



Resilience of Male Teachers and Prospective Male Teachers as Minorities in the Early Childhood Education Field

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Abstract

As a minority in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field, male teachers and prospective male teachers are likely to face some challenges. Therefore, developing resilience skills is needed. This study aims to investigate the resilience factors of male teachers and prospective male teachers as minorities in the ECE field. Identifying the resilience factors of male teachers and male teacher candidates may guide kindergarten leaders and ECE head study programs in higher education to support male participation in the ECE field. It is descriptive qualitative research involving four male teachers and two prospective male teachers in the Kudus area. In-depth interviews were used to collect the data, while a three-phase analysis of Miles and Huberman was used to analyze the data. Findings showed some risk factors that can be challenges in developing resilience, such as the public's stereotype about men who choose ECE, low salary, and lack of acceptance from others. On the other hand, some protective factors that support their resilience are their love toward children, family, colleagues, and classmates' support, as well as religious factors. Collaborative efforts are needed to make the ECE field more gender inclusive, including strengthening the protective factors and teaching resilience to prospective male teachers so they can face some challenges that might arise in the fieldwork.

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INTRODUCTION

The Statistics of Early Childhood Education (ECE) conducted by the Data and Technology Information Centre of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021) find that the comparison between male and female educators in ECE is 344.849: 13.208 or about 96%: 4%. ECE in this context consists of kindergarten, playgroup, similar ECE units, and childcare. From the data above, it is not surprising if female domination in ECE is considered a normal phenomenon by society, as stated by (Putri et al., 2022; Saigol et al., 2016). The teaching profession in the early childhood education field is closely associated with the women's profession (Lusi et al., 2020; Zhang, 2017).

Minimal participation of male teachers in ECE is also linked with the insignificant interest of male students, who later will be called prospective male teachers, to choose the ECE study program (PG PAUD) or the Islamic ECE study program (PIAUD). The term PG PAUD is usually used by colleges or universities under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in accordance with the Director's Decree General of Higher Education, Research and Technology number 163/E/KPT/2022 concerning Names of Study Programs in Types of Academic Education and Professional Education (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2022). The term PIAUD is commonly used by institutions or colleges under the Ministry of Religious Affairs as stated in Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia number 33 of 2016 concerning Title Academic Religious College (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2016).

Universitas Metro in Lampung is one of the higher institutions under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. From 2017 to 2020, there were no male prospective teachers enrolled in the ECE study program (Lusi et al., 2020). Another example is Universitas Riau. There was only one male prospective teacher in 2013 and 2 people respectively in the class of 2015, 2017 and 2018 (Sinaga & Asriwandari, 2019).

In UIN Salatiga, a university under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, among 41 new prospective teachers in 2022, all of them were female. Despite the fact that the study program has been established since 2013, male prospective teachers are a minority (PIAUD UIN Salatiga, 2022). The condition echoes in the place where the researchers work, IAIN Kudus. There are only four male prospective teachers in the PIAUD study program: 2 in 2019, 1 in 2020, and 1 in 2021.

As a minority, resilience is needed by male teachers and prospective male teachers to overcome those challenges. (Gunnestad and Thwala, 2011) Define resilience as " the ability to live and cope in difficult circumstances, the ability to regain strength and normal life after traumas or crises and the ability to handle stress " (p.169). Resilience is the ability to live and overcome challenging circumstances, gain strength, and have an everyday life after trauma, crises, or stress. In the Online Indonesian Dictionary, managed by the Ministry of Education and Cultures, resilience is the ability to adapt and stay firm in difficult situations (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). From some definitions above, resilience can be interpreted as an individual's ability to endure various challenges or problems encountered.

Some research has been done in Indonesia studying male teachers as minorities in ECE. (Putri et al., 2022) conducted a study to determine the role of male teachers in ECE from the lens of affective function. The research found that male teachers in ECE institutions have some positive impacts on children's learning, such as providing children with support, attention, and protection. Investigated the factors that contribute to prospective male students' interest in ECE teachers. The findings show that male students were willing to choose the ECE study program or wanted to be ECE teachers because of some reasons, such as financial income factor as intrinsic motivation and family influence as the extrinsic factor. Lusi researched to find out stakeholders' perspectives (parents, teachers and school principals) towards male teachers in Metro, Lampung (Lusi et al., 2020). They mentioned that parents, teachers, and school principals had gender biases toward male and female teachers in ECE. Stakeholders assumed that men are figures who must be respected more strongly in various sectors than women and that only women are suitable for educating children (Mukhlis et al., 2019).

