research with qualitative or quantitative methods, in order to obtain a more factual picture of gender construction practices in children's educational institutions. This approach can reinforce the conceptual findings resulting from the literature review.

Further research can examine gender constructs in more specific contexts, such as in specific types of educational institutions or regions with different sociocultural characteristics. The comparative approach is expected to be able to uncover the variation in gender-responsive education practices in more depth.

Subsequent researchers are also advised to explore the role of other actors, such as parents, communities, and media, in shaping the gender construct of children interacting with formal education. A more integrative study is expected

to produce more comprehensive recommendations for the development of a fair, inclusive, and child-oriented education system.

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