

The Impact of Gender Equality and Inclusive Leadership Programs on Students

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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: February 2, 2026 Accepted: May 29, 2026 Published: June 12, 2026 Keywords: Community service Gender equality Higher education Inclusive leadership Participatory action research This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License © 2026 Bubungan Tinggi: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat	This Community Service initiative was designed to strengthen students' conceptual understanding and practical engagement with gender equality and inclusive leadership within higher education institutions. The program was conducted on October 31, 2025, at the STIMI Banjarmasin auditorium, located on Jalan Kuripan No. 26, Banjarmasin. It was developed as a research-based intervention addressing previously identified gaps between academic motivation and inclusive organizational practices among student leaders at STIMI Banjarmasin. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach grounded in Reflective Teaching and Learning (RTL) was implemented, involving 32 student organization members. Program effectiveness was evaluated through structured pre-test and post-test assessments combined with qualitative reflection analysis. Findings demonstrate a 32.5% increase in gender equality understanding and a 28.1% increase in inclusive leadership attitudes. Participants also generated concrete organizational action plans aimed at promoting equitable participation and gender-responsive governance. These results indicate that participatory and reflective community engagement can function as an institutional mechanism for embedding inclusive leadership culture in higher education.
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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality constitutes a foundational pillar of sustainable governance and institutional development. It ensures equal access to participation, leadership, and decision-making processes regardless of gender identity ([United Nations, 2015](#)). Within higher education, institutions play a strategic role not only in academic formation but also in shaping leadership norms and organizational culture ([Eagly & Chin, 2010](#)). In the Indonesian higher education context, gender inequality manifests in several measurable forms. First, women's representation in university leadership positions (rector, dean, department head) remains below 25% nationally, despite women constituting over 55% of university graduates. Second, within student organizations, female students are frequently assigned to stereotypically feminine roles such as secretariat, treasurer, or event documentation, while male students dominate presidential, coordinator, and strategic decision-making positions. Third, implicit bias in leadership selection mechanisms often disadvantages female candidates, with selection criteria implicitly favoring masculine-associated

traits such as assertiveness and physical stamina. Fourth, female students report higher rates of interruption during meetings and lower perceived speaking legitimacy compared to their male counterparts. These concrete disparities formed the empirical basis for designing this intervention, as they represent systemic rather than individual barriers to gender equality.

Despite global commitments to gender mainstreaming, disparities in leadership participation remain evident in higher education settings ([World Economic Forum, 2023](#)). Structural bias, organizational culture, and implicit stereotypes continue to influence leadership trajectories and decision-making practices ([Morley, 2021](#); [O'Connor & Irvine, 2020](#)). Research suggests that policy frameworks alone are insufficient to ensure inclusive leadership unless accompanied by participatory and experiential learning processes ([Smith et al., 2022](#)).

Inclusive leadership has been defined as leadership that actively values diversity, promotes equity, and fosters shared participation in decision-making ([Carmeli et al., 2020](#)). In student organizational contexts, inclusive leadership contributes to psychological safety, engagement, and collaborative effectiveness ([Javed et al., 2021](#)). However, empirical studies on inclusive leadership interventions at the student organization level remain limited, particularly in Indonesian higher education.

Previous research at STIMI Banjarmasin identified strong academic motivation among students but revealed limited integration of gender-responsive leadership principles within organizational practice. This gap underscores the need for applied interventions that translate theoretical understanding into practical organizational behavior.

A preliminary needs assessment conducted in early 2025 involving informal interviews and internal organizational review at STIMI Banjarmasin revealed limited gender representation in student executive boards and minimal integration of gender-responsive principles in leadership selection mechanisms. Although students demonstrated strong academic motivation, structured training on inclusive governance was absent. This diagnostic finding served as the empirical foundation for designing the present intervention.

Based on the identified gaps, this community service program seeks to answer two primary questions: (1) To what extent can a participatory training program improve students' conceptual understanding of gender equality? (2) Is the program effective in shifting students' attitudes toward inclusive leadership? Answering these questions is crucial because without empirical evidence on program effectiveness, higher education institutions may continue to implement symbolic gender policies without tangible behavioral outcomes among students. Therefore, this community service initiative was conceptualized as a research-based participatory intervention aimed at strengthening students' awareness and implementation of inclusive leadership principles through reflective engagement.

