

Resilience of Male Early Childhood Education Teachers

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Abstrack

This article aims to explore the resilience and strategies employed by male early childhood education (PAUD) teachers in addressing the challenges of gender stereotypes within a female-dominated profession. This study employed a case study method using in-depth interview techniques. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis involving three male PAUD teachers. The interview results revealed that the resilience of male PAUD teachers is shaped by two main categories: internal and external factors. Internal factors include an interest in teaching, affection for children, confidence in one's career choice, a sense of happiness, a desire to be a role model, and a personal meaning in being a PAUD teacher. External factors include support from colleagues and school administrators. In response to gender stereotypes, male teachers have developed several strategies, including fostering open communication with parents to reduce prejudice, emotionally and methodologically adapting to students, and utilizing social media to enhance their visibility and strengthen the positive image of male PAUD teachers. This study recommends the importance of more gender-inclusive institutional policies, such as anti-stereotyping training in educational institutions and the creation of fair representation in decision-making processes within PAUD settings.

Keywords: resilience, male teachers, early childhood education

Abstract

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi resiliensi dan strategi guru PAUD laki-laki dalam menghadapi tantangan stereotip gender dalam profesi yang didominasi perempuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kasus dengan teknik wawancara mendalam. Data dianalisis melalui analisis tematik yang melibatkan tiga guru PAUD laki-laki. Hasil wawancara mengungkapkan bahwa resiliensi guru PAUD laki-laki dibentuk oleh dua kategori utama: faktor internal dan eksternal. Faktor internal meliputi minat mengajar, kasih sayang kepada anak, keyakinan dalam memilih karier, rasa bahagia, keinginan untuk menjadi panutan, dan makna pribadi menjadi guru PAUD. Faktor eksternal meliputi dukungan dari rekan kerja dan administrator sekolah. Dalam menghadapi stereotip gender, guru laki-laki mengembangkan beberapa strategi, seperti membangun komunikasi terbuka dengan orang tua untuk mengurangi prasangka, beradaptasi secara emosional dan metodologis dengan siswa, serta memanfaatkan media sosial untuk meningkatkan visibilitas mereka dan memperkuat citra positif guru PAUD laki-laki. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pentingnya kebijakan kelembagaan yang lebih inklusif gender, seperti pelatihan anti-stereotip di lembaga pendidikan dan penciptaan representasi yang adil dalam proses pengambilan keputusan di lingkungan PAUD.

Kata kunci: ketahanan, guru laki-laki, pendidikan anak usia dini

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INTRODUCTION

Employment as an educator in the Early Childhood Education (ECED) sector remains predominantly female-dominated. In general, society considers this to be normal. In contrast, men who choose to become PAUD teachers are often considered unusual. The PAUD teacher profession is still closely associated with motherhood, which is considered more suitable for women (Fadillah & Ngaisah, 2023). In addition, learning activities in PAUD, such as singing, dancing, and playing, are also considered incompatible with the masculine image of men. As a result, male teacher representation in PAUD is very low (Dianita, 2020).

This phenomenon is not only happening in Indonesia, but is also a global issue. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (2023), around 75% of Indonesian children have accessed PAUD services. However, of the 49,930 PAUD teachers in the 2022/2023 school year, only about 1,380 were male (Kusnandar, 2022). This means that there is a ratio of 1 male teacher for every 33 female teachers. Similar situations also occur in other countries, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Canada, and the United States, where the proportion of male ECD teachers is only around 1-3.4% (Dianita, 2020).

The lack of male participation as early childhood teachers is influenced by two main factors: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic factors include a lack of interest in the world of early childhood, low self-confidence, and the absence of role models (Maulana et al., 2020). On the other hand, extrinsic factors include social stereotypes that consider the PAUD teaching profession suitable only for women (Pancaningrum & Pasiningsih, 2023), the low economic welfare of PAUD teachers (Adriany et al., 2023), and the lack of optimal government policies to encourage male involvement in this sector. These challenges reinforce social stigma and become structural barriers that are difficult for men to break through.

In fact, the presence of male early childhood teachers is crucial in creating a more holistic and equitable education. They can serve as role models for both boys and girls. Male teachers play a vital role in helping children develop a healthy gender identity, fostering empathy without bias, and enriching their social interactions (Aprilliani et al., 2023). Furthermore, male representation in the profession also opens up opportunities for greater involvement of fathers in childcare and education (Pancaningrum & Pasiningsih, 2023). Even in sensitive issues such as sexuality education, the presence of male teachers is strategic (Justicia et al, 2020)

However, male early childhood teachers face complex social challenges. Gender stereotypes, suspicion of teaching motives, and pressure to always prove themselves are subtle forms of discrimination that female teachers do not experience (Maulana et al., 2020). A female-dominated work environment can also be a psychological barrier that impacts self-confidence, emotional stability, and even triggers burnout.

