

2020

Perspectives of Teachers, Directors, and Parents Regarding Male Teachers in Early Childhood Education

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Walden University

College of Education

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Tabiyes M. Williams

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2020

Abstract

Perspectives of Teachers, Directors, and Parents Regarding Male Teachers in Early

Childhood Education

by

Tabiyes M. Williams

EdS, Walden University, 2016

MA, Ashford University, 2014

BS, Georgia Southwestern University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Early Childhood Education

Walden University

December 2020

Abstract

The problem that was the focus of this study is the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. This problem is important because it suggests failure of gender equity in early childhood hiring. The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase understanding of the perspectives of teachers, directors, and parents that may contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. The conceptual framework of this study comprised work of Koch and Zeelenberg et al. on gender-based stereotyping and risky decision-making in hiring. Data were gathered from interviews with 20 participants, including childcare center directors, female preschool teachers, male preschool teachers, and parents of preschool children. Research questions addressed participant preference for men as preschool teachers; participant descriptions of men's qualifications as preschool teachers; participant willingness to work with, hire, or enroll their child when a man is the preschool teacher; and how participant gender affected gender perspectives in preschool teachers. Thematic analysis was applied to interview data. Results indicated general support for male preschool teachers among all stakeholders but suggested concerns regarding men's motivation, including sexual motivation, to work with small children in a predominantly female field, and concern for disruption of traditional gender roles. The results of this study indicated that addressing low male participation as preschool teachers requires training to overcome implicit gender bias, and explicit efforts to hire men as teachers. This study may contribute to positive social change because it suggests gender equity training and recruitment and support efforts may increase the number of male teachers in early childhood and increase gender diversity among adults who serve as classroom leaders and role models for young children.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this project to my late father, James Williams, Sr., for pushing me to go to school—to complete college, even though he didn't finish high school himself. The support and reassurance that he offered to me all the times I almost gave up significantly moved me, for he always wanted the best of me.

Secondly, I dedicate this project to him because I appreciate him solely raising me after my mother died in second grade. His selflessness and unconditional love was the pillar of strength for me. I hope to have made him proud of this work.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude to the faculty of Walden University for enabling this project to go through, for the privilege to have the unlimited resources required to do this research to the best of my capability, and finally, for the education and knowledge that I have gathered here for the past few years.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my family members and friends. Their continued support, motivation, and constant prayers have enabled me to get this far in my academic career.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Patricia Anderson, my doctorate chairperson, and Dr. Rebecca Curtis, my second chairperson, for their abled guidance and support in finishing this project. I thank them for not giving up on me despite my repeated and nagging requests for help.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study focused on the low number of male teachers employed in early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers compared to the proportion of men in the population and the proportion of men working as teachers at other educational levels. In this study, I explored teachers', directors', and parents' perspectives regarding male participation as teachers of children aged birth to 5. This study's potential positive contribution is to explain why male teachers are a minority in the early childhood profession. This chapter describes the study's problem and purpose, including the conceptual framework that underlies the study and the research questions (RQs). I begin by providing a background from the literature.

Background

Male teachers form a minority in the early education field (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2017), as men in ECEC account for only 2.3% of the total number of teachers in the pre-school category. However, men make up to 20.7% of elementary school teachers and 41.5% in high school, indicating that the low percentage of men in ECEC is anomalous (BLS, 2017). Several studies have also corroborated that the number of male teachers in ECEC is significantly low (Mistry & Sood, 2015; Tennhof, Nentwich, & Vogt, 2015). Thus, the government has implemented efforts to ensure that the number of male and female teachers in early education is proportional.

The issue of discrimination based on gender has been symptomatic in female-dominated fields other than ECEC. For instance, nursing is usually considered a female-dominated profession (Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015). The U.S. Census Bureau in 1970

placed the proportion of registered male nurses at just 2.7%. However, by 2017, the proportion of male nurses had risen to 9.1%, a proportion more than 4 times that of males employed in the early childhood profession (Smiley et al., 2018).

Researchers have identified potential reasons for the low number of men in ECEC. Koch and Farquhar (2015) pointed to cultural barriers contributing to the low number of men in ECEC, including negative attitudes towards men in the early childhood profession. Task assignment based on traditional gender roles was identified by Peeters, Rohrmann, and Emilsen (2015) as a problem for men in this field. They are often expected to take on roles that do not involve caregiving such as managerial positions and support positions like maintenance, food preparation, and transportation. There have been recent gains in the number of men enrolling in early childhood teaching roles, but there are persistent societal barriers that limit men's practice in the field (Peeters et al., 2015).

In this study, I explored directors', teachers', and parents' perspectives regarding male ECEC teachers. I provide an in-depth understanding of various stakeholders' attitudes toward the role of male teachers in ECEC. This study is significant because it describes reasons for the gender disparity in early childhood teaching personnel. This study suggests ways that more significant equity can be achieved in the profession for men and women.

Problem Statement

The problem that was the focus of this study is the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. Male teachers' representation was about 2.3% in 1992 (Brownhill, Warin, & Wernersson, 2016). Representation declined to 1% in 2005 but increased again

in 2010 to only 1.8% (Brownhill et al., 2016, p. 8). Further, according to the BLS (2017), about 2.3% of teachers in preschool and kindergarten were male (see Figure 1). Although men make up 20.7% of the teaching population in public elementary schools and 41.5% in public high schools, according to the BLS (2017), very few men are employed in preschool or child care settings. Men compose 49.2% of the general population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). These data are illustrated in Figure 2.

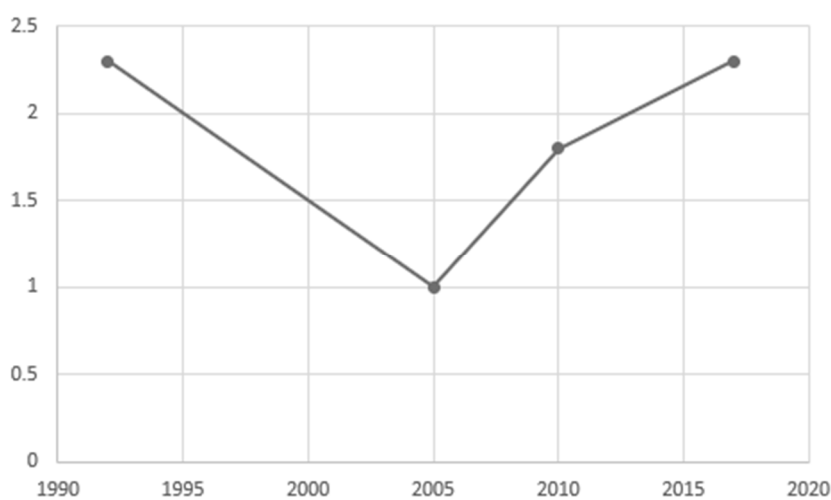


Figure 1. Percentage of males in ECEC 1992 to 2017.

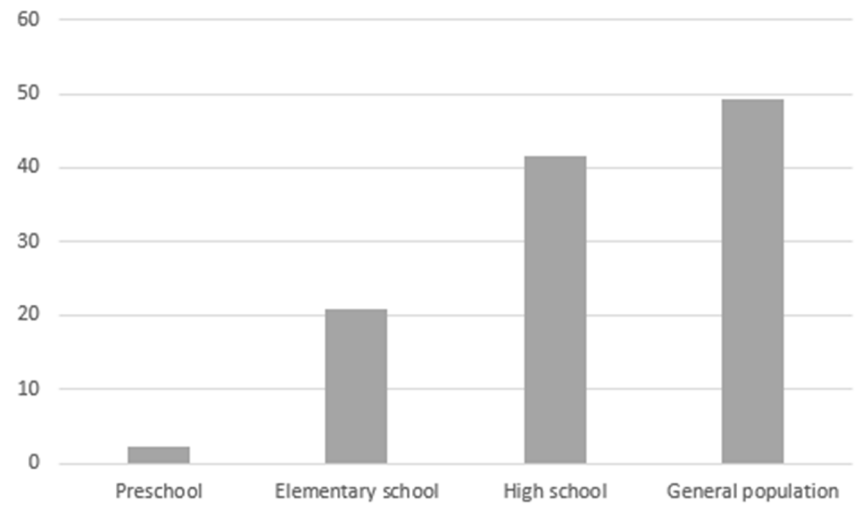


Figure 2. Males employed as teachers in 2010, compared to general population.

The reasons for this lack of men in preschool and child care have been unclear and represents a gap of knowledge in educational practice in early childhood. Teaching in early childhood traditionally has been associated with women because the work is perceived to be a way of caregiving (Salamon, Sumsion, Press, & Harrison, 2016; Tufan, 2018). Cultural perceptions associate the caregiving role with women, which has led to perceptions of men as incompetent or ill-equipped to handle teaching positions in early childhood (Koch & Farquhar, 2015). Despite research indicating these perspectives, more research is needed to understand the barriers that prevent men from becoming early childhood teachers (Tomlinson et al., 2017).

Purpose of the Study

This purpose of this qualitative study was to increase understanding of perspectives of teachers, directors, and parents that may contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. I sought to close the gap in educational practice

by exploring perspectives of preschool teachers, center directors, and parents of young children regarding male teachers and caregivers in ECEC.

Research Questions

This study's RQs were based on factors identified by Koch, D'Mello, and Sackett (2015) and Zeelenberg, Beattie, Van Der Pligt, and De Vries (1996) that influence hiring decisions, especially in situations with multiple stakeholders. These ideas are presented in the description of the study's conceptual framework. The four RQs were:

RQ1: How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe any preference for male or female teachers who work with children birth to prekindergarten?

RQ2: How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe general and particular qualifications and abilities of male and female teachers who work with children birth to prekindergarten?

RQ3: How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe the effect of the gender of a teacher in their decision to work with, hire, or enroll their child in a center or classroom?

