



## How can male not be a teacher of pupils: Assessing stereotypes among teachers in primary school

Abayomi Israel Olaofe<sup>1\*</sup>, Babajide Gboyega Abidogun<sup>1</sup>, Zozonaebi Frederick<sup>2</sup>, Wahyun Bardianing Panggalih<sup>3</sup>, Muhammad Kalle Istighfar<sup>3</sup>, Mira Fatasya Aulia<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup> Department Education, Faculty of Education, University of York, United Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Wijaya Kusuma Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding author: [abayomi.olaofo22015231019@st.lasu.edu.ng](mailto:abayomi.olaofo22015231019@st.lasu.edu.ng)

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 09 March 2026

Accepted 01 May 2026

Published 15 May 2026

#### Keywords:

Assessing Stereotypes,

Male Teacher,

Early Childhood,

Mixed Method

#### DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.26740/eds.v10n1.p1-18>

### ABSTRACT

Male teachers remain considerably under-represented in primary education globally due to incessant socio-cultural stereotypes in the system of educating young children. This study assessed stereotypes among teachers regarding male involvement in early-years education. Using a quantitative design, the Early Years Teachers' Stereotype Scale (EYETESS) was administered to n-122 educators and parents. Results revealed that primary school teaching continues to be perceived as a female-oriented profession (77.1% agreement), with men facing social stigma, masculinity doubts, and fear of false accusations (85.3% agreement). Parental attitudes were ambivalent, while expressing general trust in male teachers, parents showed reluctance regarding actual care arrangements. Male educators experience social isolation as gender minorities, inadequate professional support, gendered role expectations (channelling men into physical/disciplinary roles), and barriers to career advancement. The study concludes that institutional prejudices, stereotypes, and the psychological burden of working in suspicion promote a cycle of discouragement debarring male teachers from entry and retention in the sector. The stereotype can be eliminated through social enlightenment campaigns, gender-balanced recruitment policy, and institutional support networks for male teachers.



This is an open access article under the [CC BY SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license

## INTRODUCTION

Primary school education workforce has been among the most sex-segregated professions in the world, with male teachers always becoming a minority in various geographical and cultural settings. According to the [UNESCO \(2025\)](#) Report confirmed that are approximately low number of male teachers in the primary school education of about 10% (in Africa and Asia), 2% (in Europe), and 3% (in South America). In the United Kingdom, the number of men in the early years setting has been dwindling becoming slightly over 2 per cent recently, which is a sad retrogression after decades of campaigning and sensitisation efforts ([Tully, 2025](#)). Likewise drastic statistics can be found in Kosovo, where four out of 678 pre-primary educators are men ([Abazi, 2025](#)), and in Indonesia, where men in the teaching profession still play in a profession which is widely perceived as feminine ([Syam & Sulfianita, 2025](#)). This deep-rooted gender imbalance poses important questions in relation to what prevents men to enter and stay in the field of primary school

education, how the stereotypes that tend to maintain the idea that teaching young pupils is the work of a woman shape the experiences of those men who actually decide to become workers in this profession. It is not just a labour supply issue with men being underrepresented in the primary school education sector, but it has serious consequences regarding how pupils develop and gender expectations in the society. The studies have won the favour of showing that pupils can gain a lot by being exposed to a variety of role models to realize that care, empathy, and leadership do not have to be limited to gender (Ören and Ünser, 2024). Having exposure to male and female teachers, young pupils get to have more subtle interpretations of gender and are equipped to live in a diverse society (Zhang, 2025). Moreover, the existence of male teachers breaks the established stereotypes about masculinity and care, which results in the more balanced gender relationships at the very youngest age (Syam & Sulfianita, 2025). However, despite these acknowledged advantages, the number of men working in the primary school education sector is stubbornly low and in certain situations, it keeps decreasing.

The current research has attempted to comprehend the many-sided reasons behind this phenomenon. Based on the social constructionist feminism and social role theory, scholars have come up with the finding that gender roles have a significant influence on expectations and the career paths of people in society (Khamis et al., 2025). The sense that primary school education involves having natural feminine attributes of nurturance and care systematically denies men full involvement in the profession. Furthermore, the strong stereotypes and cultural beliefs regarding the intentions and ability of male teachers to work serve as an added obstacle. The research of various contexts, such as Zanzibar or China, Indonesia or the Philippines, demonstrates some shocking similarities in the issues that male teachers encounter: they are suspected of having an interest in pupils, their professionalism is undermined, they are discouraged by economic reasons, and they are neglected by the institutions (Parantar & San Jose, 2025; Syam & Sulfianita, 2025; Zhang, 2025). These obstacles are at different ecological levels, such as personal attitudes to the institutional policies and cultural practices in general (Ossai & Ramsaroop, 2022). These barriers require systematic research in order to be eradicated. Although the current literature has reported the experiences of male teachers in different national settings, little focus on how stereotypes are maintained within the teachers themselves, those who work with male teachers, and those that influence the teacher culture of primary school environments, has been applied. The attitude and beliefs of teachers regarding gender roles are also important factors at the workplace and may contribute to or subvert male marginalization (Ossai & Ramsaroop, 2022, Ören & Ünser, 2024). It is critical to learn how stereotypes operate in the teaching profession as one way of forming the effective strategies to make the primary school settings more inclusive.

The paper is filling such gap by evaluating stereotypes held by teachers working in early years education on the role of men in the occupation. Four objectives give the research a complete overview of the barriers, biases, perceptions, and challenges in male teachers in primary school education. The first is to determine the societal, cultural and institutional obstacles that lead to the under-representation of men in primary school education. Such barriers can be either macro or micro, such as the cultural norms and practices that assign childcare to the feminine gender, institutional practices, such as low pay and lack of support that disincentivize male involvement (Ossai & Ramsaroop, 2022, Khamis et al., 2025; Parantar and San Jose, 2025). This research will bring light to the structural factors that perpetuate the gender segregation in the workforce in the early years by systematically identifying these barriers. The second aim is to discuss the prejudices and stereotypes that will not encourage men to choose the career of primary school educator. The

study has recorded the consistent stereotypes of identifying primary school teaching as a feminised occupational self-identity that demands abilities that men are allegedly devoid of (Syam and Sulfianita, 2025; Xu et al., 2025). These stereotypes comprise suppositions regarding the nurturing strengths of men, suspicion over their reasons of working with little kids and depreciation of their professional input. This paper attempts to learn about the nature of these stereotypes among the teachers and how it operates to discourage the entry of males in the profession. The third goal is to compare the attitude of male teachers in relation to students, parents, and teachers. The reactions of those who play the most important role, those who receive the education provided by the male teachers, the parents who refer their pupils to them, and the coworkers who work in the same sphere, also influence the professional experience of male educators greatly (Parantar & San Jose, 2025; Xu et al., 2025). The knowledge of these perceptions is essential in determining the origin of the support as well as the persistent resistance to the involvement of men in the teaching of the young ones.