METHODS

This program was conducted on October 31, 2025, at STIMI Banjarmasin, involving 32 active student organization members (22 BEM/UKM executive board members, 6 lecturers, and 4 educational staff). Participants included 18 females (56.3%) and 14 males (43.7%). A Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework was employed to ensure collaborative learning and shared problem identification ([Reason & Bradbury, 2008](#)). The intervention integrated Reflective Teaching and Learning (RTL) principles rooted in experiential learning theory ([Kolb, 2014](#)).

Four-Stage Implementation with Technical Specifications:

Stage 1: Conceptual Reinforcement (45 minutes). Cognitive instruments were constructed to validate theoretical understanding enhancement. Participants received structured materials covering: (a) sex-gender differentiation, (b) social construction of gender, (c) principles of gender equality (access, participation, control, benefits), and (d) global and national gender equality frameworks. Cognitive assessment used 10 multiple-choice items measuring comprehension across

four cognitive levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis), with internal consistency (Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 = 0.78).

Stage 2: Case-Based Discussion (30 minutes). Parameters and dimensions of gender bias analyzed included: (a) stereotyping in task allocation (administrative vs. strategic roles), (b) participation inequality in decision-making forums, (c) implicit bias in leadership selection mechanisms, and (d) communication pattern disparities. Three authentic cases derived from the preliminary needs assessment were discussed in small groups (5-6 participants each), facilitated by trained moderators using structured reflection protocols.

Stage 3: Leadership Simulation (30 minutes). Objective criteria for assessing participant performance included the following: (a) equitable speaking time distribution (target: $\leq 20\%$ deviation from proportional representation), (b) quality of inclusive decision-making (measured by number of perspectives incorporated), (c) conflict resolution effectiveness (measured by mutually satisfactory solutions), and (d) gender-responsive communication (measured by inclusive language use). Success indicators: minimum 70% of groups achieving equitable participation patterns.

Stage 4: Structured Reflective Dialogue and Action Planning (30 minutes). Long-term monitoring mechanisms for ensuring sustainable implementation of action plans from 32 participants included: (a) documented commitment letters with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) action items, (b) scheduled follow-up at 1, 3, and 6 months post-intervention, (c) a WhatsApp-based peer support group for ongoing consultation, and (d) integration with Pusat Studi Gender (PSG) STIMI Banjarmasin monitoring framework.

Evaluation Instruments and Reliability:

Table 1 Impact measurement instruments

Measurement Dimension	Instrument Type	Number of Items	Indicators	Analysis Technique
Conceptual Understanding of Gender Equality	Multiple-choice test	10	Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis	Descriptive statistics (mean percentage)
Inclusive Leadership Attitude	Likert scale (1-5)	15	Openness to diversity, equitable participation commitment, bias awareness	Paired t-test, descriptive statistics
Qualitative Reflection	Open-ended questionnaire	3	Perceived behavioral change, implementation commitment, identified barriers	Thematic analysis

The quantitative instrument consisted of 15 structured items measured on a five-point Likert scale adapted from established inclusive leadership constructs ([Nishii, 2018](#); [Shore et al., 2018](#)). Reliability justification: Internal consistency testing using Cronbach's alpha on pilot data (N=15) yielded $\alpha = 0.82$, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 ([Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994](#)), indicating good internal consistency. Construct validity was established through expert review by two gender studies scholars and one measurement specialist.

Instrument Administration Procedure: The pretest was administered immediately before the first session began (at 07.30 WITA) with a duration of 15 minutes. Participants completed the 10-item multiple-choice test and the 15-item Likert scale independently without discussion to ensure

baseline authenticity. The post-test was administered after the completion of all four sessions (at 11.00 WITA) using identical instruments to measure changes in understanding and attitudes. The same procedure was followed to maintain consistency. All responses were anonymized using participant codes to enable paired analysis while protecting individual privacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To assess the effectiveness of the community service intervention, a structured pre-test and post-test evaluation was conducted measuring participants' conceptual understanding of gender equality and their attitudinal orientation toward inclusive leadership. Pre-test and post-test scores on gender equality and inclusive leadership are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Pre-test and post-test scores on gender equality and inclusive leadership

Indicator		Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)	Increase (%)	t-value	p-value
Gender understanding	equality	62.4	82.7	32.5	8.43	<0.001
Inclusive attitude	leadership	65.1	83.4	28.1	7.21	<0.001

Program Success Evaluation

Based on the predetermined success indicators (minimum 30% improvement in post-test scores compared to pre-test and minimum 80% participant attendance), this program was declared successful. The program achieved a 32.5% improvement in gender equality understanding (exceeding the 30% target) and a 28.1% improvement in inclusive leadership attitudes (approaching the target). Participant attendance reached 100% (32 out of 32 registered participants), significantly exceeding the 80% minimum threshold. These results confirm that the participatory intervention met its intended objectives.

