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Gender Stereotype Towards Children in a Social Resilience Perspective

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Abstract: Social-relational lives among both female and male children often experience various problems of gender injustice, which are manifested in the form of gender stereotype. The aim of this paper is to analyze some aspects of gender stereotype and their implications for social resilience towards children especially in context of relations between both female and male children and also for their environment. The data collection relies on two aspects, first is literature study and second is interview which is conducted for one expert whose background is as an academician and also an activist for children rights. This study asserts that gender stereotype has been done since childhood, even before the child has been born. The stereotype is perpetuated through various socializations: through families, schools, and the general public environment. Gender stereotype has an impact on children's social resilience, particularly on how children react it among society. The difference of perceptions in children with society expectations makes them feel confused, insecure, and uncomfortable among society.

Keywords: gender stereotype, children, social resilience

Abstrak: Kehidupan sosial-relasional antara anak perempuan dan laki-laki kerap mengalami berbagai masalah ketidakadilan gender, salah satunya terejawantah dalam bentuk stereotip gender (gender stereotyping). Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis aspek stereotip gender dan implikasinya terhadap ketahanan sosial pada anak dalam konteks relasi antara anak perempuan dan laki-laki dengan lingkungannya. Pengumpulan data dalam paper ini menggunakan studi literatur dan wawancara dengan satu ahli yang berasal dari akademisi sekaligus pegiat hak anak. Tulisan ini menjelaskan bahwa stereotip gender sudah dilakukan sejak masa kanak-kanak, bahkan sebelum anak lahir. Stereotip gender dilanggengkan melalui berbagai sosialisasi, baik melalui keluarga, sekolah, maupun lingkungan masyarakat secara umum. Stereotip tersebut memberi dampak terhadap ketahanan sosial anak, terutama bagaimana anak berlaku dalam masyarakat. Adanya perbedaan persepsi dalam diri anak dengan ekspektasi yang ada dalam masyarakat membuat anak akan merasa bingung dan tidak nyaman dengan dirinya.

Kata kunci: stereotip gender, anak, ketahanan sosial

INTRODUCTION

Resilience becomes a concept to analyze some problems that exist in society. Even so, the concept of resilience cannot be free from some various opinion. A German anthropologist, Daniel F. Lorenz says that the concept of resilience can only be used for disaster and ecological matters. On the other hand, John T. Capioppo et al. argue that resilience can also be implemented as a concept that explains about social phenomena related to humans². The academic debate between two is related to the broad scope concept of resilience itself. In social discourse, there is a social resilience which is well

¹ Daniel F. Lorenz, "The diversity of resilience: contributions from a social science prespective," *Nat Hazards*, (67), 7-24.

² John T. Cacioppo, et al., "Social Resilience: The Value of Social Fitness with an Application to the Military," *American Phsycologist*, Vol. 66 (1), 43-51.

known. According to Adger, the term of social resilience is the ability of a person or a group of people who are able to withstand through some external distraction that can change the social structure among a group of society³. Keck and Sakdapolrak mention that social resilience is a concept that is closely related to the way humans deal with problems that make them vulnerable⁴. From some definitions above, it can be concluded that social resilience is a personal's capacity to face problems that lead a person becomes vulnerable. The problems that arise among society are related to human relationship. However, the social problems faced by women and men are often different.

Among patriarchal society, the relationship or some roles between women and men are not on an equal point. The implication is that gender injustice often discriminates against women. Arivia said that discrimination againsts women occurs in some society and it is difficult to eliminate⁵. In a more extreme view, borrowing Simone De Beauvoir's term, women are seen as "other" figures whom different⁶. Besides that, the patriarchal system is also not only bad for women, but it works for men too. Basically, patriarchy hegemonies both women and men in a divided gender role which is constructed by society. Women must be feminine, while men must be masculine. If they do not follow the prevailing norms, there will be social sanctions from the community in the form of gender stereotypes, even for violence.

Gender stereotypes has been constructed by society since from an early age. According to psychologist Kimberley Norris, the concept of gender

³ Neil W. Adger. "Social and ecological resilience: are they related?" *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 24 No. 3 (2000), 347-364.

