



# Single-sex versus Coeducational Schools: Which One is More Effective to Implement in Indonesia?

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| Article Info   | Abstract  |
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| <b>Article History</b><br>Received: 2022-08-11<br>Revised: 2022-09-22<br>Published: 2022-12-01<br><br><b>Keywords:</b><br><i>Coeducational School;<br/>Indonesian Culture;<br/>Indonesian Educational System;<br/>Schooling System;<br/>Single-Sex School.</i> | Single-sex school is the oldest educational institution in Indonesia and it is considered to be one of the original cultures of Indonesia. Although this schooling system has a big number in Indonesia, there have not been many investigations examining its effectiveness on the students' performance. Therefore, this issue has a central role to guide the future implication of educational system in Indonesian high school. This investigation presents information on the effectiveness of single-sex school on the students' performance in Indonesian high school context. Further, this investigation would also provide the relevancy of single-sex school with the Indonesian culture. In addition, this study would hopefully enhance the knowledge of other practitioners, students' parents, as well as researchers about the position of local culture in the learning process. It is argued that single-sex school is more effective to apply in Indonesia to improve the learners' performance at school. It is highly supported by its wider relevance with the Indonesian culture. Examining three main points can proof this. Firstly, single-sex school is very potential to promote good learners' behaviour. Secondly, learning in a single-gender school can increase the students' gender satisfaction. Lastly, single-sex school is a safer place to learn any subject as opposed to coeducational school where not all subjects are suitable to teach. |

| Artikel Info   | Abstrak  |
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| <b>Sejarah Artikel</b><br>Diterima: 2022-08-11<br>Direvisi: 2022-09-22<br>Dipublikasi: 2022-12-01<br><br><b>Kata kunci:</b><br><i>Sekolah Koedukasi;<br/>Budaya Indonesia;<br/>Sistem Pendidikan Indonesia;<br/>Sistem Persekolahan;<br/>Sekolah Satu Jenis Kelamin.</i> | Sekolah satu jenis kelamin merupakan lembaga pendidikan tertua di Indonesia dan dianggap sebagai salah satu budaya asli Indonesia. Meskipun sistem persekolahan ini memiliki jumlah yang besar di Indonesia, namun belum banyak penelitian yang meneliti keefektifannya terhadap prestasi siswa. Oleh karena itu, isu ini memiliki peran sentral untuk memandu implikasi masa depan dari sistem pendidikan di SMA Indonesia. Investigasi ini menyajikan informasi tentang keefektifan sekolah satu jenis kelamin terhadap kinerja siswa dalam konteks SMA di Indonesia. Selanjutnya, investigasi ini juga akan memberikan relevansi sekolah satu jenis kelamin dengan budaya Indonesia. Selain itu, penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menambah pengetahuan praktisi lain, orang tua siswa, serta peneliti tentang posisi budaya lokal dalam proses pembelajaran. Dikatakan bahwa sekolah satu jenis kelamin lebih efektif diterapkan di Indonesia untuk meningkatkan prestasi belajar siswa di sekolah. Hal ini sangat didukung oleh relevansinya yang lebih luas dengan budaya Indonesia. Meneliti tiga poin utama dapat membuktikan hal ini. Pertama, sekolah satu jenis kelamin sangat potensial untuk mendorong perilaku peserta didik yang baik. Kedua, pembelajaran di sekolah satu gender dapat meningkatkan kepuasan gender siswa. Terakhir, sekolah satu jenis kelamin adalah tempat yang lebih aman untuk mempelajari mata pelajaran apa pun dibandingkan dengan sekolah coeducational di mana tidak semua mata pelajaran cocok untuk diajarkan. |

