

## Effectiveness of Training for Peer Counselors to Improve Gender Awareness

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to discover the effectiveness of training for trainers of peer counselors to improve gender awareness at two Islamic Universities in Banjarmasin City. The study employed a qualitative approach with the true experimental design in the form of a Pre-test Post-test Control Group Design. The study object was gender awareness. Data were collected using the gender awareness scale. The study was conducted in Banjarmasin on students of the Counseling Department of State Islamic University Antasari Banjarmasin and Islamic University of Kalimantan Muhammad Arsyad Al Banjary. The data were analyzed using a T-test. The study discovered that training for trainers of peer counselors is effective to improve gender awareness observed from the significant test difference between the experiment and control groups.

**Keywords:** Peer Counselor, Gender Awareness



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## Introduction

Universities have a crucial role in building comprehension concerning gender justice and equality. Through *Presidential Instruction (Inpres)* Number 9 of 2000 on gender mainstreaming in national development, the academic community is obliged to support the program. Campuses can contribute to shaping knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect gender equality and justice, both in academic and daily life contexts (Kusmanto, 2017., Indriyani, 2021).

In practice, universities cannot be separated from the problem of gender inequality and injustice. Gender inequality in universities can be found in **first**, inequality in access to education, e.g., the division of departments. For example, engineering faculties are dominated by male students, while female students

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dominate the social or economic departments (Aruan, 2019, *m-edukasi.kemdikbud.go.id*, ). The **second** examples are the unequal right to be actively involved in student organisations for women students (Faristiana, 2020, Antasari, 2022). The data are similar to the lower percentage of women (36 %) in senior academics across 138 universities in the world (<https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/>, 2022). In general, strategic positions such as organisational leaders are held by men. Women have to fight and face challenges related to doubts about their capacity to become leaders. The **third** example is sexual violence within the scope of education, which occurs mostly in universities with female student victims (Achmadi, 2021, Komnas Perempuan, 2021). This is very likely to happen because of power relations, inadequate handling, and strong campus bureaucracy dan untuk memertahankan reputasi kampus; Handayani & Marcoes (2019) and Fitri. et. all (2021) mentioned that it is due to the limited insight, perspective, and understanding of campus leaders

Efforts for gender equality awareness must be started from the mistake of perception and provide critical and objective comprehension of the gender concept. At Islamic Universities, the general concept must be related to Islamic understanding. In this case, it is necessary to clarify the position of the gender concept in Islam correctly and scientifically. If this issue can be resolved, then providing training on gender equality will not be hindered by debatable issues. For example, (1) the gender concept or feminism is considered a product of the secular Western world that emphasizes unlimited freedom, (2) studying the gender concept will make women forget their nature, and (3) feminism is rather destroying the life order instead of empowering women. Rara (2019) and Luviana (2021) give some conclusion that, (1) the gender concept or feminism is considered a product of the secular Western world that emphasizes unlimited freedom (2) studying the gender concept will make women forget their nature, and (3) feminism is rather destroying the life order instead of empowering women.

*Awareness* refers to the correct perception of the situation and facts and critical understanding based on proper knowledge. To achieve awareness at the above level, a comprehensive internal psychological process and a complex external process are needed. Changing perceptions and awareness requires a specific approach unattainable through lectures, seminars, or face-to-face lectures. The learning model in the form of *training/workshops* is expected to facilitate the above objectives. The hallmark of training is the process of transferring abilities or skills through repeated practice or activities. Gender equality awareness training in this study is specific to the *training for trainer* type.

*The training for trainers* is intended to allow gender equality awareness training to be disseminated to students. To that end, the training is also aimed at peer counselors at two Islamic universities in Banjarmasin, specifically at the Counseling Service Bureau (BLBK) at the Tarbiyah and the Teacher Training Faculty of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin and Islamic University (Uniska) Banjarmasin.

The selection of peer counselors was based on several reasons, i.e., peer counselors are students of the Counseling Department equipped with counseling knowledge and skills. In this case, peer counselors have a knowledge base, counseling communication, listening, empathy, and problem-solving skills (Fahyuni, 2021; Astiti, 2019) that enable them to become trainers as role models for peers. Another reason is that the gender equality approach can be used as a model for assessment, problem identification, and finding a fair solution for perpetrators and victims, particularly in cases related to gender issues on campus.

Understanding gender equality awareness is an effective entry point in achieving student independence goals. Students are facilitated to be independent, by being aware of external and internal matters that unconsciously and indirectly hinder the dynamics and processes. Externally, i.e., the practice of gender injustice on campus, internally, i.e., the awareness that students must improve themselves to feel equal based on the business rights they must strive for. The experience of self-control needs to be cultivated as part of student life skills. It can be developed through activities aimed at increasing gender sensitivity and sensitivity in students.