The fourth aim is to establish the problems encountered by male educators in primary school educational institutions. Among men who enter the profession, their experiences tend to be distinct, such as having to manage gendered expectations, suspicions about their motives, physical contact boundaries with pupils and dealing with isolation as one of the gender minorities in the workplace (Zhang, 2025). This study will educate on ways to enhance retention and provide more supportive work environments by analyzing these challenges through the lenses of the male teachers themselves. By answering these questions, this study is relevant to the emerging scholarship in an effort to comprehend and correct gender inequities in primary school education. By doing that, it helps to advance the overall agenda of establishing the early years environments that are responsive to the levels of the diversity of the society pupils grow up in and reflect equitable gender relations since the very beginning of the learning.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The two theoretical approaches used to achieve a thorough perspective of the issue of underrepresentation of male teachers in the field of primary school education form the basis of this study, Role Congruity Theory and Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981; Eagly and Karau, 2002). These theories help to understand the structural impediments turning men away where they cannot join the profession and the mental mechanisms by which gender and teaching stereotypes are perpetuated and transmitted.

The Role Congruity Theory is the theory that states that one is tested more favourably when their personal character matches stereotypical expectations about a certain social role (Eagly and Karau, 2002). For them, this theory argues that prejudice is caused by the existence of perceived incongruence between the properties stereotypically attributed to a social group and those properties supposedly needed to thrive in certain occupations. Within the framework of primary school education, the nurturing and caring attributes traditionally attributed to teachers are culturally coded as feminine and therefore, there is the inherent incompatibility with gender stereotypes held by men that favour agency, assertiveness, and emotional restraint (Fullard, 2025). The recent studies that have tested the role congruity theory in the educational context have shown that male applicants are systematically disadvantaged in fact in the area of perceived incongruity maximum, and prejudice is the strongest against entry-level jobs in the female-dominated sphere (Fullard, 2025). This theoretical perspective proves useful to the current study especially because it describes the operation of stereotypes of who belongs in the primary school education setting as filtering systems, deteriorating the involvement of males and further obstructing the entry of those

who are already in the field. These biases can also work unconsciously, the theory further says and thus they will be present even in those individuals who profess to support gender equality, thus shedding light on the complicated nature of the relationship between the attitudes expressed and implicit judgments which is what this study aims to explore (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

The Gender Schema Theory is a theory that explains how pupils and adults generate and reproduce gendered expectations regarding occupations and social roles (Bem, 1981). This theory opined that individual internalises the cultural definitions of gender by developing cognitive patterns of schemas that coordinate information and inform perception, interpretation and behavior. Gender schemas are anticipatory systems that precondition individuals to pay attention, encode and retain information in a manner that is aligned to cultural gender norms (Bem, 1981). Primary school studies have indicated that the issue of gender stereotyping could start at the age of three years, and young pupils construct femininity and masculinity by actively engaging with gender discourses offered to them in their daily settings (Purcell, 2023). Notably, Gender Schema Theory acknowledges that even teachers are not exempt of such cognitive processes; the teacher brings their gendered schemas into the classroom, which affects how they interact with pupils, expect their colleagues, and view the proper way to be a professional. This framework has been more recently applied to the problem of male preschool teacher recruitment and retention, with the argument that female and male gender schemas within the education profession, parents, and the wider community are critical to creating more inclusive primary school settings.

These two theoretical frameworks have a strong base in exploring the research objectives. Role Congruity Theory focuses the interest in structural and evaluative mechanisms that sustain occupational segregation- how occupational perceived incompatibility between masculine gender qualities and communal demands of primary school teaching generates bias in hiring, workplace relations and promotion (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Fullard, 2025). The Gender Schema Theory sheds light on how such expectations are acquired, internalised, and passed down the generations, showing how the stereotypes concerning male teachers can remain even in the environment where gender equality should be explicitly cherished (Bem, 1981; Purcell, 2023). A combination of these points of view will enable this work to investigate the processes of interpersonal evaluation and marginalisation of male teachers, as well as the intrapersonal cognitive systems, which influence how educators, parents, and pupils learn about gender and professional roles. This two-sided perspective is specifically suitable to the study that aims at evaluating stereotypes within the group of teachers themselves as educators are both the product of gendered socialisation and the agent of enforcing or breaking gender norms in the context of primary school education.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What Are The Primary Socio-Cultural Factors That Deter Men From Entering Primary school Education?
2. How Do Biases And Stereotypes Influence The Decision Of Men Considering Careers In Primary school Education?
3. What Are The Challenges Faced By Male Teachers In Primary school Education Careers?
4. How Do Educators Perceive Male Teachers In Primary school Education?

### **METHOD**

This study used a quantitative research design in order to ascertain the associations existing between stereotypes, biases, and perceptions towards male teachers in primary school education.

This design enables a systematic description of the already existing phenomena and the analysis of the relationships between the variables without controlling the circumstances and creating causality. It also allowed the researcher to determine the degree to which the stereotypes regarding male teachers can be connected to the demographic factors, the nature of their work, and their experience with male teachers, thus answering all four research questions with the help of quantitative data. The descriptive design element enables in-depth assessment of the existing attitudes and beliefs among teachers and parents and the correlational one allows to study the relationship of the attitudes to each other and to the features of the participants.

The respondents used in the study were  $n=122$ , which consisted of primary school educators and parents of pupils attending early years settings. A purposive sampling was used to recruit participants that might have pertinent information about the research phenomena. To have diversity of views, educator participants were selected in primary school education centres in both urban and rural areas, both public and private. The parents were recruited via the same primary school settings, so their responses contributed to the experiences with the current early years provision. Educator inclusion criteria involved their present employment in the primary school education setting with pupils under the age of 8 years, whereas the parent participants had to have at least one child enrolled in primary school education.

