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## Critical Reflections on the Experiences of Male in Early Childhood Education in Malaysia

**ABSTRACT:** The percentage of male in field like Early Childhood Education (ECE) is low compared to other manly job. But, recently, the position of male in preschool education has been a trending topic of research among academic societies. The ways through which government attempt to encourage or maximized the incidence of male students taking Early Childhood Education course are founded on a thorough understanding of the reasons why they choose the course and the challenges. Employing a number of semi-structured interviews, the present qualitative study endeavours to seek Early Childhood Education students' viewpoints on the reasons, challenges, and views of taking this course. Researchers used two male students, who fit the criteria chosen through purposive sampling. Based on the findings of the study, themes found for the reasons: interest, conditional support, demands, and basic knowledge; followed by themes for the challenges faced: normal, affect performance, family, and feedback differences in gender; and themes for their perception on Early Childhood Education course: business and attitude. The implications of these findings can be helpful for academic societies seeking to prioritize the role of male in Early Childhood Education setting in Malaysia.

**KEY WORD:** Male, early childhood, reason, challenge, attitude, academic societies, and role of male in early childhood education.

**RINGKASAN:** "Refleksi Kritis mengenai Pengalaman Lelaki dalam Pendidikan Awal Kanak-kanak di Malaysia". Peratusan lelaki dalam bidang Pendidikan Awal Kanak-kanak adalah rendah bila dibandingkan dengan bidang kerjaya lainnya. Tetapi, baru-baru ini, kedudukan lelaki di dalam pendidikan prasekolah adalah satu topik yang hangat dalam penyelidikan di kalangan masyarakat akademik. Pihak kerajaan telah berusaha untuk menggalakkan atau memaksimumkan penglibatan pelajar lelaki untuk mengambil kursus Pendidikan Awal Kanak-kanak melalui kefahaman yang mendalam tentang sebab-sebab pemilihan kursus dan cabaran. Menggunakan beberapa temubual separa berstruktur, kajian kualitatif ini telah mendapatkan pandangan pelajar Pendidikan Awal Kanak-kanak mengenai sebab-sebab, cabaran, dan pandangan mereka untuk mengikuti kursus ini. Penyelidik menggunakan dua pelajar lelaki, yang sesuai dengan kriteria yang dipilih melalui persampelan bertujuan. Berdasarkan dapatan kajian ini, tema dijumpai untuk sebab ialah: faedah, sokongan bersyarat, keperluan, dan pengetahuan asas; kemudian diikuti dengan tema untuk cabaran yang dihadapi: normal, menjejaskan prestasi, keluarga, dan perbezaan maklum balas dalam jantina; serta tema untuk persepsi mereka pada kursus Pendidikan Awal Kanak-kanak: perniagaan dan sikap. Implikasi dapatan kajian diharapkan dapat membantu para ahli akademik untuk mengutamakan peranan lelaki dalam suasana Pendidikan Awal Kanak-kanak di Malaysia.

**KATA KUNCI:** Lelaki, pendidikan awal kanak-kanak, sebab-sebab, cabaran, pandangan, masyarakat akademik, dan peranan lelaki dalam pendidikan awal kanak-kanak.

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## INTRODUCTION

Number of female in learning institution remarkably huge compared to the male (Cech, 2013; and Fung, 2014). The rising number of female in formal education system influenced the rate of their involvement in the workforce and lead to the segregation of gender in occupation (Noor Rahamah, 2006). Research showed that the number of female graduates at the undergraduate level is high in the field of humanities, economy, business, and management compared to the number of male graduates in the field of engineering, architecture, property management, town and regional planning (Noor Rahamah, 2006). Thus, the percentage of male in field like ECE (Early Childhood Education) is low compared to other manly job.

Relating to that, more than a quarter century before, we know that the number of men teaching in the field of ECE has not changed much nor have the reasons why men do not teach (Nelson, 2002). Men make up 5.2 percent of what the USA (United States of America) Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labour, in 2005, classifies as child care workers, 2.3 percent of preschool and kindergarten teachers, and 17.8 percent of elementary and middle school teachers (DoL, 2005). The shortage of men teachers in early childhood and elementary education is similar in other industrialized countries. For example, 2.5 percent of early childhood caregivers in Sweden are men, and men teach only 6.1 percent of Sweden's preschool classes (Cooney & Bittner, 2001).

