# Exploring the Teaching Practice of ELT Pre-service Teachers to Develop Gender-responsive Pedagogy

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## Abstract

Integrating gender-inclusive strategies in teacher training prepares future educators to create fair and inclusive classrooms. Addressing gender biases in education can expand equal learning opportunities, positively impacting students' experiences and outcomes. This paper examines how Indonesian pre-service teachers implement gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP), focusing on their choices in teaching materials, classroom management, and instructional methods as they prepare to shape future learning environments. Four Indonesian ELT pre-service teachers from Universitas Negeri Malang participated in the study, closely examining them through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The thematic analysis of the interviews and observations revealed that pre-service teachers incorporated gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP) elements into their teaching practices, including diverse teaching materials, inclusive classroom management, and methods encouraging equitable student participation. These practices seemed to stem from the general inclusive teaching principles emphasized in their teacher education program. The findings indicate a potential benefit in integrating specific GRP training within professional education frameworks, enabling pre-service teachers to develop a deeper and more intentional understanding of gender-responsive strategies. This integration would empower future educators to address gender biases effectively and foster classrooms that actively support gender equality, enhancing students' educational experiences and outcomes.

**Keywords**: Gender-responsive pedagogy, pre-service teachers, inclusive education, teaching practice.

## INTRODUCTION

Gender awareness is often absent from classroom discourse in Indonesia, as teachers focus on transferring knowledge rather than fostering an inclusive environment (Mukminin et al., 2019; Azizah, 2023). This limited attention to gender inclusivity often results in female students being less encouraged to speak publicly or share their opinions, reflecting societal norms that discourage questioning authority, particularly in male-dominated settings. These dynamics are unintentionally reinforced by teacher attitudes, gendered curricula, textbooks, and instructional materials, all of which influence students' learning experiences and academic outcomes (Ariyanto, 2018; Triyaswati & Emaliana, 2021; Rachmadtullah et al.,

2020). Moreover, studies reveal that gender inequalities in academic performance persist from early childhood through adulthood, often exacerbated by teachers' unintentional biases (Jayachandran, 2015; Zulkarnaini & Adriany, 2021). For instance, educators may hold different expectations for boys and girls or underestimate female students' capabilities due to unexamined stereotypes and insufficient training on gender issues (Brown & Stone, 2016). To address these challenges, equipping teachers with a solid foundation in gender-responsive teaching practices is essential for creating truly inclusive and equitable classrooms.

Gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP) has emerged as an effective strategy to counteract biases and promote equitable opportunities for all students. According to UNESCO (2020), GRP refers to teaching and learning processes that pay attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys. Practically, this involves scrutinising learning materials, methodologies, content, activities, language use, classroom interactions, assessments, and classroom setups to address the unique needs of both boys and girls in the teaching-learning process. GRP encourages teachers to adopt diverse teaching methodologies, such as group discussions, role plays, and concept mapping, to engage students with varying learning preferences. The focus is ensuring equal participation in classroom activities and preventing the marginalisation of less assertive students, regardless of gender (Khalil et al., 2023).

Furthermore, gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP) offers a comprehensive framework for creating inclusive and equitable classrooms by addressing the unique needs of all students. A key component of GRP is the critical evaluation and adaptation of teaching materials to eliminate gender bias and stereotypes. Textbooks and learning resources should reflect balanced representations of both genders, promoting positive and equitable images that empower students to explore their potential without being constrained by traditional roles. Kostas (2023) emphasized that textbooks should be supplemented with formal guidelines to facilitate discussions on gender equality in the classroom. Ahmed et al. (2018) also highlighted that gender influences classroom management, noting that female teachers tend to demonstrate more vital classroom management skills. Equally important, GRP fosters classroom environments that encourage interaction and equal participation from both boys and girls, ensuring that all students feel supported and valued. In addition to teaching materials and classroom management, GRP emphasises diverse instructional methods and strategies that cater to different learning styles and encourage participation from all students. Techniques such as group discussions, role plays, and case studies enable collaborative and inclusive learning experiences (UNESCO, 2019).