In this context, resilience is a key element that enables male teachers to not only survive but also thrive. Resilience is generally understood as an individual's ability to rise above life's pressures and challenges, and to transform difficult experiences into positive learning opportunities (Siliyah & Hadi, 2021). For male early childhood teachers, resilience includes the ability to deal with social stigma, navigate rigid gender norms, and maintain professional motivation in an environment that is not always supportive.

Previous research has shown that emotion regulation, age, and tenure play a significant role in shaping the resilience of PAUD teachers (Pancaningrum & Pasiningsih,



2023). However, studies that specifically highlight how male teachers build their psychological resilience are limited. It is precisely under these complex social pressures that resilient male teachers can become agents of change, inspiring a new paradigm in gender equality in the world of early childhood education.

Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth how male early childhood teachers build and develop their resilience. It also examines the strategies employed to address the professional challenges posed by gender stereotypes. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on the role of men in ECD and encourage the creation of a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive educational ecosystem for gender diversity in the teaching profession.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, selected for its suitability in exploring the resilience of male early childhood education (ECE) teachers in depth within a natural and bounded context. According to Creswell (1998), case studies are suitable when researchers aim to comprehensively understand a specific issue within clearly defined boundaries, utilizing multiple sources of information. This research focuses on a complex and contextual phenomenon: how male ECE teachers develop psychological resilience in the face of gender stereotypes. Therefore, an intrinsic case study was employed, as the primary aim was to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon itself rather than generalize the findings to a broader population.

The subjects of this study were three male ECE teachers with 1 to 9 years of teaching experience. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a method that involves the deliberate selection of individuals based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria were: (1) male individuals currently working as ECE teachers with at least one year of experience, (2) willingness to participate in in-depth interviews, and (3) the ability to reflect on personal experiences regarding challenges and strategies in dealing with gender stereotypes. The exclusion criteria included temporary teachers or those with less than one year of teaching experience. Although the sample size was small, three participants were deemed sufficient for qualitative, exploratory research to gain in-depth insights and highlight unique experiences.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the research questions and the theoretical framework on resilience discussed in the literature review. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio recorded with participants' consent. All interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the analysis accurately reflected the participants' narratives and subjective experiences.

To ensure data validity, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review the transcripts and preliminary interpretations to confirm that the findings represented their actual experiences. Additionally, the researcher maintained reflexivity throughout the process to minimize interpretive bias, documenting personal assumptions and responses during data collection and analysis.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Saldaña's (2021) approach, which involved two coding cycles. In the first cycle of coding, several techniques were applied, including descriptive coding (to summarize the content of the data), *in vivo*



coding (using participants' actual words), and values coding (to explore underlying values, beliefs, and attitudes). During the second cycle of coding, initial codes were grouped into broader categories, from which key themes were developed. The theme development process was guided by the research questions and theoretical framework to ensure that the resulting themes genuinely reflected the phenomenon of resilience among male ECE teachers.

Data interpretation involved considering the consistency of narratives across participants, as well as similarities and differences in their experiences, within the socio-cultural context surrounding each case. To ensure transparency and credibility, the researcher documented each step of the coding process, theme development, and final analysis. A more detailed description of the research flow is presented in Figure 1 below.