In many countries, this keeps wages for early childhood educators disrespectfully low (Kilgallon, Maloney & Lock, 2008). Low wages then become a barrier to recruiting and sustaining good educators. UNESCO (United Nations of Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Institute for Statistics in 2005 has listed Malaysia together with Paraguay and Philippine as the country which provide minimum salaries at pre-primary and primary schools, but the number of hours of instruction for the former is lower than the latter (UNESCO, 2005).

In Malaysia, the percentage of male teachers is also low; and, thus, they have

become the disadvantaged minority in preschool teacher training classrooms. From our personal experience as the Early Childhood Education's lecturers, there are little number of male students in our class; not more than five person in one class. In college or university, number of male is growing, but lack in the real setting. With this phenomenon, we have difficulty especially when male is in need to perform hard task. As such, higher learning institutions, universities and colleges offer ECE Diploma and Degree courses. Early childhood in Malaysia is growing rapidly and currently more and more male teachers are involved in this industry.

However, the responses to the shortage by governments in some other Westernized nations are quite varied. New Zealand and Australia provide financial incentives and propose legislation to help increase the numbers of men in teaching. In the United Kingdom, men in childcare sponsors an annual conference, and Britain's and Norway's governments fund offices to recruit male teachers for teacher training programs (Cooney & Bittner, 2001). Nonetheless, New Zealand Ministry of Education plan, the strategic plan for ECE does not specifically address the shortage of male educators and there is no existing government policy to increase the recruitment of men (Keefe, Marshall & Robeson, 2003).

**Objectives of the Study.** Specifically, the objective of the proposed study was to seek the reasons of male students for not choosing in ECE (Early Childhood Education) course and the challenges for them as the minority group in the course. By understanding the reasons, this present study could suggest the implementation plan of promoting ECE course to another gender instead of the females. Other than that, it is intended to collect their views on ECE, including their aspirations, hope, feelings, and suggestions towards the course (ECEC, 2006).

Overall, this study meant to answer these research questions: (1) What are the reasons male students choose ECE course?; (2) What are those challenges being minorities in ECE course?; and (3) What are their views on ECE course?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Karanja Grace N. Njoki (2009) study on the factors influencing gender disparity among teachers of pre-school and identify the factors that explain the prevailing distribution of female and male teachers in pre-school. The research involved all teachers in 20% of pre-schools in each of the two divisions of Thika District, central province, Kenya. Interview session was conducted with preschool teachers and District Centre for Early Childhood Education officers, while Focus Group Discussion for the parents. From the analysis, it has been found that cultural influences, teacher remuneration, and age scored highest in influencing gender disparity in that order. There also found the significant relationship between the flexible work schedule in preschool and the large number of female teachers. Factors contributed to gender disparity among pre-school teachers in Thika District included parents influence, flexible work schedules, proximity to the centre, age and number of dependants (Njoki, 2009).

In addition, Tsigra (2010) conducted a semi-structured interview was conducted with ten male teachers working in public kindergartens in the island of Crete to study how male kindergarten teachers perceive their role and how they affect children's gender construction. After the analysis of the interviews, male teachers believed that their presence in the kindergarten creates a balance both among teachers and among children in daily life. This balance contributes to the construction of children's gender in a direct/active and experiential way, through teaching practices that they use, or indirectly, by exposing children to different versions of masculinity (Tsigra, 2010).

Those versions of masculinity, which will be analyzed below, indicate how the male teachers of our research position themselves in kindergarten and how they perceive the ways in which they are positioned by others. The answers and narratives indicate how these male kindergarten teachers perceive their role and how they affect children's gender construction. Male teacher perceived they as the model of father, traditional man, an alternative model of man and an alternative teacher model.

Also, F.N. Mudegu (2012) undertake the study to explore factors influencing the enrolment of male students in early childhood education training colleges in Kenya. About 45 male students in early childhood education training colleges in Nairobi County have been given a set of questionnaire together with semi-structured interview. Factors influencing enrolment of male students in early childhood education training colleges was divided into socio-economic factors and individual factors. Elements such as market demand, interest, and opportunity are the basis of entering this sector for them (Mudegu, 2012).