RQ4: How are perspectives of early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents regarding the gender of early childhood teachers reflective of the respondent's gender?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the work of Koch et al. (2015) and of Zeelenberg et al. (1996) on gender-based choices in hiring. In a meta-

analysis of 136 experimental studies, Koch et al. examined hiring of females in male-dominated fields and identified six gender-based effects:

1. although men were preferred for male-dominated jobs, neither gender was preferred for female-dominated jobs;
2. the gender of the decision-maker affected this preference for gender-role congruity;
3. when decision-makers had more significant information about individuals under consideration, gender-role congruity bias did not decrease with any consistency;
4. gender-role congruity bias had consistent effects both in general perspectives about candidates and in evaluating individual candidates;
5. decision-makers exhibited less gender-role congruity bias regarding jobs characterized as male-dominated if they were motivated to make well-thought decisions; and
6. experienced decision-makers exhibited less gender-role congruity bias regarding jobs characterized as male-dominated than did others with less decision-making experience.

In general, in female-dominated fields, there is a tendency among decision-makers to consider men and women equally; however, Koch et al. did not examine the role of gender-congruity bias in female-dominated fields such as child care. Koch et al. also did not consider the compounding effects of different stakeholder perspectives on a decision.

Zeelenberg et al. (1996) found that expected feedback on what is deemed a risky decision can influence how the decision is made. This suggests that a gender-congruent

choice might be preferred over a choice that carries the risk of negative feedback, a possibility that increases as the number of stakeholders increases. In my study, I explored four different stakeholders' perspectives for different stakeholders' perspective four different stakeholders for different stakeholders' perspectives on gender-based hiring decisions: childcare center directors, male and female early childhood teachers, and parents who engage in childcare center enrollment for their children. Four key conclusions derived from this framework informed the RQs in my study: that stakeholders identified as teachers, directors, and parents of preschoolers may have an existing gender bias regarding child care teachers; that stakeholder perspectives might be based on gendered notions about child care teacher qualifications, both in general and about any particular candidate; that stakeholders might make their decisions with different levels of care; and that that stakeholder perspectives on the gender of child care teachers might be influenced by their own gender.

Nature of the Study

I used a basic qualitative design with interviews to explore teachers', directors', and parents' perspectives regarding male teachers employed in ECEC. Interviews are appropriate when a study aims to develop a deep understanding of many individuals' experiences and perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), so they are the most frequently used method of data collection in qualitative studies (Oltmann, 2016). Interviews can be used as the only data collection method when data are triangulated by including participants representing various positions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Because my purpose was to increase understanding of factors that contribute to the lack of male

teachers in early childhood classrooms, open-ended conversations in interviews were appropriate for accomplishing this purpose (Saldana, 2016). In-person interviews best suited the data collection purpose because through interviews, an interviewer can derive more prosperous and more diverse information from the respondents than a questionnaire. An interviewer may prompt the respondent to explain a point further, bringing greater clarity to the data and including information the interviewer may not have considered asking.

I conducted interviews with five childcare center directors, five female childcare teachers, five parents of children enrolled in childcare, and five male childcare teachers for a total of 20 participants. I invited participation from individuals associated with childcare centers in a single community in a U.S. southeastern state. I conducted interviews by telephone, which I audio-recorded and transcribed. I used a priori coding, based on concepts derived from the conceptual framework and open coding of emergent themes. In this way, I intended to increase understanding of factors contributing to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms.

Definition of Key Terms

Early childhood education: This refers to education-related to children's education from birth up to the age of 5 years (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016).

Gender role congruity: Gender role congruity proposes a positive evaluation of a person or group when its characteristics are aligned with typically associated social roles (Kumra, Simpson, & Burke, 2014).

Gender-role congruity bias: This is a form of bias in which descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes about a given gender with regards to particular roles or jobs are allowed to inform or influence decision-making, the result of which is usually an evaluation/assessment that is unfair and subjective rather than rational and objective (Wilcox, 2011).

Stakeholders: A stakeholder is a person who has a vested interest in a phenomenon under consideration and who might influence it or be influenced by it (Janmaat, McCowan, & Rao, 2016). For this study's purpose, this term includes childcare center directors or owners, parents of children enrolled in childcare, and female and male teachers employed by childcare centers.

Assumptions

I conducted this study based on the assumption that the study respondents expressed their thoughts and opinions wholly and truthfully. I also assumed that the perspectives participants shared were reflected in their daily practice of working with their children's teachers or their teaching colleagues or hiring, assigning, and supervising teachers. I also assumed that participants were representative of the broader population of individuals who hold similar roles so that the perspectives of parents in the study are representative of the general opinion of parents with children enrolled in ECEC centers, the perspectives of teachers in the study are representative of the opinions of early childhood teachers in general. The perspectives of directors in the study are representative of the opinions of the directors generally. Such assumptions are typical in

an interview-based study that relies on informants as the data source (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Scope and Delimitations

In this paper, I investigated perspectives regarding male teachers in ECEC from representatives of four groups: male teachers, female teachers, center directors, and parents of children enrolled in childcare. The study was conducted with adults associated with early childhood education centers in a southeastern U.S. state. Excluded from the study were parents and teachers of older children who attended before-, after-, or summer school programs at childcare centers. I collected data through individual interviews with five center directors and five persons each representing male teachers, female teachers, and parents, for a total of 20 participants.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was its small sample size of 21 participants. However, the study's nature required eliciting the participants' in-depth opinions; therefore, a small sample size supported this plan. Conducting this study and answering the RQs using a large sample would have been time-consuming and resource-intensive. Thus, a small sample is appropriate for studying this type (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The second limitation of this study was its geographical area. The study was set in one southeastern state in the United States. As mentioned in the first limitation, this restriction was necessary to facilitate the collection of in-depth information. However, this study's findings may not be generalizable to other areas of the United States or locations in other world regions.

Finally, I presented a limitation in this study because I am a male. Participants may have been reluctant to express overtly any opinions they assumed might have been personally offensive. A female researcher might have elicited different perspectives from these participants than I did. Similarly, as a male, I needed to be careful to manage my perspectives, both in the conduct of interviews and in the analysis and interpretation of data.

Significance of the Study

This study provides insight into staffing practices and other factors that have limited the number of male teachers in early childhood. The study provides information that might encourage qualified male teachers to enter the early childhood field. Using the framework of gender-based hiring practices provided by Koch et al. (2015), I explored how teachers, directors, and parents view male teachers and their suitability for working in early childhood settings. A greater understanding of these perspectives may lead to more effective ways of attracting male teachers to take up teaching positions in early childhood and improve gender balance in this field. This study's results may contribute to positive social change because gender equity in the workplace is an established social good and incredibly valuable in education (Jabbar, Sun, Lemke, & Germain, 2018). In addition, it is important to have male teachers in early education to provide male role models for children (Brownhill, 2015).

Summary

In this study, I explored the perspectives of teachers, directors, and parents in ECEC regarding male teachers of children ages birth to 5. The number of male teachers

in ECEC is very low compared to that of female teachers. To gain the stakeholders' perspectives on male teachers in ECED, I conducted individual interviews with childcare center directors, teachers, and parents. The results of this study describe the barriers to men's employment in the field of early childhood education. In Chapter 2, I present literature relevant to this topic. I present the method by which I conducted my study in Chapter 3, the results in Chapter 4, and a discussion of these results and the study conclusions in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This qualitative study was conducted to increase understanding of teachers, directors, and parents' perspectives that may contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. Men are underrepresented as early childhood teachers, even compared to their representation in other fields of education. The reasons for the low proportion of male teachers is not fully understood (Tomlinson et al., 2017). This chapter presents why male teachers' number is very low compared to female teachers in early childhood classrooms. I also describe the conceptual framework that underlies the study and the method I used for searching for literature.

Literature Search Strategy

I used various electronic services for this research, including EBSCO, LexisNexis Academic, and JSTOR. I also used Google Scholar and other databases available to me through the Walden Library. The terms I used for searching the articles included *directors and male teachers in early childhood, male and female in early childhood, low number of male teachers in ECEC, female teachers in early childhood, low number of male teachers in ECEC, and perspectives of parents and teachers about male teachers in ECEC*. Key search terms in developing the conceptual framework included *early childhood a female field, female teacher's early childhood education, gender roles and jobs, gender and recruitment and selection, gender roles in early childhood education, and gender and low male teacher numbers*.

Conceptual Framework

This research study's conceptual framework was based on Koch et al.'s (2015) work on gender-based choices made by decision-makers during hiring processes. In a meta-analysis of 136 experimental studies, Koch et al. found six gender-based effects regarding hiring in male-dominated fields:

1. although men were preferred for male-dominated jobs, neither gender was preferred for female-dominated jobs;
2. this gender-role congruity was affected by the gender of the decision-maker;
3. when decision-makers had more excellent information about individuals under consideration, gender-role congruity bias did not decrease with any consistency;
4. gender-role congruity bias had consistent effects both in general perspectives about candidates and in evaluating individual candidates;
5. decision-makers exhibited less gender-role congruity bias regarding jobs characterized as male-dominated if they were motivated to make well-thought decisions; and
6. experienced decision-makers exhibited less gender-role congruity bias regarding jobs characterized as male-dominated than did others with less decision-making experience.

However, in general, in female-dominated fields, decision-makers' tendency to consider men and women equally, the role of gender-congruity bias in female-dominated fields such as child care was not defined by Koch et al. (2015).

The work of Koch et al. (2015) added to my study's lines of inquiry regarding the gender and the experience of the person who makes hiring decisions or whose response to a hiring decision might be anticipated, the extent to which hiring decisions might be made without consideration for information about a candidate, and the care with which hiring decisions are made. Although Koch et al. did not consider the compounding effects of different stakeholder perspectives on a decision, expected feedback on what is deemed a risky decision can influence how the decision is made (Zeelenberg et al., 1996). This implies that a conventional choice might be preferred over a choice that carries the risk of negative feedback, a possibility that increases as the number of stakeholders increases. In my study, I explored four different stakeholders' perspectives on gender-based hiring decisions: childcare center directors, male and female early childhood teachers, and parents who engage childcare center enrollment for their children. The framework suggested that hiring managers, derived from their perspectives and parents' and teachers' perspectives, might limit men's employment. The RQs in this study explored these various perspectives. In the remainder of this chapter, I describe the literature on gender discrimination in the American workforce, legislation on gender discrimination, gender discrimination in female-dominated fields, and men in ECEC.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

The literature review covered concepts such as gender discrimination in the American workforce, the existing legislative framework to address discrimination, the impacts of gender discrimination in the American workforce. The review also extended to gender discrimination in female-dominated fields discrimination. Lastly, the literature

review focused on men in early childhood education, a female-dominated female. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key points in the literature review.

