Do We Still Need Women/Gender and Child Protection Research Centers in Universities? Notes And Critiques

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to address a critical question: Do universities still require a Women/Gender and Child Protection Research Centre? The core thesis is that various policies, particularly those affecting women and children, frequently disregard study findings. Whereas the number of incidents of violence against women and children continues to rise year after year, in lockstep with the growing body of research on violence. This study is divided into two sections to address this subject. The first section will examine the women's research center’s role in Indonesia. By examining the period from 1970 to 1998, this article demonstrates how women's research center’s influenced Indonesian policymakers. The second section of the study, which spans the reform era to the present, will demonstrate how Indonesia's separation and fragmentation of research and policy results in varied research findings ending up in libraries or scientific journals but having no impact on policy. By focusing on research center’s at eighteen universities and doing ethnographic research, this study elucidates some of the reasons why research has not resulted in significant policy change. There is a disconnect; research institutions have long since abandoned their duty as knowledge producers; research is no longer regarded as a policy reference. On the other hand, fragmentation occurs when diverse research institutions do not collaborate, resulting in nearly identical or irrelevant research. Finally, this article identifies several opportunities for gender research center’s to take a more active role in policy development at the national level by leveraging the outcomes of research conducted across universities.

Keywords: Gender, research, higher education, violence, policy

1 Introduction

In a keynote address at a conference in late 2019, the Minister of Research and Technology said explicitly that the gap between research and policy outcomes continues to be substantial. Two years earlier, Yohana Yembise, the state minister for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, claimed the same thing, that many research findings on women and children could not be used as policy references in Jakarta due to the lack of a link between research and policymakers.

The issue is that simply complaining without addressing the fundamental cause of the problem solves nothing. Nonetheless, if we look at search engines and scientific indexation, for example, between 2015 and 2020, more than 17,500 hits containing the keyword "violence against women and children" emerged. If we assume that all 17,500 results are scientific publications, then 3000 research on violence against women and children are published each
year. With this volume of research, it is critical to inquire about the research's outcomes. Why is Indonesia's policy of protecting women and children still in effect? The simplest explanation is that study results are only published as scientific articles, however this paper does not stop there. Additionally, this article will examine one of the most under-recognized actors: the Women/Gender and Child Protection Research Centre (hereinafter referred to as research center).

This research center dates all the way back to the inception of gender studies in Indonesia. This study will examine two critical concerns by concentrating on the Women/Gender and Child Protection Research Centre: To begin, trace the history of the research center and its influence on Indonesia's policy environment. Second, identifying the issues confronting research institutions today and why their decline has had a significant impact on Indonesia's dissociation between research and policy. Finally, this article will provide ASWGI with insight into how to manage this crisis and transform it into an opportunity.

Problem Statement

There are two major issues highlighted in this article, both of which are prevalent in numerous research centres throughout Indonesia: To begin, there is a gap between research and policy. Increased quantitative study on gender and children is counterproductive to policies that are becoming incredibly aggressive to women and children. Second, fragmentation between research institutions that never share research data. Even ASWGI, which has existed since its inception, has failed to foster a culture of sharing research findings among its members.

Research Questions

This paper aims to answer one crucial question: do universities still need Women/Gender and Child Protection Research Centre?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to document the historical roots and challenges experienced by various research centres at various universities. Additionally, this research indicates that while a research centre is still necessary, it requires a strategic rethinking and a network of collaboration to assure its survival.

2 Methodology

This study was conducted in eighteen university-based Women/Gender and Child Protection Research Centers. As a former managing director of the University of Indonesia's Centre for Women and Gender Studies and a current member of the University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta's Gender and Child Protection Research Centre, this research was relatively straightforward to conduct due to the network of various study centers. On the other hand, this research serves as a self-critical examination of many studies investigated by numerous existing research institutions.

3 Findings

3.1 Growth, Development, and Disconnection
The research center’s formal interest in gender and child issues is indeed not new. Since the appointment of Mrs. Lasijah Soetanto as the first Junior Minister for Women's Roles in 1978, there has been an increased focus on women and children. Although these diverse research centres established a decade later, in 1988, under the auspices of Sulasikin Moerpratomo (Irianto & Noer, 2015).

The government's concern for women and children in Indonesia is inextricably linked to the global ideology of development models. Since the 1960s, when numerous global development projects began to incorporate women and children in their work, studies of women and children have emerged. It was heralded as the beginning of the age of Women in Development (WID). WID is a model that dates all the way back to the 1960s and 1970s. The critique begins with the "welfare model," which prioritizes women as mothers and wives. In this context, the different welfare programs that have been repeated place a greater emphasis on nutrition, health, and family childcare.