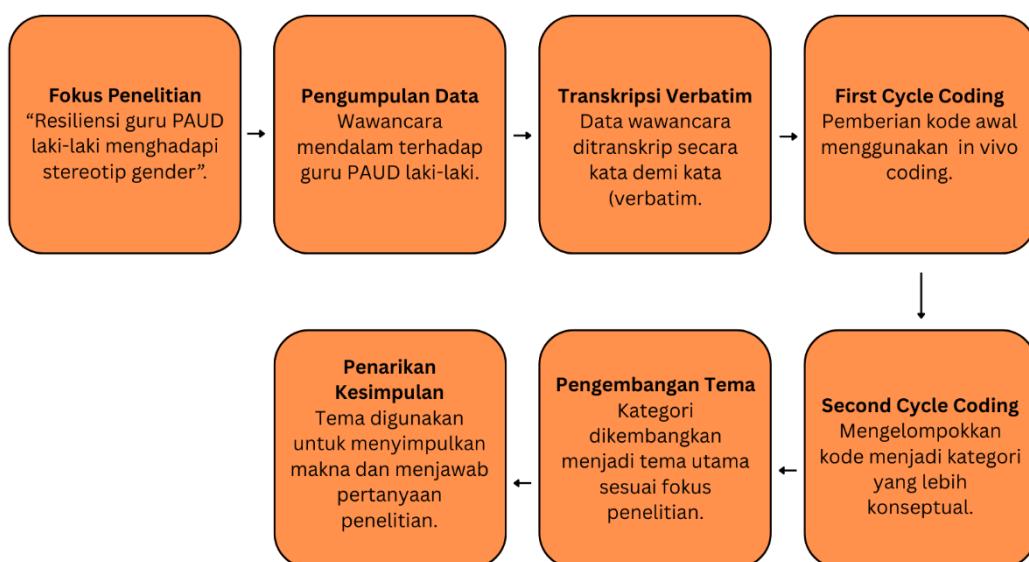


Figure 1. Research flow

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, researchers interviewed three male ECD teachers with a linear educational background from the PGPAUD study program. All three had between 1 and 9 years of teaching experience, with one teacher being a beginner and the other two having medium to long experience. They teach in private ECD institutions, located in urban and semi-urban areas. All three work in a predominantly female environment, which is relevant in describing the dynamics of gender stereotyping in the workplace. As described by the male ECD teacher below:

“ngelihat saya tuh kayaknya nggak yakin deh....banyaklah hal-hal yang memang kalau dari orang tua sih ya kebanyakan itu ada beberapa yang kurang percaya (RA interview quote)”

“Tertanam stereotip gender ya dari pihak yayasan yang berpikir bahwa hanya perempuan saja yang bisa jadi guru TK (FMH interview excerpt)”



“Bertanya-tanya kenapa sih jadi guru paut kini-kini karena karena kebanyakan dari tahun-tahun sebelum-sebelum, memang guru paut itu kebanyakan Perempuan (K interview excerpt)”

The role of a male teacher, especially in PAUD, cannot be eliminated because men play a vital role in the development and growth of children. As revealed by Purnama et al. (2022), Male early childhood teachers can help boys build their identity through interaction and modeling appropriate behavior, thereby supporting girls in seeing men in a supportive, empathic, and caring role. Furthermore, the role and benefits of male teachers can contribute to more equitable representation in teaching and nurturing roles, and the presence of male teachers demonstrates that gender inequality in the early childhood education profession can be reduced, offering significant opportunities in this sector (Fikria et al., 2023).

Therefore, despite being a minority group, this study explores how male early childhood education teachers develop their resilience. The findings indicate that the strength of male ECD teachers is influenced by two primary factors: internal and external factors. Here is a more detailed explanation of the key findings from the article's research:

Table 1.
 Findings of Teha Article

Main Category	Sub-Category	Description
Internal Factors	Interest in becoming a teacher	Motivated by reflective career exploration and calling to educate.
	Interest in children	Enjoy interacting and observing children's development; see it as a challenge and joy.
	Career confidence	Strong belief in profession; see long-term opportunity in PAUD.
	Feelings of happiness	Emotional satisfaction from teaching and observing children's progress.
	Desire to be a role model	Aspiration to inspire other men and fill the father-figure role in education.
	Personal meaning	View profession as meaningful life mission contributing to child development.
External Factors	Peer support	Collaboration and emotional support from colleagues in predominantly female settings.
	School support	Institutional acknowledgment of male teacher roles and creation of inclusive culture.
Coping Strategies	Communication with parents	Building mutual understanding and reducing bias through open dialogue.
	Adapting to learners	Bonding with students to demonstrate care and competence.
	Utilizing social media	Enhancing visibility and breaking stereotypes via professional online presence.



Interest in becoming a teacher

Teachers are a noble profession. Without the guidance of a teacher, children will struggle to navigate life, even when accompanied by parents. Not everyone has an interest in becoming a teacher, especially men, and this is particularly true at the Early Childhood Education (ECED) level, which is more dominated by women. In this study, researchers found that informants expressed interest in becoming early childhood education teachers, as illustrated in the following interview quotes.

“pengen jadi guru itu dari lama sih dari SMA juga belum tahu jadi guru apa, guru apa pada akhirnya jalannya waktu itu pilihannya antara guru ada guru bahasa Indonesia guru SD atau guru PAUD dan kodarullahnya ternyata ambil jurusan di (PAUD RA interview excerpt”).

“terpikirkan, ada nggak sih guru TK laki-laki... Supaya dapet jawaban kenapa sih orang-orang Khususnya laki-laki gak mau jadi guru TK...oleh karena itu saya terjun untuk jadi guru (FMH interview excerpt”t.