Likewise, Fu & Li (2010) tap the same purpose of the research, but found different result. Three male pre-service preschool teachers in Taiwan were interviewed and observed regarding the reasons they enter preschool education. They were not motivated by the interest of the subjects, but more to start their own business and to get a degree. Conversely, they discussed further male preschool teachers; learning experience in childcare centre. They tend to constantly doubt the value of their jobs as preschool teachers, but positive attitude will help them to seek pleasure in their careers (Fu & Li, 2010).

A. Diren & T. Besnard (2010) try to describe the reality for male students in ECE (Early Childhood Education) and embark on identifying the personal and environmental factors that can influence their involvement in this program. This large-scale study employed both qualitative and quantities method and occupied those individuals associated to ECE which are Secondary V students, that is to say potentially future ECE students, male students registered in ECE who are pursuing the program or who have dropped out, teachers in ECE and colleagues in the future work setting for program graduates. They found that the quality of their adaptation seems to be a determining factor for the pursuit of their studies. The study also brought to the information on the challenges that young men in ECE must face which were prejudice from parents, female-dominated working environment, and different system in the preschool (Diren & Besnard, 2010).

**Challenges and Sustainment.** A research

done in Sweden with female and male students who aiming to work in pre-schools. The researchers utilized interview method to seek out students understanding concerning recruiting more male pre-school teachers, and their views on dominant notions of femininity and masculinity. The result showed that gender stereotypes are the challenges in the society. Many students, both female and male, welcome male teachers, because men are expected to add something to preschools. Moreover, male teachers are widely appreciated in a way that female teachers are not. Students also questioned the one-sided focus on gender. They also object to the gender division that may occur in gender-mixed work groups (Hedlin & Åberg, 2011).

Narrow it down in Malaysia, Rohaty Mohd Majzub (2013) examined the issues and challenges in pre-school education in Malaysia and the recommendation to enhance quality. She conducted the FGD (Focus Group Discussion) with 30 experienced practitioners in early childhood education including teachers, college lecturers, post graduate students, and government officers. The researcher identified several important issues relating curriculum, teacher training, equity and accessibility, assessment, and monitoring of preschool centers. It stated clearly that lack of male teachers influenced the classroom climate and at the end gives great impact to the learning process in the class. Many of the respondents questioned why males are not attracted to teach preschool and they asserted that males should be encouraged to do so (cf Kember & Kwan, 2000; and Mohd Majzub, 2013).

## METHOD

**Research Design.** In order to explore in depth of proposed topic and seek for the richness of information, qualitative research design will be employed in this research. Qualitative research merely defined as a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Using case study out of other types qualitative designs, it aims to describe in-depth the experience of one person, family, group, community, or institution. The choice also due to this design

does not require team of researcher, but can be conducted by single researcher. Also, case study assists researcher gained direct interaction and observation with the subjects to achieve in-depth description of their experiences (Nisbet & Watt, 1984).

Case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle from a single instance action (Sherman & Webb, 2005). It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case. It also blends a description of events with the analysis of them. Likewise, it focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events. N.K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln eds. (2003) stated that case study highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.

In this proposed study, researchers try to understand their state as the minorities in early childhood education setting by seeking information from few cases. Utilizing this design, researchers will not only meet certain objective but also, there are limitations.

According to J. Nisbet & J. Watt (1984), case study grasps unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger scale data like survey; these unique features might hold the key to understanding the situation. Even so, the results may not be generalizable except where other readers/researchers see their application. They are not easily open to cross-checking; hence, they may be selective, biased, personal, and subjective.

**Data Collection Techniques.** A semi-structured interview will be conducted with participants. A date, time, and venue for the interview was fixed, accompanied by the statement outlining the purposes and nature of the research and will send to the participants via SMS (Short Message Service). Participants will be guaranteed of anonymity through assurance that the interviews were being conducted solely by the researchers. They also will fill up the informed consent and are entitled to withdraw at any time of the data collection process.

Participation will be voluntary basis and the responses anonymous. No comments will be attributed to individuals and no record of names will be taken or kept. Interviewees



will be told that their responses would be presented to the group of people, so that the data gathered from the interviews may be used to prepare future research and papers. All in all, the personal interaction between researchers and participants is crucial in data gathering by keeping in mind the research focus and being clear about the role of researchers (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000).

Other than that, researchers applied document analysis in digging the information further. Documents broadly include any papers, especially official ones, which provide more or less direct evidence of decisions, status, thoughts, debates or actions, which are directly or indirectly related to the purpose of a research inquiry. In this research, document analysis used to explore ECE (Early Childhood Education) conditions in other countries, included the ratio of male preschool teacher, the training provided for male students who enrolled in ECE course and the salary rate in ECE.