The data collection tool was Teachers' Stereotype Scale which was a researcher-developed survey that was developed in regards to this study. The data were developed according to the established principles of survey construction in educational research, that is, the items were associated with the four goals of a research but were clear and accessible to the respondents. The instrument includes four sections that reflect each research aim (1) Barriers to Male Participation (10 items exploring barriers to male participation in society, culture, and in institutes); (2) Stereotypes and Biases (10 items exploring certain stereotypes which discourage the entry of men in teaching); (3) Challenges Faced by Male Teachers (10 items exploring attitudes of male teachers towards students, parents, and educators); (4) Primary School Teacher's Perceptions (10 items exploring the problems that male teachers face in their work). The questions were measured on a four-point Likert scale with 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), which made it possible to measure attitudes and beliefs in a more subtle way. Demographic items were also incorporated in the EYETESS in order to carry out correlational analysis in terms of gender, age, and years of experience (in the cases of educators). The barriers and stereotypes that were identified through the [Ossai and Ramsaroop \(2022\)](#) report were used to inform dimensions of gender imbalance reported in various national contexts.

The first step to generate items was based on the thorough examination of the literature on male teachers in primary school education. After creating items, the instrument was presented to a panel of three individuals with extensive background in primary school education that established both face and content validity, that is, whether the items reflected the constructs of interest in an adequate manner. The expert criticism of the items were made clear and relevant. Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyse collected quantitative data. The analysis was carried out in a series of steps which was compatible with correlational descriptive research design. The descriptive statistics about respondents were performed on all the demographics dataset. These descriptive statistics (mean, percentage and standard deviation) answer the research questions by writing down the nature and prevalence of the stereotypes in educators and parents. Cronbach alpha was used to prove internal consistency reliability of the Likert scale items which yielded 0.0845 alpha level.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Demographic Data of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	28	23.0
	Female	94	77.0
	Total	122	100.0
Highest Educational Qualification	Ordinary National Diploma (OND)	3	2.5
	National Certificate in Education (NCE)	6	4.9
	Higher National Diploma (HND)	3	2.5
	Bachelor's Degree	67	54.9
	Master's Degree	40	32.8
	PhD	3	2.5
	Total	122	100.0
Age	20–29 years	8	6.6
	30–39 years	65	53.3
	40–49 years	37	30.3
	50+ years	12	9.8
	Total	122	100.0
Geo-political Zone of Origin	South-West	98	80.3
	South-South	4	3.3
	North Central	6	4.9
	South-East	10	8.2
	North-West	4	3.3
	Total	122	100.0

(Researchers' Data, 2025)

This table 1 showed the participants in the necessary context of the perceptions that the study has in the research of male primary school educators. It is dominated by female respondents and, therefore, the information is mostly an account of the female viewpoint and perception of the struggle that their male counterparts go through, and not the direct testimony of male teachers. The respondents are also very highly educated with the majority having attained at least a bachelors degree implying that the views obtained are those of a workforce of professionals. The participants, in terms of the age, are mostly experienced professionals in their thirties and forties with the unique insights being based on the long time experience in the field. Also, the geographical clustering of the respondents belonging to the South-West region results in the fact that the findings can be considered as rather reflective of the cultural and social processes in the given region, which is important, since attitudes towards gender roles can significantly differ across different areas.

**Research Questions One:** what are the primary socio-cultural factors that deter men from entering primary school education?

**Table 2.** Perceptions of Society and Community toward Men in Primary school Education

S/N	Item	SD F (%)	DF (%)	AF (%)	SA F (%)	Mean (x̄)	SD
1	Society views men in primary school education with suspicion	18 (14.8)	40 (32.8)	47 (38.5)	17 (13.9)	2.52	0.94
2	Men who choose to teach young pupils are widely accepted in my community	16 (13.1)	54 (44.3)	40 (32.8)	12 (9.8)	2.39	0.86

S/N	Item	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean (x̄)	SD
3	Teaching young pupils is generally perceived as a woman's job	10 (8.2)	18 (14.8)	35 (28.7)	59 (48.4)	3.17	0.98
4	A man working as an primary school teacher is as socially acceptable as a woman working as an engineer	8 (6.6)	45 (36.9)	46 (37.7)	23 (18.9)	2.69	0.87
5	Men who work in primary school education are often judged negatively by their peers	12 (9.8)	32 (26.2)	59 (48.4)	19 (15.6)	2.70	0.88
6	Most men avoid primary school teaching because they fear being labeled as unmanly	9 (7.4)	28 (23.0)	65 (53.3)	20 (16.4)	2.79	0.80
7	Parents are generally uncomfortable with male teachers handling their young pupils	10 (8.2)	35 (28.7)	50 (41.0)	27 (22.1)	2.77	0.91
8	Parents trust male teachers just as much as female teachers in primary school settings	6 (4.9)	21 (17.2)	59 (48.4)	36 (29.5)	3.02	0.81
9	The lack of male teachers in primary school education discourages more men from joining the profession	6 (4.9)	16 (13.1)	59 (48.4)	41 (33.6)	3.11	0.80
10	Seeing more male teachers in early education would normalize the profession for men	6 (4.9)	20 (16.4)	62 (50.8)	34 (27.9)	3.02	0.80

(Researchers' Data, 2025)

Table 2 demonstrates a complicated societal environment toward male primary school educators and displays the traces of the gender stereotypes on the one hand and the new tendencies in favor of the male representation. The results have shown that there is high awareness that primary school teaching is still culturally seen as a feminine occupation and that the respondents have realized that men are socially punished to the satisfaction of having negative peer attitudes and the fear of labels of being unmanly when they choose this occupation. The parental attitudes are also quite controversial, on the one hand, parents are widely believed to trust the male teachers, on the other hand, parents are not comfortable with men working with young pupils, but in this case, the reported agreement and the discomfort are disconnected. Importantly, the data indicate a self-reinforcing loop of underrepresentation where it is unanimously believed that the scarcity of male teachers now will not encourage more men to join the profession, and more of these professionals will simply make the presence of a male in the profession normal.

The results of this study has shown socio-cultural obstacles such as gendered occupational stereotypes, social stigma, and ambivalent attitudes of parents still influence perceptions and prevent the entry of men into the primary school teaching profession (Grozev et al., 2024; Salvatori & Cherubini, 2024).

### **Research Questions Two: How do biases and stereotypes influence the decision-making process of men considering careers in early education?**

**Table 3.** Influence of biases and stereotypes on the decision-making process of men considering careers in early education?