Addressing gender representation and pedagogy in education has been the focus of several studies, each highlighting progress and persistent challenges in fostering equality and inclusivity. For instance, Emilia et al. (2017) and Maesaroh et al. (2022) revealed that stereotypes remain prevalent in educational materials, whereas Nisak et al. (2020) identified encouraging strides toward gender-balanced portrayals. To counter these biases, Zahro et al. (2020) proposed the Edu Gender Unity model, which emphasises critical engagement and redesign of textbooks to promote equity. Beyond textbooks, Mardhatillah et al. (2019) explored thematic learning models in Aceh's elementary schools, which integrated gender equality and diversity to cultivate students' national character and instil these values early.

Similarly, Antasari et al. (2022) examined gender mainstreaming within student organisations at Islamic religious universities, highlighting barriers such as weak legal frameworks, low student awareness, and insufficient institutional commitment. Expanding the scope further, Sarani et al. (2019) investigated Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of critical pedagogy, considering gender roles and teaching experience. Although no significant differences emerged between male and female teachers, some disparities were evident in specific areas. These studies emphasize diverse approaches to addressing gender issues in education, from curriculum integration to institutional and teacher-level analyses. They emphasise the importance of targeted strategies to create equitable and inclusive educational environments.

Equipping pre-service teachers with gender-responsive teaching strategies during their training is crucial for fostering inclusive classrooms and future-ready educators. While much of the existing research emphasises gender representation in textbooks or examines the practices of in-service teachers, less attention has been given to preparing pre-service teachers for gender inclusivity. These aspiring educators bring unique qualities, including adaptability, a willingness to collaborate, and a developing pedagogical skill set (Ji et al., 2022; Franco, 2014), making them ideal candidates for targeted gender-responsive training. This study addresses this gap by exploring how Indonesian ELT pre-service teachers implement gender-responsive pedagogy during their teaching practice. By investigating their experiences, the research sheds light on their preparedness, challenges, and strategies for integrating inclusivity into their teaching. Specifically, it seeks to answer the central question: How do ELT pre-service teachers implement their teaching practices to develop gender-responsive pedagogy? By addressing this underexplored area, the study contributes valuable insights into the practical application of gender-responsive pedagogy in Indonesian pre-service teacher education, bridging a critical gap in the existing literature.

## METHOD

This research examines the implementation of pre-service teachers' teaching practice in developing gender-responsive pedagogy. The study focused on pre-service teachers' teaching internships in school settings to explore their approaches to integrating gender-responsive strategies. The participants were drawn from the Department of English at an Indonesian university, specifically from the Asistensi Mengajar (AM) and Kampus Mengajar (KM) programs. These programs aim to provide hands-on teaching experience, with the Department offering elective courses such as *Gender and ELT* to equip students with knowledge and skills for promoting gender equality through material selection and classroom practices. The participants began their internships in the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year, from August 10 to December 5, 2023 (16 weeks). Only four of the 15 female pre-service teachers in this cohort agreed to participate in the study.

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the implementation of gender-responsive teaching practices among pre-service teachers. Classroom observations focused on how pre-service teachers implemented inclusive teaching methods, managed seating arrangements and provided leadership opportunities. Observations allowed for a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, while efforts were made to minimise the impact of the researcher's presence during fieldwork (Anney,

2014). Besides, semi-structured interviews offered insights into the teachers' perspectives on selecting gender-inclusive materials and promoting equal participation among students. The interviewers followed a structured guide, but they could expand the conversation based on pre-prepared questions when additional information was needed. This approach is beneficial when only one interview session allows researchers to gather precise, comparable, and reliable qualitative data in a single meeting (Taherdoost, 2021). The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and allow participants to express their views openly.