Gender Discrimination in the American Workforce

A line between the genders has been drawn in many cultures and societies worldwide (Saewyc, 2017). In many instances, the execution of activities, whether economic, social, or political, traditionally has hinged on gender-based alignments. Gender-based debates have made headlines and constituted the subject of social action initiatives (Bhugra, 2016), resulting in attention toward various issues that manifest based on discrimination on gender (Steyn & Jackson 2015). Scholarly databases also contain hundreds of articles on gender-based issues that contribute to the broader subject of gender discrimination (Baqi et al., 2017). Given the nature of academic investigations, most literature strives to present a typical case that ultimately adds relevant information into the extant body (Assari, Mistry, Lee, Caldwell, & Zimmerman, 2019).

Gender discrimination seems a simple subject at first glance. However, a more in-depth review of the subject reveals numerous issues (Adesoye et al., 2017), beginning with defining the term. Mihăilă (2016) based his definition on the aspect of inequality among the various genders. Pennington et al. (2018) referred to the aspect of limited autonomy between the different genders. Steyn and Jackson (2015) defined gender discrimination as the unfair treatment of a select population based on sex. As a global challenge, gender discrimination evokes multiple emotions and attitudes, ultimately affecting individual perception (Antman, 2015). Steyn and Jackson suggested that people must consider equity and discrimination individually because the former implies fair

treatment or handling. The latter denotes the lack of a clear framework that resonates well with fair handling or treatment. Thus, gender discrimination can be defined as the stereotyping or discriminatory treatment of persons based on their gender.

American society still grapples with the effects of gender discrimination (Carter & Peters, 2016), and legislation has not brought the issue under control (Naff, 2018). Cases of gender discrimination are commonplace within the larger American society (Lucifora & Vigani, 2016). For instance, gender discrimination is evident within the nation's workforce, and women and minorities face barriers (Sipe, Larson, McKay, & Moss, 2016). Women of African American descent are underrepresented in executive positions in the workforce (Carter & Peters, 2016). Workplace discrimination against African American women persists despite legislation and intervention programs that seek to promote diversity in the broader American workforce (Carter & Peters, 2016).

Though the focus of this study is male teachers, research in gender discrimination has focused on women more than on men. Studies have been on the prevalence of gender discrimination from women's perspectives (Johnston & Johnson, 2017). Perception and societal alignment have always favored men more than women in employment (Harris & Estevez, 2017), so women strive to attain an equal opportunity to their male counterparts (Butkus, Serchen, Moyer, Bornstein, & Hingle, 2018). However, today, women select careers based on interest and ability rather than their gender (Godwin, Potvin, Hazari, & Lock, 2016), and they do not choose between a marriage/family and a career (Cheryan & Ziegler, 2017). A large portion of the female population is increasingly choosing careers in fields previously dominated by men, such as technology, business, and engineering

(Meiksins et al., 2016; Toledo et al., 2017). Women in the 21st century also run for and occupy political office to good effect (Cheryan, Master, & Meltzoff, 2015) and have become integral players in the business industry such as entrepreneurship (Godwin et al., 2016; Wang & Degol, 2017). In general, gender discrimination against women has become less acceptable and less overt (Godwin et al., 2016), and women have made significant strides in the last half-century regarding reducing gender-based barriers (Rahman, Shore, & Lightner-Laws, 2016).

Despite these breakthroughs, however, only a negligible percentage of women have benefited from the societal transformations in modern times (Ruggs, Martinez, Hebl, & Law, 2015). The bulk of the female population still contends with the effects of gender-based discrimination in employment. For example, Parker and Funk (2017) found out that 42% of women in the United States reported having experienced discrimination at work due to their gender such as low wages compared to their male counterparts and prejudiced assignment selection. Further research has also shown that gender was a crucial factor in the hiring process (Griffin, Attaway, & Griffin, 2018), though other research exists with conflicting findings (Darolia, Koedel, Martorell, Wilson, & Perez-Arce, 2016).

Legislation on Gender Discrimination

Overall, gender discrimination harms the dignity of an individual. Most gender discrimination victims find it difficult to live naturally and coexist with others in society due to the emotional and psychological effects they experience (Verniers & Vala, 2018). Gender discrimination may deprive people of proper housing, equal opportunities in

education, and opportunities to engage in various social activities (Cundiff & Vescio, 2016). Existing legislation aims to provide a balance across the various facets of social life to promote equal treatment for all regardless of age, sex, race, nationality, and physical conditions (Hirsch, 2016; Terjesen, Aguilera, & Lorenz, 2015). Legislation that addresses gender discrimination has existed for over a century. For instance, the 13th Amendment's subordination principles, which were ratified in 1865 to prevent racial discrimination, have relevance to gender discrimination abolishment policies. The 14th Amendment was adopted later in 1970 and was initially confined to race, but it has now evolved to cover gender discrimination (Tsesis, 2012). However, these two amendments only implicitly address gender discrimination.

Other legislation more explicitly concerned gender discrimination alongside other forms of discrimination. The Equal Credit Opportunity Act guarantees everybody the same opportunities to obtain credit and forbids discrimination by creditors based on sex (Larence, 2009). The Equal Pay Act of 1963 requires employers to implement equal pay for the same work regardless of gender (Hanna, 2007; Larence, 2009). The Fair Housing Act forbids sex-based discrimination in the financing, rental, or sale of housing (Larence, 2009). The Pregnancy Discrimination Act protects women from being discriminated against in hiring, employment, promotion, and wrongful employment termination (Hanna, 2007). The 1964 Civil Rights Act stipulates that nobody should be discriminated against in employment based on sex, although it applies to employers with a workforce of at least 15 persons (Hanna, 2007). The Family and Medical Leave Act was passed in the latter years of the 20th century as an additional improvement of the previous legislation

that touched on employment and employee welfare (Klerman, Daley, & Pozniak, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). All the outlined legislation concerns discrimination based on sex and gender, whereas some concern more bases for discrimination.

Effects of Gender Discrimination on the American Workforce

Gender discrimination affects various factors in the American workforce, such as hiring practices, workplace culture, pay, and advancement. In a study conducted to examine the bias involved in hiring salespersons in the United States, Griffin et al. (2018) showed that gender was a crucial factor in the hiring process. Besides, the survey identified other factors that equally influenced the process, such as religion and ethnicity. However, Darolia et al. (2016) showed that gender or ethnic groups had little effect on employers' preferences during the hiring process. In another study, Liebkind, Larja, and Brylka (2016) established that gender and ethnic factors negatively influenced recruitment in a case study of Finland. The findings revealed that male applicants experienced discrimination compared to their female counterparts in occupations considered feminine. This study's outcomes resonate with the extant study's objectives, which aim to examine the discrimination against men in ECEC.

Organizational culture is a crucial factor that determines a company's advancement. Starnski and Son Hing (2015) held that the existing organizational culture influences, among other things, human resource practices such as decision-making and policies. Essentially, organizations with an ingrained culture of gender discrimination have a biased recruitment process, which influences every other decision-making process afterward. In such a company, every decision is made along gender lines,

thereby victimizing one to the other's benefit. Steyn and Jackson (2015) sought to determine the effects of gender discrimination on employment in the South African workforce. In a survey that used 1740 participants, Steyn and Jackson established that males had better salaries compared to the females working in similar professions and circumstances. Sohn (2015) examined the gender gap from the Indonesian context and reported that men earned at least 30% more than women. The prevalence of gender discrimination remains well pronounced across societies globally.

Gender Discrimination in Female-Dominated Fields

Previous studies showed that women working in male-dominated careers undergo serious challenges based on their gender. Compared to their male counterparts, women have and enjoy fewer opportunities in the American workforce (Wynn & Correll, 2017). However, men also endure substantial difficulties in working in female-dominated fields (Forsman & Barth, 2017).

The occupational trajectories of men in the female-dominated fields have not warranted significant scholarly attention. Additionally, according to Born, Ranehill, and Sandberg (2018), the trend of men exiting female-dominated areas may be aggravated by factors other than those related to female employees existing in traditionally male-dominated fields. Such factors may include competitiveness, economic leadership, dominance, and ambitiousness (Born et al., 2018). Reisel, Hegna, and Imdorf (2015) found a consistent failure by stakeholders such as government and labor unions in creating awareness about discrimination of men employed or seeking employment in traditionally women-dominated fields. Most of the focus on gender bias has been on

discrimination against women rather than against men, contributing to underreporting of men discrimination in female-dominated fields (Gardenier, Mallo, & Moss, 2016; Kay, Matuszek & Munson, 2015; Plickert & Sterling, 2017). Public education and sensitization to gender-based discrimination may help create awareness of the actual nature and extent of discrimination of men in female-dominated fields (Vyas, Malhotra, Nagaraj, & Landry, 2019).

One of the factors that have defined employment and public perception of hiring bias is stereotyping (Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016). In the last three decades, the American workforce has shifted to reflect cultural trends in gender equity and the value for equality between the genders (Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma, 2018). In this period, women's entrance and participation in the American workforce have increased though men have continued to display stability in their roles (Goldin & Mitchell, 2017). However, Haines et al. (2016) expressed concern regarding the persistence of gender stereotypes that limit gender diversity in specific fields. Koenig (2018) found role definition and gender stereotypes influence hiring as much as they did in the past in occupations traditionally considered appropriate only for males or females. Gender stereotyping has continued to be an integral element of American society so that individuals operating in fields dominated by the opposite gender endure considerable stigmatization, just as in the past (Koenig, 2018). Ultimately, these developments affect men's acceptance and participation in female-dominated fields in the American workforce (Goldin & Mitchell, 2017).

In comparison to the growing involvement of women in traditionally male occupations, men's participation in female-dominated fields has waned (Spinelli-de-Sá, Lemos, & Cavazotte, 2017). In the last half-century, men have ventured into the traditionally female fields, such as nursing; however, the trend has stagnated due to the stereotyping and social pressure that works against men's inclusion (Koenig, 2018). According to Torre (2018), social pressure has caused men in female-dominated fields to resign and enter traditionally male professions due to a lack of competitiveness in low-status occupations and other social pressures.