S/N	Item	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD
1	Men are discouraged from pursuing primary school education because it is seen as a “women’s profession”	8 (6.6)	26 (21.3)	51 (41.8)	37 (30.3)	2.96	0.89
2	Teaching young pupils is viewed as a gender-neutral career in today’s society	24 (19.7)	54 (44.3)	40 (32.8)	4 (3.3)	2.19	0.78
3	Society expects women rather than men to take caregiving roles, making primary school teaching unlikely for men	8 (6.6)	12 (9.8)	56 (45.9)	46 (37.7)	3.15	0.85
4	Men are just as naturally suited for nurturing and caregiving roles as women	14 (11.5)	49 (40.2)	38 (31.1)	21 (17.2)	2.54	0.92
5	Male teachers in primary school education face the risk of being wrongly suspected of inappropriate behaviour	8 (6.6)	10 (8.2)	64 (52.5)	40 (32.8)	3.12	0.82
6	There is little to no social stigma associated with men choosing a career in primary school education	14 (11.5)	34 (27.9)	61 (50.0)	13 (10.7)	2.60	0.88
7	Men who pursue careers in primary school education are often perceived as less masculine	9 (7.4)	31 (25.4)	65 (53.3)	17 (13.9)	2.74	0.81
8	Choosing primary school education does not affect how a man’s masculinity is viewed by others	27 (22.1)	40 (32.8)	44 (36.1)	11 (9.0)	2.32	0.92
9	Primary school education is not considered a prestigious or respectable career path for men	4 (3.3)	28 (23.0)	61 (50.0)	29 (23.8)	2.94	0.79
10	Men in primary school education receive the same level of professional respect as those in other teaching roles	14 (11.5)	48 (39.3)	45 (36.9)	15 (12.3)	2.50	0.89

(Researchers’ Data, 2025)

Table 3 explained the extent to which entrenched gender preferences and stereotypes guide the career calculus of men looking to pursue the field of primary school education, demonstrating that the area of professional career is characterized by the presence of considerable social and psychological impediments. The results indicate that the occupational gender segregation is supported by the strong societal expectations that caregiving is a feminine role in which respondents firmly believed that women are supposed to play nurturing roles and that men joining such a profession are seen as having low masculinity. One striking result is the widespread fear of suspicion of inappropriate conduct that develops to become a major issue that fundamentally changes the risk-benefit analysis of potential male entrants. The data also show that the lack of occupational prestige regarding primary school education is an issue among men in particular, which implies that gender and professional status interact and form their own disincentives. It is important to note that, even though the respondents admit that they give slight consideration to the natural ability of men to nurture, these considerations are accompanied by the stigma and the fact that teaching young pupils is not seen as gender-neutral.

These results overall indicate that the biases are made to work together in many related processes, that is, questioning of motives, depreciation of masculinity, assumption of role incompatibility, and reduced professional respect. Those combine to produce a strong deterrent

effect of male involvement in the primary school workforce (Khoerunnisa et al., 2025; Zembylas, 2011).

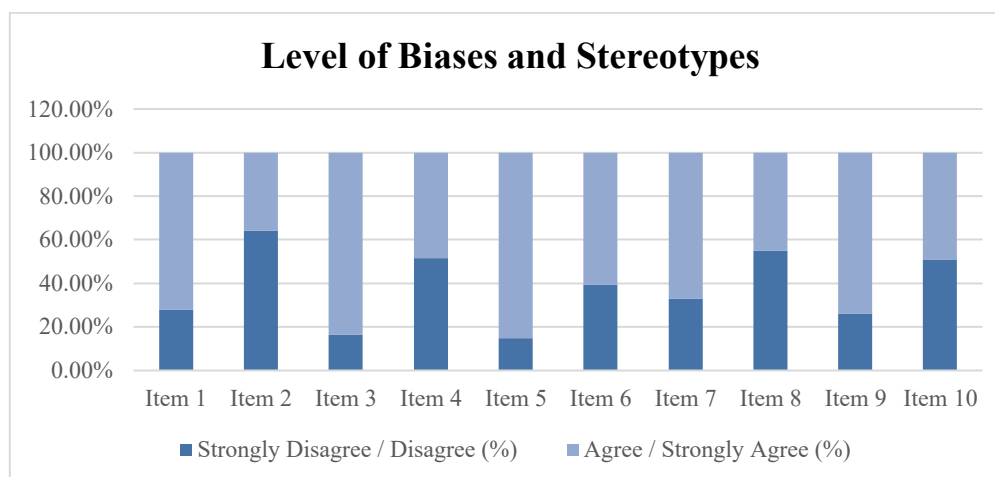


Figure 2. Level of Biases and Stereotypes

**Research Questions Three:** How do educators perceive male teachers in primary school education?

Table 4. Perception of male teachers in primary school education.

S/N	Item	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD
1	Male primary school educators often feel like outsiders in a predominantly female work environment	12 (9.8%)	36 (29.5%)	68 (55.7%)	6 (4.9%)	2.56	0.73
2	Male teachers in primary school settings feel fully integrated and supported by their colleagues	23 (18.9%)	61 (50.0%)	38 (31.1%)	0 (0%)	2.12	0.70
3	Parents are more hesitant to leave their pupils under the care of a male primary school teacher compared to a female teacher	13 (10.7%)	14 (11.5%)	64 (52.5%)	31 (25.4%)	2.93	0.89
4	Parents generally feel comfortable with male teachers taking care of their young pupils	4 (3.3%)	26 (21.3%)	58 (47.5%)	34 (27.9%)	3.00	0.80
5	Male teachers in primary school education worry about being falsely accused of inappropriate behavior	6 (4.9%)	16 (13.1%)	68 (55.7%)	32 (26.2%)	3.03	0.78
6	Male primary school educators feel just as safe and trusted as their female counterparts	8 (6.6%)	34 (27.9%)	59 (48.4%)	21 (17.2%)	2.76	0.82
7	Male teachers in primary school education are often expected to take on more physical or disciplinary roles than female teachers	10 (8.2%)	20 (16.4%)	69 (56.6%)	23 (18.9%)	2.86	0.83
8	Male and female primary school teachers are treated equally in terms of assigned responsibilities	32 (26.2%)	60 (49.2%)	24 (19.7%)	6 (4.9%)	2.03	0.81

9	Men in primary school education find it harder to advance into leadership positions compared to their female colleagues	27 (22.1%)	44 (36.1%)	38 (31.1%)	13 (10.7%)	2.30	0.94
10	Male teachers in primary school education have the same career growth opportunities as female teachers	32 (26.2%)	60 (49.2%)	24 (19.7%)	6 (4.9%)	2.03	0.81