The research above provided a deeper understanding of why males are a minority in the ECE field. However, none of the research above investigates the resilience factors of male teachers and prospective male teachers as minorities in ECE. Identifying the resilience factors of male teachers and male teacher candidates may guide kindergarten leaders and ECE head study programs in higher education to support male participation in ECE. In some cases in the ECE study program in which the researchers work as lecturers, prospective male teachers sometimes withdraw from their study program because they do not want to be the only male students in the class. (Beltman et al., 2011) Use the term risk factors to call some factors that can be challenges for individuals to build resilience. On the other hand, factors that support individuals in developing resilience are labelled as protective factors (Beltman et al., 2011). This study aims to determine risk factors and protective factors for the resilience of male teachers and prospective male teachers as minorities in the field of ECE (Judge et al., 2005; Ge et al., 2023; Carotta, C. et al., 2021). In the end, this research has the potential to advance diversity, dispel gender stereotypes, improve the standard of care and instruction for young children, and support more significant initiatives aimed at achieving gender quality in early childhood education.

METHOD

This research applied the qualitative descriptive approach to answering the following research questions: (1) What are the risk factors for the resilience of male teachers and prospective male teachers as minorities in the ECE field? (2) What are the protective factors for the resilience of male teachers and prospective male teachers as minorities in the ECE field?

After receiving approval from the Committee for Research and Community Service (LPPM) IAIN Kudus, the research was conducted from October to December 2022. There were six participants, consisting of two male prospective teachers taking an ECE study program in an Islamic-based university and four ECE teachers in the Kudus area. The differences of participants in this study were expected to provide a deeper understanding of the risk factors and protective factors for the resilience of men as minorities in the ECE field. The numeric code was used as the identity of the participants to maintain the secrecy of their original identity. This was intended to make the participants more comfortable and open in answering questions from researchers. The use of a code as a substitute for the identity of the source was also related to the research ethics to protect participants.

Table 1. Research Subjects (Participants)

Research Subjects	Place
Prospective Male Teacher 1 (PMT 1)	Islamic University X
Prospective Male Teacher 2 (PMT 2)	Islamic University X
Male Teacher 1 (MT 1)	Raudhatul Athfal A, Kudus
Male Teacher 2 (MT2)	Raudhatul Athfal B, Kudus
Male Teacher 3 (MT3)	Play Group C, Kudus
Male Teacher 4 (MT4)	Kindergarten D, Kudus

Researchers used in-depth interviews as the data collection technique. The interviews were semi-structured for approximately 20-30 minutes. In semi-structured interviews, researchers have prepared several questions that will guide the interviews, but additional questions can be asked depending on the answers of the research subjects. Previously, the questions used for the interview were validated by an ECE lecturer to see the relevance of the questions with the research questions. During the data collection process, participants had the right to determine the place and time of the interview. They also had the right to not answer questions if they felt uncomfortable with them. The researchers asked permission from participants to record the interviews.

After collecting the data, the researchers started to analyze them using three stages of data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/ verification. In the data reduction stage, the researchers summarized the data obtained from the interviews, created a code, determined the themes according to the research questions, and created categories from the data collected. Data collection and data

reduction activities interact with each other back and forth instead of in one direction only (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The second stage is the presentation of data or data display. In this stage, the researchers compiled and presented the information. In displaying the data, the researchers not only used narrative form but also tables to help readers understand the findings. This also helped the researchers see whether the findings matched with the data so the conclusion could be drawn or whether the data needed another analysis process, as suggested by Rijali (2019).

The third stage is conclusion drawing or verification. The process of concluding this stage was flexible; it could be changed after analyzing the data in more detail. In conclusion, the researchers also verified them by re-reading the interview transcripts of the 6 participants and re-reading the references related to the topic, as well as re-reading the findings. Rijali (2019) explains that there are several ways to verify research results, including re-reading written research results, reviewing field notes again, discussing with colleagues to seek mutual agreement regarding conclusions, and looking for additional literature related to topics that can enrich the conclusion.