Women are viewed in terms of their reproductive capacity, whereas children are viewed as family members (United Nations, 1992). While the WID strategy has been quite successful in terms of material conditions, it has been less successful in terms of economic and social empowerment. Women and their families do receive aid, but only addresses a portion of the poverty problem. Because if aid is terminated, the recipient is certain to return to poverty. There is no certainty at all due to the inaccurate identification of the source of the problems.

After the World Plan of Action, United Nations Decade for Women 1976-1985 was adopted in Mexico, the Women in Development movement featured prominently. The most notable shift from WID is the emphasis on women's roles in areas other than domestic childcare. As a result, an idea was born to boost women's productivity through the inclusion of women in development projects. The basic notion is that by involving women into development, children's education and health will almost certainly improve. Women's participation in development must be increased to accomplish this.

Unfortunately, WID continues to treat women as if they were a spice in the development recipe. Women are considered, but the procedures and outcomes remain consistent, albeit with some adjustments. Women are still viewed exclusively through the lens of their reproductive function, and children are still viewed as a minor component of the family, a tiny fragment of society at large.

Since 1975, statistical statistics have begun to demonstrate progress: the gap in educational access has narrowed, affirmative action in general elections has increased, and the number of women in parliament has increased, but single-gender equality has not been realized (UNWOMEN, 2017). On the other hand, the percentage of children enrolled in school has climbed.

Assume, however, that the figure is disaggregated by gender. In that instance, it appears as though the number grows solely among boys; girls are more likely to walk in the area, though it has not fallen significantly. In simple terms, the agenda for women and the realization of children's rights continues to be sidelined in the context of development programs and priorities. Programs continue to be in the form of insubstantial "patches." Women are inextricably linked to their homes, while children are merely add-and-stir factors that play no meaningful role.

WID's failure to promote and protect children's rights has a devastating impact. In this example, expanding access to WID has had no effect on reducing inequality. Until the 1980s, gender discourse evolved as a critique that resulted in a new mantra: power redistribution in social relations. The WID was thereafter renamed Gender and Development (GAD). GAD's first efforts focus on women's empowerment, the importance of gender analysis, the women's movement, and women's agency as a catalyst for change; in this context, GAD serves as a more
radical type of gender mainstreaming in the transformation of a pro-women and child development agenda (Rathgeber, 1990).

This initiative was reaffirmed at the Second World Conference on Women in 1980 in Copenhagen and the Third World Conference on Women in 1985 in Nairobi. Following the 1985 conference, numerous countries established bureaus and ministries dedicated to women's problems. Indonesia is no different. GAD effected numerous reforms in Indonesia, most notably at the national level. Since the 1980s, when the dominant paradigm of change shifted from WID to GAD, a new academic discourse on women's studies has gained traction in Indonesian universities.

At that time, study groups devoted to women's issues began to emerge. Academics have established research and advocacy organizations, as well as a new curriculum that develops women's issues through the lens of women in a variety of disciplines. At the time, a new chapter in the development of women's studies at the University of Indonesia was inaugurated. In 1979, as a continuation of the 1975 Women International Year events, the Women's Study Group (Kelompok Studi Wanita) of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Indonesia was the first to respond to this incoming knowledge. The Women Study Group established an activity called the Development Program for the Enhancement of Women's Role in Development in conjunction with Vrouwen en Autonomy Leiden University.

This program is designed to meet the demands of women studies professionals and experts who support, directly or indirectly, the State Ministry for Women's Role's development plans. At the time, young academics may enroll in a variety of courses and receive official education in women's studies in the Netherlands (Irianto & Noer, 2015). The Program is not a degree-granting institution. The most exciting outcome of this program is the establishment of numerous Women and Child Studies Centres across Indonesian colleges.

This is unsurprising, given the embryos discovered at the Centre for Women's Studies in the previous decade. Sulastikin Murpratomo was appointed Minister of State for the Status of Women at the time and requested that higher education institutions construct Women's Research Centres at various universities, where research findings were used to inform development strategies of the time. The most significant impact of the perspective of women and children on diverse interdisciplinary studies is the inclusion of interdisciplinary studies on children's rights. These two subjects, the study of women and the study of children, are distinct but related. Women's studies are inextricably linked to child studies, because these two entities were first viewed as distinct variables but interdependent.

