



IMPLEMENTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING (PUG) POLICY IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL

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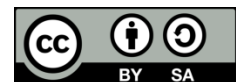
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ABSTRACT

Gender mainstreaming is a strategic policy for integrating gender equality into educational governance and practice. This study examines how Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) policy is implemented in a private secondary school, SMP Swasta IT Al Fajar Tanjung Morawa, Indonesia, and identifies the factors that support and constrain its implementation. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observation, and document review involving ten purposively selected informants, namely the principal, vice principal for student affairs, guidance and counseling teacher, teachers, students, administrative staff, and parents. Guided by policy implementation theory, the study finds that gender mainstreaming is practiced mainly as a moral commitment to fair treatment rather than as a formal and measurable institutional policy. Although school actors generally support gender equality, implementation remains limited by the absence of technical guidelines, gender-responsive planning, dedicated budget allocation, and sex-disaggregated data. The analytical novelty of this study lies in its focus on a private secondary school, a setting that is often underexplored despite having different supervision patterns, institutional autonomy, and resource conditions from public schools. The findings show that private-school cases are important for understanding how national gender policy is translated unevenly at the micro-institutional level. Strengthening internal policy instruments, organizational capacity, and monitoring systems is therefore crucial for advancing sustainable gender-responsive school governance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a strategic arena for advancing social justice, inclusion, and human development. Within this context, gender equality remains a central concern because educational institutions often continue to reproduce stereotypes, unequal treatment, and asymmetrical access to participation and opportunity. Gender bias in education does not only appear in formal rules, but also in classroom interaction, school culture, extracurricular participation, and the allocation of institutional support. For this reason, education is increasingly understood not merely as a

channel for knowledge transmission, but also as a transformative space for internalizing equality and challenging discriminatory social norms (Sumar, 2015; Borge & Bent, 2015; Hakim, 2016).

In Indonesia, the state has formally adopted Gender Mainstreaming (Pengarusutamaan Gender/PUG) as a national strategy to integrate gender perspectives into all stages of development. This commitment is institutionally grounded in Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000, which mandates all sectors to incorporate gender analysis into planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In the education sector, this framework is reinforced by Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 84 of 2008, which provides an operational basis for embedding gender responsiveness into educational governance and service delivery. Normatively, these regulations indicate that gender equality in education is no longer an optional ethical aspiration, but a policy obligation that should be translated into institutional programs, administrative systems, and pedagogical practices (Tigayanti et al., 2014; Valentina, 2019; Nurhaeni, 2022).

However, empirical studies consistently show that the implementation of gender mainstreaming in education remains uneven and frequently symbolic. Previous studies in different Indonesian contexts have found that PUG is often understood only as a general principle of fairness, without being institutionalized through clear technical guidelines, gender-responsive planning, budget support, or evaluation mechanisms. Research by Tigayanti et al. (2014), Martiany (2011), Azmy and Pertiwi (2020), Harefa et al. (2024), and Hentihu et al. (2021) demonstrates that many educational institutions still rely on individual awareness rather than organizational systems in implementing gender equality. Yet, an important unresolved gap remains in the literature: most existing studies discuss gender mainstreaming at the general policy level or in broader educational settings, while limited attention has been given to how this policy is interpreted and operationalized specifically in private secondary schools, where governance structures, resource arrangements, and patterns of supervision may differ substantially from public schools.

This gap is analytically important because private schools occupy a distinctive institutional position in the education system. Compared with public schools, private institutions often have greater managerial autonomy but more varied access to policy supervision, financial support, and technical assistance. As a result, national gender policy may be translated differently at the school level. This study focuses on SMP Swasta IT Al Fajar Tanjung Morawa, Deli Serdang Regency, where preliminary observations indicate several issues relevant to gender responsiveness, including unequal sanitation arrangements, limited participation of female students in certain activities, gender-biased disciplinary tendencies, and the absence of formal school programs specifically oriented toward gender mainstreaming. These conditions suggest that gender equality may be practiced informally in everyday interactions, while still lacking institutional reinforcement through policy instruments, organizational routines, and gender-sensitive infrastructure (Putri & Yasin, 2025; Savitri et al., 2024).

To analyze this issue more systematically, the study employs the policy implementation framework of Van Meter and Van Horn (1985), which emphasizes the interrelationship among policy standards and objectives, resources, communication, organizational characteristics, socio-political environment, and implementers' dispositions. This framework is relevant because gender mainstreaming in schools cannot be assessed solely by the existence of formal regulations; it must also be examined through the capacity of institutions to translate policy mandates into sustainable and measurable practices. The novelty of this study therefore lies not only in its empirical focus on a private secondary school, but also in its effort to position gender mainstreaming as a question of micro-institutional governance, rather than merely as a moral discourse of equal treatment. In this sense, the study extends prior scholarship by showing how institutional context shapes the actual implementation of gender-responsive policy in education.