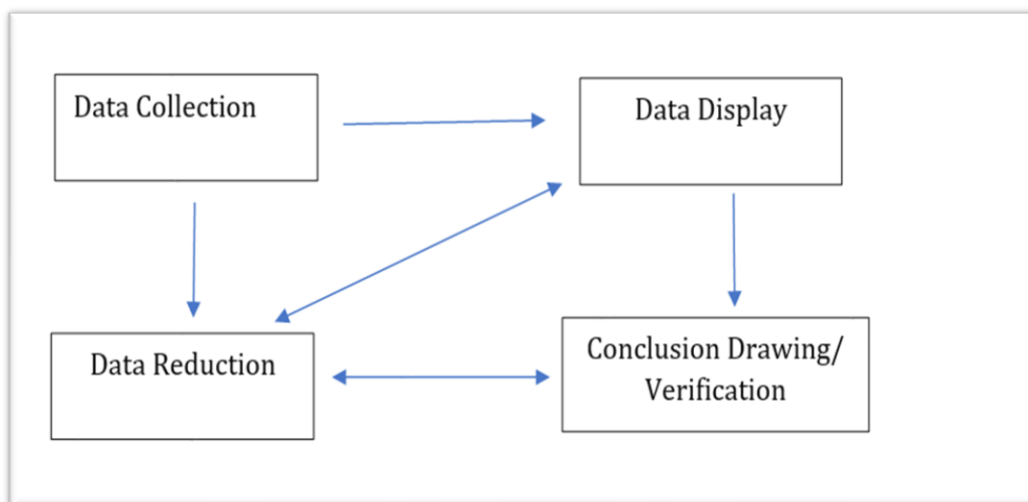


Image 1. Miles and Huberman (1994) Qualitative Data Analysis

Creswell, as cited in Li (2020), recommends seven approaches to test the trustworthiness of data, namely prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, clarification of research bias, member checking, thick description, and external editing. For this study, member checking was used by researchers. Member checking was done by sending copies of interview transcripts to research subjects. Research subjects had the right to reduce or provide additional comments. This is in line with what is suggested by Creswell (2014). After the research subjects agreed with the contents of the interview transcript, they provided signatures on the transcript as their proof of agreement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

Beltman (2020) states that resilience is not only influenced by the character of an individual but is a complex construction of a combination of risk and protective factors. Furthermore, (Beltman et al., 2011) divide each of the risk factors and protective factors into two groups based on their sources, namely individual and contextual. Individual factors include all impacting aspects coming from individuals themselves, while contexts refer to the academic environment, work environment, class, or other broader contexts related to professionalism. As a minority in a field that tends to be dominated by women, the male prospective teachers and male teachers involved in this study explained that they

faced some challenges. The challenges were quite diverse, starting from the stereotype of men who chose the ECE field, the salary they received, and acceptance from other people. All of them are from contextual risk factors.

Table 2. Risk Factors of Male Teachers and Prospective Male Teachers in ECE

Research Subjects	Individual Risk Factors	Contextual Risk Factors
Prospective Male Teacher 1 (PMT 1)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes about ECE teachers from other students • Stereotypes of men as leaders • Lack of activities to make the class atmosphere lively
Prospective Male Teacher 2 (PMT 2)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling alienated • Being the last choice • Stereotypes of male choosing ECE field • Lack of activities to make the class atmosphere lively
Male Teacher 1 (MT 1)		Parents and society's doubt about the competence of male ECE teachers
Male Teacher 2 (MT 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low salary • Community stereotypes about the ECE teaching profession 	
Male Teacher 3 (MT 3)		Extra care in treating girls to avoid accusations of sexual abuse
Male Teacher 4 (MT 4)		Low salary

"Sometimes, I am ridiculed by friends from other study programs. Why do you choose ECE? It is only about clapping and singing. I was chosen as a class leader even though female students are the majority. Women can be leaders. The lecturers also need to give more activities that consider male ECE students, such as music, so the class would be lively" (PMT1)