(Researchers' Data, 2025)

Table 4 indicates the perception of the educators regarding the professional experiences of their male counterparts in the primary school settings which contributes to the picture of marginalization, different treatment, and certain occupational weaknesses. The results show that male teachers are perceived as having an outsider position in the female-dominated working environments and that male respondents to the study were nearly unanimous in their opposition to the idea that men feel completely integrated and appreciated by their workmates. The parental attitudes are also revealed as highly ambivalent envisaging that on the one hand, teachers agree that parents are generally comfortable with any male teacher, and, on the other hand, parents are more reluctant when it comes to making care-related decisions that involve men, and there is a subtle distance diverging between abstract and concrete acceptance. The fear of being falsely accused can be considered one of the strongest concerns that predetermine the professional life of male teachers, as it is evident that there is increased scrutiny in which the representatives of the given profession must work. The data also reveal evident tendencies of gendered role division, as the consensus is clearly that men are directed towards physical and disciplinary roles and at the same time are subjected to unfair treatment in both the allocated roles and the career promotion ladder. Interestingly, the respondents are strongly opposed to the idea that male and female teachers are treated equally in their everyday duties or even leadership opportunities, which means that they tend to believe that inequity is not isolated but systemic.

Therefore these findings show that male primary school educators have to work in a social environment that is marked by social isolation, mixed parental trust, their constant watchfulness about possible accusation, stereotyped role beliefs, and professional barriers to career advancement (Thien & Lee, 2023; Zein, 2017).

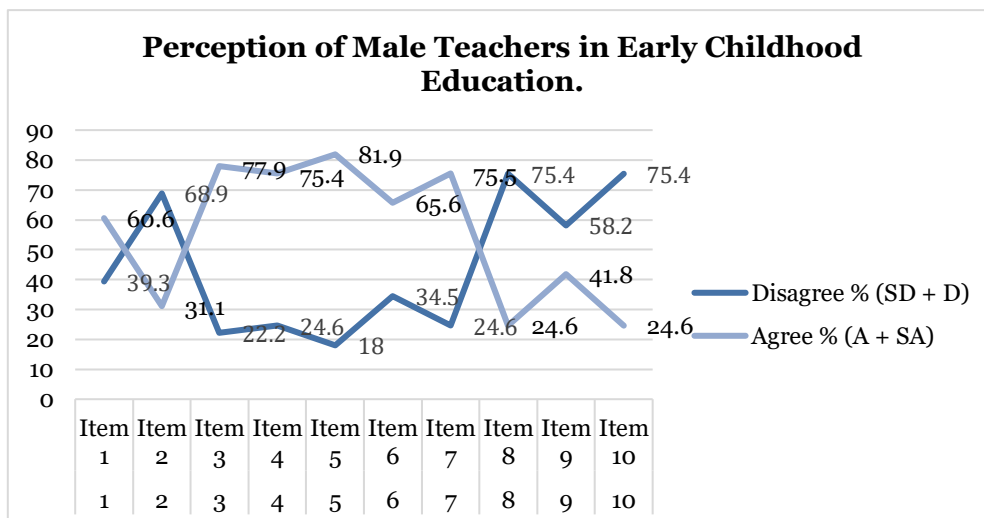


Figure 3. Level of Biases and Stereotypes

**Research Question Four:** What are the challenges faced by male teachers in primary school education settings?

**Table 5.** Challenges faced by male teachers in primary school education settings

S/N	Item	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD
1	Male teachers in primary school education often feel isolated due to the low number of male colleagues	14 (11.5%)	23 (18.9%)	70 (57.4%)	15 (12.3%)	2.71	0.85
2	Male teachers in primary school settings receive the same level of professional support as their female colleagues	21 (17.2%)	55 (45.1%)	40 (32.8%)	6 (4.9%)	2.25	0.79
3	Parents tend to be more skeptical of male primary school educators than female teachers	4 (3.3%)	21 (17.2%)	67 (54.9%)	30 (24.6%)	3.01	0.75
4	Parents express equal levels of trust toward male and female primary school teachers	8 (6.6%)	25 (20.5%)	64 (52.5%)	25 (20.5%)	2.87	0.81
5	Male primary school educators worry about being falsely accused of inappropriate behavior	6 (4.9%)	22 (18.0%)	69 (56.6%)	25 (20.5%)	2.93	0.78
6	There is no additional scrutiny placed on male teachers when interacting with young pupils	4 (3.3%)	61 (50.0%)	42 (34.4%)	15 (12.3%)	2.56	0.72
7	Male teachers in primary school education are often expected to take on more physical or disciplinary roles than their female colleagues	14 (11.5%)	32 (26.2%)	54 (44.3%)	22 (18.0%)	2.69	0.91
8	The responsibilities assigned to male and female primary school teachers are generally the same	21 (17.2%)	43 (35.2%)	44 (36.1%)	14 (11.5%)	2.42	0.94
9	Male teachers in primary school education have fewer opportunities for career advancement compared to female teachers	26 (21.3%)	40 (32.8%)	46 (37.7%)	10 (8.2%)	2.33	0.91
10	Men in primary school education are just as likely as women to be promoted to leadership positions	25 (20.5%)	69 (56.6%)	24 (19.7%)	4 (3.3%)	2.06	0.73

(Researchers' Data, 2025)

This table 5 shows that the issues of male teachers engaged in primary school education are a complicated mix of social and professional challenges. The results suggest that there are very serious issues regarding the perceptions of the population where it is noted that the participants are more convinced that the parents are more hesitant to put in this position and that there is a high sense of fear among the male educators about the issue of false allegations. At work, it is indicated that the findings tend to isolate men because they are the minority and feel the lack of institutional support in comparison with their female peers. Besides, the replies mention gendered expectations at the work place, as men are stereotyped to either be physical or disciplinary, at the same time

they feel that there are imbalances in promotion and there are no equal chances to become a leader. All of these lead to a professional environment that is difficult to work in which retention and workforce diversification are affected.