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the fast-growing trend of coeducational institutions in the twentieth century, many practitioners and researchers began to show their interest in exploring the superiorities and weaknesses of both single-sex school (SS) and coeducational school (CE) (Shah & Conchar, 2009). One of the longstanding global issues being debated among the experts until recently is which one is more effective between SS and CE on the students' achievement. For example, in

some parts of the globe such as in some European countries, Caribbean, and Latin America, fierce debate about what impacts SS bring to the students' development still occurs. In connection with this, it has been claimed that carrying out an assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of SS is not easy (Anfara, & Mertens, 2008). In this case, Shah and Conchar (2009) contend that in the recent global trend trying to find out what impacts SS has to the learners' performance is even more complicated because

there are many variables that need to be taken into account such as resources, learners' personal and social position, locality, etc. Although there have been numerous theories addressing the advantages of SS and its central role in the education policy, they have not provided the satisfying answer yet to the question regarding the advantages of SS to the students' performance (Jackson, 2012). Therefore, to contribute to the understanding of this issue, this essay explores SS implementation in Indonesia, particularly in High School context.

Arising this issue is essential because education in Indonesia has been long dominated by single-gender schooling system. It is argued that SS is the oldest educational institution in Indonesia and it is considered to be one of the original cultures of Indonesia (Asep, 2016). It is claimed that there are about 50,000 single-sex institutions spread out across this country (Tan, 2015), and most of them are secondary schools. Since Indonesia has the most population of muslim in the world, the Islamic typical school is mostly adopted in the SS (Nilan, 2009). Because of the lack of studies about SS in Indonesia, this essay is mainly aimed to explore the implementation of SS in Indonesian contexts and how it contributes to the learners' performance. It is argued that SS is more suitable to apply in Indonesian high school context compared to CE. It is because this sort of schooling system is believed to be more appropriate to the students' local culture across Indonesia. The effectiveness of SS to boost the students' achievement can be examined through three main ways. Firstly, SS is very potential to promote good learners' behaviour. Secondly, learning in a single-gender school can increase the students' gender satisfaction. Lastly, SS is a safer place to learn all school subjects as opposed to CE where some certain subjects are not suitable to teach. In the next parts of this essay, these three factors will be examined and how they are highly supported by the Indonesian culture. In the last part of the essay, a conclusion and suggestions will be provided.

## II. METHOD

Examining three main points can proof this. Firstly, single-sex school is very potential to promote good learners' behaviour. Secondly, learning in a single-gender school can increase the students' gender satisfaction. Lastly, single-sex school is a safer place to learn any subject as opposed to coeducational school where not all subjects are suitable to teach.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. *Single-Sex School Can Promote Good Behaviour*

Students' attitude in the learning process is an essential factor to determine their overall academic achievement at school. Some evidence has been proposed by a number of researchers. For example, SS can prevent the boy students from having a roughness of attitude towards the girls. A study conducted by Bracey (2007) shows that the attendance of female students in the classroom may potentially provoke rough behavior of male students. This is supported by a theory called group socialization theory stating that in coeducational schools the students have strong tendency to divide themselves into a dominant group while marginalizing those who are outside the group members (Wills, 2007). This division happens along the line of gender that is likely leading to competition and hostility. Furthermore, it is claimed that even when their teachers struggle to reduce such negative feeling and competitiveness, the hostility still happens because it is hard to overcome. Conversely, if the teachers do not take any action to find out the solution of the conflict, the situation can get worse and may lead to strict gender opposition and bullying. Another research carried out by Stables (1990) supports the previous findings confirming that there is a strong possibility of polarisation between gender groups in coeducational schools. It is also found that, in terms of gender intensification of girl students, girls from SS will potentially grow up more flexible in their gender roles of adult life (Granleese & Joseph, 1993). By the same token, boys are also benefited if the girls are not around. Hubbard and Datnow (2005) argue that without the presence of girls, male students feel unnecessary to show off or engage in an action to grab the girls' attention.