Analytical Prose and Systemic Impact

The findings indicate a substantial improvement in both cognitive and attitudinal dimensions following the intervention. The 32.5% increase in conceptual understanding ($p < 0.001$) suggests that participatory and dialogical engagement significantly enhances students' comprehension of gender-responsive governance principles. This result aligns with recent studies emphasizing that experiential and reflective learning models strengthen value internalization more effectively than traditional lecture-based approaches ([Smith et al., 2022](#); [Saleh et al., 2023](#)).

Systemic Impact Analysis

The 32.5% increase in understanding and 28.1% improvement in attitudes potentially translates into formal structural changes at STIMI Banjarmasin. Following the intervention, participants committed to three concrete systemic reforms: (a) revision of BEM/UKM organizational bylaws (AD/ART) to include gender parity provisions in leadership selection (target: minimum 40% representation for any gender), (b) mandatory inclusive leadership training for all incoming executive board members, and (c) establishment of a "Youth for Gender Equality" working group with quarterly reporting to the Pusat Studi Gender. Without such systemic integration, the intervention would be considered incomplete in achieving the expected institutional transformation. The 28.1% improvement in inclusive leadership attitudes reflects a meaningful shift toward equity-oriented organizational behavior. Contemporary leadership research highlights that inclusive leadership fosters psychological safety, participation, and balanced decision-making

processes in academic environments ([Javed et al., 2021](#); [Morley, 2021](#)). Within higher education institutions, structured interventions that combine dialogue, simulation, and action planning have been shown to produce sustainable behavioral transformation ([O'Connor & Irvine, 2020](#); [World Economic Forum, 2023](#)).

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative reflections further revealed participants' commitment to implementing practical measures, including equitable speaking opportunities in meetings (reported by 84.4% of participants), transparent leadership recruitment mechanisms (78.1%), and mentoring for underrepresented members (71.9%). One participant stated: *"I now recognize that my habit of interrupting female colleagues during meetings is a form of implicit bias. I commit to changing this behavior and ensuring all voices are heard."* Another noted: *"Our organization will revise selection criteria to focus on competence rather than gender stereotypes."*

Thus, the program demonstrates that research-informed community engagement initiatives can function as catalytic mechanisms for embedding inclusive leadership values within student governance structures. Documentation of community service activities is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Participatory learning atmosphere

CONCLUSION

This Community Service program effectively strengthened students' understanding and commitment to gender equality and inclusive leadership. The significant improvements in knowledge (32.5%) and attitudes (28.1%), combined with actionable organizational commitments (including AD/ART reforms, mandatory training, and establishment of monitoring mechanisms), indicate that participatory and reflective approaches support sustainable institutional change.

Strategic Recommendations for Stakeholders: (1) for STIMI Banjarmasin Rectorate: Mandate gender parity provisions (minimum 40% representation) in all student organization leadership selection mechanisms within the upcoming academic year. Allocate dedicated funding for Pusat Studi Gender to provide ongoing mentoring for student organization leaders; and (2) for Student Organization Executives (BEM/UKM): Immediately implement the RTL action plans, including equitable speaking protocols, transparent recruitment, and quarterly gender equality reporting to PSG.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this publication.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors contributed to the conceptualization, implementation, analysis, and preparation of this manuscript. All authors approved the final version.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author team used DeepSeek AI during the preparation of this work for language refinement and minor editing of the manuscript. After using the tool, the authors carefully reviewed, revised, and edited the content to ensure accuracy and coherence. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of the publication. This community service activity represents the downstream implementation of research. The research, analysis, and interpretation presented in this article were conducted by the author team without relying on artificial intelligence (AI) to generate scientific findings.

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