Accordingly, this research aims to analyze the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming policy in private secondary education, with specific reference to SMP Swasta IT Al Fajar Tanjung Morawa. The study examines how gender perspectives are reflected in school policy, classroom practice, school management, student activities, and the provision of facilities, while also identifying the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence implementation. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on policy implementation by demonstrating that the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming depends on the extent to which equality values are institutionalized within school governance structures. Practically, the findings are expected to provide insights for school leaders, local education authorities, and policymakers in designing more systematic strategies for strengthening gender-responsive education in private-school settings.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a field-based approach to examine how Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) policy was interpreted and implemented in a private secondary school setting. The research was conducted at SMP Swasta IT Al Fajar Tanjung Morawa, Deli Serdang Regency,

North Sumatra, from May 2025 to February 2026. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand policy implementation as a contextual, institutional, and lived process rather than as a measurable outcome alone. In this approach, the researcher functioned as the primary research instrument, enabling direct engagement with participants and the school environment to capture meanings, practices, and institutional dynamics related to gender responsiveness in school governance and everyday educational interaction (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The informants were selected purposively based on their positional relevance, involvement in school governance, and direct experience with educational practices related to gender equality. A total of ten informants were included because they were considered sufficient to represent the main institutional and social actors involved in the phenomenon under study. These consisted of the principal as the key informant, due to responsibility for overall school policy; the vice principal for student affairs and the guidance and counseling teacher as main informants, because of their direct roles in student management and policy implementation; and supporting informants comprising teachers, students, administrative staff, and parents, who were included to provide complementary perspectives on classroom practice, school services, daily interaction, and family-based perceptions of gender treatment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted semi-structured to allow flexibility while maintaining relevance to the research focus; observation was used to examine classroom interaction, student participation, use of facilities, and school routines; and documents such as school regulations, activity reports, and administrative records were reviewed to identify whether gender perspectives had been formally incorporated into institutional planning and practice (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously throughout the research process, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were coded and organized into thematic categories derived from the policy implementation framework, particularly policy standards, resources, organizational characteristics, implementers' disposition, and communication. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation by comparing information from school leaders, teachers, students, staff, and parents; method triangulation by cross-checking evidence from interviews, observations, and documents; and source verification through repeated comparison between field findings and institutional records. Member checking was also undertaken selectively by reconfirming key interpretations with several core informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation remained consistent with participants' intended meanings. Through these procedures, the study aimed to produce findings that were credible, contextually grounded, and analytically relevant to understanding gender mainstreaming at the micro-institutional level in private secondary education (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This research was conducted at SMP Swasta IT Al Fajar, located in Tanjung Morawa, Deli Serdang Regency, an area characterized by industrial activity and agricultural settlements. The school primarily serves students from lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds whose parents work as factory laborers, farmers, and small-scale traders. Despite these socioeconomic constraints, the school demonstrates a strong commitment to providing inclusive and character-based education. In 2025, the institution initiated an educational transformation through the implementation of a Deep Learning approach emphasizing mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. This pedagogical orientation is integrated with national student profile standards and local cultural values, thereby creating a contextual foundation for examining the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) within the school environment.

The findings indicate that the school community generally understands Gender Mainstreaming as the principle of equal treatment between male and female students. School leaders and teachers interpret PUG primarily as an ethical obligation to avoid discrimination rather than as a structured public policy framework requiring systematic operationalization. This conceptualization reflects a normative alignment with the general objective of gender equality; however, it lacks a clear translation into formal standards and measurable indicators. According to Van Meter and Van Horn's policy implementation model, the clarity of policy standards and objectives plays a decisive role in shaping the behavior of implementers and the consistency of policy execution. In this case, the absence of explicit institutional benchmarks has resulted in the interpretation of PUG as a moral guideline rather than a strategic institutional target. Consequently, although the school demonstrates an expressed commitment to fairness, this commitment remains embedded in individual attitudes rather than being institutionalized through formal policy instruments.

In relation to resource availability, the school has utilized its human resources in an inclusive manner, involving teachers and staff in planning and implementing school programs without gender-based differentiation. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that none of the school personnel have received specialized training in gender analysis or gender-responsive educational planning. This condition limits their capacity to translate normative commitments into technically grounded interventions. From a financial perspective, no specific budget allocation is dedicated to Gender Mainstreaming initiatives. School funding priorities are concentrated on general instructional needs and operational expenditures, thereby constraining the development of targeted programs such as gender-sensitivity training, structured socialization activities, or curriculum innovation informed by gender perspectives. In terms of informational resources, the school lacks technical guidelines or planning documents that explicitly incorporate gender analysis into the School Work Plan and annual programs. Within the framework proposed by Van Meter and Van Horn, these limitations indicate that inadequate financial and informational resources undermine policy consistency and weaken the sustainability of implementation, despite the relative adequacy of human resources.