The primary sources of data used were the annual reports, minutes of meetings, and institutional prospectuses of China, New Zealand, Taiwan, Kenya, and certainly Malaysia. Documents are a useful source of evidence, but they have their limitations. One problem with them is that we may not know how they came into being in the first place or who wrote them.

**Role of Researchers.** The role of researchers is quite different in qualitative studies. The researchers are considered an instrument of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln eds., 2003). In order to suit this role, the researchers need to describe relevant aspects of self, including any biases and assumption, expectations, and experiences to qualify his ability to conduct the research (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000). Other than that, with the purpose of preserving validity, researchers should able to bracketing, which means researchers suspend what is known about the phenomenon and sets aside own preconceptions about the issue (Greenbank, 2003).

## FINDINGS DAN DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to explore the reasons of male students in the IIC (International Islamic College) being in ECE

(Early Childhood Education) field and what motivate them to perform well even as the minority group in the course. Results were presented in there sections, according to the research questions: the analysis of the reasons of male students choose ECE course; followed by those challenges being minorities in ECE course; and their views on ECE course.

From the analysis, four themes were found for the reasons: Interest, Conditional support, Demands, and Basic Knowledge; four themes for the challenges faced: Normal, Affect performance, Family, and Feedback Differences in Gender; and two themes for their perception on ECE course: Business and Attitude.

**About the Reasons.** Four themes were found for the reasons: Interest, Conditional support, Demands, and Basic Knowledge with findings as follows:

**First, Interest.** This was first theme drawn for the interview about their reasons for taking ECE (Early Childhood Education) course. Both participants agreed that interest is a drive to fulfill a desire, need, or expectation. For example, Participant A said as follows:

*Firstly, I choosed this course because my great love towards children. Secondly, I could see good prospect for job occupation as male is less than female's kindergarten teacher (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

Participant B displayed his interest in teaching in his statement, as follows:

*I choosed this course since no one in my family is a teacher. I love teaching (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

So, there was no significant difference in the reasons of taking ECE (Early Childhood Education) between two respondents.

**Second, Conditional Support.** There were common ideas how the family respond towards their choice. Both participants got support from the parents after certain conditions. This can be reflected in statements made by Participant A, as follows:

*Initially, they against my decision as I am an eldest in my family. They started to accept my decision after seeing my efforts (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

Similarly, Participant B said as follows:

*For my mum, she accepted my decision. For her, if I want to study, then it is ok as long as I could get a job and earn money to support myself (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

However, his brother doubts with his decision. Then, Participant B said as follows:

*[...] he scolded me. He said didn't I think about my future when made choice to take early childhood? (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

**Third, Demands.** This theme was portrayed in both participant answers when they have been asked concerning their considerations towards the financial and market demands for ECE (Early Childhood Education) course. To Participant A, he considered the demands of the market for ECE as he said as follows:

*I told my parents regarding the vast opportunity of job prospect of early childhood teacher. From that, somehow, they more open to accept my choice (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

While Participant B believed on the fate determined by God and that reflected from his answer, as follows:

*That's depending on "rezeki". If there is, then, Alhamdulillah. If not, I will find funds to operate my own tadika (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

**Fourth, Basic Knowledge.** This theme represented by the answer of the participants. Both of them have no basic knowledge of ECE (Early Childhood Education) course before entering the college. But, for Participant A, he just glance through an article about this course in the newspaper. He said as follows:

*I read newspaper and came to notice an article about the demands and opportunity as kindergarten teacher (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

Participant B has no idea at all when enrolled in this course. In short, he said as follows:

*I did not search any information about early childhood. I just gave a try (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

**About the Challenges.** Four themes for the challenges faced: Normal, Affect performance, Family, and Feedback Differences in Gender with findings as follows:

First, **Normal.** This is the first theme drawn for the challenges faced by the male students in ECE (Early Childhood Education). There was undisputed agreement between both participants that it is normal to be the minorities. To Participant A said as follows:

*It actually does not give any problem to me as I think anywhere man always being minorities. There are some limitations of female students that can be fulfilled by male (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

Participant A reveals also his feeling being in the huge crowd of female in the college as normal. He also believed they could complement each other well (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).