Although researchers have attempted to explain the male population's reluctance to enter female-dominated fields (Torre, 2018; Shah, 2017), few studies have explored the experiences of men who have successfully joined these fields. According to Manzi (2019), the stigmatization of men entering such occupational fields is higher than for women joining male-dominated fields. Another reason for the low male population in female-dominated fields is the increased departure by men from the field a short time after entry. Irby (2018) argued that men's early departure contributes to the imbalance and inequality in female-dominated occupations. Torre (2018) attributed the abrupt departure of men from jobs they took in female-dominated fields to an abundance of jobs in traditionally male-dominated fields, which often offer better opportunities than jobs in female-dominated industries. Better pay and regular advancements featured notably among the advantages cited by Shen-Miller and Smiler (2015) of occupations in male-dominated fields overwork in fields dominated by women. Also, the stereotyping of

female-dominated professions causes some that men who work in female-dominated fields are homosexual or insufficiently manly (Brody, 2015).

Male discrimination in female-dominated fields is not due to their inability to perform satisfactorily in their specific roles (Brody, 2015). In most cases, men choose to work in female-dominated fields due to a lack of alternative higher-status employment (Hardie, 2015). ECEC is perceived as a low-status profession (Hargreaves & Hopper, 2007). Mistry and Sood (2015) noted that the number of male teachers in ECEC, a female-dominated field, is still low despite stakeholders' efforts to bring the numbers up. Koch and Farquhar (2015) suggested that barriers, such as cultural attitudes towards men in caregiving roles, have a lasting effect on men's decision to join or reject the early childhood field.

The issue of gender roles, as identified by Mistry and Sood (2015), fuels the attitude in the early childhood profession that parents favor female teachers over male teachers. In their survey of male trainees and others in the Early Years program in the UK, participants reported that a career in ECEC was suited to women, but not to men like themselves. Tennhof et al. (2015) and Peeters et al. (2015) found that gender role bias contributed to the low number of male teachers in early childhood careers. However, Van Polanen et al. (2017) established that male and female students reacted positively to both male and female teachers. Brody (2015) found that male early childhood teachers in Switzerland, the United States, the Netherlands, Israel, Norway, and England, all of whom had extensive experience and longevity in the field, felt others perceived them as lacking in masculinity. Therefore, this could affect the way men view careers in the field.

Clow, Ricciardelli, and Bartfay (2015) found that men's resistance to joining such fields came from their fellow men. For example, they found that women were more likely to rate a male nurse than were men positively. Forsman and Barth (2017) found that occupational gender stereotypes had an effect on why men choose to enter a female-dominated field, but also that men were likely to get involved in female-dominated fields if they viewed the job as a chance to disrupt the occupation rather than play into the gender stereotypes associated with the profession.

Men in Early Childhood Education

As noted by Bullough (2015), male teachers are rare in ECEC. For example, in the US, fewer than 3% of ECEC teachers are male, and the reasons for the paucity of male teachers has been linked to a range of issues such as the position of women in the society, urbanization and economic development, and gender stereotypes (Bullough, 2015; Drudy, 2008). Bullough (2015) suggested that children need a diverse range of competent teachers such that early learners can accumulate the memories associated with the formation of identities. Gender diversity in teachers, like racial and cultural diversity, can contribute to this process.

Male teachers in ECEC reflect how men negotiate masculinities in a predominantly feminine arena (Heikkilä & Hellman, 2016), and confront hegemonic masculinity in a female-dominated field (Pruit, 2014). Since male teachers are few in ECEC, men become targets for suspicion, delegitimizing them in ECEC careers. For instance, males in ECEC risk being labeled as potentially violent, suspected of being pedophiles and assumed to be homosexuals (Jones, 2007; Joseph & Wright, 2016). This

suspicion discourse alienates men from being teachers in ECEC (Jones, 2007; Joseph & Wright, 2016). To create a diverse teacher population in ECEC, it is necessary to acknowledge the discourse of suspicion and analyze strategies for minimizing the interplay of factors that lead to the discourse. Tokić, (2018) found some parents are wary of their children's safety when they leave them in the hands of male teachers. They have little confidence in male teachers' ability to nurture the emotional development of their children and are wary of the possibility of them taking advantage of their children. At the same time, according to Smith (2015), some young children, mostly from dysfunctional or single-parent families, do not have their emotional needs adequately met at home. In particular, children who come from fatherless homes may look up to male teachers as masculine role models or father figures because these are absent in their lives. According to Zhang (2017), some parents express confidence in men teaching their preschool children because, unlike female teachers, parents believe men represent strong authority figures who effectively deal with behavior issues and enforce discipline.

Sak (2015) examined levels of self-efficacy among male and female pre-service early childhood teachers. Differences between men and women on overall self-efficacy were evident in classroom management. Still, there were no significant differences between men's and women's self-efficacy regarding instructional strategies or student engagement (Sak, 2015). Shpancer et al. (2019) explored the attitudes of male caregivers in a child care setting and found that social bias was a barrier to men's involvement in child care work. However, as noted by Besnard and Letarte (2017), children are believed to benefit from the presence of male teachers in ECEC. The inclusion of male teachers in

ECEC fosters improved social adaptation of the children and may serve as a potential educational intervention practice to improve ECEC outcomes (Besnard & Letarte, 2017). Increasing male teachers in the female-dominated ECEC field may create a family feeling within ECEC programs such that academic learning is consistent with social-emotional learning (Bullough, 2015). This rationale is founded in the observation that the relationship between ECEC teachers and preschool children is equal, regardless of teacher gender. The inclusion of male ECEC teachers improves the quality of education by contributing to children's social adaptation. This leads to this study's purpose, which is to increase teachers, directors, and parents' perspectives that may contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms.

Summary

In summary, this literature review focused on gender discrimination in the American workforce, legislation on gender discrimination, gender discrimination in female-dominated fields, and men in ECEC. In many instances, the execution of activities, whether economic, social, or political, traditionally have hinged on gender-based alignments. Gender discrimination demonstrates regional autonomy between genders that lead to unfair treatment of individuals based on their sex. Gender-based discrimination also evokes the attitudes and emotions that delineates individual perception. It is evident from past studies that gender discrimination research has focused more on women than men, mainly due to existing perception and social alignment that have always favored men more than women in the workplace. This has made gender

discrimination against women less overt and less acceptable. However, men have also been subjected to gender-based discrimination in the workplace.

The occupational trajectories of men in the female-dominated fields have not warranted significant scholarly attention. Past literature showed that in comparison to women's growing involvement in traditionally male occupations, men's participation in female-dominated fields has waned. Although men have ventured into the traditionally female fields, such as nursing; however, the trend has stagnated due to the stereotyping and social pressure that works against men's inclusion. Male teachers are rare in ECEC, where in the United States, fewer than 3% of ECEC teachers are male, and the reasons for the scarcity of male teachers has been linked to a range of issues such as the position of women in the society, urbanization and economic development, and gender stereotypes. Gender diversity in teachers, like racial and cultural diversity, can contribute to learners' formation of identities. In this study, I explored the perspectives of child care center directors, teachers, and parents of enrolled children, to increase understanding of factors that contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. How I conducted, this study is presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of aspects of teachers, directors, and parents that may contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. In this chapter, I detail the methodology and philosophies adopted to guide the research process. This chapter presents the research design and rationale, the researcher's role, methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures observed.

Research Design and Rationale

In the current study, I addressed four RQs that were informed by the purpose of this investigation and the conceptual framework:

RQ1: How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe their preference for male or female teachers who work with children birth to prekindergarten?

RQ2: How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe general and particular qualifications and abilities of male and female teachers who work with children birth to prekindergarten?

RQ3: How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe the effect of the gender of a teacher on the care taken in their decision to work with, hire, or enroll their child in a center or classroom?

RQ4: How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe the effect of the gender of a teacher in their decision to work with, hire, or enroll their child in a center or classroom?

These RQs support the interpretive research tradition that I followed in this study. Interpretivism contends that comprehending reality requires the researcher's intervention. The fact that people are different and complex implies the availability of various ways to have unique perceptions of the world (Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2009; Venable, 2011). Toloie-Eshlaghy, Chitsaz, Karimian, and Charkhchi (2011) suggested the interpretivism philosophy reflects and guides the investigator's beliefs and actions regarding the way data of a phenomenon should be collected, analyzed, and applied (Toloie-Eshlaghy, Chitsaz, Karimian, & Charkhchi, 2011). In line with this proposition, I developed RQs that reflected my intention to explore the perspectives of four distinct stakeholders, including parents, center directors, and male and female teachers, to define and interpret the nature of the problem of low numbers of male teachers in early childhood settings.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this investigation was that of participant–observer. This role is one in which the researcher participates in the process by eliciting data and taking careful note of what participants say and do (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because this study targeted teachers, there was a chance that I may have been a student to some of the respondents, providing a possibility of bias. Therefore, directors, parents, and teachers with whom I had a personal or professional relationship were excluded from the study to eliminate any potential biases. Additionally, a potential imbalance in the power relation between the researcher and the participants may cause bias that could affect the quality of the study's findings (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). For this reason, I excluded those with whom I have a personal or professional relationship. In my current role as a teacher in ECEC, I

routinely engage with teachers and parents in ECEC. My professional role increased the possibility of bias due to conflict of interest. Therefore, I was careful to remain open to the research participants' views without letting my views be known to them during the interviews. However, because I am in the same profession as my research subjects and am male, and thus have my perspectives regarding male teachers, I recorded my research process experience in a journal to manage my opinions so the credibility of my research could be enhanced.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The target population included individuals of both genders who were directly involved in ECEC. Parents, teachers, and center directors are the primary members of this population. The selection of the participants was achieved through convenience sampling. I chose the convenience sampling method over a simple random technique, mainly because the current investigation did not focus on acquiring a large sample, which is a requirement to effectively apply the latter approach (Johnston & Sabin, 2010). However, using the convenience method increased the potential for voluntary bias because those who chose to participate may have been different in some way from those who chose not to participate (Bujang et al., 2012). I applied inclusion and exclusion criteria to mitigate this bias and ensure that the participants selected were knowledgeable of male preschool teachers (see Ronconi, Shiner, & Watts, 2014).