Between the 1980s and the mid-1990s, Indonesia had no less than 189 research centers distributed throughout several universities. These research centers, which are primarily located at public universities, receive full government assistance to conduct research on women and family issues. This research is being implemented in a variety of government entities, most notably provincial women's offices and the National Family Planning Coordinating Board. It's worth noting that numerous research were conducted throughout this time period on population issues such as marriage, divorce, childcare, and the societal changes that arise as a result of development.

This appears to be strongly tied to Indonesia's development policy paradigm as articulated in the Five-Year Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun/Repelita), which is aimed at transforming the country's rural face into one of industrial development. This policy had a profound effect on the villages, and in order to examine and gain a better understanding at work in the villages, these research centres conducted fieldwork in a variety of villages around Java. Not unexpectedly, the phrase social engineering was used during that era to refer to a research-based endeavor. The 1990s saw a paradigm shift in research.
Historically, studies on women were always coupled with studies on children, but between 1985 and 1990, there was a distinct divide between gender study and child research. The transition was precipitated by the founding of the University of Indonesia's Women's Studies Program in 1990 and the UI's Convention Watch in 1993. This appears to be directly tied to worldwide changes that have resulted in the separation of women's and children's issues. At the worldwide level, this division began with CEDAW, which was founded in 1979 and adopted as the International Bill of Women's Rights in 1981.

It was strengthened during the next decade into Gender Mainstreaming, which was formally approved in the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women in 1995. Meanwhile, the child issue gained prominence with the United Nations' ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) in 1989 and Indonesia's ratification of the UN-CRC in 1990.

Disconnection at the global level has influenced the development of women's and children's studies in wholly new directions. Historically, women's studies have been more concerned with family and demographic issues. However, development has been a concern for women and poverty, community development, sexual violence, and women's human rights since the 1990s. Similarly, the study of children evolves into violence against children, children's rights to education, politics and anti-child inequality, and children and the law. Numerous researches on women and children are used as main references in the government's policymaking process.

Between 1993 and 1998, Mrs. Mien Soegandi served as State Minister for the Role of Women, in accordance with the mandate of the Outline of State Constraints (Garis Besar Halauan Negara/GBHN), that through development efforts, the potential for national resources is channeled into economic, sociocultural, political, and security strengths, backed up by qualified human resources with knowledge, technology, and capabilities. Thus, by actively participating in all development activities, the ambitions, roles, and interests of human resources - including women - as drivers of national development are integrated into the national development movement. This is the primary means through which the government can adopt the findings of research on women and children as a basis for policymaking.

This mismatch is exacerbated by the failure of Indonesia's primary patron of women's studies: the government. The collapse of the New Order had a profound effect on Indonesian research on women and children. Previously, many study findings were routed through official routes to women's offices in various provinces and the ministry of women's empowerment, but these channels have been completely blocked off since 1998.

Two factors are driving this shift. To begin, the fact that the state no longer funds research on women and children has an effect on the quantity of research conducted. Between 1998 and the early 2000s, numerous research centres closed due to a lack of research help. This is because the state, through provincial women's and children's departments, often supports numerous studies on women and children.

Second, the 1998 era ushered in a darker chapter in the history of women and the women's movement. The emergence of sexual violence and rape, which resulted in the establishment of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), is an intrinsic component of the dynamics of Indonesian women's and children's studies. This history has shaped the women's movement into activism that is more concerned with effecting change than with identifying the source of the problem.

On the other hand, the advancement of women's and child studies cannot be detached from the activity of foreign donor organizations. This funding agency supports research and educational scholarships, which contribute significantly to the advancement of women and
children's studies at the university level. However, since early 1998, when Indonesia experienced a financial crisis, contracts for research and education aid have been terminated, leading to a decline in women's studies and studies in Indonesia. While research on women and children has stagnated, women's issues gained pace in the mid-2000s, during Abdurrahman Wahid's administration.

Gender mainstreaming was formally accepted in Indonesia by Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000. The primary goal is to establish the government as a gender-equitable agent of change that intervenes at all phases of the development process or cycle. Several years later, in 2002, the Indonesian government promulgated Law 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, which established the legal framework for implementing the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (KPPA RI, 2014, 2015; Wuryandani et al., 2018).

Gender mainstreaming and child rights mainstreaming remain critical mantras in Indonesian development. The prerequisites for gender mainstreaming and child rights mainstreaming are established on two levels: the institutional level (policies, structures, systems, and procedures) and the operational level, with an emphasis on three fundamental principles: the inclusion of women and children as actors, democracy and equity, and law enforcement and equality.

Although they are positioned as critical mantras, gender mainstreaming and child rights mainstreaming face a number of challenges, including an over-emphasis on enabling tools/technical tools such as political support, policies, resources, data and information systems, gender analysis tools, and support from civil society and research institutions.

