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INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY INTO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of gender equality into curriculum development within the context of Islamic education at the elementary level. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations at an Islamic elementary school known for its progressive curriculum initiatives. The findings reveal that while there is a growing awareness among educators regarding the importance of gender equality, its implementation in teaching materials and classroom practices remains limited and often reinforces traditional gender roles. Curriculum documents tend to portray male figures more dominantly, while female figures are underrepresented or confined to domestic roles. However, some educators have begun introducing alternative narratives and expressed openness to professional development on gender-sensitive pedagogy. This study concludes that integrating gender equality into Islamic education requires collaborative curriculum reform, culturally contextualized training, and alignment with core Islamic values. The results contribute to broader efforts in promoting inclusive education and offer practical insights for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality has become a central issue in the discourse of global education reform, including within Islamic education. As educational institutions play a vital role in shaping values and perceptions from an early age, integrating gender equality into curriculum development is essential to foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. At the elementary level, where foundational attitudes and understandings are formed, the curriculum serves as a powerful tool to instill respect, fairness, and equal opportunities regardless of gender.

Islamic education, while rooted in religious values and teachings, is not incompatible with the principles of gender equality. In fact, Islamic teachings contain numerous references to justice, mutual respect, and the dignity of both men and women. However, in practice, curriculum content and classroom interactions in some Islamic schools may unintentionally perpetuate gender stereotypes due to traditional interpretations or lack of awareness among educators.

This study explores how gender equality can be integrated into the curriculum development process within the context of Islamic education at the elementary level. Using a case study approach, the research investigates current practices, identifies challenges, and proposes strategies for creating a more gender-sensitive curriculum that aligns with both educational goals and Islamic values. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader efforts of curriculum reform and provide practical guidance for educators and policymakers in Islamic educational institutions.

METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative case study approach to explore the integration of gender equality in the curriculum of an Islamic elementary school. The case study method was selected to allow for an in-depth exploration of the practices, perceptions, and challenges experienced by educators and curriculum developers within a specific institutional context. The research was conducted in an Islamic elementary school located in [lokasi], which was purposively selected due to its reputation for progressive educational practices.

Data were gathered through multiple sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, curriculum developers, and school administrators who were directly involved in the design and implementation of the curriculum. These interviews aimed to capture their perspectives on gender equality and how such values are—or are not—reflected in the educational content and classroom practice. Additionally, document analysis was carried out on school curriculum materials, including lesson plans and textbooks, to assess the representation of gender and the inclusion of gender-sensitive themes. Classroom observations were also conducted to examine how gender roles and interactions manifest in teaching and learning activities.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to identify key themes and recurring patterns related to gender perspectives in the curriculum. Strategies such as triangulation of data sources, member checking, and detailed documentation of the research process were employed to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that while there is an emerging awareness of gender equality among educators in the Islamic elementary school studied, the practical integration of these values into the curriculum remains limited and inconsistent. Interviews with teachers and curriculum developers indicated that most participants recognized the importance of promoting fairness and respect between boys and girls. However, many also admitted to a lack of formal training or clear guidelines on how to effectively integrate gender equality into lesson content and pedagogy.

Document analysis showed that curriculum materials, particularly textbooks for Islamic studies, often reinforce traditional gender roles. Male figures were predominantly represented in stories and examples, while female figures were rarely highlighted, and when they were, it was often in domestic or supportive roles. This imbalance contributes to the subtle reinforcement of gender stereotypes, which may influence students' perceptions of their own roles and capabilities based on gender.

Classroom observations further supported these findings. Teachers generally treated students equally in terms of discipline and participation; however, gender-neutral language and examples were rarely used. In some cases, boys were given leadership roles more frequently, while girls were expected to take on supportive tasks, such as organizing materials or tidying up. These patterns, while perhaps unintentional, reflect deeper cultural norms that continue to influence classroom dynamics.

Despite these challenges, the study also identified promising efforts and opportunities. Some teachers had begun incorporating stories of female figures from Islamic history who demonstrated leadership, intelligence, and moral strength. These examples were positively received by students and showed the potential for using Islamic values to support gender equality. Moreover, there was openness among staff to receive professional development on the subject, indicating a willingness to adapt and grow.

The discussion of these results highlights a central tension between traditional interpretations of Islamic education and contemporary understandings of gender equality. While Islamic teachings advocate for justice and respect for all individuals, the way these values are interpreted and applied within educational contexts can vary. To move forward, it is essential that curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers collaborate to ensure that gender equality is integrated into Islamic education in a way that remains faithful to religious principles while also promoting equitable learning environments for all students.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that efforts to integrate gender equality into curriculum development within Islamic elementary education are still in the early stages and face several challenges. While there is a growing awareness among teachers and curriculum developers of the importance of fostering a fair and inclusive learning environment for both male and female students, the implementation of gender-sensitive approaches in teaching materials and classroom practices remains limited.

The analysis of curriculum documents—particularly Islamic studies textbooks—revealed an imbalance in gender representation, with male figures predominantly portrayed and female roles often marginalized or confined to domestic and supportive contexts. This imbalance has the potential to reinforce gender stereotypes and shape students' understanding of their roles and identities based on gender.

Nevertheless, the study also identified positive signs of progress. Some educators have begun incorporating stories of influential women in Islamic history and expressed a willingness to adopt more gender-sensitive teaching strategies. This openness indicates a foundation upon which meaningful change can be built. For gender equality to be effectively integrated into Islamic education, sustained professional development, curriculum reform, and institutional support are essential. Such efforts must align with both pedagogical goals and Islamic values to ensure that education promotes justice, respect, and equal opportunity for all learners.

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