I used snowball sampling to identify possible participants and invite them to be part of the study. Snowball sampling is a method that leverages social connections

between members of a targeted group to generate referrals to additional members of the group, so they can be invited to join a study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). I began recruiting participants by asking people I already knew who were teachers, parents, or directors to connect me with other teachers, parents, and directors I did not know. Using snowball sampling, I located my target number of participants in each of the four groups and avoided recruiting individuals with whom I had a personal or professional relationship.

Respondents invited to participate were either an early childhood teacher, a parent of a child aged 2 to 5, or a center director. If a volunteer did not belong to one of these categories, they were not accepted as a participant. To establish that the participants met the study's criteria, I communicated specific inclusion criteria to parents, teachers, and center directors who expressed interest in the study. I established contact with teachers, parents, and center directors and asked them to confirm their study eligibility once they nominated themselves to participate. I recruited a sample of five parents, 10 teachers, and five directors for a total of 20 participants. To ensure that as many male teachers as possible were represented in the study, I took special care to recruit male teachers. I continued to seek participants as I conducted interviews until it seemed unlikely that additional interviews would lead to new concepts, which implied that I had reached data saturation (see Sargeant, 2012).

Instrumentation

I conducted my research using one-on-one interviews with stakeholders, including both male and female educators and parents. Interviews are appropriate in a study like

this to derive the patterns and frequency of issues relating to male teachers in ECEC and encourage direct responses that might not otherwise be expressed in questionnaires (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I created four open-ended interview questions and six follow-up questions (see Appendix). Open-ended questions offered the respondents no limitations on their responses, allowing them to elaborate on their claims after I asked for elaboration or clarity as needed to understand the respondents' perspectives. I created the interview questions based on the conceptual framework, and they are associated with the four RQs presented in this study. To ensure that the interview questions were valid and aligned to the study's purpose, they were submitted to an expert in the field who holds a doctorate in early childhood and has worked for over 20 years in early childhood settings. This expert affirmed that the RQs were appropriate for the research and made some suggestions to improve the interview questions' clarity and sense. I incorporated the feedback from the expert in improving the research instrument.

In answering RQ1 about participant preference for male or female teachers, I used responses from Interview Question 1, which asked about initial thoughts about male teachers; follow-up questions inquired about experiences with male teachers and reports from other participants may have received about male teachers. In answering RQ2, about qualifications of men as teachers of preschool teachers, I used responses to Interview Question 2, which asked for assessing men's qualities and abilities that make them suitable teachers for young children. In answering RQ3, about the effect of a teacher's gender on decisions respondents make about working with a teacher, I used responses to Interview Question 3, which asked a participant to imagine their thinking they were

assigned to work with a male teacher. Finally, in answering RQ4, about the effect of someone's gender on decisions regarding a teacher's gender, I used responses to Interview Question 4, which asked about the effect of a decision-makers gender on teacher selection; a follow-up question for parents inquired about the effect on decision-making of the gender of the respondent's child.

In a qualitative study, the researcher is an instrument for data collection. The individual is involved in creating the questions, sorting through and selecting the interview data, analyzing the results, and finding meaning in the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, I actively and critically monitored and challenged my biases and positionality and attended to the complexity and rigor of the study throughout the study process. Though partiality is unavoidable in research (Oluwatayo, 2012), to minimize bias, I enlisted an independent expert's services to conduct a critical review of the interview questions to confirm their suitability for this kind of study, as I described before. Second, I kept a reflective journal throughout the interview and data analysis process to separate these from participants' thoughts and feelings. Third, I engaged each participant after the interview to review their interview transcript to confirm that it represents their beliefs and perspectives regarding male teachers in childcare settings. Lastly, I relied on my dissertation committee, who questioned my assumptions and guided my thinking to ensure fidelity of the data. These mechanisms helped me be confident in the legitimacy of the study outcomes.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I began snowball sampling by asking teachers, directors, and parents whom I already knew to nominate others, share with me those individuals' contact information, and permit me to mention the name of the person who nominated them when I contacted their nominees. These nominators, who were known to me, were excluded from the study to avoid possible bias. As I conducted interviews, I asked each person to nominate another teacher, parent, or center director, who might have been willing to participate in the study.

As potential participants I invited to be part of the study respond, I emailed them the informed consent form, which included a description of the research and its objectives and the benefits and risks of participating in the study. In the email, I also suggested a possible schedule for the interview. Participants who wished to continue with the study replied to the email with the words, "I consent." and also confirmed the time and day for the telephone interview or suggested a new schedule. Next, I contacted the participants who consented to participate in the interview in an email a day before the scheduled interview to remind them and reconfirm the interview schedule.

Phone interviews are advantageous since they allow the research participants to be interviewed in a familiar environment, allowing them to express their perspectives about the research phenomenon (Meho, 2006). Phone interviews are also cost-effective and convenient, mainly where participants are geographically dispersed. Moreover, telephone interviews may support participants in being honest in their opinions since the telephone minimizes the effect of the interviewer's race, gender, and social class

(Musselwhite et al., 2007; Wilson, Roe, & Wright, 1998). However, in telephone interviews, the researcher may be challenged by the loss of the non-verbal cues that allow for smooth-flowing conversations in face-to-face interviews (Smith, 2005).

Each interview lasted about 45 minutes. I audio recorded the interview sessions and kept field notes to indicate changes in vocal tone and my thoughts. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participant and asked them who they knew who is a parent, teacher, or director and might be willing to participate in the study. The audio files generated from the phone interviews were transcribed using AmberScript software. I saved the transcriptions as Word documents. Since the software is not errorproof, I edited transcriptions for errors while replaying the audio file line by line. As each transcript was completed, I emailed it to the participant, with a request that they confirm my transcription accuracy. Lastly, I expressed my appreciation to the participants for their cooperation throughout the study.

Data Analysis Plan

For the analysis of the data collected through the interviews, I employed a qualitative coding strategy. Sgier (2012) described coding as the process of assessing data to identify key themes, patterns, ideas, and determining the extant linking factors. Most importantly, I endeavored to establish the connection between the survey data and specific RQs.

After I transcribed all the interviews and received back from participants any corrections they made in their review of their transcript, I organized the data. I arranged the data in a three-column table in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, with the transcripts in the

middle column, the left column contained my notes, and the right column was reserved for codes extracted from the interview data. This source labelling process ensured there was a text layout of information to separate information that was associated with my thoughts from information provided by the participants.

The steps in the analysis process included data coding, running of queries, and reporting. Data coding was an inductive process, in which I will read through the data to get a sense of the topic while making comparisons with my notes (Hélène & Lucy, 2004). In this step, I assigned the first set of codes by breaking the qualitative dataset into smaller samples. I went through the data line-by-line to yield more details of the data. I re-read the sample of the data to add additional data and create more codes and recode. This was done iteratively until the codes could be categorized with coding frames. The coding frame represented the organizational structure of the emerging themes. I used the flat coding frame where all codes are assigned the same level of significance and specificity. Data saturation is attained through an iterative cycle of data collection that allows a researcher to document the emergence of new themes or any overlooked perspectives (Sargeant, 2012).

Coding involved arranging ideas in a systematic order, grouped and categorized to consolidate meaning, to explain the data. In the categorization phase of thematic analysis, I acted as an analytical lens through which I searched for patterns in the interview data. Ideas that shared some characteristics were organized first into subcategories and then categories. To form the categories, I extracted a coding scheme and then transformed it into an outline format, in which the codes fit into subcategories and then categories of the

overall emergent themes. In coding, I expected the codes and categories to become more refined from the first cycle codes onwards to the second cycle coding. During each coding cycle, I endeavored to either allow codes to be subsumed and relabelled in other categories or dropped altogether from a subcategory or category. As I progressed in the coding process, I rearranged and reclassified coded data into different or new categories, as seemed appropriate. In some instances, some categories contained clusters of coded data that required further refinement into subcategories. Categorizing was described by Richards and Morse (2013) as a process that helps classify data from the general to the specific and then identify emergent themes.

The coding process was initiated at pre-coding, in which I looked for “codable moments” from the data; these included words and short phrases. Since the data were from multiple participants, coding involved coding first for one participant. In contrast, the coding of the second, third, and so on, participants influenced and affected the recording of the previous participants. To reduce discrepant cases, I tried to restate and summarize information, clarifying with participants at points in the conversation where their meaning was not entirely clear to me. I also tried to notice discrepancies during my review of transcriptions. I identified no discrepancies in these stages, as described in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

According to Yilmaz (2013), credibility refers to the confidence of qualitative research in the truth of the investigation’s findings. The overall credibility of research seeks to establish whether the findings represent the plausible information derived from

the participants' original data and that there is accuracy in interpreting the participants' perspectives (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For this study, I relied on persistent observation of the interview data's fundamental characteristics relative to the research phenomenon. The data were triangulated by having multiple data sources (different participants representing different stakeholders), which supported the interview data's credibility.

Transferability is the extent to which qualitative research findings can be transferred to other settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In qualitative research, the researcher has the responsibility of transferability judgment by providing an extensive description. I increased the transferability of the results of this study through thick description such that other researchers can confirm this study's findings. Transferability of the results' findings allows confirmability in that this study's data and interpretations are demonstrated not expressions of my perspective but originate from the data. I ensured there are thick descriptions where the descriptions are provided in context and reflect the participants' reported experience about the research phenomenon. This helped to make the data meaningful to an outsider.

Dependability refers to the extent to which other investigators can repeat the study and find consistent results. Since the current study focused on the respondents' opinions and views, other researchers may acquire participants with different perspectives. Regardless, the inquiry was used to establish high levels of dependability. That entailed seeking a person not involved in the research process and asking them to examine and review the data analysis to review its consistency with the findings.

Finally, confirmability indicates the level of neutrality of the findings of the study.

This component focuses on determining whether the results are purely based on the participants' responses and not any personal motivation or bias from the researcher (Yilmaz, 2013). In the current study, confirmability was enhanced by a detailed methodology for other researchers to follow up with the research process as adopted. Moreover, transcriptions of the interviews provide an enduring data set that can be analyzed further as necessary.

Ethical Procedures

I obtained approval (08-07-20-0566137) from the Walden University Institutional Review Board. As described above, I recruited participants, and I emailed prospective participants a copy of the consent form, so they could review it and confirm participation in the telephone interview. Participants indicated their consent by replying to the email with the words "I consent."