⁴ Marcus Keck & Patrick Sakdapolrak. "What Is Social Resilience? Lesson Learned and Ways Forward," *Erdkunde*, Vol. 67 (1), 8-11.

⁵ Gadis Arivia, Feminisme: sebuah kata hati (Jakarta: Kompas Gramedia, 2000).

⁶ Simone De Beauvoir, *Second Sex: Kehidupan Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi, 2016).

begins to emerge and develop in children from the age of three. This can be seen from the tendency of children to make friends with children of the same gender. Not only that, children also tend to play games that are associated with a certain gender. Towards adulthood, the label continues to be socialized through social relationships in which children are included. Joan E. Grusec said that family was a factor in the socialization process. However, gender stereotype only makes room for binary gender and emphasizes non-binary gender. Fakih said that gender stereotype is influenced by the misunderstanding of society in understanding nature and gender. According to him, nature is different from the concept of gender. Nature refers to something that is attached to the human body and cannot be exchanged such as menstruation for women and sperm production for men. Meanwhile, gender is an identity that is constructed by the community and can still be exchanged.

This paper analyzes the implications of gender stereotype of children on their social resilience. The main theory used in this paper is gender theory. Based on the Women's Studies Encyclopedia, Helen Tierney defines gender as a set of attitudes, functions, roles, and responsibilities attached to both men and women¹⁰. The gender concept that is embedded in the community will create gender relations and roles. Due to its biased and dichotomous nature, the gender that is embedded often creates injustice. The author also applies

⁷ Kimberley Norris, "Can a four-year-old be sexist?"

https://theconversation.com/can-a-four-year-old-be-sexist-75547 (diakses 23 Juli 2020).

⁸ Joan E. Grusec, Socialization Processes in the Family: Social and Emotional Development, *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 62, 243-269.

⁹ Mansour Fakih, Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial (Yogyakarta:Pustaka Pelajar, 2006), 10-11.

 $^{^{\}rm 10}$ Helen Tierney, Women's Studies Encyclopedia (Westpot, CT: Greenwood Press).

social resilience theory, that is the ability of a person or group of people to overcome various threats.¹¹

METHOD

This paper applies a qualitative approach and literature study by a cross-sectional design and internet sources as data collection techniques. Besides that, the author also confirms literature-based findings to a formal figure from academia, that is Mamik Sri Supatmi (a lecturer in Criminology at the University of Indonesia and an activist for the Proclamation of Indonesian Children). The data analysis refers to Miles and Huberman's theory which consists of three main processes of data analysis including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Stereotype Gender in Patriarchal Society

Before discussing further about gender, Fakih said there is a need for a clear understanding on the concept of gender. This concept here is to explain the problems that exist in the relationship between women and men. Fakih continued, the gender discourse must start from an understanding of the differences between biological sex and gender which are caused by social constructs¹². Like a construction, gender is made by humans. This means that gender is interchangeable. The gender that attached to humans can change time to time and differs from one place to another. Gender as a social construction is formed in a long time. There is a long process until gender is

¹¹ Marcus Keck dan Patrick Sakdapolrak, "What Is Social Resilience? Lesson Learned and Ways Forward," *Erdkunde*, Vol. 67 (1), 10-11.

¹² Mansour Fakih, *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006).

seen as normal and becomes a habit. Through this process, gender generates differences and roles that are considered as beliefs and ideologies of society. Gender has taken root in public awareness in the form of standardization of gender roles. However, empirically, gender is often misunderstood, which leads causing gender injustice. Mulia said that this view was caused by an incomplete understanding of religion. This is due to the distorted interpretations that arise when the religion is understood by its adherents, then experiences interactions with various cultures¹³.

Gender discourse has existed since feminist groups fought for equality in 1977 through changing the term 'patriarchal' or 'sexist' become 'gender discourse'. Observing on the condition of Indonesia, the embryo of gender discourse had begun to exist since the 5th Development Cabinet (1988-1993) under the leadership of President Soeharto. Gender received greater attention when the government in the reform era issued Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 concerning Gender Mainstreaming in Social Development. Since then, gender was discussed more and more¹⁴. In the beginning, gender was seen as a discourse of women's struggle only. This is reasonable because at that time, women could be categorized as a group that has a high level of vulnerability. During its development, feminists began to struggle for the deconstruction of the existence of masculinity and femininity¹⁵. In a patriarchal society like in Indonesia, gender tends to be viewed in a dichotomous way. This negates the existence of a non-binary gender identity - a gender group that is not categorized as women or men¹⁶.