Similarly, female students will show positive behavior with the absence of male students around them because they do not feel any pressure from the boys' attention. Furthermore, with the absence of boys during the learning process, the female students will have bigger inclination to collaborate each other and strengthen their friendship. As a result, they become more concentrate on achieving their academic goal. Some points explained previously, therefore, highlights the great potential of SS to guide the learners to improve their positive behavior during their

study. In Indonesian context, what SS proposes for the students' behavior is in line with the students' cultural background. Since most of the Indonesian population is moslem, religion has become the fundamental factor shaping their culture. One of the unwritten rules in this religious culture is that male and female may not have a close relationship without the status of marriage. Therefore, the interaction with the opposite gender is strictly prohibited unless it is necessary. In contrast, this embedded Indonesian culture does not agree with CE where male-female interaction cannot be controlled maximally. Asep (2016) points out that one of the biggest concerns of Indonesian government at present is the ignorance of the youth to the importance of moral, behavior and discipline. Another value emphasized in SS in Indonesia is what is called 'the spirit of education' which shapes the strong will of students to always study along their life (Nilan, 2009). It is expected that this becomes the learners' principle and forms their behavior during their study. There is one Islamic ideology that has long melted into the culture of Indonesian society named as muslim brotherhood. This ideology is basically the main principle in stipulating the teaching program in SS (Noorhaidi, 2009). It promotes a strong brotherhood among the young generation so that it can be their basic principle of life. For the long-term result, it is hoped that they will be good citizens who have strong commitment and creativity in their life. Therefore, as long as SS always keeps adapting and implementing the original culture of Indonesia it will continue to form and improve the students' personality (Asep, 2016).

## *2. Single-sex school can promote gender satisfaction*

SS is an ideal schooling system to promote gender satisfaction for both male and female students. There have been a lot of evidence supporting this notion. For instance, SS can provide a solution to gender inequity in teaching activities. Gender inequity is very vulnerable in CE setting. It is found in some CE institutions that teachers show the inclination to treat one gender students differently from another (Bracey, 2007; Carpenter & Hayden, 1987). The different treatment sometimes occurs beyond the teacher's consciousness. Moreover, it is not easy for the educators to balance their attention to both male and female learners in CE. Because boys and girls

are naturally different physically and psychologically, the teacher is required to fulfil the need of the two groups of student simultaneously. In this case, the teacher may experience difficulty to maximize the conduciveness of the class atmosphere. In addition to this, there have been some proofs supporting the gender satisfaction for female students. As an example, SS enables the girls to make their free choice about their physical appearance. Hubbard and Datnow (2005) argue that a major merit of gender separation for the girls is that they can freely decide how they perform physically without being worried of the boys' comment. Furthermore, Hubbard and Darnow also claim that with the absence of the other gender disturbance, the learners are capable of maintaining their concentration during the learning process in more meaning-ful way. Besides, they have more opportunity to interact intimately and openly with their classmates and teachers. Such easy interaction can enhance the learners' well-being. For the teachers, it is found that SS allows teachers to set up the teaching instruction on the basis of the learners' particular needs of each gender. It is mainly due to the fact that boys and girls have different ways of learning because of their distinct biological and social appearances (Jackson, 2012).

For Indonesian students, who are the majority as moslms, separate-sex interaction has been long embedded in their social life. This gender separation has become a part of Indonesian culture. In this case, Shah and Conchar (2009) claim that single-sex schooling system has been the distinct feature of the Islamic community. Additionally, the concept of gender-segregation is in line with the government effort to apply character education in Indonesian curriculum. Character education is proposed to prevent the degradation of moral and values on the young generation. It is proofed that when character education is applied in a particular institution, it improves better school safety, better school culture, and help the learners to be more concentrate to get a better academic achievement (Abdurrahman, 2016). More specifically, there are six values of life proposed by the concept of character education: physiological, ethical, aesthetical, logical and theological values. One of the values mentioned above is the theological value where the students are

educated to practice their religious faith in their daily life. All religions in Indonesia agree that male and female should not have the intimate relationship without marriage to maximize their gender satisfaction in any activity. It can be claimed that sex separation is a part of character education in Indonesia in ensuring the gender satisfaction for both men and women.