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative research technique that provides a richer and more comprehensive interpretation of qualitative data. Thematic analysis is precious for those interpreting and representing textual data, as it offers a structured approach to uncovering patterns and themes within the data (Nowell et al., 2017). An inductive approach was employed, allowing coding to be guided solely by the data, accessible from preexisting frameworks or researcher biases, so themes could emerge organically. The analysis followed the six stages outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006): familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This systematic approach ensured a detailed and meaningful understanding of the data.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Gender-responsive Teaching Materials

The findings indicate that pre-service teachers implemented gender-responsive teaching materials by aligning their selections with students' developmental levels, academic needs, and cultural contexts.

**Table 1.** Observational results on gender-responsive teaching materials

| Aspect | Details | Pre-Service Teacher (PST) |
|---|---|---|
| Cultural Relevance | The materials were culturally relevant, included examples of both genders in leading roles, and reflected students' daily lives. The examples aimed to promote inclusivity and gender equality while ensuring authenticity. | PST1 & PST2: Connected material to students' daily activities. PST3: Used local examples featuring gender roles but occasionally reflected stereotypes. PST4: Struggled to relate material to daily life. |
| Challenges in Material Usage | Challenges in connecting material to real-life situations; occasional use of gender-stereotyped examples in teaching practices. | PST4: Difficulty relating material to daily life. PST3: Use stereotyped examples (e.g., "My mother is cooking serabi"). |
| Implementation of Gender-Responsive Materials | Selected materials were inclusive, free from gender bias, and promoted equality. Examples included texts addressing diverse topics (e.g., health, technology, natural phenomena) and varying styles to | All PSTs: Focused on inclusive materials while addressing diverse needs. PST3: Highlighted inadvertent use of traditional gender roles in examples. |

| | accommodate students' interests and abilities. However, occasional reliance on traditional stereotypes was noted. | |
|---|---|---|
| Alignment with Theoretical Framework | Findings support gender-specific materials promoting inclusivity and equality, challenging societal constraints. Variations in teaching materials catered to diverse student needs, as suggested by previous studies. However, caution is advised to avoid reinforcing outdated gender norms in examples. | All PSTs: Reflected a balance between theoretical alignment and practical adaptation, with occasional missteps in avoiding stereotypes. |

The findings revealed that pre-service teachers' teaching materials were culturally relevant and designed to reflect both boys/men and girls/women in leading and active roles, aligning with the principles of inclusivity and authenticity central to English Language Teaching (ELT). PST1 shared, *"I align teaching materials with vocational students' daily activities and majors, such as health and technology, to ensure relevance and ease in completing tasks."* At the same time, PST2 added, *"My teaching materials connect to students' real-life contexts, focusing on vocational relevance to engage them effectively and simplify learning."* For example, PST1 incorporated texts about artificial intelligence (AI) and e-commerce advancements, directly aligning with vocational majors like Computer Science. At the same time, PST2 used texts addressing mental health awareness that were relevant for nursing majors. These approaches demonstrate how pre-service teachers integrate ELT with practical, vocational contexts, making language instruction meaningful by tailoring content to students' specific needs and aspirations.

Conversely, PST4 highlighted the challenges of connecting ELT materials to students' daily lives, stating, *"I strive to relate materials to students' daily lives, but I face challenges in helping them fully connect the content to their real-world experiences."* For instance, PST4 attempted to use examples like natural phenomena (e.g., rainbows and volcanoes), but students struggled to see the relevance to their contexts. Meanwhile, PST3 effectively employed local examples to enhance relatability in ELT, explaining, *"I use local examples to make materials relatable, like food preparation habits. However, I recognize that some examples may unintentionally reflect traditional gender roles."* In one lesson, PST3 used sentences like "My mother is cooking serabi" and "My father usually reads a newspaper," which, while familiar to students, inadvertently reinforced traditional gender stereotypes.