Both quotes indicate that informants' choice of profession as an early childhood teacher is not merely due to coercion or coincidence, but is part of a reflective process and a search for meaning in the role of a male teacher in the early childhood education world. Informant RA, for example, revealed that his desire to become a teacher had emerged since high school. He considered various options for the teaching profession, ranging from teaching the Indonesian language to elementary school teaching, and ultimately, through the passage of time and various considerations, he chose to pursue the PAUD field. This indicates a process of experiential learning and decision-making rooted in long-term exploration of a career that suits her. This finding is also supported by the results of research conducted by Eren and Tezel (2010) and Karaklış (2021), which indicate that prospective teachers' professional engagement is significantly related to their motivation towards the teaching profession and satisfaction with their chosen profession.

Meanwhile, informant FMH showed a motivation that was not only personal but also social. She was driven by curiosity about the low involvement of men in the kindergarten teaching profession, which then led her to consciously choose to go directly into the world of PAUD. This decision demonstrates a commitment to addressing social challenges while showing that men are also capable of playing a role in early childhood education. Rachman et al. (2022) explained in their research that one of the reasons someone wants to become an early childhood teacher is the desire to contribute to and address gender inequality.

The two informants' answers regarding their interest in becoming a PAUD teacher align with Krumboltz's (Sari et al., 2021) notion that some individuals choose their profession not only because of rational planning, but also because they interpret it as a life calling that has personal and social meaning. In this context, male early childhood education teachers are not only practicing their profession but also giving new meaning to the role of men in early childhood education, a meaning shaped by the interaction between their experiences, self-reflection, and expectations of social change. This is in line with the view Jayadinata dkk., (2024) that the process of educating prospective teachers plays an important role in instilling character values, including commitment to the profession and social concern, which encourages career choices as teachers.



Interest in children

The next internal resilience that emerged in the male early childhood education teachers in this study was their interest in children, particularly in the context of direct interaction, observing growth and development, and addressing challenges related to the diversity of children's characteristics. This is reflected in the following interview quotes.

"Suka berinteraksi sama anak-anak, bisa membantu anak-anak dalam mengembangkan kemampuan-kemampuan yang potensial gitu bagi anak-anak (K interview excerpt)"

"senang banget interaksi sama anak-anak... ada punya berkebutuhan khusus atau anak yang hiperaktif..jadi menantang bagi saya (RA interview excerpt)"

"kita kayak main bareng sharing bareng sama anak-anak (MFH interview excerpt)"

The three informants' interest in interacting with children and helping them develop their potential is not just a personal preference but an essential element of internal resilience. In line with research (Sandilos et al., 2023), warm and sustained emotional relationships between teachers and children form the foundation for the development of children's social and emotional skills, while also increasing teachers' emotional resilience in carrying out learning tasks. Teachers who are able to build these positive interactions not only encourage children's development but also strengthen their own intrinsic motivation (Pancaningrum & Pasiningsih, 2023) .

Career Confidence

In carrying out the role as an educator, especially in the PAUD environment, a strong belief in the profession and the goals to be achieved is needed. This is especially true for male early childhood teachers, who are in the minority among female teachers. Therefore, this belief serves as a crucial foundation that fosters a resilient attitude, one that is characterized by responsibility and the ability to survive and thrive despite facing various challenges. For male early childhood teachers, a strong belief in their role as early childhood educators is one of the primary forms of internal resilience that supports the sustainability of their profession. Based on interviews from all three interviewees, they believe that being an early childhood teacher is one of their future opportunities and have a strong vision for early childhood education.

" karena yakin apa yang kita tekuni ya salah satu peluang lebih besarnya untuk nanti kedepannya di dunia kerja "(Interview excerpt RA)

" yakin bisa menjalankannya dengan optimal" (interview excerpt K)

"Punya visi ke PAUD tuh bukan karena orang lain bukan karena disuruh sama siapa siapa atau bukan karena mengisi kekosongan atau berdasarkan visi sendiri itu kita akan tumbuh dan keyakinan yang kuat" (interview excerpt MFH)

Informant RA mentioned that becoming a PAUD teacher is not just an ordinary career choice, but a future opportunity. In the midst of the underrepresentation of men in this profession, she sees this position as an opportunity, not an obstacle. This statement



shows the prospective orientation of how RA forms an optimistic view of her career, despite being in a minority context. Study (Sikora, 2024) The study confirms that career optimism is not merely self-confidence, but is influenced by social networks, social capital, and external support that shape individual expectations of career opportunities.