### **3. *Single-sex school can promote better grade for learners***

SS can positively influence the learners' grade in their school subjects in general. Many studies have supported this claim. For instance, an investigation conducted by Carpenter and Hayden (1987) reveals that the learners' choice of SS has positively contributed to the learners' mark. It is claimed that their good mark is not influenced by any other factors such as their social origins, school curriculum, or their status in society. For the girls, SS is seen to be more beneficial for their achievement in some particular subjects. It is because the female students can establish their positive self-concept in some school subjects. For an example, a study conducted by Jackson (2002) and Sullivan (2009) states that girls in SS do not show an assumption that they are 'below average' in maths and science. According to Colley, Comber, and Hargreaves (1994), female students of younger group prefer boy stereotyped school subjects such as science and mathematics more than girls in CE. Moreover, another research argues that girls in SS show better performance in masculine school subjects compared to their counterparts in CE (Kessels & Hannover, 2008). It is due to all school subjects that relate to gender issues are openly accessible in SS as opposed to the mixed-gender school.

In Indonesian high school context, SS is more preferred, particularly by the parents, because generally the school encourages the balance between the learners' secular academic learning and moral values (Hasan, 2014). Although SS in Indonesia in general very emphasizes the character education, which means students' behaviour is one of the main concerns, secular subjects such as science, social, and physics are also no less important. This concept is fully supported by Al-Banna's popular notion claiming that the muslim generation of Indonesia should be educated to be "rabbani" generation meaning

that they have to recognize the existence of the Creator of the universe and realize their position to serve the other beings (Noorhaidi, 2009). This principle, in turn, has become the main vision of every SS in Indonesia. As a result, the practitioners and policymakers in the country have been aware of the importance of knowledge and skills owned by the learners as a means to serve the world. To fulfil such demand, the updated curriculum of SS across Indonesia has been set up in such a way to cover four basic areas: religious learning, character building, vocational education, and general study (Luken, 2001). Religious learning has been an unseparated part of Indonesian schooling systems irrespective of the type of schooling systems, single-gender or unisex-gender schools. Religion is one of five pillars of Indonesian national ideology.

Character development is sounded to seek for the solution of moral fallacy among the young generation that can be seen by the fast growth of drug abuse, free sex, juvenile delinquency, cheating on the exam, etc. Meanwhile, vocational skills training is emphasized to prepare the learners in fulfilling the needs of future employment. The last area is general education which guides students to be competent in understanding the phenomena in their respective circumstance. Such competence encompasses science, social, physics, and so on. In terms of following sex education, SS is considered a very safe circumstance compared to CE since such materials are considered taboo by the Indonesian society. In day-to-day interaction, it is considered very annoying and impolite to talk about sexual intercourse in mix-gender setting. Therefore, sex education is more suitable to teach in SS because it is in line with the Indonesian culture.

### **4. *Single-sex schooling system supports the Indonesian culture***

Although there are enormous essential advantages pertaining to the role of SS mentioned above, a number of researchers have also pointed out some limitations of SS on the students' learning performance. For instance, the learning advantages gained by the students of SS may be caused by the other factors rather than the school being single-gender system. A research carried out by Jackson (2012) in Trinidad and Tobago reveals that the merits of SS claimed by students are not mainly because of the

schooling system being single-gender, but it is due to the popular admission among the society to the schools. It is also proofed that, in the same study, the popularity of SS is due to the support from the local government as opposed to CE. Another finding suggests that the notion of SS can provide benefit to the academic achievement of female learners is not totally true. It is claimed that girls in SS and CE show no difference in their academic result (Duly, 1995, 1996; Yalkincaya & Ulu, 2012). Harker (2000) emphasizes that whatever the schooling system is, it is their ethnicity and social environment that influence their school performance. Moreover, there is an inclination showed by female students at SS that they seem to be ignorant of their attitude than those in CE. Granleese and Joseph (1993), in their study, found that girl students of SS did not have good satisfaction on their physical appearance compared to female students in CE. A very serious demerit of SS considered by many researchers is the fear of parents and practitioners about the lack of equitability of SS in preparing the learners to face the real world (Young, 1994). The worriedness is based on the notion that men and women will live together in the future and, therefore, they should be encouraged to know each other earlier.