Pre-service teachers demonstrated efforts to implement gender-responsive teaching materials by selecting inclusive texts, free from gender bias and tailored to students' diverse needs. These materials spanned topics such as technology, health, and natural phenomena, addressing varied interests and academic levels. The findings align with Muasya and Kahiga (2018), who argue that gender-specific materials can challenge traditional biases, enabling students to explore opportunities beyond societal constraints. Moreover, variations in teaching materials help accommodate diverse learning preferences and foster positive attitudes toward gender roles, as supported by Milal et al. (2020) and Chen (2019). However, occasional reliance on traditional stereotypes highlights the importance of careful material

selection. Ellemers (2018) warns against using such examples, as they may perpetuate biased judgments and expectations based on gender.

**Table 2.** Observational result on gender-responsive classroom management

| Aspect | Details | Pre-Service Teacher (PST) |
|---|---|---|
| Equal Participation | Pre-service teachers promoted equal participation in classroom activities, especially during Q&A sessions. PST1 alternated between boys and girls for equal opportunities. PST2 used extra points to motivate participation. PST3 ensured active engagement but occasionally faced resistance from mixed-gender groups. PST4 promoted inclusivity but unintentionally overlooked a passive male student in a predominantly female class. | PST1, PST2, PST3: Promoted inclusivity and balanced participation. PST4: Missed engaging the only male student in her class. |
| Student Grouping | Grouping methods varied by gender balance and academic levels. Mixed-gender groups were used in balanced classrooms, while same-gender groups were preferred in classes dominated by one gender. PST3 adjusted grouping to align with students' comfort and preferences, shifting to same-gender groups when discomfort arose. Grouping strategies influenced comfort, collaboration, and academic engagement. | PST1 & PST2: Mixed-gender and academic level-based grouping. PST3: Shifted to same-gender grouping due to student complaints. PST4: Random grouping based on counting. |
| Seating Arrangement | Original seating arrangements (rows or U-shaped) were modified to accommodate group discussions. PST1, PST2, and PST4 arranged students in circular seating for collaboration. PST3, teaching a small class, maintained a U-shaped arrangement, facilitating easy group discussions without rearranging seats. | PST1, PST2, PST4: Circular seating for group activities. PST3: Maintained U-shaped seating for smaller groups. |
| Leadership Opportunities | Leadership roles were assigned equally among boys and girls, promoting inclusivity. PST3 rotated leadership roles (e.g., leading prayers and distributing worksheets) regardless of gender. PST1, PST2, and PST4 alternated leadership roles during group activities, ensuring gender balance in presenters, moderators, and note-takers. | PST1, PST2, PST3, PST4: Distributed leadership roles equally, ensuring balanced opportunities for boys and girls. |
| Challenges in Inclusivity | Pre-service teachers treated students equally but did not fully consider unique needs and diverse potentials—some overlooked differences in learning style preferences, with identical treatment impacting learning experiences. | PST4: Missed engaging passive male student. All PSTs: Did not fully address students' diverse learning needs and preferences. |

| Mixed-gender and Same-Gender Grouping | Mixed-gender groups fostered cognitive processes, motivation, and social interactions. Same-gender groups, however, provided comfort and safety for some students, particularly in younger age groups or specific cultural contexts. | PST1, PST2, PST4: Mixed-gender groups were used in balanced classes. PST3: Preferred same-gender groups to ensure student comfort. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gender-Responsive Leadership | Pre-service teachers ensured equal leadership opportunities as part of a gender-responsive educational environment. This aligned with promoting equity and combating stereotypes that hinder inclusive leadership development. | All PSTs: Assigned leadership roles equally to foster inclusivity and combat stereotypes. |