Furthermore, FMH informants revealed that she has a concrete vision for the advancement of the ECD field, and her motivation is not merely for "filling the gap", but as an active effort to contribute strategically to the development of ECD. This statement indicates that FMH exhibits prosocial motivation, characterized by a future orientation, with the intention of having a positive and sustainable impact on the early childhood education environment. Pancaningrum & Pasiningsih, (2023) emphasize that male early childhood education teachers as a minority group develop resilience through protective factors such as the spirit of contribution, environmental support, and FMH's intrapersonal value system that not only sees his position as a "filler" but as a pioneer in advancing early childhood education, demonstrating resilience as a minority driven by vision and social responsibility.

Feelings of Happiness

Feeling happy while carrying out tasks is also an important factor in building resilience. Teachers who feel happiness in their interactions with children, feel valued by the work environment, and get emotional satisfaction from the teaching process will have stronger resilience. These feelings of happiness become a source of positive energy that helps them stay motivated and enthusiastic, even when facing obstacles.

"Karena happy aja sama dunia anak-anak" (interview excerpt K)

"ada perkembangan-perkembangan yang sifatnya kayak Gak selalu besar Hal-hal kecil tapi Tumbuh secara berkala itu membuat kita Bahagia" (interview excerpt MFH) "melihat proses dari awal anak ini datang nangis atau datang nggak bisa apa-apa sampai dia kelas B udah bisa banyak hal itu jadi hal yang menyenangkan bagi saya gitu jadi hal yang jadi motivasi tetap bertahan" (interview excerpt RA)

All informants in this study stated that witnessing children smile and make small progress every day is the primary reason they remain PAUD teachers. Positive emotions, such as happiness, can expand an individual's thinking capacity and build psychological resources that support resilience (Suranata et al., 2022).

Desire to be a Role Model

One of the interesting findings of internal resilience in this study is the encouragement of informants to become role models for other men in the PAUD teaching profession. This desire is not only driven by personal motivation but also by an awareness of the underrepresentation of males in the ECD field. This attitude reflects a willingness to contribute socially and become an agent of change in addressing gender inequality in the child education sector.

"bisa membuka jalur ke teman-teman yang lain misalkan kok ngapain jadi guru paud" (interview excerpt RA)"



“Menjadi pelopor selain guru-guru TK laki-laki juga mahasiswa-mahasiswa PGPAUD Laki-laki yang sadar akan ya negara ini tuh perlu figure yang memang hilang di Pendidikan anak usia dini” (interview excerpt MFH) ”

Male teachers in PAUD also want to be the driving force to make this profession more gender inclusive and not stigmatized as "women's work". Research (Pancaningrum & Pasiningsih, 2023) found that men who work as PAUD teachers often develop forms of social resilience through efforts to become positive representations.

Supported by Role Model theory in Morgenroth et al. (2015), a role model is an individual who shows others how to act or pursue a career through real-life examples. This plays a crucial role in shaping aspirations and self-confidence, particularly among gender minorities in certain professions. In this case, male ECD teachers, such as RA and MFH, position themselves as role models who can pave the way for other men to overcome stereotypes and seriously consider the profession.

Personal Meaning of Being an Early Childhood Teacher

Being an Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher is not just about teaching, but also about playing a deep role in assisting children's holistic development. For many teachers, including male early childhood education teachers, this profession holds a deeply personal significance. Behind the dynamic daily activities lies a sense of calling, caring, and commitment that comes from within. The personal meaning of being an early childhood teacher often stems from a deep awareness of the long-term responsibility of shaping a child's life foundation.

“belajar bagaimana nanti kita mempersiapkan anak-anak sebetulnya tidak hanya mempersiapkan tapi bagaimana membentuk pembiasaan untuk anak itu sendiri agar dia bisa hidup seperti bagaimana mestinya..” (interview excerpt RA)

This statement reflects the view that being a PAUD teacher is not limited to delivering teaching materials, but rather shaping children's mindset and life habits from an early age. Male PAUD teachers like RA understand that early childhood education has a strategic role in building children's character and life readiness. This is in line with research (Anggraeni et al., 2021) that habituation in instilling the character of discipline and responsibility in early childhood education can be seen from the habituation carried out by teachers at school through routine, programmed, and incidental activities that can bring out the values of discipline and responsibility in children. In addition, other informants also said that:

“membantu anak-anak dalam mengembangkan kemampuan-kemampuan yang potensial gitu bagi anak-anak” (Interview excerpt K).

This statement highlights the dimension of developing children's potential as a meaning that is personally important to teachers. In this context, male early childhood teachers view their profession as a facilitator of children's development, tasked with helping them reach their full potential. Teaching in early childhood should consider the possibilities, interests, and unique needs of each child (Komari & Aslan, 2025).