Another criticism towards SS is that it does not support the process of sex education to the students. It is claimed that in following sex education, SS prevents students to share their knowledge with the opposite genders. As a result, they cannot maximally understand each other better (Strange, Oakley, Forrest, & The Ripple study team, 2003). The limitation of single-gender schools elaborated above may be true in some particular contexts, but they are less likely to happen in Indonesian context in general. For example, since SS in Indonesian context adopts the Islamic principle in the learning process, most of them provide Islamic dorms close to the schools where they receive extra study. The extra study is very beneficial to the learners' achievement compared to their counterparts in CE. What is claimed by Jackson (2012) above regarding the other factors influencing the students' achievement does not happen at SS in Indonesia. On the other hand, although the students spend most of their time in the school and have very limited interaction with the local society, SS always encourages them

to keep their local sensitivity (Srimulyani, 2007). SS has been seen not only as a school but also as a community institution where a strong connection with the local people is maintained and the students are highly motivated to serve the community. Therefore, instead of being influenced by the community SS students are guided to provide the positive impact to the society. In terms of preparing the female students to face their future life, SS in Indonesia has a particular treatment. The treatment promotes gender-specific moral values that are suitable for both socio-cultural and religious aspects of the local people (Srimulyani, 2007). Another concept applied for female learners in SS is called Indonesian Muslim femininity. The purpose of this concept is to prepare the students with important knowledge about how to be a good woman morally and religiously in the future. The material encompasses essential knowledge of being a good wife and mother who can promote good future generation. So, the argument contending that SS prevents both gender groups to prepare their future togetherness is not true in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, a finding of another investigation shows that SS encourages girls to continue their study to the higher level after their graduation. It means that SS also pay attention to the girls' education in the future.

Another weakness of SS addressed by many is the learners' dissatisfaction of receiving sex education because they cannot ask their respective opposite gender directly. This claim is totally not true for Indonesian students because it is not the early interaction that determines the harmony of male-female relationship in the future, but how deep they understand each other. This understanding can be gained in the classroom or by learning with the adult. There may be an assumption that this way is not effective because it ignores the practical aspect. Perhaps this assumption can be justified to a certain extent, but it is important to be aware of the bigger negative impact of providing sex education in unisex circumstance. Besides supported by the principle of character education, SS is also in line with the local content education. Local content education is mostly similar to character education where it is proposed to incorporate the students' local culture into the curriculum. The incorporation of local content is set up to be the seal of culture from

globalization era (Saputra, 2013). By applying this local content education nationally, all regions in Indonesia provide their respective knowledge of local culture to the learners. Specifically, there are two main purposes: to introduce the culture of Indonesia from the early age and to open new areas of standard living in the society. In connection with the implementation of SS in Indonesia, most of the local cultures across Indonesia agree with the concept of gender segregation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

##### A. Conclusion

To conclude, the incorporation of character education concept and local content education shows the serious attention of the Indonesian government to produce high achieving generation with good character while appreciating their own culture. These three distinctive characters of personality, high achiever, good moral values, and being appreciative of self culture, are fully supported by the concept of SS. On the contrary, coeducational schooling system is not fully matching the original culture of Indonesian. It is worrying that if CE is widely applied across Indonesia, not only does it endanger the endurance of original culture of Indonesia but also less effective to promote students' good performance. However, this essay does not deny the notion from Anfara and Mertens (2008) stating that the precise nature of SS advantages is highly contextual. It is also agreed that the issue of single-sex education is complicated and tricky. Its effect on the academic improvement of the students is only one side of the many aspects of the debate (Shah & Conchar, 2009). Therefore, it is suggested that there is a need to carry out the further investigation about the role of students' culture towards the implementation of SS.

##### B. Suggestion

Discussion related to this research is still very limited and requires a lot of input, a suggestion for the next writer is to study more deeply and comprehensively about the Single-sex versus Coeducational Schools: Which One is More Effective to Implement in Indonesia?

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