Pre-service teachers employed various strategies to ensure all students could engage in classroom activities. PST1 stated, *"I emphasise equal opportunities for both boys and girls in classroom participation by alternating who asks and answers questions, ensuring everyone has the same chance."* This approach created an inclusive environment, and observations confirmed smooth Q&A sessions with active student participation. PST2 encouraged participation by offering extra points to motivate students, explaining, *"I aim to balance involvement by rewarding active participation, which helps both boys and girls feel included."* Her strategy led to successful classroom interactions during presentations and Q&A sessions. Conversely, PST4 noted balanced participation in interviews, stating, *"My approach fosters an equitable learning environment for all students."* However, observations showed that a passive male student in her predominantly female class was unintentionally overlooked, as her focus remained on the majority group. PST3, despite promoting active engagement, occasionally faced resistance in mixed-gender groups. She adjusted her methods to address these challenges, ensuring all students could contribute.

The study also identified two primary grouping conditions: mixed-gender groups and same-gender groups. PST1 and PST2 preferred grouping students by gender and academic levels, stating, *"The group is a mix between girls and boys, and I ensure that each group has students of different academic abilities."* They organized groups systematically by writing students' numbers on the board. PST4, however, used a random counting method to assign group members. PST3, on the other hand, observed discomfort among students working in mixed-gender groups, which led her to reorganize students into same-gender groups, explaining, *"Students felt more comfortable working with the same gender due to their awareness of dating and relationships."*

Regarding seating arrangements, PST1, PST2, and PST4 initially set their classrooms in orderly rows but adjusted seating to circles for group activities. PST3, teaching a small class, maintained a U-shaped arrangement, stating, *"The U-shape works well for small groups, as students can collaborate easily without rearranging their seats."* All arrangements ensured equal access to teacher support and facilitated discussions.

All four pre-service teachers promoted equal leadership opportunities in their classrooms. PST3 ensured fairness by rotating roles such as leading prayers and distributing worksheets, explaining, *"I assign equal roles to both boys and girls, like leading prayers based on the date, ensuring no bias."* PST1, PST2, and PST4 equitably divided leadership roles in group activities, alternating roles like moderators, presenters, and note-takers. PST2

explained, *"When choosing roles in a group, gender is not considered; I focus on students' ability to take responsibility."* Similarly, PST4 stated, *"Leadership roles are allocated equitably, with boys and girls alternating as presenters and moderators, depending on the group's composition."* These practices fostered inclusivity and promoted impartiality in classroom leadership.

Our study found that pre-service teachers often treated students uniformly without fully considering their diverse potential and unique needs. This contrasts with the findings of Baharu (2019), Marantika (2022), and Xu (2022), who argue that identical treatment disregards variations in learning style preferences, unique needs, and individual potential, ultimately impacting students' learning experiences. Prior research has highlighted differences in learning preferences between male and female students. Besides, Shah et al. (2012) and Nasution et al. (2019) reported no significant gender-based differences in learning style preferences. These studies emphasize the importance of addressing students' learning styles and unique needs to develop gender-responsive pedagogy, as highlighted by Yulaelawati (2016). Educators must observe and adapt to students' preferences and diverse potentials to foster equitable and effective learning environments.

Regarding classroom participation, our study highlights the importance of grouping and seating arrangements in managing student engagement. Mixed-gender groups and seating arrangements effectively enhanced cognitive processes, motivation, and social interactions, aligning with the findings of Lewinski (2015) and Tobia et al. (2020). However, same-gender groups provided comfort and a sense of safety for some students, particularly in particular educational contexts, as Feng et al. (2023) supported. Grouping same-gender students can help mitigate gender domination and improve academic performance. These findings underscore the need for pre-service teachers to consider students' needs and preferences when arranging groups and seating to create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment.

Additionally, our study found that pre-service teachers provided students with equal leadership opportunities, contributing to an educational environment that promotes equality. This approach aligns with Choge's (2015) assertion that cultural practices and stereotypes hindering women's leadership advancement must be addressed. Mentoring, training, and structured teacher education are vital in cultivating leadership skills and fostering student inclusion and collaboration. By prioritising equitable leadership roles, pre-service teachers combat stereotypes and support the development of a more inclusive learning culture.