¹³ Siti Musdah Mulia, Ensiklopedia Mulimah Reformis, Pokok-Pokok Pemikiran untuk Reinterpretasi dan Aksi, (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 2019).

¹⁴ Riant Nugroho, *Gender dan Strategi Pengarusutamaannya di Indonesia*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008).

¹⁵ E. Susanti dan K. Juliasih, "Feminitas, Maskulinitas, dan Peran Gender dalam Tiga Venus Karya Clara Ng" Tesis, UGM, 2014.

¹⁶ G. Elliot, "Exploring Non-binary Gender Identities" *Tesis*, 2017, 7-10.

Non-binary gender group identifies themselves as humans whom exist outside the binary system in society.

However, groups that do not conform to binary gender are often considered into 'guilty' group and they gain gender-based stereotype. According to Zaduqisti, stereotype has three main characteristics, they are grouping people into certain characteristics or traits, consensus on certain characteristics or traits, and the existence of differences in certain characteristics or traits. Everything is done by relational-perceptual. At an advanced level, stereotypes will lead to discrimination against minority groups.¹⁷ Gender role stereotype is social expectations that view how women and men should act. This concept forces women and men to submit on some certain barriers. These stereotypes can create social pressure that also influences self-identification of their gender identity. ¹⁸ In their research, Levitt and Ippolito found three basic things that shape gender identity, they are pressure from society, linguistic aspects that contribute to the formation of gender identities, and the existence of sustainable gender identity formation.

Several studies show that gender stereotype places women and men in an unequal position¹⁹. Gender stereotype that occur in patriarchal societies considers that women have lower status rather than men²⁰. Besides, a research conducted by Bian, et al. shows that gender role stereotype is more influencing the mindset of women which at least planted in the women's mind about the hierarchy of relations between men and women. In their study, Bian says that society tends to associate the level of intelligence between men compared to

¹⁷ Esti Zaduqisti, "Stereotipe Peran Gender Bagi Pendidikan Anak," MUWÂZÂH, Vol. 1 (1), 74.

¹⁸ G. Elliott. "Exploring Non-binary Gender Identities," *Tesis* (2017).

¹⁹ Heidi M. Levitt dan Maria R. Ippolito, "Being Transgender: the experience of transgender identity development," Journal of Homosexuality, 61(12), 27-58.

²⁰ Kelly Lin Mulvey dan Melanie Killen. "Challenging gender stereotypes: resistance and exclusion," Child Development 86(3), 681–694.

women. This causes women to tend to lower themselves and are reluctant to pursue high-or higher careers than men²¹. Still in relation to gender stereotype, there is a term known as intergroup bias. This term is defined as a systematic tendency to view the group members of a certain group is better than other group members. This concept explains that gender stereotype is closely related to prejudice and discrimination.

Socialization of Gender Role towards Children

Gender as a construction is closely related to change. Gender can change and differ depending on time, place, and class conditions of society. It is possible to find that there are groups of women working from morning to night in one region, while in another one, there are women who only take care of domestic work. There are also tough women whom lived in the past and there are also women whom are bland and emotional whom live todays. It happens because gender can be exchanged and change. These changes are influenced by the socialization of gender roles among society. Gender roles have been socialized since childhood, even before the child is born²². Parents generally treat their children according to gender roles that prevail among society-their belief-in general and they influence the identification of their gender identity. Socialization is a theory that forms gender identity. According to Nugroho, the socialization theory explains gender role differences as a result of the demands and expectations that exist in society. Socialization of gender roles is not only carried out by parents who are considered closer to their children, but also society in general. If it is not in accordance with the

²¹ Lin Bian, et. al. "Gender stereotypes about intellectual ability emerge earlu and influence children's interests," *Science*, (355), 389-391.