In conclusion, awareness of gender equality is one of the important abilities of students to become independent and empower students. In this case, at the Islamic universities in Banjarmasin. An effective way to achieve it is through the active role of students guided by their peers. Peer counselors can provide awareness, understanding, and skills. It will begin by providing training for peer counselors who will later become role models and provide guidance and counseling for other students. Based on this conclusion, the researcher raised the title of *Training of Trainer* of Peer Counselors for Gender Equality Awareness in Islamic Universities Students in Banjarmasin.

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## Method

The study employed a quantitative approach with the *true* experimental *design* in the form of the *Pre-test Post-test Control Group Design*. The study object was gender awareness. Data were collected using a gender awareness scale comprising general concept knowledge and gender problem analysis indicators. The scale testing criteria state that, if *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient is  $\geq 0.60$ , the scale item is declared reliable or consistent in measuring the variable. The reliability test calculation results for 30 items of the gender awareness comprehension scale were 0.650. Therefore, the gender awareness scale is reliable or consistent to be used as the study instrument. The study was conducted in Banjarmasin City on students of the Counseling Department of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin and Islamic University of Kalimantan Muhammad Arsyad Al Banjary. The data analysis technique was a T-test.

## Results and Discussion

The study implementation procedure followed the training manual for using the understanding of gender equality awareness materials, i.e., (1) introduction, the preliminary component containing the gender awareness comprehension, (2) the implementation stage of providing the material, and (3) the final stage, it concludes the content and simulation. The experiment was carried out for four meetings. The first meeting administered the pre-test, while the second and third meetings were filled with material, and the fourth meeting conducted reflection and administered the post-test.

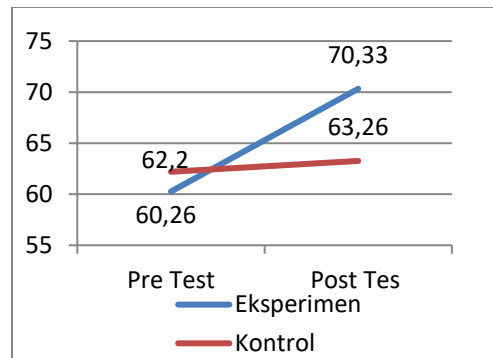
System of training is made to make the training could complete the goals. But, the company who held the training should to know capability of training's participant is different each other (Charismi, et al, 2016). The training activities in this study were carried out starting from the planning stage, the implementation process, and the evaluation of the training. The planning stage is carried out after a training needs analysis is conducted. The first step in training planning is to formulate training objectives. The implementation stage is the process of implementing the training concept to the participants. The series of training activities held refers to the previously designed planning. The curriculum, implementation methods and flow of implementation must be adjusted to the objectives, namely the achievement of competencies that have been applied. The training evaluation stage is the process of collecting data in order to measure the effectiveness of the training program. This evaluation aims to measure the success of the process and the achievement of the objectives and competencies required in the training (Noe, 2005).

The concept of gender awareness studied in the training includes gender awareness in Islam and the development of gender awareness in Indonesia. Gender equality is the creation of equal conditions and status of men and women to obtain opportunities and enjoy their rights as human beings. In other words, there is an equal assessment and appreciation of the similarities and differences between men and women and their various roles (Afif, et al, 2020; Fahyuni, 2001; Rahmah, 2019). Peer counselors' learning experiences include the development of gender equality in Indonesia. In Indonesia, the gender equality movement began in the 1920s. Beginning with individual initiatives that made R.A. Kartini a pioneer, until now the movement that intends to free women from all forms of discrimination is in its fourth stage. The women's movement reached the lowest levels such as Islamic boarding schools and also the birth of social organizations that focus on women's issues. This period lasted from the 1990s until now. In this period there is also a synergy between secular feminists and Muslim feminists. Their ultimate goal is the same, namely the elimination of discrimination against women for any reason. Feminists of this period include Mrs. Sinta Nuriyah Wahid, Mansour Faqih, Lies Marcos-Natsir, KH. Husein Muhammad, Nasaruddin Umar, Siti Musda Mulia, and Ruhaini Dzuhayatin (Taufiq, 2007).

The gender awareness material connected in the Islamic view of Guidance and Counseling is essentially an effort to help individuals to develop their nature, and return to their faith-*fitrah* in a way that empowers their various natures. Each individual has physical, spiritual, *nafs*, and faith traits that will function properly and correctly if the individual learns and carries out the demands of Allah and the Messenger. The ultimate goal is that the existing nature can guide individuals to be safe and obtain true happiness in this world and the hereafter (Sutoyo, 2003). Gender awareness in Islam also adheres to the principles of gender awareness in the Islamic perspective, there are 5 principles including: men and women are equally servants of Allah, as

caliphs on earth, as those who accept the covenant or equally pledge the existence of Allah, as servants who have responsibilities, and as potential achievers (Umar, 2001).