"Initially, I wanted to change my major because I was the only male student in the class. When creating groups or circles, friends will choose me last, so I feel left out. My senior school friend also asked, "Why, as a male, do you choose ECE?" My classmates also asked the same question. At first, I was embarrassed. Lecturers are sometimes too serious. There needs to be activities that make the classroom atmosphere lively." (PMT 2)

"At first, people doubt that I could teach children. However, as the time goes by, I prove that I can." (MT1)

"If you look at the salary, it's not worth it because the salary is low. My neighbours mocked me as to why I should dress up neatly for a job that earns no money. "It's better to sleep," my neighbours said." (MT2)

"If there is a female student in my class who wants to go to the toilet, I have to ask another female student to help her " (MT3)

"I have a job outside of teaching to fulfil my duty as the breadwinner for my family." (MT4)

Despite facing several challenges as a minority, all participants felt confident about their choice to teach children as their career path. Some factors, such as love for children,

support from family and friends, as well as religious factors, were mentioned by the research subjects as their reasons for being resilient. Each of the protective factors from the six research subjects can be seen in the following table, which has been supported by evidence from the interview transcripts.

Table 3. Protective Factors of Male Teachers and Prospective Male Teachers in ECE

Research Subjects	Individual Protective Factors	Contextual Protective Factors
Prospective Male Teacher 1 (PMT 1)	Love for children and teaching profession	1. Parents' support 2. Classmates' support
Prospective Male Teacher 2 (PMT 2)		3. Parents' and classmates' support
Male Teacher 1 (MT 1)	Love for children	4. Support and acceptance from the ECE leader and colleagues 5. Religious belief
Male Teacher 2 (MT 2)	Love for children	6. Short working duration 7. Expectations of increasing teachers' welfare by the government
Male Teacher 3 (MT 3)	Love for children	8. Family's and colleagues' support
Male Teacher 4 (MT 4)	Love for children	9. Family's support

"My parents gave me the freedom to choose which major. I have always wanted to be a teacher and loved children. My classmates also often make the class lively, so I don't feel lonely." (PMT 1)

"My parent was initially doubtful why, as a boy, I chose kindergarten. But in the end, my mother supported me after I told her that my friends in class supported me." (PMT 2)

"*Alhamdulillah*, I am comfortable in the class because children are also comfortable. The children and I are very close. The principal and colleagues in the institution are like family. I always remember that there are hadiths in Islam stating that the best humans are those who are beneficial to others" (PMT1)

"Short teaching duration, feeling comfortable with children, and the state promised certification, and in Kudus there is a support for teacher welfare" (PMT2)

"I love this job. Meeting children is fun. My colleagues do not differentiate between men and women. Family and friends are supportive. After all, I also still have a part-time job." (PMT3)

"It's fun because I can teach children. My family supports my choice as long as my job is *halal*. However, I also have a job outside of teaching to fulfil my duty as the breadwinner. *Alhamdulillah*, it's enough." (PMT4)

B. Discussion

Diana (2020) argues that Indonesian people perceive ECE teachers as more suitable for women. Women are considered to be more patient in handling children (Saigol et al., 2016). Patriarchy culture plays a role in building this perception. According to Diana (2020), in a patriarchal culture, women have the role of children's caretakers, while men are responsible for being the breadwinner of their families. Because of this stereotype, society will find it strange when they find a man who chooses to become a teacher and prospective teacher in ECE. Children's parents doubt men's ability to teach and handle children. That argument is supported by Cushman (2010) as cited by (Liu, 2023). He said that three main variables were highlighted as the reasons behind the low percentage of male recruitment and retention in early childhood education, namely, non-competitive pay, the difficulties of working with young children, and environments that women dominate.

The domination of female teachers in ECE will cause children to develop gender bias toward that profession (Evi Resti Dianita, 2020; Saigol et al., 2016). Children may associate ECE teachers with female teachers only since they are predominantly taught by female teachers (Dianita, 2020; Sumsion et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2009). When men are discouraged from pursuing employment in early childhood education, and women are primarily responsible for caring and nurturing roles, it will maintain the gender imbalance. This gender disparity restricts men's career options, and everyone's ability to follow their hobbies and passions free from social pressures is diminished (Liu, 2023).