²² Through ultrasound technology, parents will find out the sex of their child. After that, parents tend to stereotype gender such as preparing masculine toys for boys and girls clothes for girls. Interview with Mamik Sri Supatmi, 3 Mei 2020.

gender roles that apply in society, children will receive social sanctions because they are considered to have a conflict with norms. This is a factor perpetuating injustice in the form of gender stereotype in society²³.

Grusec's research shows that continuous socialization toward children effects them having gender perceptions according to society's expectations, especially by families. In addition, Macrae C. Neil et al. argue that gender stereotype is often introduced through various mainstream media such as some story books, school lessons, daily advice, and certain types of games by more mature people, such as families, religious leaders and teachers. Everything affects the stereotypes that are manifested in the different roles between women and men²⁴. Literature study conducted by King, et al. found that there are at least seven factors which influence the development of gender labels and norms in children, namely family, toys, games, media, language, teachers, and peers.²⁵

In order to prepare their children to enter the community, parents as the child's earliest teacher often provide gender-biased education. Girls are taught to cook, wash, sweep floors, and other activities considered feminine. Unlike girls, boys are free to do activities as long as they don't do 'girl work'. This is influenced by the views of parents about the gender roles they experience, such as a wife is also acting as mother and a husband whom takes his role through family responsibility. Traditional roles like this are perpetuated by the socialization of gender that exist in society. Related to toys, Fine and Rush's study suggest that gender stereotypes in children's toys can perpetuate

²³ Riant Nugroho, Gender dan Strategi..., 23-25.

²⁴ Neil C. Macrae, Charles Stangor, dan Miles Hewstone, Stereotypes and Stereotyping (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996).

²⁵ Tania King, et. al. "Building Children's Resilience through Respectful and Gender Equitable Relationship Pilor Project, a literature review, CSRM Working Paper No. 4 (2018), 6.

beliefs about activities that are suitable for either male and female children based on expectations and norms prevailing in society. Furthermore, they said that for boys, these stereotypes could lead to violent practices²⁶. This finding is shared by Maas, whom says that there are gender stereotypes that arise as a result of socialization through dichotomous children's toys. Girls and boys are separated by different shelves when they want to buy toys in a shop. This difference is caused by the availability of different toy products²⁷.

In other studies, media exposure affects children's perceptions of certain toys. Boys who are exposed to superhero content and violence by the media tend to be more attracted to play weapon toys rather than girls. When entering educational institutions, gender stereotypes are also perpetuated²⁸. Nugroho said that children are introduced to dichotomous gender stereotypes at school. Through textbooks and advice from teachers in schools, children are introduced to gender labels in accordance with the norms in society²⁹. Besides, Hilliard and Liben find the effect of gender signs about the formation of categorized gender behaviors in the classroom, such as using gender-specific language or physically separating girls and boys³⁰. According to Mamik Sri Supatmi, although there are many ways to attach gender labels to children,

²⁶ Cordelia Fine dan Emma Rush. "Why Does All The Girl have to Buy Pink Stuff? The Ethics of Science and Gendered Toy Marketing Debate," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149, 770-773.

²⁷ Megan K. Maas. "Ada identitas gender dalam mainan anak; untuk menghilangkannya butuh upaya lebih serius," https://theconversation.com/ada-identitas-gender-dalam-mainan-anak-untuk-menghilangkannya-butuh-upaya-lebih-serius-131663 (diakses pada 6 Juni 2020).

²⁸ Sarah M. Coyne, et. al. "It's a bird! It's a plane! It's a gender stereotype! Longitudinal associations between superhero viewing and gender stereotyped play," Sex Roles 70(9–10), 416–430.

²⁹ Riant Nugroho, Gender dan Strategi..., 36-39.

³⁰ Lacey J. Hilliard dan Lynn S. Liben, "Differing Level of Gender Salience in Preschool Classrooms: Effects of Children's Gender Attitute and Intergroup Bias," *Child Development*, 81(6), 87-98.

family is the most effective medium to introduce gender labels since childhood because families have physical and social closeness to children. Family has a significant role to place gender label on children because they spend much time with children. The process of caring in the family makes children learn moral values from parents, which include values for how a person acts according to his gender³¹.