Based on the pre-test result of the gender awareness scale, of 15 experiment group members, one subject was in a low category, 13 subjects were in the moderate category, and one subject was in the high category. In the post-test result of the experimental group, 11 subjects were in the high category and four subjects were in the moderate category. The pre-test and post-test results in the control group were the same, i.e., 14 subjects were in the moderate category and one subject was in the high category.



**Figure 1. Comparison of the Average Pre-test and Post Test Result on the Students Gender Awareness Scale between Experiment Group and Control Group**

The figure represents the training for trainers of peer counselors is effective to improve gender awareness observed from the significant score difference between the experiment and control groups. It is supported by the T-test result with a sig. value of 0.000, less than 0.005. Therefore, it concludes that *training for trainers of peer counselors* is effective to improve gender awareness.

Peer counselors who participated in gender awareness training in Islam obtained the highest score increase change in the indicator of knowledge of gender concepts and analysis of subordination issues to support the realization of equality between people. Peer counseling, in particular, doesn't concentrate on content evaluation; instead, it concentrates on the thinking, feeling, and decision-making processes. Peer counseling helps young people develop the experiences they already have, are good at, and need, especially respect (Suranata, 2013). Peer counselors gain experience regarding the analysis of examples of gender awareness issues that occur in the living environment and in universities. Increasing the ability of peer counselors to understand the concept of gender equality is in accordance with the opinion of Cowie and Wellace (2000, Butler, et al, 2022) that peer support helps or provides benefits to adolescents who have social problems and family problems, can help improve the school climate, and provide social skills training. Peer counseling is a form of intentional and systematic psychological education. Peer counseling allows counselees to have skills to implement experiences of independence and self-control that are very meaningful to adolescents.

The effectiveness of peer counselor training of trainers implemented effectively to increase gender awareness is influenced by student characteristics. According to Students can be defined as individuals who are studying at the tertiary level, both public and private or other institutions that are at the same level as universities. Students are considered to have a high level of intellect, intelligence in thinking and planning in action. Critical thinking and acting quickly and precisely are traits that tend to be inherent in every student, which are complementary principles. Students are human beings who are created to always think complementary (Siswoyo, 2007). The role of universities, government and society is needed in efforts to build student character. Culture, the academic environment with all its tools, regulations and systems for organizing higher education and the social environment have their own role in shaping the character of Indonesian students (Manurung & Rahmadi, 2017).

The effectiveness of peer counselor training of trainers carried out effectively to increase gender awareness is also influenced by the application of the concept of gender awareness in the community environment.

According Warliah (2017) Gender has been used to distinguish between the differences between men and women from the social-broad spectrum. Gender is related to the general public's perception and expectation of what it means to be a woman or a man, respectively. Gender represents a social development from the point of view of the majority, hence gender varies from day to day and is not always universal. As found in the research findings of Qomariyah and Bahagijo, et al (2019, 2022) that public perceptions of the concept of gender equality are still low, but have been widely practiced and accepted by the community. This is evidenced by the fulfillment of equal children's rights in the field of education, the division of domestic duties in the family equally by boys and girls, freedom to make choices and express opinions, and freedom in family decision making. Gender equality in the family is considered good by the community as long as it does not conflict with human nature and religious values prevailing in society (Oláh, L.S., Kotowska, I.E., Richter, R, 2018).

Based on preliminary research, it was found that the perception of gender equality is still low among students. This will cause students to not be able to see problem solutions based on a gender perspective. Peer counselors who have attended training can be a bridge for the practice of Guidance and Counseling Services that are more gender responsive. In general, this research can contribute to Guidance and Counseling education in Higher Education, namely through internalizing a more equitable gender concept that is gender inclusive in the theories taught, especially in the context of counseling that is more empowering for women's groups. In particular, this research and the resulting outputs (research reports, modules and books) in becoming a source or material that helps counseling service units in higher education in providing services and counseling that lead to an understanding of gender equality that is not only beneficial for female students but also male students. For peer counselors in Islamic universities, the provision of gender understanding and awareness is expected to further empower and add counseling skills with the specificity of gender issues. For female student counselors, they will be more able to see the potential and opportunities as female students so that they are more capable and confident in overcoming problems and contributing more to their immediate environment.

## Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion, there is a higher gender awareness improvement in the experimental group than in the control group. It is affected by the learning experience provided in the gender awareness training in the experiment group. Thus, the counseling applied will be able to further empower the counselee so that it can support problem alleviation, improve academic processes and achievements as well as empower their capacity and positive character. Both counselors and student counsees increased gender perspective will make them more empowered, more confident to be able to make themselves more fully functional and do better and more productive for the environment, both in college and later when they have become alumni of the Islamic Religious College.

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