This attitude congruent to what Participant B feels based on his statement, as follows:

*This condition is normal to me. In my school before, female teachers are more than the males. But I'm just okey. Because easy for me to share and study with the females (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

He also believed being atypical would actually benefit him in future as his statement stated, as follows:

*Also, maybe female hard to get other job and society feels that teaching is a profession of the female. Furthermore, women with qualification are numerous but men are limited (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

**Second, Affect Performance.** Then, both participants gave similar view on their performance in this course. Participant A answered as follows:

*More or less it gives impact to my study even in a simple thing. For example, the outcome (assignments) did by female will be more beautiful and attractive compared to us. As we know, this course demands creativity to complete the task (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

He might face difficulties when the task involved creativity (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014). Likewise, Participant B's

performance of his study affected as in her respond, as follows:

*Everything goes well. Alhamdulillah. But, since semester 1 until 3, my pointer decreased (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

Although he said the whole thing runs smoothly but somehow it affects his results (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).

**Third, Family.** There was unanimous agreement on what motivate them to sustain instead of challenges as the minorities. Related to this, Participant A feels a great earnestness to achieve something in his study due to his family. He simply said as follows:

*First of all are my parents, to prove to them that what I am doing know is something worth. I wish to be a good role model to my siblings since I am the eldest (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

This response is also represented by another participant. Participant B, for example, said as follows:

*My spirit comes from my family. So I could help to settle her problem (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

**Fourth, Feedback Differences in Gender.** Participants noted that different gender response differently to this issue. The comparison basically involved either an individual with the other person who is greater or lesser than him/her. Participant A told that responses from his male peers are commonly negative. He plainly said as follows:

*It seems to be common for me to gain quite negative feedback by them as I am renting a house with number of colleagues who comes from different schools/courses (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

On the other hand, Participant B got negative reaction from the boys but not in terms of verbal. Participant B said as follows:

*If boys, they will laugh at me. But until now, no negative words from them (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

**About the Perceptions.** There are two themes for their perceptions on ECE (Early Childhood Education) course, namely: Business

and Attitude. The findings are as follows:

**First, Business.** There was undoubted view by both participants that ECE (Early Childhood Education) could lead to positive outcomes in vocational setting. The one which was more obvious was business. Participant A said as follows:

*I hope to open my own tadika, if God Wills in Terengganu (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

Participant A's vision was congruence to what Participant B thought. Participant B said as follows:

*I wished to open a kindergarten. Before that, I would like to gain as much experience as I can (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

**Second, Attitude.** This theme clearly reflected their opinions of the challenges they could face when working in early childhood education area. Both participants concurred that the obvious part that may affect an individual negatively being in the ECE (Early Childhood Education) course was their attitude. Participant A said as follows:

*[...] But my attitude is, like in any other environment, it's what you make of it. I've learned a lot from everyone around me. I love it (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014).*

In his opinion, positive attitude would elicit other positive manners (interview with Participant A, 9/10/2014). It was also supported by the statement made by Participant B, who said as follows:

*I might experience some skepticism and some mothers would ask why I wanted to do this as a man. Positive responses and support eventually repay everything else (interview with Participant B, 9/10/2014).*

From the analysis, four themes were found for the reasons: Interest, Conditional Support, Demands, and Basic Knowledge. First and foremost this study discover that interest is best reasons that encourage male to be involve in early childhood education.

However, Fu & Li (2010) motivating factor males enter pre-school education include to start their own business and to get a degree,

not interest in the subject itself. Equally, love for children, becoming role models to the boy child and prior experience with children are the factor influence male students to enrol in ECE (Early Childhood Education) course (Mudegu, 2012).

In additions in this study, conditional support correlated to the reasons why they choosed this course. From previous research, Karanja Grace N. Njoki (2009) believed that policy makers should endeavour to change parents' attitudes towards male teachers in preschools through sensitization meetings.

Other than support, demands also being consider as one the major concern of the male to be involved in this field. The statement was supported by Ramazan Sak, Ikbal Tuba Sahin & Betul Kubra Sahin (2012). They found that any of the teachers thought the employment opportunities in preschool teaching was the main factor. They explained that since in Turkey the importance of early childhood education was on the increase, there are many vacant positions for teachers, administrators, academician, and researchers (Sak, Sahin & Sahin, 2012).