This study's primary ethical consideration was to ensure participants' safety and confidentiality of the interview and the data. I kept confidential the identity of the respondents and conducted interviews by telephone from a private location. I urged participants also to choose a quiet, private location for the interview. Edginton et al. (2012) argued that assuring the participants of the process's privacy is a strategy for encouraging them to become much more willing to cooperate and share information. I have referred to participants by pseudonym (P1, P2, P3, and so on), so actual names were not be used in the data or the study report. The digital files generated in the interviews have been protected with passwords and paper materials stored in lockable drawers in my

office; only I can access the materials. I will retain all data for five years, as required, after which I will shred paper files and erase digital files with a tool like Eraser.

Summary

This section highlighted the various processes and strategies that I employed in this study. I followed a basic qualitative design using interviews informed by the interpretive tradition and inductive reasoning approach. Using a basic qualitative design permitted me to obtain highly focused information from the participants. I used a convenience sampling technique to identify the study participants supported by inclusion and exclusion criteria—the data analysis involved using thematic analysis methods to identify and examine themes from the transcribed interview responses. In Chapter 4, I describe the results of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study aimed to increase understanding of teachers, directors, and parents' perspectives that may contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. The RQs involved examining how early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe any preference for male or female teachers who work with children birth to prekindergarten, particular qualifications and abilities of male and female early childhood teachers; the effect of the gender of a teacher in their decision to work with, hire, or enroll their child in a center or classroom; and how perspectives of early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents regarding the gender of early childhood teachers are reflective of the respondent's gender. This chapter includes a discussion of the setting and data collection during interviews of participants in this study, data analysis, results, and a summary of the chapter.

Setting

The research was conducted at a time when the country was facing the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I conducted interviews by telephone, as I planned. However, pandemic-related disruptions in social and economic sectors may have influenced the respondents' perception, especially considering the disruptions to child care business activities and high unemployment that may have affected participants. I conducted the interviews from a room in my house. Most participants answered my calls from their homes due to the COVID-19 restrictions. The network connection was not always clear, and we had to reschedule some of the interviews. However, I managed to recruit all the participants I required for the study and conducted all the interviews.

Data Collection

I interviewed 20 participants, which included five parents with children between 2 and 5 years, 10 early childhood teachers (five men, five women), and five ECEC center directors. The five parents and five directors interviewed were all females. The data collection process lasted for a week; interviews were staggered across the days based on the participants' availability. I conducted most of the interviews in the morning hours and recorded them on a tape recorder. The interviews lasted for an average of 45 minutes, and those that extended were because the interviewee had to pause to attend to some event at their home. Some interviews were interrupted with static on the line, and I had to hang up and call back again. Despite this, I obtained audio that was clear enough to transcribe, so the data set was complete.

Data Analysis

The primary data collected in this study were analyzed through six steps suggested by Creswell (2014). These steps involved organizing and preparing data for analysis, studying the data to acquire the general sense of the data and its overall meaning, data coding, generating a description of the themes or categories for analysis, advancing how the themes and descriptions were represented in the qualitative narrative, and capturing the essence of the ideas presented in the findings. Following this process, I determined 27 codes, which I grouped into three themes of positive attributes, knowledge and skills, and diversity. The codes and themes are depicted in Figure 3.

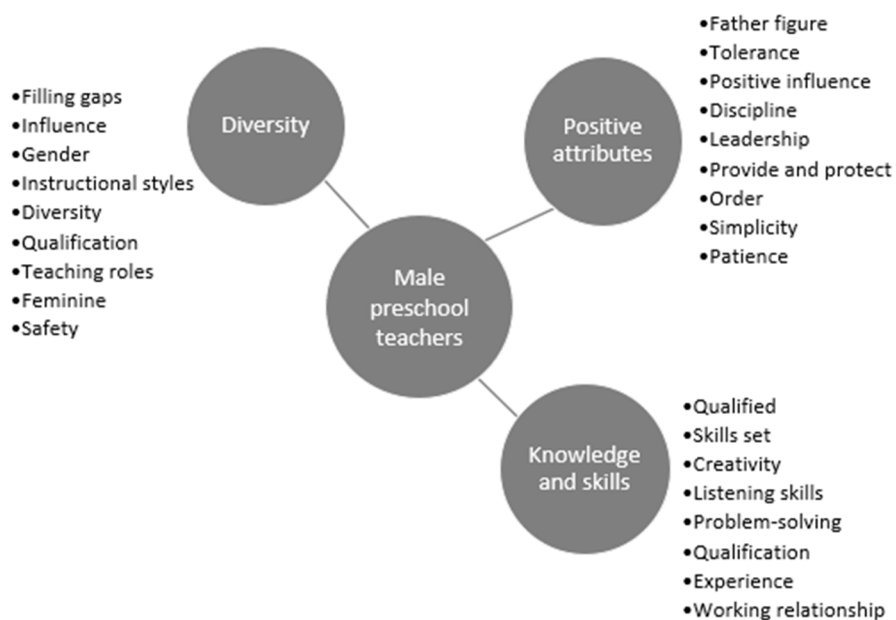


Figure 3. Codes and themes emergent from the data.

Raw Data and Responses

In the following sections, I present participant responses relevant to each RQ using direct quotes. Participant names have been replaced with codes to keep their identities confidential. Parents are denoted with a P and then a numeral (P1, P2, and so on), female teachers with TF and a numeral, male teachers with TM and a numeral, and center directors with D and a numeral.

Responses for Research Question 1

RQ1 asked, “How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe any preference for male or female teachers who work with children birth to prekindergarten?” The results showed that the early childhood teachers, center directors,

and parents had positive appraisals of male teachers working with children in early childhood education. Female teachers such as TF2 said,

I believe men would make excellent preschool teachers. I teach first grade, and I taught with a co-teacher who was male. We had a very positive working relationship. He had a different way of looking at some things, so I found this beneficial to our students.

Another female teacher, TF3, said, “I’ve had the opportunity to work with males in the pre-K classroom as co-teachers or substitute paras. The children automatically were engaged with the male pre-K teacher.”

Male teachers also had similar perspectives. For instance, according to TM1:
Men, as preschool teachers, are enlightening. As a former elementary educator, I believe that our kids do not get the chance to experience male educators until later in middle school or even high school. Some of our kids lack a father figure and male nurturing, so having them at this level would be refreshing for them to start their educational paths on the right track.

TM5 said,

I was the only male who worked at my preschool. The experience was very different because I meant something to all 240 students who attended the preschool for the first time in my life. It was almost like being famous because I stood out like a superhero to the students.

The same views were affirmed by center directors, with D1 acknowledging that

Men teachers are capable of engaging and preparing children to be successful in life. I have had the experience of employing a male teacher in this after school program for 11 years, and it has proven to be an asset to the children and community.

D2 also argued that “Male teachers bring another aspect to a non-discriminatory learning environment because students have a different perspective of male teachers. Simply stated, students respect and value male teachers more than female teachers.” According to D3, “The men tend to be excellent teachers because they are innovative, energetic and caring,” even though, D3 continued, “Men as nurturers have received a bad rap because of the disproportionate cases of physical or sexual abuse involving men and children.”

Parents were also positive about male teachers, including P3, who said, “I think there are great male teachers who do a great job educating the youth. How a child receives an education should not be based on the gender that gives them a quality education.” P4 claimed that “Men are an excellent asset to not only teaching but as role models,” whereas P19 said that “I think men can be successful preschool teachers just like a woman, and sometimes men are known to have more patience than women. So, gender is not the real issue here.”

Responses for Research Question 2

RQ2 asked, “How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe general and particular qualifications and abilities of male and female teachers who work with children birth to prekindergarten?” The results showed that teachers

believed that men are equally qualified as women to teach preschool children but that men and women may each provide different classroom things. TF3 said,

I believe that men are as qualified to teach preschool, just like women teachers who have been certified to do so. I believe that men have a different perspective on solving problems and engaging students with learning tasks. Science has shown that men and women's brains function differently in tasks.

TF2 said, "Male teachers have different qualities than female teachers. The male teacher shows their concern for students by how he listens, makes eye contact with a student, and even by his choice of words." According to TM2, "Male preschool teachers can communicate, flexible, passionate, creative and have a great personality. Our students come from different home environments and backgrounds, which can lead to different learning styles." TM1 also noted that:

Gender has no relation to the qualification of being able to teach preschool children effectively. In many capacities, men bring a wealth of knowledge. They can assist students with social-emotional barriers, as they are likely to connect with those students who are longing for the relationship of an absent father.

According to TM5,

There is no certain quality that a man needs to be an effective teacher in preschool. When you work in education, seeing children succeed and learn should ignite the fire in your soul to push children to be the best student they can be.

The director also affirmed that male teachers were as qualified as their female colleagues to teach preschool children. According to D2, "Outside the fact that males

provide positive figures, males can also connect with children in a ‘child-like’ way.

Males are considered less mature than females, and they have no problem with turning on their ‘inner-child’ switch.” D3 said,

Qualities and abilities that make men very good at teaching preschool children include, but are not limited to, great listening skills, patience, vivid imagination, high energy level, unconditional love for children, creativity, a safety mindset, and a father figure mentality.

D1 also claimed that “Men are very qualified to teach preschool children if they have the patience, love and caring ability to work with preschool children.”

According to parents, male teachers are just as qualified as their female counterparts to teach preschool children. P4 claimed that:

In my community of poverty, male teachers want ALL children to gain an example. It’s not where they come from but where they are going. Male teachers that I’ve been privy to don’t come from mother/father homes; most are single-family homes and living on housing assistance, medical, EBT. Those males not only made it out of their situations but can relate to our school system and environment.

However, P3 noted that:

Yes, there are particular qualities men have to possess when teaching preschool children. There are male teachers [who] are the ones who step in and become male role models/mentors to students that may be exhibiting behavioral

challenges because the child may not have a male figure that was active in their lives.

Responses for Research Question 3

RQ3 asked, “How do early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents describe the effect of the gender of a teacher in their decision to work with, hire, or enroll their child in a center or classroom?” Teachers I interviewed indicated that they did not mind having male co-teachers as long as they were qualified for the job, and they promoted a positive working relationship. TF2 said: “I would love to have more male co-teachers. As long as the person is passionate about teaching and wants to make a difference in children’s lives, we will make a great team.” TF4 claimed that she would “work well with a male co-teacher. A male co-teacher would bring different views and experiences to the classroom setting. With the varied backgrounds and instructional styles, we could work together to improve student learning.”