Women and men still have the same gender perceptions as when they were children, until they grow up in adult phase. Prastyani argues that gender is one of the factors that limits career perceptions of female health professionals. From 48 informants interviewed, the majority of them did not continue to work in remote areas because of their gender perceptions³². Even when working, women and men still carry the label. They are forced to be in two different boxes that are limited by the norms that apply in a patriarchal society. Women are seen as only having responsibility for domestic affairs while men work outside the home. Even so, because of their constructive nature, gender stereotypes can change as children grow up socially³³.

Gender Stereotype toward Children in The Perspective of Social Resilience

For social resilience perspective, humans have their respective capacities to face various obstacles in their lives. Keck and Sakdapolrak view that the concept of social resilience is related to the concept of humans as agents (human agency)³⁴. Looking at the gender and age context, female

³¹ Wawancara Mamik Sri Supatmi, 3 Mei 2020.

³² Ade W. Prastyani "Riset tenaga kesehatan perempuan: himpitan peran gender sangat pengaruhi karier mereka," https://theconversation.com/riset-tenaga-kesehatan-perempuan-himpitan-peran-gender-sangat-pengaruhi-karier-mereka-129219 (diakses 1 Juli 2020).

³³ Wawancara Mamik Sri Supatmi, 3 Mei 2020.

³⁴ Marcus Keck dan Patrick Sakdapolrak, "What Is..., 11.

children have a higher level of vulnerability than male children. Besides by existence of gender inequality, children are also seen as not having the ability to live independently. Besides that, more specifically, Eddyono adds that women is able to become some agents for themselves (women's agency). According to him, women are individual subjects. Even though they experience the same conditions, they have different ways of dealing with problems. The way women deal with problems is closely related to their perceptions of their gender roles and responsibilities³⁵.

In cultural conditions that place women and men in a dichotomous of their gender roles, social resilience can be used as a lens for analyzing to see how they deal with the problems that come to them. Gender stereotype, as a form of gender injustice, is a complex social problem³⁶. Therefore, an intersectional approach is needed to analyze it, one is using the social resilience approach. The concept of social resilience does not only involve human social factors, but also psychological and biological factors. The aim is to untangle the repressive threads that are raised by their problems³⁷.

Keck and Sakdapolrak explain that there are at least three main factors determining a person's social resilience. They are social relations and network structures, institutions and power relations, and the last is knowledge and discourse. *First*, related to social relations and network structures, Keck and Sakdapolrak state that humans need social capital to build their capacity for

³⁵ Sri Wiyanti Eddyono, Women's Empowerment in Indonesia, A Poor Community in Jakarta, (New York: Routledge, 2019).

³⁶ Citra Orwella dan Khabibur Rohman, "Imaji Salehah

dalam Media Sosial Instagram dalam Kasus Rina Nose", Martabat: Jurnal Perempuan dan Anak. 1 (2), 2017

³⁷ Rondang Siahaan, "Ketahanan Sosial Keluarga: Perspektif Pekerjaan Sosial," *Informasi*, Vol. 17 (2), 84.

social resilience. More specifically, good social relations to increase social resilience are informal relationships between humans³⁸.

Second, related to institutions and power relations, social resilience is seen as a result of one's access to resources. Humans do not have equal access to resources due to unequal power relations. In a more severe level, this inequality can lead to conflict. *Third*, social resilience is also determined by knowledge and discourse³⁹. Marshall and Marshall argue that social resilience is greatly influenced by human perceptions of risk. This means that before building their capacity for social resilience, firstly, humans need to have related knowledge⁴⁰.

In the context of gender stereotype againsts children, social relations and network structures become the determiners the formation of gender injustice in community. In fact, children have had the social capital yet rather than their parents or the community collectively that perpetuates gender stereotype among them. In his research, Zaduqisti argue that children tend to adjust their behavior to standards they find in society. Children understand and organize information about what women and men should do according to society's expectations (gender typing)⁴¹.

Regarding on institutional factors and power relations, Fakih asserts that gender injustice, besides developing systematically, it also arises because of unequal relationships⁴². Gender role stereotype is a manifestation of the

³⁸ Marcus Keck dan Patrick Sakdapolrak, "What Is..., 12.

³⁹ Marcus Keck dan Patrick Sakdapolrak, "What Is..., 12.