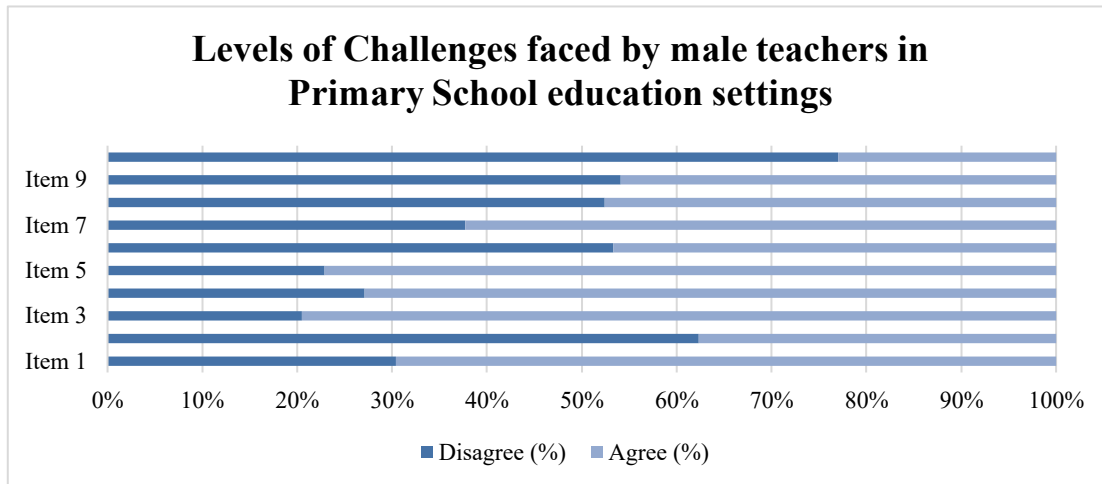


Figure 4: Levels of Challenges faced by male teachers in primary school education settings

Results of this research are provided based on the four research questions based on the data gathered about 122 respondents using Teachers Stereotype Scale. The findings show intricate trends of stereotypes and bias and perceived difficulty of male teachers in primary school educational contexts.

## DISCUSSION

### Research Question One: What are the primary socio-cultural factors that deter men from entering primary school education?

The results indicate that there are deep-rooted socio-cultural influences that act as a deterrent to male involvement in primary school education. The survey showed that the upholding of gendered occupational stereotypes with a significant majority of respondents (77.1%) admitting that teaching young pupils is traditionally viewed as a female occupation ( $\bar{x} = 3.17$ ). This observation can be corroborated by the fact that primary school education is still perceived as a feminine sector of work, according to Syam and Sulfianita (2025), in the contexts of various cultures, and they also record the global report of the extreme imbalance in gender representation of the workforce in the early years, with male representation varying between only 2 and 10 percent in various geographical areas. Social stigmatization was found to be a strong discouraging factor and 69.7% of the respondents indicated that most men keep primary school teaching away because they fear that they are not manly ( $\bar{x} = 2.79$ ). This observation shows how the standards of hegemonic masculinity work, that professions of care and nurturance are built as incompatible with masculine identity. The evidence also shows that male entrants of the profession are subjected to negative judgments by their colleagues, and 64.0% of the men interviewed indicated having experienced this social penalty ( $\bar{x} = 2.70$ ). These findings confirm the findings of Khamis et al. (2025) in Zanzibar where the male teachers stated that they faced considerable levels of social attention and doubt about their masculinity when they decide to teach young pupils.

The attitudes of parents to male teachers were ambivalent and tend to be rather cautious. Although most of the respondents (77.9%) said that they trusted male teachers as much as they trusted female teachers ( $\bar{x} = 3.02$ ), an interesting finding is that a significant proportion of 63.1 expressed the fact that parents usually do not like male teachers taking care of their young pupils ( $\bar{x} = 2.77$ ). This seeming paradox indicates that though the overt attitudes can support gender equality, underlying anxieties are still present, such an outcome that is indeed intuitive in the context of the role congruity theory that bias can be hidden even in the individual who may publicly affirm and defend the concepts of egalitarianism (Eagly and Karau, 2002). The observation that 82.0 percent of the respondents supported that more male teachers should be shown to normalize the profession ( $\bar{x} = 3.02$ ), and that 82.0 percent disclosed that as little as possible is forcing male teachers out of the profession ( $\bar{x} = 3.11$ ) indicates a vicious cycle of underrepresentation. This comes in a cyclical way reminiscent of the discarded worker effect reported by Parantar and San Jose (2025) in the Philippine market leverage where lower figures of male role models within the occupation strengthen the images that primary school teaching is not a man-friendly job.

### **Research Question Two: How do biases and stereotypes influence the decision-making process of men considering careers in primary education?**

The results prove that biases and stereotypes have a strong effect on the process of career decision making among men with the sphere of primary school education. A large majority of the respondents (72.1%) agreed that men are not encouraged to undertake primary school education as it is viewed as a women occupation ( $\bar{x} = 2.96$ ), even more dramatic is the fact that 83.6% of the respondents accepted the fact that it is the women who should take caregiving roles (distinctly  $\bar{x} = 3.15$ ) as opposed to men. This expectation is the highest expected score of all the items in this section, which highlights the original essence of the gendered care giving assumptions. The results align with those of Ören and Ünser (2024), who study teacher candidates and found that the deeply ingrained gender roles attitudes have an influence on the professional aspirations and expectations of the teacher candidates at the initial phases of career building. The stereotype that men working in primary school education are suspected of inappropriate behavior was highly supported where 85.3% of the respondents supported the stereotype ( $\bar{x} = 3.12$ ). This evidence supports the study of Zhang (2025) in the Chinese environment since the author observed that male educators have to deal with the about-the-intentions-with-pupils-vigilance all the time, an issue that does not affect their female colleagues. The data also indicate that men entering the career of primary school are generally viewed as less masculine 67.2% in agreement ( $\bar{x} = 2.74$ ) and only 45.1% disagreeing that primary school education influences concept of masculinity ( $\bar{x} = 2.32$ ). The stigma of participation in primary school education by men is more than just a question of motivation, lowering masculinity, and role incongruity as these findings indicate that such stigma works in a variety of ways.

Another aspect of bias was professional respect, as 73.8% of the respondents believed that primary school education is not a prestigious or respectable profession among men ( $\bar{x} = 2.94$ ). When coupled with the suspicion and stigma recorded above, this idea of low occupational prestige forms a strong negative deterrent to male entry. The reviewed literature of the deteriorating male labor force in early years environments in the United Kingdom (Tully, 2025) observed the same tendency, pointing to a scenario where low wages, low position, and high scrutiny form the environment that preconditions the systematic discouragement of male involvement. However,

more importantly, the perception of teaching young pupils as a gender-neutral occupation was only at 36.1% among the respondents in the current society ( $\bar{x} = 2.19$ ), which shows that even the decades of gender equality promotion in the workplace did not allow getting rid of the firmly rooted gender stereotype in people regarding the profession of primary school teachers.