**Table 3.** Gender-responsive teaching methods and learning activities

| Aspect | Details | Pre-Service Teacher (PST) |
|---|---|---|
| Methods and Activities | Pre-service teachers used various methods and activities, some of which were gender-responsive. Activities included individual work, group work, games, technology integration, and project-based learning (PBL)—methods aimed at promoting equal opportunities, active | PST3: Used lecturing, games, group work, and technology. PST1, PST2, PST4: Primarily focused on group work and PBL. |

| | participation, and engagement during the teaching and learning process. | |
|---|---|---|
| Effectiveness of Group Work | Grouping students was a commonly applied activity, often recommended by tutor teachers to boost participation. However, its effectiveness varied depending on the class composition. Group work promoted confidence and active participation in girls-dominated classes but was less effective in mixed-gender groups. | PST1: Grouping boosted confidence, but struggled with mixed-gender dynamics. PST2: Found girls taking more responsibility in group tasks. PST4: Focused on collaborative group work but noted overemphasis on scores. |
| Challenges in Activities | Pre-service teachers faced various challenges, including: managing students' moods, ensuring equal participation in mixed-gender groups, and addressing imbalanced contributions within groups. Games occasionally caused disruptions due to high energy levels. Some students prioritized scores over learning quality in PBL tasks. | PST3: Struggled with chaos during games and complexity in teaching themes. PST2: Faced gender imbalance in group participation. PST4: Noted lack of focus on material quality in PBL tasks. |
| Gender-Responsive Practices | Gender-responsive practices included treating boys and girls equally, providing equal opportunities, and ensuring non-differentiated tasks. Despite this, some methods lacked full inclusivity, as boys often relied on girls in group tasks, or activities inadvertently failed to promote balanced gender participation. | PST1: Emphasized fair treatment and equal opportunities. PST2: Acknowledged unequal participation but intervened to engage boys. PST4: Ensured equal participation and tasks for all students. |
| Student Motivation and Engagement | Teachers used various strategies to encourage participation and engagement, such as Q&A sessions, presentations, and group discussions. However, challenges persisted in motivating students to focus on learning quality rather than scores. | PST3: Adapted methods to class dynamics. PST2: Addressed students' moods to maintain participation. PST4: Highlighted the need for motivational strategies in PBL. |
| Impact of Activities | Activities were partially successful in promoting gender responsiveness, with teachers adapting their strategies based on class dynamics. Mixed-gender groups often faced challenges, while group work aligned with students' preferences in majority-gender classes. | All PSTs: Attempted to ensure equal opportunities, with varying success depending on class dynamics and activity types. |

The study revealed that pre-service teachers employed diverse teaching methods and activities, with some approaches demonstrating gender responsiveness by providing equal opportunities for all students during the teaching and learning process. PST3 utilized various strategies, including individual work, lecturing, games, pair work, grouping, and technology, to cater to her students' needs. She explained, *"I use individual assignments and lecturing to explain new materials and promote critical thinking."* Grouping was implemented to address device limitations, creating a more conducive learning environment. Games encouraged equal participation but sometimes caused chaos due to high energy levels. She noted, *"The effectiveness of my strategies depends on the material; some complex themes make my methods less effective."* Her gender-responsive methods were tailored to each class's dynamics, reflecting her commitment to flexibility and inclusivity. PST1, PST2, and PST4 consistently used group work, as recommended by their tutor teachers, to enhance active participation. PST1 focused on active engagement and time management, particularly in classes dominated by female students. She noted, *"Grouping boosts students' confidence and encourages active participation. I treat boys and girls fairly, giving them the same opportunities."* While effective in female-dominated classes, grouping was less successful in mixed-gender settings, where students were unfocused. She observed better results when projects were tied to students' majors, like websites or other vocationally relevant tasks. Initially facing challenges with students' confidence, she encouraged them to ask questions confidently, ensuring a fair and inclusive classroom.