TM3 also said that “I’ve heard from parents that students sometimes have a great affection for male teachers. This is largely due to the perceived father-figure role.” TM5 said,

I would accept a male as my co-teacher because somebody gave me the chance to be their co-teacher, and that’s where I found my calling for education. I don’t think anybody could influence my feelings about a male as my co-teacher because I’ve seen some male teachers do amazing things in the classroom.

The directors also claimed that they were not concerned about adding a male teacher to their staff. For one, D1 said, “Yes. The influence of others would not have an impact on my feelings about having a male co-teacher.” According to D5,

If I had a choice, I would most definitely add a man teacher to my staff. The opinions of parents, teachers, and other directors are critical. However, when it comes to adding a man teacher, one must look at the teacher’s qualification being considered. He must have the following characteristics: a passion for early childhood education, patience, a sense of humor, creativity, communication skills, flexibility, and a degree in child development.

Some directors, such as D2, claimed that:

Gender diversity among teachers is very critical inside of the classroom. Hence, I must have a balanced representation of my staff. Gender diversity affects student learning; male teachers seem to promote mathematics and science. As a result, students may perform better in these areas when a male teacher is present.

whereas D3 claimed that “The opinions of others would not influence my feelings about a man teacher on our staff at all, as long as it’s the right man.”

Generally, the parents were not bothered by the gender of the teachers of their children. For one, P3 argued that:

I would not because it may be insulting the intelligence of that male teacher. He may think I feel as though he could teach as effectively as a female teacher. The opinion of others would not influence my feelings about the male teacher at all.

Some parents, such as P5, claimed that:

I am not sure that I would ask for a male teacher, but if that person were qualified and felt comfortable after meeting him, I would have no objection. The same would be true for a female teacher. As a single parent, I am solely responsible for my children's decision-making, so the other parent's opinion would not sway my decision.

Others, such as P19, indicated that:

Yes, I would not mind if my child's teacher is male. Most teachers are women. I would only ask simply to give my child a chance to learn how to learn, not just with a female teacher but also with a male. All teachers will not be women, and my child will have to know how to adapt to another teaching style.

Responses for Research Question 4

RQ4 asked, "How are perspectives of early childhood teachers, center directors, and parents regarding the gender of early childhood teachers reflective of the respondent's gender?" Female teachers believed they would feel the same if they were male teachers. TF1 said, "I would not feel any difference as long as he had the qualifications. The expectations for the role of each teacher still need to be communicated and understood." TF2 said, "I don't believe I would feel any differently. All you need is a desire to help your students and do your best every day. I know that some men look down on elementary school teachers."

Among the male teachers, TM2 claimed that:

My thoughts would not change as we speak. The profession was geared towards female teachers because they are known for nurturing, and male teachers are

known for discipline. Co-teaching is like a marriage. There is a female teacher (the mom) and the male teacher (the daddy), so I believe that we are all in this together and if you have the qualities that I have listed above, anyone can teach our students. I love teaching as a profession because I am dedicated to education. Also, TM4 pointed out, "I believe I would still be non-biased. As long as the academic results were in good standing and the development of the children is in a positive state, I would be good."

Some of the directors, who were all female, claimed that they would have no different perspectives if they were men instead. D4 said that:

If I were a male, I would probably have a different aspect. I asked a male colleague if he would teach preschool, and he said, "No." He said that he did not want to appear feminine. He said the role was more geared toward a feministic quality,

D2 argued that:

There has been a debate about gender classrooms. I have heard that students respond differently when teachers of the same gender are teaching them. However, in my experience, this could cause conflict. For example, I have experienced power struggles between male teachers and male students. Some boys assume a traditional role in the home because they are the only male inside of the home; therefore, it is hard to turn that role off when he enters the classroom. The male student does not relinquish power or respect to the male teacher, and struggle occurs.

Many parents indicated that they would not feel any differently given that either gender can teach their children. P5 said,

If I were of the opposite gender, I would still wholeheartedly advocate for male teachers in preschool classrooms. Our young boys need to see positive male role models in their lives. Our girls should also see men who possess positive and gentleman-like characteristics. Men teachers can inspire girls and boys to become teachers themselves.

P5 said, “I would not feel any kind of way because a male teacher should not intimidate me; they have their way of doing things, and females do things their way.” However, P1 said,

My two kids are girls, and I am very cautious about their safety, whether male or female. I understand people tend to be very cautious about males as far as the notion that they could be a predator.

Results from The Responses

The study findings indicated that the teachers, directors, and parents all had no concerns about male teachers teaching young children. Male and female teachers in this study described a positive working relationship with male teachers because, they said, men have different a perspective from female teachers that can be beneficial to students. Teachers also indicated that male teachers served as role models and father figures to children. The same views were affirmed by center directors, who acknowledged male teachers’ capacity to effectively engage with students and bring diversity to the classroom, not just in gender but also in thinking in ways not traditional for female

teachers. The parents also acknowledged male teachers serve as role models in acting as father figures and building self-esteem in young children.

Further, although teachers, directors, and parents concurred that men are equally qualified to teach preschool children as are women, this was complicated by a focus on how different in the classroom men are from women because they “have a different perspective,” their “brains function differently” from women’s, and even that they are “less matured” than women. In addition, many participants couched their support for men in conditional terms, saying they are acceptable as early childhood teachers if men were “flexible, passionate, creative, and have a great personality,” and have “patience, love, and caring ability,” and are willing to see themselves as role models for children with behavioral challenges. Although no one among these participants believed men are unqualified to teach small children, they indicated that women’s teaching and thinking methods are standard. Men’s ways were considered outside the norm.

Additionally, the teachers, directors, and parents said they did not mind a male teacher for their students or children, as long as they were qualified for the job. For instance, female teachers claimed that they would appreciate male teachers as co-workers due to their different teaching styles. Male teachers intimated that they longed for company of other male counterparts. School directors demonstrated their interest in adding male teachers, a decision that would not be influenced by others. However, they noted that educational qualification and traits such as communication skills and creativity would be indicative of a male teacher’s fitness for employment, qualifications that tend to be assumed in female teachers (see Salamon et al., 2016). They also indicated that adding

male teachers was instrumental in achieving diversity in their staff that is teaching preschool children. The responses by the parents indicated that they would not discriminate against male teachers as long as they are qualified to do their work and so long as the parents felt comfortable with him. It was not clear what parents needed to feel comfortable with a male teacher.

In conclusion, the participants in this study described a mixed perspective about male teachers, with some skepticism voiced by parents, teachers, and directors. Many participants seemed puzzled why a man would want to teach preschool, and were supportive of traditional gender roles in which women are nurturers and men are disciplinarians, like mothers and fathers in a traditional nuclear family, as one participant suggested. In particular, while some directors claimed it is important for children to grow up in environments where they are modeled to appreciate both genders, other directors said they would feel awkward because society considers preschool children's teaching as a feminine job. This indicates the stigma associated with men teaching preschool children, which can be attributed to men's societal expectations based on gender roles. Most parents indicated that they would not feel any differently about a male teacher if their child were a different gender than what they are. Still, one parent said they would fear for their children's safety because a male teacher might be a sexual predator.

Discrepant Cases

There were no discrepant cases that emerged in the interviews with the participants. Participants seemed consistent in their responses regarding their perspectives on male teachers in the preschool. However, all participants seemed careful to qualify

their men's endorsement as teachers, with concerns about men's qualifications and motivation for working in the early childhood field. They appeared careful not to reflect any social or cultural opinions that could stigmatize males who teach or seek teaching jobs in preschool.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I took care to conduct this study in ways that support the trustworthiness of its findings, by attending to confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability. I supported confirmability through detailed description of my methodology for other researchers to review and to follow in replicating this research. In addition, by presenting verbatim data from interview transcripts, readers and future researchers may analyze the data themselves and critique my analysis. Because I asked participants to review their interview transcripts for errors, the transcripts themselves are confirmed. I demonstrated credibility in that interview questions and resulting data are relevant to the research phenomenon. In addition, I created triangulation of data by having multiple informants representing multiple stakeholder groups. The findings represent plausible information derived from the participants' original data and an accurate interpretation of the participants' perspectives. I supported transferability to other contexts by providing extensive descriptions such that readers may evaluate the applicability of my findings to their own situations. Data are described using thick descriptions in context and with sufficient precision and detail to make the data meaningful to the reader. Finally, I demonstrated dependability in my study, the study by providing my audience with evidence that other investigators can use to repeat the study and expect similar results. I

reported limitations of this study with consideration for future research and to ground the dependability of my findings.

Summary

The teachers, directors, and parents I interviewed in this study all indicated they were accepting of males in teaching young children. They cited benefits that male teachers might bring to the early childhood context, include divergent teaching methodologies, male role modeling, gender diversity, and helping to develop the self-esteem of some children, particularly boys. However, all participants hinted at reservations about male teachers, questioning men's motivation to take on this work, and expressing an assumption of traditional gender roles that was disrupted by the presence of men as preschool teachers. This embrace of traditional gender roles was expressed even by male teachers. While no participant in this study rejected the general idea of male teachers outright, everyone reserved judgment on individual male teachers, indicating that a man would need to embody a wide range of qualities and abilities before they could endorse him. Therefore, while the idea of male teachers at the preschool level was embraced by the teachers, directors, and parents in this study, the prospect of actual engagement with a male teacher seemed to cause some hesitation in all participants.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase understanding of perspectives of teachers, directors, and parents that may contribute to the lack of male teachers in early childhood classrooms. I used a qualitative approach with interviews to collect and analyze data. Findings suggested that male and female teachers, directors, and parents were receptive of the idea of men teaching in preschool, concurred that male teachers have qualifications that make them effective teachers for preschool children, and would include qualified men as preschool teachers. However, parents, teachers, and directors voiced some skepticism of the motivation of men to seek employment in a feminized field and even expressed concern that male teachers might be sexual predators.