Thus, career development was considered to be important for men. Similarly in Kenya, male students' enrolment in ECE training college was due to the better chance to gain good salary and job promotion (Mudegu, 2012).

Moreover, when group of pre-school teachers were asked their views about ways of reducing the bias in society about male preschool teachers, they focused; informing society and conducting more research related to male preschool teachers in the world. They said that society in general and parents in particular should be informed via advertisements and programs on television and the role of male teachers in the preschool classroom. Counseling services should explain the roles and responsibilities of preschool teachers to high school students to make them well-informed and having clear understanding what is early childhood education is all about (Sak, Sahin & Sahin, 2012).

For the challenge, there are four main findings: Normal, Affect performance, Family, and Feedback Differences in Gender; and two themes for their perception on ECE. Firstly, they have no problem to cooperate with

the female students as it is common and in fact, give them privilege in certain aspects. This supported by pre-existing research by M. Hedlin & M. Åberg (2011), where gender stereotype are common challenges to male students in ECE. Next, challenge come from family sources of support, this result further confirmed by P. Kilgallon, C. Maloney & G. Lock (2008), where their participants indicated that the support they received from parents contributed to sustaining their sustainment and occupational motivation.

Last challenge is related to the feedback differences in gender. In this study, respondent's experienced positive feedback, for example, the girls feel proud and amazed to them. Most of the female preschool pre-service teachers agreed that there should be male preschool teachers due to the following three main reasons: skills, professionalism, and support for social/emotional development of children (Sak, Sahin & Sahin, 2012).

However, there was research produced different conclusion. B. Baris (2010) stated that female pre-school teachers have negative attitudes towards male pre-school teachers. For the result related to the attitude, they believed that open kindergarten would bring benefit to them and society as a whole. The findings aligned with earlier results found by Fu & Li (2010).

Males enter pre-school education, one of the reasons is starting their own business. In additions, the respondents also concurred that the obvious part that may affect an individual negatively being in the ECE course was their attitude. The views parallel to the findings by Fu & Li (2010), where if these men are able to relocate their learning attitudes can become more positive, and they can start to enjoy their study as well as their careers.

Also, this study supports previous research identifying the challenges faced by male ECE's students. The study participants described how their positive attitudes, caring dispositions, and empathy for teaching young children influenced their sustainment (Kilgallon, Maloney & Lock, 2008).

Aside from the comprehensiveness of data analysis in this research, still, there were some limitations exist. The need for case studies



and long-term participant observation and the combinatorial methods of macro- and micro-approaches may in future give some guidance in understanding some of them (Tsigra, 2010). B. Baris (2010) also suggested to conduct study with father and mother of children also, so that can give wider perspective about the issue and understand attitudes towards male preschool teachers.

In spite of knowing the reasons and the challenges of the minorities, further investigation on the barriers of being a male teacher in early childhood education and which strategies are effective for recruiting and retaining men in early childhood education programme would actually help in planning the mode of operation to increase the number of male teacher/students in preschool sector (Mudegu, 2012).

Fu & Li (2010) proposed that more researches can be done according to theories, such as “objective orientation” or “learners’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivations”. Since a lot of prior literature mentioned that parents are one of the most important factors in children choice, further a study on whether parental socialization influences choice and recruitment of preschool teachers.

To complement the findings, it is recommended to test identify the different ways of supporting male students in a minority situation as suggested by A. Diren & T. Besnard (2010). All in all, as mentioned by Rohaty Mohd Majzub (2013), to deal and tackle the fundamental issues in preschool education in Malaysia revealed in this study, the policy makers should collaborate with the practitioners as well as preschool experts at all community levels.

## CONCLUSION

The present study delved challenge face by male students in ECE (Early Childhood Education). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and they were asked to describe the challenges and perceptions of ECE course. As the sample selected was small, the findings basically the respondents’ perceptions for the possible reason students entered the course, the challenges. As such, caution needs to be taken into accounts, while

generalizing the finding of the study.

Despite its limitations, the present study provides a range of reasons and views in their own words. The findings emerged can be helpful to other institutions and educational authorities who aim to increase the occurrence of male preschool teacher.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>**Statement:** We would like to declare that this article is our original work; so, it is not product of plagiarism and not yet also be reviewed and published by other scholarly journals.

- Interview with Participant A, one of the male students, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on October 9, 2014.
- Interview with Participant B, one of the male students, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on October 9, 2014.
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