⁴⁰ Nadine A. Marshall dan Paul A. Marshall, "Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Social Resilience within Commercial Fisheries in Northern Australia," *Ecology and Society*, 12 (1).

⁴¹ Esti Zaduqisti, "Stereotipe Peran Gender Bagi Pendidikan Anak," *MUWÂZÂH*, Vol. 1, 77.

⁴² Mansour Fakih, *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial* (Yogyakarta:Pustaka Pelajar, 2006).

unequal power relations between children and parents and also society. Likewise with the knowledge factor, children do not have the knowledge to resist restraint due to stereotyping gender roles in society. Through continuous socialization, children consider the gender role standards that apply in society to be something right and must be followed if they do not want to be discriminated. So, what emerges is a biased perception that is only based on what applies in society, such what Bian, et al. Suggest, that gender stereotype in children creates certain gender perceptions⁴³.

In addition, Keck and Sakdapolrak formulate three dimensions of social resilience that can be used to analyze these problems which they say are related to individual and group capacities and vulnerabilities, namely coping capacities which refers to the capacity of a person or group of people to overcome short-term problems directly, adaptive capacities which are preventive measures, and participative capacities which are long-term and refer to external relations with the community and how they participate in it⁴⁴.

Ideally, the three social resilience capacities can be owned by children. Even so, children have limitations to build these capacities. because there is a power relationship between children and parents. Socially and culturally, children still need protection from adults - in this case parents and society in general. That is why children are seen as a vulnerable group and need to be protected. Because of this vulnerability, children do not have the right to be independent and are still seen as a dependent group in society.

Some studies explain that the vulnerability of children comes from various sectors. Socially, when there are differences in personal perceptions of children with social perceptions of how children behave in society, it is also a problem. When children are educated to be women and men socially, but

⁴³ Lin Bian, et al. "Gender stereotypes about..., 389-391.

⁴⁴ Marcus Keck dan Patrick Sakdapolrak, "What Is..., 10-11.

when they get different knowledge, children will experience personal conflicts that make them confused. This is due to differences in the resistance capacity it has. Children who are raised in the same family may behave differently.

Children tend to be confused and feel uncomfortable with themselves. When a boy wants ballet a course, but he is made fun of, or when a girl plays sports, she is scorned of it, those can affect their endurance.⁴⁵

The risk factors experienced by children are not only existed in the family environment such as, having a low support from parents, but also from the community and schools such as low empathy and self-esteem, conflict with peers, and low support from teachers⁴⁶. In fact, Keck and Sakdapolrak note that support from the community, such as peers, family, and teachers in schools are needed to increase social resilience⁴⁷.

CONCLUSION

Based on what the author mentions above, it can be concluded that gender role stereotype is a form of gender injustice. Gender stereotype forces women and men to be in different boxes and act according to the existing standards or values among society. This stereotype is socialized since childhood through various media such as toys, mass media, and educational institutions. Not only perpetuated by parents in the family, gender role stereotype is also strengthened by the treatment of the social environment such as society and peers. Through these socializations, the gender role label that is embedded has a long-term impact until the children grow up. One of

⁴⁵ Wawancara Mamik Sri Supatmi, 3 Mei 2020.

⁴⁶ Brian P. Ackerman, et. al. "The relations between persistent poverty and contextual risk and children's behavior in elementary school," *Developmental Psychology*, 40(3), 367-377.

⁴⁷ Marcus Keck dan Patrick Sakdapolrak, "What Is..., 11.

the manifestations of the impact of these stereotypes is the unequal perceptions of men and women about work.

Although it has broad impact, gender role stereotype has a greater impact on children, especially girls who have a higher level of vulnerability than boys. In society whom lives in a patriarchal socio-cultural environment, women are still viewed as lower than men. This can widen inequality and power relations between women and men, which at an advanced level will create repeated injustices.

In the perspective of social resilience, gender stereotype in children is related to how children deal with their problems, especially in terms of the dimensions of social relations, power relations, and access to knowledge. Gender stereotype in children is one of the factors that can influence children's social resilience capacities, including coping capacities, adaptive capacities, and participatory capacities. However, due to the unequal and dependent position of children compared to parents and society as the party introducing the gender role label, these capacities cannot be built easily.

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