The following statement by participant MFH shows the deep meaning she feels in her profession as a male early childhood teacher



“terlepas daripada menjadi figur ataupun hanya sekedar mengajar tapi juga mengisi kekosongan figur anak di usia dini sebagai figur ayah...saya ingin menjadi orang atau salah satu orang yang mengabdikan diri sebagai figur ayah atau sosok laki-laki secara utuh di pendidikan anak usia dini” (interview excerpt MFH)

The quote reflects that for male early childhood teachers, their presence in the classroom is not only meaningful as educators, but also as representations of father figures that some children may not have at home. This role becomes a form of personal devotion with emotional and social meaning. Teachers are not only tasked with transferring knowledge or stimulating development, but also filling an important psychosocial space in the process of forming a child's identity.

This finding aligns with previous research by Sephiana & Yulindrasari (2024), which indicates that male teachers in early childhood education are often perceived as male role models, particularly in family environments where father figures are absent. The study explains that the presence of male teachers provides a healthy dimension of masculinity and supports the social-emotional development of children, especially boys. Their presence helps create balance in gender relations in the classroom and expands children's view of positive, loving, and supportive male social roles.

Thus, the resilience of male early childhood teachers in this role stems not only from their professionalism but also from a deep sense of their emotional and social contribution. This is also a strength that strengthens their commitment to survive and continue to develop in a profession that is still dominated by women.

Peer support

The successful implementation of learning activities in the school environment cannot be separated from the participation of all school members, including collaboration and mutual support between teachers (Ambawani et al., 2024). Mustika et al (2024) state in an educational institution, synergy between fellow educators is one of the important factors in creating a positive, productive, and supportive work environment. This collaboration is not only related to the technical aspects of learning but also involves emotional, social, and professional aspects that contribute to a teacher's resilience in facing work challenges (Ambawani et al., 2024). Informants feel supported in the form of social elements and develop external resilience. The following are excerpts from interviews with informants.

“Support antar guru sih Alhamdulillah fair-fair aja gitu ya...karena disini kita bekerja sama jika ada kesulitan dan ya tentunya saling membantu” (interview excerpt RA)

“Sama-sama mendukung, kita saling melengkapi kehadiran sosok laki-laki, sosok perempuan juga... rekan kerja juga akan saling mendukung dan tentunya saling memberi afirmasi-afirmasi positif” (interview excerpt MFH)

“Diskusi dengan rekan rekan guru, gimana untuk mengatasi jika ada anak yang bermasalah seperti itu... terus juga pasti saling tolong dan saling menyemangati” (interview excerpt K)



For male ECD teachers, who are relatively few in number in the context of ECD in Indonesia, peer support is an important form of social resilience. In the research on resilience of male ECD teachers, it was found that the presence of supportive peers plays a major role in helping them adapt to a work environment that is dominated by women. Through collaboration between teachers, they feel more accepted, valued and have space to develop professionally. Based on the research by Aisah et al. (2024), collaboration and knowledge sharing among teachers can enhance teacher motivation.

This collaboration is reflected in various forms, including cooperation in designing learning activities, providing feedback on teaching approaches, and sharing experiences and strategies for addressing student dynamics. In addition, emotional support from colleagues is also a support when teachers face pressure, conflict, or burnout. In this context, peers function as a social network that strengthens individual resilience in maintaining motivation and commitment to the profession. However, peer support alone is insufficient if an adequate institutional service system does not complement it. Research results by Agustina & Broto (2022) show that only about 20% of teachers have good guidance service planning to develop resilience. Although many teachers understand the concept, its implementation in learning remains very minimal. This finding confirms that strengthening the guidance counseling service system is an urgent need to build teacher resilience more comprehensively, including for male early childhood education teachers.

This aligns with the findings of research by Faridah et al. (2025), which suggest that strong social support from the work environment, including the Institute, can help individuals not only survive but also thrive amidst pressures and challenges. Male early childhood education teachers who receive support from peers and institutions show the ability to build healthy and constructive coping strategies.

Thus, collaboration between teachers not only supports the success of learning activities at school but is also an important foundation in shaping the resilience of male early childhood teachers. Peer support strengthens the spirit of togetherness, creates a safe space for expression, and serves as an emotional resource that enhances the sustainability of their role as early childhood educators.

School Support

According to the European School Education Platform article, every school has a responsibility not only to educate students but also to create an ecosystem that supports the welfare and resilience of its teaching staff. One important form of support that needs to be provided is positive institutional support for the diversity of the teaching workforce, including male teachers working in early childhood education (ECE). This support is not limited to facilities or training, but also involves instilling a collective awareness about the importance of male teachers as a representation of equal gender roles in the school environment (Putri et al., 2022).