3.2 The dawn of the research center?

Although long awaited, the Presidential Instruction on gender mainstreaming arrived at an unfortunate time. Numerous women's research centers have perished even before they were established. Some have disbanded, while others have taken a hiatus until the unknown. Not only at the level of research institutes, but also at the level of study programs that provide a more specific level of education, the majority of them perish. Indonesia once had three women's studies programs at the University of Indonesia, Hasanuddin University, and Brawijaya University. However, only the University of Indonesia's study programs have remained operational throughout the 2000s. Although, at the moment, the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University also offers an Islam and Gender Studies (Islam dan Kajian Gender/IKG) program.

If the fate of the study program is pretty well-known, but not in the case of a research center. This brings us to the next critical point: the fragmentation that occurs, whether inside the research center itself or within research on women and children. Fragmentation manifests itself in three ways: a decline in the number of research centers and the quantity of outputs, research which is too micro to use it as a policy basis, and a lack of collaboration among research centers. I am not suggesting that micro-scale research is ineffective or unlikely to result in policy change; rather, what is critical is to connect community-level phenomena to country-level policies in order to support more gender responsive policy changes (Elmhirst et al., 2017; Nafi et al., 2016) The initial fragmentation occurs at the level of research centers. It's concerning that the majority of research centers are occupied exclusively by women.

On the other side, many research institutions are hesitant to recruit men. This demonstrates that gender issues and gender research centers continue to be institutionalized as an unique to women subject. The critical point is that we have not progressed in our scholarly understanding of gender. The issue with gender studies is its inability to persuade the general public that gender is not only a concern for women and children, but a societal issue for its whole (Decker et al., 2018; EIGE, 2016; Heidari & Moreno, 2016; May 2014; Putri & Noer, 2020) This is inevitable,
given the prominence of gender studies on the scientific landscape in Indonesia. Gender studies have historically been viewed as non-autonomous.

If we look at the Ministry of National Education and Culture's List of Knowledge Clusters (Daftar Rumpun Ilmu), gender and children's studies may be included in number 624, or as undeclared social disciplines. This inequality is heartbreaking yet concerning. Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study at the University of Indonesia, alongside Regional Studies (America, Japan, the Middle East, and the European Union), National Resilience Studies, and Police Science Studies. Regrettably, the Regional Study received number 614, the National Resilience Study received number 603, and the Police Study received number 604. Then why are these statistics significant? Although this statistic is primarily concerned with administrative concerns, it obviously completely ignores gender and children's studies as distinct fields of study.

Another concern is the unclear number of research centres that exist in Indonesia today. There is a strong suspicion that the random appearance of research centres is related to the lack of good statistics on the number of research centres. Simply expressed, research centres grow out of necessity; in this example, the requirement that women be included in national programs. Thus, the best way to address these objectives is to create the broadest possible potential for the establishment of research centres in the future, without consideration of human resources.

At some universities, for example, the University of Indonesia, at least three research centres are devoted entirely to women's concerns, while another is devoted entirely to children's issues. Similarly, at certain institutions, multiple gender and child research centres have been formed inside various faculties. There are currently initiatives underway to establish an association for women's research centres. However, the organization itself is problematic because it is founded on two pillars: institutional research centres and individuals interested in gender and children's studies who are not affiliated with the research centres.

Another issue at the level of research centres is the widespread tendency of research centres being dominated by specific individuals and members of their internal groups. Large number of research centres stop working as a result of stagnant regeneration inside the organization. One thing that must be stated openly in the academic world is that numerous institutions continue to retain individuals rather than a recruitment mechanism. Research organizations, including research centres within universities, continue to operate as a one-man show, with the leader serving as the institution's founder, patron, and administrator simultaneously. Whether we are aware of it or not, institutions are bound and dependent on the founder's figure. As a natural consequence of this dependence, when the individual is no longer capable of administering the institution, the institution dies with him or her.

Numerous causes contribute to this stagnation; one issue is not only the utilization of research centres as a single stage for a single person, but also the organization's unwillingness to recruit more diverse lecturers. Numerous research centres that were administered by particular departments. As a single stage, it's logical that lecturers who don't feel at ease with the leader are hesitant to enter and join. It is unfortunate that research institutes should be open to anybody interested in gender studies regardless of their scientific discipline. The impact of not integrating academics, particularly young professors, into research centres is that acute freezing conditions grow more prevalent, and the research centres become mono-disciplinary. Lacking young lecturers, the organization suffers a major decline, or the best-case scenario is that research centres become a home for inactive scholars.