The presence of male teachers in ECE will help children to understand that the teaching profession is not merely for women; men can also be teachers. This helps them to develop their gender equality from an early age so they will not have gender stereotypes attached to this profession (Saigol et al., 2016). ECE teachers play a role model for children. Children will reflect and imitate what they do (Munafiah et al., 2023). This argument is also applicable in developing children's perspectives toward ECE teachers. When male teachers teach children, they will build their perspective that men can be teachers, not only women.

Moreover, research shows that male teachers can stimulate more physical activities, and this will be useful for children, especially boys, who tend to be more active, as suggested by Sandberg and Pramling-Samuelsson cited by (Zhang, 2017). Men's participation as ECE teachers also encourages male parents to participate in their children's school (Thérèse & Ayşe, 2010). This poses a positive impact on promoting balanced parenting between fathers and mothers as mothers are usually considered to have more responsibilities in children's education and nurture (Cabrera et al., 2000; Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Furthermore, for children who do not have male figures in their family, the presence of male teachers can help them to understand the role of men.

However, male teachers and prospective teachers face some challenges in the ECE field. Research conducted by (Lusi et al., 2020) reveals that 27 out of 50 parents who participated in the study state that men are not fitting enough to be ECE teachers. Parents think that men lack patience, persistence, and responsibility toward children's needs. On the other hand, women are considered gentler and more sensitive to supporting children's development because they understand how to educate and nurture children. Another reason is parents' concern towards the potential case of sexual violence that might be committed by male teachers to children (Lusi et al., 2020).

In her study involving twelve prospective male ECE teachers in East Texas, the United States of America (Xu, 2019) figures out some challenges experienced by her participants. They were not allowed to change the children's diapers or escort their female students to the toilet, yet those two things could be done by their female prospective teachers. They must also be more careful in building interaction with female students to

prevent accusations of sexual abuse. Moreover, male prospective teachers receive a lack of trust from children's parents (Xu, 2019).

Prospective male teachers face some challenges not only when they teach at school but also when they study at universities. As a minority, they do not feel comfortable because they stand out. They do not participate much in class activities and interact with their female classmates (Xu, 2019).

Wilson (2011) argues that male teachers in ECE face various challenges, such as prejudice and bias from society, colleagues, and children's parents because this profession is usually closely related to women's professions. Men who choose this field as their profession will be considered strange and are often asked some questions, such as their motives for becoming ECE teachers and whether they are unable to find other jobs (Wilson, 2011). Men, as ECE teachers, also need to be extra careful when interacting with children to avoid accusations of child sexual abuse or paedophilia (Xu, 2019). This can be the reason why the participants in this study asked another child to accompany her classmate to the toilet instead of him. This strategy was also used by prospective male teachers who participated in Xu's research (2019).

(Xu, 2019) argues that the identities of women and men are influenced and shaped by the treatment they receive or the role they play in society. This ultimately also affects how women or men see themselves, including in terms of teaching children. The view that men are less competent and less compassionate in teaching children compared to female teachers is also one of the factors why there is a lack of male participation in ECE (Wilson, 2011). All those factors could be the reasons why the participants in this study receive negative comments and stereotypes from various parties when choosing a career in ECE. In Indonesia, the male figure is also associated with masculinity. Thus, it is perceived as something odd when men do something identical to women's work, such as handling and teaching children.

Low salaries and lack of certainty about career paths are also two of the reasons for low male participation in ECE (Wilson, 2011). In Indonesia, low salaries received by teachers are a common phenomenon, and several studies have been conducted on this matter. One of them is research conducted by Felayati and Nasution (2022). Based on interviews with some ECE teachers in West Pasaman, West Sumatra, ECE teachers who possess high school academic qualifications are only paid Rp. 300 thousand/month, while ECE teachers with bachelor's degree qualifications earn approximately Rp. 400-Rp. 800 thousand/month (Felayati & Nasution, 2022). The low salary received by participants in this study resulted in negative comments. It required them to have additional work to meet family needs, especially in Indonesian society, where men usually have a role as the primary breadwinner for the family.