“sekolah juga dapat meningkatkan kesadaran dan pemahaman tentang pentingnya peran guru laki-laki di pendidikan anak usia ini dan bagaimana guru laki-laki dapat berkontribusi pada perkembangan anak” (interview excerpt K)



This support is also in line with the findings of Pasiningsih and Pancaningrum (2023), who stated that the active involvement of schools in building a positive ecosystem can increase the resilience of male teachers as a minority group in the PAUD world. Thus, support from school institutions can be categorized as a crucial external factor in building and strengthening the resilience of male ECD teachers, especially in the context of a profession that is still dominated by women. This support fosters a sense of security, recognition, and development opportunities that are essential for teachers to fulfil their roles in a sustainable and meaningful manner.

Communicating with Parents

In facing the challenges of gender stereotypes attached to the profession of male early childhood teachers, special strategies are needed so that they can survive and carry out their professional roles optimally. Stereotypes, such as the assumption that men are not suitable or inappropriate in the world of early childhood education, still often arise, both from the general public and from some parents of students (Dianita, 2020). To address these challenges, the informants in this study reported that active communication with parents is one of the primary strategies they employ.

As stated by informant RA, he emphasized the importance of building two-way communication with parents so that there is harmony between habituation at school and at home:

“Orang tuanya mau komunikasi sama saya mau untuk apa atau apa saya butuh komunikasi itu biar istilahnya pembelajarannya sama di rumah sama di sekolah pun pembiasaannya sama” (interview excerpt RA)”

Meanwhile, informant K also stated that openness in dialogue with parents is an effective way to equalize understanding and reduce prejudice against the role of male PAUD teachers:

“Dengan membicarakan bersama dengan orang tua tersebut dan berdiskusi untuk menyelaraskan pemahaman yang sama terkait peran guru PAUD laki-laki” (interview excerpt K)”.

This strategy demonstrates that male teachers are not passive in addressing stereotypes, but rather take an active role as educators and communicators who build collaborative relationships with parents to create a conducive and supportive educational environment. This is reinforced by Bronfenbrenner (Crawford, 2020), who notes that interactions between teachers and parents, as part of the mesosystem, have a strong influence on perceptions and support for the role of teachers.

Furthermore, research results Syafrudin et al (2022) confirm that teacher-parent communication is a crucial key in building trust and social acceptance among male early childhood education teachers, especially in eradicating gender-based prejudice. When teachers are able to explain their parenting and learning approaches openly, parents are more likely to accept them positively.

Thus, the communication strategies used by male early childhood teachers are not only a form of technical coordination of learning, but also an affirmative effort to maintain their professional identity amidst strong gender stereotypes. This strategy is part of the social and professional resilience that supports their long-term career sustainability.



Adapting to Learners

In the world of early childhood education, the teacher's ability to foster closeness with students is one of the primary keys to the success of the learning process (Musa et al., 2022). This not only applies to pedagogical aspects but also plays a crucial role in shaping children's trust, sense of security, and emotional well-being within the school environment (Sunaryo, 2025). A teacher who is able to adapt and build strong *bonds* with children will find it easier to convey material, establish discipline, and foster motivation to learn from an early age.

Male ECD teachers clearly implement this strategy as part of an effort to address gender stereotypes that assume the world of ECD is not a suitable place for men. As expressed by informant MFH:

"Tentunya kan kita membangun bonding dengan anak terus anak juga seneng adanya guru TK laki-laki bisa juga maksimal dan menjadi guru TK laki laki tidak perlu malu tidak perlu rasa minder jangan pernah mendengarkan bahwa kalau laki-laki masuk kesini kemayu dan lain-lain atau feminim nggak" (interview excerpt MFH)

This statement shows that MFH positions positive interactions and emotional closeness with children as a form of social proof that men are also capable of carrying out maternal roles in early childhood education without having to lose their masculine identity. Meanwhile, informant RA stated that:

"dengan menunjukan bagaimana saya megajar anak anak di sekolah, dan terbukti hasilnya anak2 nyaman dan betah di sekolah, untuk dampak lebih kepada memotivasi diri agar bisa membuktikan bahwa guru laki2 di paud itu bisa mengajar" (interview excerpt MFH)"

RA makes the real results of teaching practice as a means to motivate themselves and refute the negative stigma about the ability of men in the world of PAUD. This is in line with research (Rachman et al., 2022) shows that one of the strategies of male teachers in PAUD in dealing with stigma is through direct proof in practice, namely by demonstrating the ability to teach and create learning comfort for children, this strategy not only has an impact on changing the image of male teachers in the community, but also increases their self-confidence and intrinsic motivation.