With respect to classroom practices, empirical evidence shows that teachers provide relatively equal opportunities for participation to both male and female students. Students reported that teachers do not differentiate in assigning tasks, inviting responses, or organizing group work. This suggests that, at the level of daily interaction, the principle of gender equality is largely respected. However, the integration of gender perspectives into learning content and instructional strategies remains minimal. Teachers do not systematically address gender stereotypes or encourage critical reflection on gender relations within subject matter. As a result, Gender Mainstreaming is implemented implicitly through behavioral fairness rather than explicitly through pedagogical design. This condition indicates that while the organizational culture supports equitable treatment, it has not yet evolved into a gender-responsive instructional policy. The absence of structured pedagogical guidelines causes implementation to depend heavily on individual teacher awareness and values rather than on institutional standards.

In the domain of school management and governance, school leaders and staff demonstrate positive dispositions toward the principles of gender equality. Task distribution and administrative responsibilities are determined primarily by competence rather than by gender. No evidence of resistance to Gender Mainstreaming was found among implementers. Nevertheless, communication regarding the policy remains informal and unstructured. There are no institutional forums, internal regulations, or systematic dissemination mechanisms specifically addressing Gender Mainstreaming as a school policy. Communication occurs implicitly through general ethical norms and leadership practices rather than through explicit directives or strategic planning. According to Van Meter and Van Horn, effective policy communication is essential for ensuring uniform interpretation and coordinated action among implementers. In this case, the absence of formal communication channels has resulted in fragmented and individualized policy execution, reducing the potential for coherent institutional transformation.

Regarding environmental conditions, the school has provided basic facilities that reflect sensitivity to gender-specific needs, particularly through the provision of separate sanitation facilities for male and female students. These facilities contribute to students' physical comfort and sense of safety. However, infrastructure planning is not informed by gender-disaggregated data or systematic gender needs assessment. Facilities are developed based on general considerations rather than on gender-responsive planning principles. Social norms also influence the use of space, although no formal restrictions are imposed on access based on gender. This finding suggests that environmental support for Gender Mainstreaming remains partial and pragmatic rather than strategic and analytical. Within Van Meter and Van Horn's framework, such environmental conditions can constrain the effectiveness of policy implementation when not aligned with institutional policy objectives.

Overall, the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming at SMP Swasta IT Al Fajar can be characterized as normative and practice-oriented rather than institutional and policy-driven. The school has successfully fostered an atmosphere of fairness and mutual respect, which supports gender equality in everyday interactions. However, this achievement is not yet reinforced by formal policy instruments, structured planning, or systematic evaluation mechanisms. From the perspective of Van Meter and Van Horn's model, weaknesses are evident in the domains of policy standards, resource support, communication mechanisms, and organizational formalization. Implementation is driven primarily by individual ethical awareness rather than by institutional governance structures, resulting in limited sustainability and measurability.

These findings imply that strengthening Gender Mainstreaming in the school context requires a shift from normative commitment to structured institutionalization. The development of operational guidelines for gender-responsive education, the provision of capacity-building programs for teachers and administrators, the allocation of dedicated financial resources, and the integration of gender indicators into planning and evaluation systems are essential steps toward enhancing policy effectiveness. Through these

measures, Gender Mainstreaming can move beyond moral intention and become an integral component of school governance and instructional practice, ensuring consistency, accountability, and long-term impact.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) policy at SMP Swasta IT Al Fajar Tanjung Morawa remains largely normative and practice-based rather than fully institutionalized within a formal and measurable governance framework. Although school actors demonstrate supportive attitudes toward gender equality and apply principles of fair treatment in everyday educational interaction, the policy has not yet been translated into clear internal regulations, gender-responsive planning, dedicated budget allocation, systematic monitoring, or the use of sex-disaggregated data. Theoretically, this study contributes to policy implementation scholarship by showing that the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in education depends not only on regulatory mandates but also on the micro-institutional capacity of schools to formalize equality values into organizational structures and routines. Practically, the findings highlight the need for private schools to strengthen internal policy instruments, staff capacity, communication mechanisms, and evaluation systems in order to advance sustainable gender-responsive governance. As a single-case qualitative study, however, this research is limited in its contextual scope and does not seek broad generalization; therefore, future studies are recommended to undertake comparative analyses across private and public schools, or across different regional and institutional contexts, in order to deepen understanding of how gender mainstreaming policies are variably interpreted and implemented in the education sector.

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