### **Research Question Three: How do educators perceive male teachers in primary school education?**

The results indicate that teachers see male teachers as having a peripheral role in primary school programs, which is social isolation, unequal treatment, and special professional vulnerability. Most of the respondents (60.6%) concurred that male primary school educators usually feel they are outsiders in an otherwise female work setting ( $\bar{x} = 2.56$ ), and only 31.1% of the respondents thought that male teachers feel completely integrated and supported by their workmates ( $\bar{x} = 2.12$ ). This sense of isolation of male teachers is consistent with the report that [Abazi \(2025\)](#) made in Kosovo, where the very low number of male educators (just four out of 678 pre-primary teachers) creates a situation of tremendous isolation of professionals of the opposite gender. The statistics indicate a very shocking trend in terms of parental perceptions, as perceived by teachers. Although 75.4% of those questioned agreed that parents are usually comfortable with a male teacher ( $\bar{x} = 3.00$ ), a still greater number (77.9%), also admitted that parents are less willing to leave their pupils in the care of a male teacher than they are to leave them with a female teacher ( $\bar{x} = 2.93$ ). This contradiction implies that teachers feel that there is a disconnect between the overall parental comfort and the precise choice of care, which is a subtlety that mimics the intricate situation male teachers are in. Similar contradictions were found in the work by [Purcell \(2023\)](#) who, in his study on the attitudes towards gender in primary school classrooms, observed that the abstract support of gender equality is often accompanied by concrete reluctance to fulfill the situation of actual care.

Fear of false accusation was also a major issue, with 81.9% of the participants admitting that the male teachers were concerned about being wrongly accused of inappropriate conduct ( $\bar{x} = 3.03$ ). This observation is one of the most highly supported items in the whole survey and identifies what is possibly the root cause of occupational stress among male teachers. Similar anxiety was found to be a major discouraging factor to male preschool teacher training in [Sun and Leili \(2026\)](#) that discussed barriers to training and retention, where constant attention to ensure that a person is not suspected is an unsustainable psychological burden. The role expectations by gender could be seen through the fact that 75.5 percent of the respondents believed that male teachers are frequently anticipated to perform more physical or punitive role compared to the female teachers ( $\bar{x} = 2.86$ ). At the same time, the respondents did not agree with the idea that male and female teachers are equal in various aspects, including the number of assigned responsibilities, as 75.4 percent of them did not agree that there is an equal approach ( $\bar{x} = 2.03$ ). This gendered division of labor or appropriation of men to physical and disciplinary tasks and exclusion of men to nurturing duties is a manifestation of what [Fullard \(2025\)](#) termed as role incongruity bias at play in the educational workplaces. These workplace issues are further aggravated by the fact that 58.2% of respondents do not agree that both men and women have equal career advancement opportunities ( $\bar{x} = 2.30$ ) and 75.4% do not agree that men teachers and female teachers have the same career advancement opportunities ( $\bar{x} = 2.03$ ).

#### **Research Question Four: What are the challenges faced by male teachers in primary school education settings?**

The results shed a complex range of issues that face male teachers in the primary school context, which includes social isolation, lack of professional support, parental mistrust, fear of being accused, stereotypical role-related expectations, and barriers to career progression. Another issue came out to be social isolation with 69.7 percent of the respondents admitting that male teachers tend to be isolated because there are not many male teachers ( $\bar{x} = 2.71$ ). It is further enhanced by the insufficient professional support as 62.3% of the respondents did not agree with the fact that male teachers are provided with equal professional support as compared to their female counterparts ( $\bar{x} = 2.25$ ). These results are consistent with those of the edited volume on the topic of views of young pupils on the issue of teacher gender by [Xu et al. \(2025\)](#); in particular, the authors underline that the minority of male teachers fosters a state of marginalization that influences the professional practice and personal wellbeing. Parental mistrust is a significant obstacle, and 79.5 percent of the participants confirmed that parents are more likely to mistrust male primary school educators than female teachers ( $\bar{x} = 3.01$ ). Markedly, this is one of the mean scores in the challenges area, which means that parental bias is well-known. Nonetheless, the result that 73.0 percent of the respondents also held the same view that parents trust male and female teachers equally ( $\bar{x} = 2.87$ ) once again demonstrates the dualistic, ambivalent character of the parental attitude. In their research of Nigerian early grades contexts, [Ossai and Ramsaroop \(2022\)](#) have reported such a phenomenon of ambivalence in parents, that is, trust towards an individual male teacher usually exists along with detachment towards men in primary school occupations.

False accusation was the item of the strongest endorsement, and the agreement was 77.1% ( $\bar{x} = 2.93$ ). The observation, which was made in various parts of the survey, highlights the primacy of this issue to the professional lives of male teachers. The data also show that male teachers are subjected to extreme scrutiny where only 46.7 percent of teachers confirm that no extra scrutiny is given to male teachers when they are around pupils of young age ( $\bar{x} = 2.56$ ). This omnipresence as observed by [Parantar and San Jose \(2025\)](#) during their research among Filipino male kindergarten teachers is, in essence, a fundamental change in the way men handle their jobs, as they have no choice but to perform constant self-monitoring and to create a strategy of avoiding circumstances that could subject them to suspicion. Gendered role perceptions are observed in the observation that, male teachers are expected to have more physical or disciplinary responsibilities (62.3% agreed), whereas, the male and female teachers are not expected to have the same (52.4% disagreed) duties. This segregation of labor, sending men outside nursing relationships and into disciplinary roles, enhances the amount of stereotyping about masculinity and at the same time curtails the professional growth of male teachers and the full opportunities to provide pupils with experiences. According to [Zhang \(2025\)](#), these trends are also present in Chinese kindergartens, where male teachers are frequently not distributed across the entire range of primary school pedagogical work but instead tend to be overrepresented in the physical education and behavior management classes.