Research conducted by Xu (2019) involving twelve male ECE prospective teachers in the United States reveals several challenges that prospective PAUD teacher candidates experienced when they were students, such as standing out among their classmates who were primarily female, feeling isolated from group activities, having limited interaction with other students, as well as receiving higher expectations from their female students (Xu, 2019). This is also a challenge experienced by prospective male teachers in this study, as can be seen in the table above. Furthermore, Xu (2019) also explains that the limited number of boys in the class is likely to create gender-biased in-class programs. This may be the reason for the two PAUD teacher participants feeling that the activities in class were not enjoyable.

On the other hand, (Mansfield et al., 2016) listed some protective factors that support teacher resilience from some literature and papers. Similar to risk factors,

protective factors are divided into individual, personal, and contextual factors. Table 4 shows that there are 12 individual protective factors and 14 contextual protective factors.

Table 4. Protective Factors of Resilience ([Mansfield et al., 2016](#))

Personal resources (61) 12 factors	Contextual resources (68) 14 factors
Motivation (35)	School leaders (41)
Efficacy (29)	Colleagues (31)
Sense of purpose (21)	Relationships with students (26)
Optimism (19)	School culture (25)
Social and emotional competence (11)	Mentors (25)
Initiative (11)	Trust (19)
Sense of vocation (10)	Recognition (18)
Hope (9)	Autonomy (17)
Empathy (9)	Family support (17)
High expectations (7)	Social networks (16)
Value (6)	Opportunities for participation (9)
Courage (4)	Emotional support (8)
	Collaboration (7)
	Induction programs (2)

Some of the protective factors proposed by ([Mansfield et al., 2016](#)) were found in this study, namely, intrinsic solid motivation such as love for children and interest to become an early childhood educator, support and acceptance from colleagues, classmates, and family, as well as expectations of the fulfilment of teacher welfare. Love for children and the support from family and classmates also emerge as factors that make male participants in research conducted by Xu (2019) and Wilson (2011) consistent in choosing ECE as their career choice despite facing challenges and stereotypes as a minority. Gu and Day (2007), cited in ([Beltman et al., 2011](#)), suggest that intrinsic motivation is an influential teacher's professional asset. This intrinsic motivation makes a person have goals in life and be diligent, ambitious, and motivated.

Interestingly, there is one protective factor for resilience that is not present in the research by ([Mansfield et al., 2016](#)) but found in this study. The factor was religious belief. In Islam, there is a hadith narrated by al-Tabrani: "The best human being is one that is beneficial to other humans" (UIN Antasari, 2019). This hadith teaches Moslems to become human beings who are helpful to others (UIN Antasari, 2019). The teachings in this hadith contribute as a protective factor for the participant to remain as an ECE teacher despite the low salary. A study conducted by Felayati and Nasution (2022) involving honorary teachers in ECE found that several factors make ECE teachers survive even though the salary is low, namely support from family and colleagues, good social skills, and high religiosity in the community. This high religiosity value is manifested in the pure intention of working; the work is a form of worship, not a way to earn profit from teaching. From this, religion plays a role as a protective factor. Religion helped the participant to feel content with his job because he believed that his job was *halal* or a good-source job in his belief as a Moslem. Religiosity plays a role in ECE teachers' resilience and can predict their psychological well-being ([Indrawati, 2019](#)).

CONCLUSION

Children need the participation of males in the ECE field. However, in practice, there are many challenges (risk factors) related to stereotypes about the ECE profession and views regarding men in society, which become obstacles to the resilience of male preservice teachers and ECE teachers. The challenges experienced by male teachers and prospective male teachers in this study make it not easy for them to remain in their choice in the ECE field. In the context of higher education institutions, for example. The withdrawal of male students who choose ECE

study programs, because they are not comfortable being the only male in class, is not something that has happened only once or twice. Identifying the resilience factors of male teachers and male teacher candidates may guide kindergarten leaders and ECE head study programs in higher education to strengthen protective factors as a way to support male participation in the ECE field. Efforts are needed to change the existing perception. Men can work with children, too. ECE study programs and ECE school settings should be more gender inclusive and should attract more men to participate. The government is expected to be actively involved in dealing with this case, especially in fulfilling the welfare of ECE teachers so that this sector can attract men to become teachers. Prospective ECE teachers also need to be equipped with resilience skills to be able to cope with challenges they may face during their studies and work.

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