PST2 incorporated group work and presentations to foster participation. She stated, *"I use group presentations and Q&A activities to encourage active participation, especially in female-dominated classes."* However, she found that boys often relied on girls to complete tasks, prompting complaints from female students. To address this, she would approach boys directly and encourage them to participate. She reflected, *"My methods are not always gender-responsive, but I try to address imbalances by motivating boys to contribute."* Additionally, she faced difficulties managing students' moods in majority-female classes, adapting her focus as needed to maintain engagement. PST4 implemented Project-Based Learning (PBL) and group work, promoting gender-inclusive collaboration. She explained, *"I ensure tasks are non-differentiated and provide equal participation opportunities for boys and girls."* However, she noted that students often prioritized scores over learning, reducing the effectiveness of her strategy. She highlighted, *"Only a few students actively participate in group tasks, and motivating them to focus on learning quality over scores remains challenging."* Despite these obstacles, her approach maintained a balance between boys and girls in participation and leadership roles.

Pre-service teachers integrated technology into their lessons, incorporating male and female students equally, thereby challenging gender stereotypes surrounding technology use. This finding contradicts earlier studies suggesting disparities in attitudes toward technology between genders (Cai et al., 2016; Ardies et al., 2015), as both boys and girls in this study embraced its importance in modern education. Additionally, collaborative learning emerged as the most widely applied method, with boys and girls actively participating in pair work, group work, and presentations. This approach fostered positive classroom dynamics by promoting social interaction, teamwork, and confidence, similar to findings by Ghavifekr (2020), who emphasized the role of collaboration in enhancing

students' social and communication skills. These activities were particularly effective in language teaching, where studies by Styati et al. (2021) and Rianti et al. (2022) highlight the benefits of pair work and group work in improving students' speaking and writing abilities. Collaborative learning also created a supportive environment where students felt comfortable asking and answering questions and participating in discussions.

Despite these successes, some challenges in student engagement were observed. While this study found no significant gender differences in engagement levels, disengaged students posed challenges to pre-service teachers. This aligns with Zhang's (2022) findings that disengagement significantly impacts learning experiences, particularly in language education. Teachers often leave disengaged students alone, which could hinder their progress and classroom involvement. Reyes et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of creating a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere to address disengagement and improve learning outcomes. These findings suggest that pre-service teachers need targeted strategies to manage disengagement effectively, ensuring that all students benefit from a gender-responsive and inclusive learning environment regardless of their level of engagement.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, pre-service teachers' teaching practices are approaching the level where gender-responsive pedagogy can be fully integrated. Despite their limited formal training and knowledge in gender-responsive pedagogy, the participants demonstrated the ability to implement gender-responsive teaching materials, classroom management strategies, and teaching methods. Their practices reflect an effort to create inclusive learning environments, though they often relied on general teaching concepts from their prior coursework. This reliance underscores the need for specialized training in gender-responsive pedagogy to equip pre-service teachers with the tools and confidence to address gender equality comprehensively. The findings highlight the importance of integrating gender-responsive principles into pre-service teacher education programs. Providing targeted training on gender equality and inclusivity can ensure that future teachers are better prepared to foster equitable and inclusive classrooms. Such training would enhance their ability to address diverse student needs, challenge traditional stereotypes, and create a supportive learning environment for all students.

This study has limitations, particularly concerning its participants, as all were female pre-service teachers. As such, the findings may not fully represent the experiences and practices of male pre-service teachers. Future research should include male participants to explore how gender influences the implementation of gender-responsive pedagogy. Additionally, larger sample sizes and diverse educational contexts could provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender-responsive practices in pre-service teacher education. Further studies could also examine the long-term impacts of targeted training in gender-responsive pedagogy on teaching practices and student outcomes. Investigating how such training influences the perceptions and practices of pre-service teachers over time could contribute to developing more effective teacher education programs. These insights would support ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and inclusivity in education.

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