Career advancement challenges represent a significant concern, with 54.1% of respondents agreeing that male teachers have fewer opportunities for career advancement compared to female teachers ( $\bar{x} = 2.33$ ). An even more striking 77.1% disagreed that men are just as likely as women to be promoted to leadership positions ( $\bar{x} = 2.06$ ), representing the lowest mean score in the

challenges section and indicating strong consensus regarding leadership inequity. This perception of blocked advancement opportunities contradicts the stereotype that men benefit from male privilege in all occupational contexts and instead suggests that in highly feminized fields, gender operates differently, with men facing distinct disadvantages in accessing leadership roles (Ilyas et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2020). Fullard, J. (2025) said that the analysis of bias in educational hiring and promotion documented similar patterns, finding that while men may face barriers to entry in female-dominated fields, those who enter may encounter glass escalator effects in some contexts while facing glass ceilings in others a complexity that warrants further investigation (Rahmawati & Permana, 2020; Robertson, 1996). Taken together, these findings paint a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing male primary school educators: they navigate social isolation as gender minorities, contend with inadequate professional support, manage heightened parental skepticism, bear the psychological burden of constant suspicion regarding their motives and behavior, confront gendered expectations that channel them into narrow roles, and face barriers to career advancement into leadership positions. These challenges, operating at individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels, create conditions that discourage male entry into the profession and undermine the retention of those who do choose this career path.

## CONCLUSION

This research establishes that ingrained social-cultural stereotypes still exist that make teaching primary school feminine and actively deny the male gender. Male teachers experience a complex burden: they are gender minorities, constantly suspected of different intentions, they are afraid of false accusations, there is no parental trust towards them, they are directed to physical or disciplinary work, and they do not have equal career growth opportunities. These systemic issues of underrepresentation functioning at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels form a self-perpetuating loop of male absence desensitizing potential entrants. Gender diversification in primary school will still be an unfulfilled dream unless there are specific interventions that can be applied to avoid overt biases and the more hidden institutional practices.

## REFERENCES

- Abazi, F. (2025, July 3). Few men in pre-primary education. KOHA.net. <https://www.koha.net/en/arberi/pak-burra-ne-edukim-parafillor>
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573–598. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573>
- Fullard, J. (2025). Is the school workforce biased against men? *Economics Letters*, 251, Article 112337. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2025.112337>
- Grozev, V. H., Easterbrook, M. J., & Jessop, D. C. (2024). Discipline identification, identity incompatibility, belonging and their association with deep approaches to learning and academic self-efficacy during COVID-19 in the UK. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 39, 785–812.
- Ilyas, I., Wahab, W., Imran, I., Mahluddin, M., & Asmawati, A. (2025). Digital Transformation in Educational Management for School Quality in the Digital Era. *Scaffolding: Jurnal*

Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme, 7(3), 78–90.  
<https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v7i3.7735>

- Khamis, A. S., Kanukisya, B., & Mwaikokesya, M. (2025). Engendering preprimary education in Zanzibar: Question of male teachers' under-representation in primary school teaching and learning. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 33(3), 579–594. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2024.2330370>
- Khoerunnisa, R., Yulianti, D., & Ramadhan, R. A. (2025). Challenges of Elementary Education: Curriculum Incompatibility Towards Students Learning Motivation at Bangbayang Elementary School. *Journal of Science and Education (JSE)*, 6(1), 1034–1040.
- Ören, M., & Ünser, A. F. (2024). Investigation of primary school and primary school education teacher candidates' attitudes to gender roles in terms of gender, grade, mother's and father's education levels. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 8(2), 755–777. <https://doi.org/10.34056/aujef.1355552>
- Ossai, O. V., & Ramsaroop, S. (2022). Exploring the perceptions about male teachers in early grades across schools in Nigeria. *Webology*, 19(4). <https://hdl.handle.net/10210/501782>
- Parantar, P. I. P., & San Jose, A. E. (2025). Male teachers in kindergarten: Their experiences, navigation of challenges, and suggestions to increase their number. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 51(6), 1462–1480. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2025/v51i61859>
- Purcell, A. (2023). Developing healthy gender attitudes in the primary school classroom. *The Journal of Teacher Action Research*, 10(1), 45–62. <https://jtar-ojs-shsu.tdl.org/jtar/article/view/66>
- Rahmawati, I., & Permana, J. (2020). Improving Teachers Teaching Performances Through Development of Capacity Buildings and Innovative Work Behaviors. 400(Icream 2019), 90–93. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200130.146>
- Robertson, S. L. (1996). Teachers work, Restructuring and Post-Fordism: Is this the New Professionalism? In & A. H. (Eds) I. Goodson (Ed.), *Teachers Professional Lives* (pp. 28–55). Falmer Press.
- Salvatori, M. L., & Cherubini, D. (2024). Gender stereotypes in physical education: state of the art and future perspectives in primary school. *Pedagogy of Physical Culture and Sports*, 28(3), 231–238.
- Sun, Y., & Leili, N. (2026). Trapped in implicit social exclusion: A study on the restrictive mechanism of male preschool teachers' identity construction in China. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 17, Article 1796491. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1796491>
- Syam, A. S. M., & Sulfianita, S. (2025). Breaking stereotypes: Male teachers' perspectives on gender roles in primary school education. *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 12(2), 580–592. <https://doi.org/10.19109/1c4sqe12>
- Thien, L. M., & Lee, H. C. (2023). The effects of school culture dimensions on teacher well-being across under-enrolled and high-enrolment schools. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 7(1), 100396. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100396>
- Tully, J. (2025, August 12). Man oh man! The decline of men in early years. YPO. <https://www.ypo.co.uk/news-and-events/blog/man-oh-man---the-decline-of-men-in-early-years>

- UNESCO. (2025). Global education monitoring report 2025: Gender and teaching workforce diversity. UNESCO Publishing. <https://www.iicba.unesco.org/en/new-2025-gender-report-calls-more-women-top-education>
- Wijaya, T. T., Ying, Z., & Suan, L. (2020). Gender and Self Regulated Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 4(3), 725–732. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v4i3.422>
- Xu, Y., Brody, D., Emilsen, K., & Coles, L. (Eds.). (2025). *Young pupils's perspectives on teacher gender: Contextualizing gender stereotypes and inclusive practices in primary school education and care*. Routledge.
- Zein, M. S. (2017). Elementary English education in Indonesia: Policy developments, current practices, and future prospects. *English Today*, 33(1), 53–59. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078416000407>
- Zembylas, M. (2011). Toleration and coexistence in conflicting societies: some tensions and implications for education. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 19(3), 385–402.
- Zhang, J. (2025). Does man has a place in kindergarten leadership? A literature review in China's early child education. *Psychology in the Schools*, 62(7), 2178–2191. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.23458>