Interpretation of the Findings

The male and female teachers who participated in this study claimed that male teachers contribute to a positive working relationship because of men's different teaching perspectives from those typical of women and because of men's symbolic role for children as models of male competence and care. These findings concur with those of Besnard and Letarte (2017), who found that children benefit from the presence of male teachers in early childhood education. Further, the usefulness of male teachers as role models, particularly for children raised in female-headed households, was a benefit suggested by Smith (2015), who wrote that children who come from fatherless homes tend to look up to their male teachers as father figures in their lives. The center directors in this study also suggested male teachers increase diversity of gender and of teaching approaches. These findings agree with Bullough (2015), who found that increasing male

teachers in the female-dominated field of ECEC may create a family feeling within ECEC programs so that academic learning is consistent with social-emotional learning. Finally, parents in this study appreciated male teachers as role models and father figures and said that they believed male teachers build self-esteem in young children. This finding is similar to findings of Zhang, 2017), who found that some parents have confidence in men teaching their preschool children because, unlike female teachers, they represent strong authority figures whom the children look up to as role models, particularly when it comes to matters to deal with discipline.

I also found in this study that teachers, directors, and parents believed that male teachers could have the same qualifications to teach preschool children as those of their female colleagues, however, they inadvertently acknowledged that women teachers set the standards of teaching and thinking at preschool levels. Therefore, men who were qualified to teach at the preschool level were those who demonstrated qualities valued in female teachers, such as flexibility, patience, creativity, and caring ability. The findings are affirmed by Heikkilä and Hellman (2016), who found that male teachers in preschool are conscious of the need to negotiate masculinities in a predominantly feminine field. In doing this, male preschool teachers have to continuously question hegemonic masculinity to succeed as teachers of small children (Pruit, 2014). Men are a target of suspicion in early childhood education, a factor that delegitimizes their involvement at this level of education (Joseph & Wright, 2016).

Teachers, directors, and parents in this study further said that they did not mind a male teacher for their students or children if they were qualified for the job. But male

teachers longed for an increase in the number of male counterparts, as the number of male teachers in early childhood education is still low despite various efforts (Mistry & Sood, 2015). Directors suggested that communication skills and creativity were some of the traits they looked for in male teachers, qualifications that are assumed to be feminine traits (Hentschel, Heilman, & Peus, 2019), though they claimed that the gender of the teachers did not influence their hiring decisions. These findings conflict with previous research suggesting that role definition and gender stereotypes influence hiring, and gender is a crucial factor in the hiring process (Griffin et al., 2018; Koenig, 2018). The differences in these findings could be understood as the reluctance by directors to openly admit that gender affected their hiring decisions. Similarly, parents in this study said that they would not discriminate against male teachers for their preschool children if the men were qualified for the work and that they felt “comfortable” with the teachers. These qualifiers suggest that parents, like directors, might be less open to male teachers than they profess to be. The space such answers provide to reject a teacher based on feelings and subjective assessment of qualifications is similar to research noting that intuition is an important basis for decision-making, especially among teachers (Vanlommel, Van Gasse, Vanhoof, & Van Petegem, 2017).

Finally, there were mixed perspectives among the teachers, directors, and parents regarding their own gender perspective and the perspective of men who teach in preschool. Most participants were puzzled by the interest of men to teach in preschool and inadvertently advocated for the continuation of the traditional gender roles for women at this level of education, where teachers serve as nurturers. These findings

support that the stigmatization of men entering female-dominated occupational fields is higher than it is for women joining male-dominated fields (Manzi, 2019). The directors reiterated the need for children to grow up in environments where they are modeled to appreciate both genders, with some acknowledging the societal expectation about teaching in preschool as a role reserved for women teachers. In a similar study, Bullough (2015) concurred that children need a diverse range of competent teachers such that early learners can accumulate the memories associated with the formation of identities. Though some parents in my study had no objections about men teaching in preschool, some parents feared for the security of their children who could be exposed to possible sexual predators. Other research has also reported that parents are wary of the safety and emotional development of their children with male teachers (Tokić, 2018). To the extent that hiring a man to teach a child seems risky, both directors and parents may make the conventional choice and hire women rather than make the choice of hiring a man that carries the risk of negative feedback.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by the COVID-19 pandemic that made the process of conducting face-to-face interviews impossible. The interviews were therefore conducted over the phone, and this process was complicated by interruptions, with some interviewees having to stop to answer to some errands before the interview continued. Some backgrounds were also noisy, which made communication between me and interviewees difficult. I also experienced difficulty recruiting center directors. Some directors who inquired about the study were reluctant to participate and were suspicious

about the academic purpose of the study; therefore, they opted out. Although I was successful in recruiting the target number of directors, the resulting sample of directors might represent those who were open to the notion of male teachers and might not represent an accurate portrayal of the diversity of director perspectives.

Recommendations

Future researchers should consider the use of a survey design to include a larger sample size, whose findings could then be used to triangulate the findings of the present study. A larger number of participants might provide a more accurate portrayal of stakeholder perspectives of male preschool teachers, and a survey design might encourage directors and others to participate, since they would not need to talk directly with an interviewer. In addition, interview-based studies with a female interviewer might provide a different response from stakeholders; because I am a man, participants in my study may have been reluctant to express any negative perspectives about my role as an early childhood professional.

In addition, because perspectives of gender roles may vary regionally in the United States (Lee, Tufis, & Alwin, 2018), this study could be replicated in other regions than the American southeast, to determine any regional differences. Similarly, future studies might focus on specific types of preschool organizations, differentiating between stakeholders in independently-funded child care centers, Head Start centers, and state-funded preschool and prekindergarten programs. In this study, I did not attempt to recruit participants by preschool type.

Implications

The study provided insight into preschool staffing by exploring key stakeholders' perspectives on male and female preschool teachers, center directors, and parents regarding the gender imbalance in early childhood education. Implications of this study for preschool practice include a need for center directors to examine any negative social stereotypes in themselves, parents, and teaching staff associated with men teaching in the preschool. In addition, center directors might develop effective strategies for attracting male teachers to preschools. They identified benefits men offer to the center staff so that these advantages can be realized. As the creators of community culture, center directors might also provide teachers with diversity training focused on gender issues and might provide parents with information or discussion forums so they can begin to feel "comfortable" with their child's male teacher.

Preschool teachers, especially female teachers, should be guided in reflecting on gender stereotypes, noting those that have affected their own lives and extrapolating these personal experiences to the experiences of men who wish to work in a predominantly female field. Gender stereotypes persist in teacher attitudes towards preschool children, particularly with regards to behavior expectations, so increasing awareness among teachers of implicit gender bias may improve the childcare experience for children as well as for teachers. In addition, directors and teacher trainers should guide teachers in confronting the implicit assumption that men who work with children should be suspected of pedophilia. Finally, directors and teachers should examine role expectations for male teachers, to avoid assigning men roles of groundskeeper, disciplinarian, physical

education specialist, van driver, or other traditionally masculine tasks, that may not be appropriate to individual men and may limit their ability to demonstrate their skills in other areas.

Male teachers should be encouraged to invite other male teachers to apply for work in childcare centers, to begin to achieve a critical mass that normalizes male teachers similar to the normalization enjoyed by male high school teachers. To support the normalization of male preschool teachers, men should be included routinely in training materials describing care for children, and as trainers of teachers. Showcasing exemplary male teachers in conference presentations and other forums, similar to the traditional showcasing of female exemplars, would help to develop an expectation of excellence in men as preschool teachers, and would have the added benefit of encouraging more men to join the field and to pursue excellence as teachers.

Parents can be encouraged to accept male teachers in the preschool by normalizing the role of men in childrearing and childcare. Salomon et al. (2016) suggested that mothers are the expected main caregivers of young children, and are more welcomed to the preschool classroom as parent volunteers than are fathers. The literature on parent involvement focuses on mothers and excludes fathers (see Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). When center directors and teachers make an effort to include fathers as equals to mothers in children's education and care, it may be easier for parents to accept male teachers as equals to female teachers as well.

In my study, bias against men and bias towards women as preschool teachers was expressed obliquely in feminized teacher expectations and distrust of men's motivation to

teach preschool. Such bias may be deeply ingrained, as suggested by Gardenier et al. (2016) and Lucifora and Vigani (2016). Gender discrimination as a topic of study has focused primarily on discrimination against women (Johnston & Johnson, 2017). To the extent that this study might inspire conversations in early childhood practice about gender and gender discrimination, this study may contribute to positive social change. Positive social change will result if center directors, teachers, and parents of preschool children become more aware of gender discrimination in the preschool and work to change the culture in which men are discriminated against in early childhood education.

Summary and Conclusions

The teaching of preschool children by male teachers was supported in this study by key stakeholders, including teachers, directors, and parents. This approval was based on various benefits that male teachers were perceived to bring to preschool education, which included diversity in gender and teaching approaches, creativity, role modeling, and discipline. There was, however, an undercurrent of reluctance to include men's ways of teaching in the feminized culture of early childhood and puzzlement about the motivations of men who choose to teach at this level. Results of this study suggested that resolution of the problem of low male representation among preschool teachers, even compared to teachers at other educational levels, may require complex solutions to address explicit and implied barriers to men's participation as teachers of preschool children. A need exists for erecting systematic structures to increase acceptance of male teachers in preschool, which can be operationalized through public and institutional policies, and childcare center practices. The change in societal perspectives about the

involvement of male teachers in preschool can result in an increased presence of male teachers in preschool, gender diversity reflective of society, and diversity of teaching perspectives and methods. More men in early childhood may result in better, more equitable outcomes for all children.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

1. What are your thoughts about men as preschool teachers?
 - a) Tell me about your experiences with men teachers in preschool.
 - b) Tell me about experiences with men teachers in preschool that you've heard about from other parents/other teachers/other directors.
2. In general, how qualified do you think men are to teach preschool children?
 - a) Are there particular qualities or abilities men have that you think make them very good at teaching preschool children?
 - b) Are there particular qualities or abilities men have that you think make them not very good at teaching preschool children?
3. If you had a choice, would you seek out a man teacher for your child/as your co-teacher in the classroom/on your staff?
 - a) How much would the opinion of others – such as your child's other parent/other teachers at the center/other directors you know – influence your positive or negative feelings about a man teacher for your child/as your co-worker/on your staff?
4. How much do you think you would feel differently about men teachers if you were of the opposite gender?
 - a) How much do you think you would feel differently about men teachers if your child were of the opposite gender to what they are? [question for parents only]