The second type of fragmentation occurs in research on gender and children, which has a reasonably small scope. Only within Office/Agency A, village B, or, at the most, within City C (for example see Dewi, 2020; Hamudy, 2015; Indraswati et al., 2020; Wahid & Purnomo, 2020;
Widyawati & Laksmitasari, 2015). There is nothing odd with this research model from a methodological standpoint. However, the consequences are severe. As a result, gender and children are considered as discrete issues, rather than as subjects of study. As a result, extensive research focuses exclusively on explaining the phenomenon without providing insight into why it occurs and how to resolve it.

Countless studies make recommendations that are highly gender-biased and ignore characteristics of the child's self. Numerous studies on child marriage, for example, fail to acknowledge that child marriage is not solely a poverty issue and that married children can assist rescue the family finances (see Bemmelen & Grijns, 2018; Oktavia et al., 2016; Sunaryanto, 2019). Rather of reducing, the family burden is increasing, exacerbating family poverty. Various studies have been tendentious, asserting that child marriage occurs as a result of parents' choice to work as migrant workers, clueless to the poverty conditions and systemic regulations that push women to work as migrant workers.

Another example is that research on sexual violence in teenagers tends to focus on peer group and relationship concerns, overlooking the core fact that boys and girls have unequal relations. Numerous erroneous studies assert that violence against young women occurs because women create opportunities for assault through clothing styles and behaviors deemed inviting (see Natasha, 2018; Rusyidi et al., 2019; You, 2019). Numerous studies classify gender and child concerns as non-strategic in this scenario. If we assume that A is caused by B, then the solution is C. These studies make no strategic recommendations. Unfortunately, this type of research is conducted by individuals affiliated with research institutions. Certain studies are more progressive in that they consider a variety of elements and employ gender as a tool for resolving practical issues—for example, study on garbage banks and women's empowerment (Astuti, 2012; Lestari et al., 2019; Noer, Chadjiah, & Rudiatin 2021, Putri & Noer, 2020; Saptandari, 1999).

Gender and child research provides great opportunity for providing insight on policy suggestions in this environment. However, there is one issue: many legitimate pieces of study wind up as research reports and scientific papers, despite the fact that the government does not require reports or articles, but rather practical suggestions based on theoretical investigations. Because this stuttering is never resolved, numerous research are ultimately fruitless. The primary benefits of this type of research are the researchers themselves, not the subjects. The fourth point of fragmentation is the absence of a common basis for the diverse research institutions.

Not only are gender and child studies viewed as a non-strategic concern for women, but the complexity of problems in research institutions, the mismatch between research findings and policy, and the fact that many research institutions that remain viable do not network with one another. This network is critical because when research is conducted in other locations, it can be mapped to draw comparisons. By examining policies across regions, a more comprehensive policy roadmap may be constructed (see Noer et al., 2021; Noer & Madewanti, 2020).

The concern is with government policies on higher education. Due to the workload of academics who are required to carry out the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi, an increasing number of lecturers' colleagues choose for community service over research. There are various complaints that research centres are more involved in community service than those in research, for example, because community service activities are relatively easier to conduct than research that needs significant time - especially when lecturers' workloads are incredibly dense. Perhaps it is also because restricted manpower means that research possibilities are becoming increasingly constrained, or perhaps it is because research centres are unable to identify gender and children's studies as cross-cutting issues in an ever-changing world of research.
According to numerous interviews with directors and members of research centres, there is a tendency to be monodisciplinary or to focus exclusively on specific areas related to the research centres' primary focus, or – because the majority of research is essentially personal research funded by the state or a donor, the focus of research is determined by agreement between the donor and the researcher.

For instance, a number of research institutions put a higher focus on Integrated Service Centres for Women and Children's Empowerment or Child-Friendly Integrated Public Spaces. The severe consequence of focusing more on community service or on research, which is a "safe domain," is that research centres are no longer capable of producing breakthroughs in science that are valuable for legislation and knowledge enrichment. Finally, research institutions are unable to demonstrate their status as knowledge producers, but rather as consumers of existing knowledge.

4 Conclusion

This research demonstrates that research institutes do indeed have a long history. Regrettably, this history has become a distant memory. What was originally meant to serve as a point of reference for the government in order to stimulate the establishment of gender responsive policies has devolved into ordinary research institutions. The research centre has produced no substantial findings on which the government can base policy. As a result, the research centre's position must be reformulated in order to remain relevant in an ever-changing world of research.

References