In this context, emotional closeness to children becomes a strategic tool, not only to improve the quality of learning, but also to build social legitimacy for the existence of male teachers in PAUD spaces that women have dominated. Teachers are not only tasked with educating, but also shaping a new narrative about gender role equality in early childhood education (Rahman, et al., 2021).

Increasing Existence Through Social Media

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of people's lives, including in the educational sphere. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook are not only used as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for sharing information, building networks, and strengthening professional image (Anggarini, 2021). In this context, social media can be an effective and unique strategy to increase the presence of male early childhood education teachers.



Given that the role of men in early childhood education is still often seen as unusual by some people (Dianita, 2020), social media can be utilized to present a positive image, educate the public, and build alternative narratives (Purnamasari, et al, 2020). By utilizing social media, it can demonstrate that men are also capable of being empathetic, warm, and professional educators in the early childhood sector. Through uploads in the form of learning videos, documentation of classroom activities, personal reflections, and educational content, male early childhood teachers can demonstrate their competence as well as dedication widely to the community.

“Memunculkan eksistensi guru TK laki-laki Di media sosial Supaya orang-orang itu tidak aneh... jadi influence menjadi orang yang memang aktif membagikan kegiatan tentang guru khusus sebagai guru TK laki-laki juga punya peran masing masing di Pendidikan PAUD” (interview excerpt MFH)

“Sekarang kan zaman sosial media yang melek lah ya konten-konten atau melihat dari kita sebagai guru laki-laki itu membuat jejaring” (Interview excerpt RA)

This aligns with the concept of self-affirmation theory Steele (Sherman and Cohen, 2006), which posits that individuals are more resistant to pressure when they can affirm the identities and values that are important to them. By using social media to showcase their role as ECD teachers, male educators strengthen their professional identity while affirming the values they believe in, such as caring, responsibility, and commitment to children's education.

Thus, the use of social media is a strategy for addressing the challenges of gender stereotypes in male early childhood teachers by enhancing their online presence. It is based on self-expression, meaning creation, and efforts to build wider social support. Male early childhood education teachers who can manage social media positively have the potential to become agents of change, helping to inspire the next generation of educators while challenging stereotypes about gender roles in the early childhood education world.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the resilience of male early childhood education (ECE) teachers in facing gender stereotype challenges is shaped by two main factors: internal and external. Internal factors include an interest in teaching, an affinity for working with children, confidence in career choice, feelings of happiness, the desire to be a role model, and a personal sense of meaning in the ECE teaching profession. External factors involve peer support and institutional support from the school. Male ECE teachers have also developed three main strategies to survive and thrive amidst strong gender stereotypes: (1) building positive communication with parents, (2) adapting to a female-dominated work environment, and (3) enhancing their professional visibility through social media.

These findings support the notion that resilience is a key element enabling male teachers to navigate the complex social pressures present in the ECE work environment (Siliyah & Hadi, 2021). Gender stereotypes, suspicion about their motives for teaching, and constant pressure to prove themselves represent subtle forms of discrimination that significantly affect their psychological well-being (Maulana et al., 2020). In this context, the ability of male teachers to remain motivated, manage their emotions, and find positive



meaning in their profession highlights the crucial role of resilience, as understood within the framework of individual psychological resilience. Furthermore, this study reinforces Bronfenbrenner's perspective on the importance of interaction between individuals and the surrounding social systems, emphasizing social support as a protective factor that strengthens resilience. The findings also fill a gap in the literature, which has primarily focused on age and years of service as determinants of teacher resilience (Pancaningrum & Pasiningsih, 2023), by demonstrating how male teachers develop psychological resilience through their lived experiences and adaptive strategies.

Practically, the findings suggest the need to develop training programs that are responsive to gender issues, particularly anti-stereotype training grounded in the real experiences of male teachers. Such training could include case-based models, reflective workshops, and cross-gender mentoring initiatives. Additionally, it is crucial for educational institutions and policymakers to create fair representation spaces for male ECE teachers—for instance, by including them in professional promotion campaigns and ensuring equal opportunities in career development policies. However, this study has several limitations. First, the number of participants was limited to only three individuals from a single region, making the findings difficult to generalize broadly. Second, the data collection relied solely on in-depth interviews, without supporting secondary data such as observations or additional documents, which could have enriched the analysis. For future research, it is recommended that the geographical scope and number of participants be expanded to obtain a more representative picture. Further studies could also explore the experiences of male teachers at other educational levels, such as elementary or middle school, to examine the consistency of resilience dynamics across educational stages. Additionally, future research could focus on developing psychological resilience-based intervention models specifically designed to support male teachers in culturally and structurally female-dominated work environments.

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