

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**Gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom teaching in agona west
municipality a focus on male teachers**



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DECLARATION

Students Declaration

I, **Emmanuella Peace Hammond**, hereby declare that, this project work with the quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and dully acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

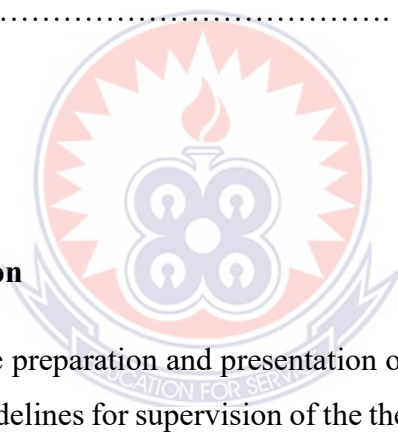
Supervisors Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this project work was done in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Hans Kweku Wiabo Baffoe

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DEDICATION

To my Husband Mr. Paul Acquah and my son Rev. Samuel Allotey Hammond



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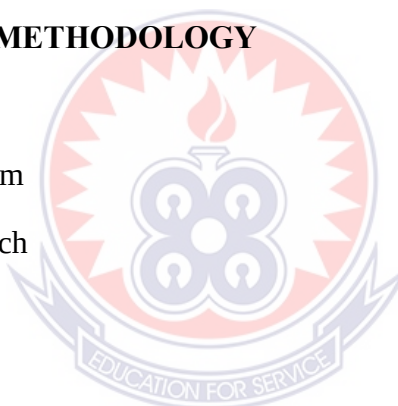
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ABSTRACT

The study explored the gender imbalance in early childhood education, focusing on the experiences of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms within the Agona West Municipality. It sought to understand the factors contributing to the gender imbalance, the impact on educational experiences and outcomes, and strategies for promoting the recruitment and retention of male teachers. Qualitative research approach, supplemented by a case study design was used to delve into the intricate nature of the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms. Rigorous semi-structured interviews with fifteen head teachers selected from seventy-two basic schools with KGs were methodically conducted, all of whom were carefully selected using purposive sampling techniques. Following data gathering, a thematic analysis using coding was carried out to distil the findings and encourage scholarly discussions. The study found that societal and cultural perceptions, along with the devaluation of the profession for men, play a significant role in discouraging male participation. Again, the study found that Male teachers face stigmatization, isolation, and professional skepticism, which deter their entry into kindergarten early childhood centres. The study therefore recommended the launching of comprehensive campaigns to change societal perceptions about gender roles in caregiving and nurturing professions, targeting various stakeholders to challenge stereotypes and highlight the importance of male teachers.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Study

Early childhood education is universally recognized as a critical stage in a child's development which is the period from birth to eight years. It is a remarkable brain development for children and represents a crucial window of opportunity for education (UNESCO, 2015).

UNESCO believes early childhood care and education (ECCD) that is truly inclusive is much more than just preparation for primary school. It can be the foundation for emotional wellbeing and learning throughout life and of best investment a country can make as it promotes holistic development, gender equality and social cohesion. Ghana has made significant strides in enhancing the accessibility and quality of ECE. National initiatives and policies have been implemented to support early childhood development, reflecting the country's commitment to fostering an educated and skilled populace (UNICEF, 2020; Ghana Education Service, 2018).

Male teachers can have a significant positive impact on children in kindergarten and their influence is important for their holistic development.

Advanced spatial abilities, functional motor skills, and complex cognitive functions are the distinctive skills that males possess, which are frequently lacking in children. Research has demonstrated that males demonstrate superior spatial skills in comparison to their female counterparts from a young age (Levine, Vasilyeva, Lourenco, Newcombe & Huttenlocher, 2005). For example, by the age of four and a half, males demonstrate a significant advantage in tasks that involve mental rotation and spatial transformations (Levine et al., 1999). This male advantage persists into maturity and is

observed in more intricate spatial tasks, including route planning and map-use skills (Gilmartin & Patton, 1984). Additionally, males outperform girls in object control skills, including kicking and throwing, from as early as three years of age (Zheng et al., 2022). These abilities are essential because they serve as the foundation for more sophisticated motor functions that are essential for sports and daily activities. Males demonstrate advanced functional skills that are essential for independent living, in addition to spatial and motor skills. Most adult males have autonomously acquired key self-care skills, including toileting, dressing, and bathing, according to research conducted on individuals with fragile X syndrome (Bailey et al., 2009). The broader capacity of males to acquire and refine practical skills that necessitate both physical coordination and cognitive planning is emphasized by these findings. Moreover, males are also favored in the development of manual control abilities, particularly in tasks that necessitate precision and fine motor skills, such as object manipulation and aiming (Flatters et al., 2014). These manual skills, which are refined over time, are essential for the completion of intricate tasks in a variety of personal and professional settings. Historically, early childhood education has been dominated by female teachers, resulting in a scarcity of male representation in this field. Several studies have highlighted the importance of male teachers in early childhood education, emphasizing their unique contributions to the development of children, particularly boys (Bryan & Milton, 2017; Sumsion, 2005). The uniqueness of male teachers can be seen in the mastering of ICT, and creativity. Male teachers at the kindergarten classrooms can serve as fathers to children who are raised by single mother. Despite this recognition, the number of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms remains disproportionately low in many countries, including Ghana (Bryan & Milton, 2017).

To understand the causes of the gender imbalance in kindergarten, it is crucial to examine the global trajectory of this issue. Research conducted in different cultural and societal contexts provides valuable insights into the underlying factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of male teachers in early childhood education. Studies such as Akman et al. (2014), Bryan (2021), and Reich-Shapiro et al. (2021) explore the perceptions of parents, caregivers, and male teachers themselves regarding the appointment and impact of male teachers in early childhood settings. These studies offer diverse perspectives and shed light on the barriers and challenges faced by male teachers in their professional journey.

One significant factor influencing the gender imbalance is societal and cultural norms. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes may discourage men from pursuing careers in early childhood education, leading to a scarcity of male teachers. Studies such as Akman et al. (2014), Bryan & Milton Williams (2017), and Granbom (2015) have explored parents' views, societal perceptions, and teachers' beliefs regarding the presence of male teachers in early childhood education settings, shedding light on the prevailing attitudes and challenges.

Moreover, the experiences and perspectives of male teachers themselves are crucial in understanding the complexities surrounding their recruitment, retention, and professional development in early childhood education. Studies like Bryan and Browder (2013), Dos Santos (2020), and Reich-Shapiro et al. (2021) have examined the lived experiences, career decisions, and conceptualisations of male teachers' impact on the early childhood classroom, highlighting the unique contributions they bring to children's learning and development.

The impact of gender imbalance extends beyond gender representation alone. It can also influence classroom dynamics, teaching practices, and children's educational outcomes. Research by Catsambis et al. (2012), Bryan (2021), Wood et al. (2020), and Silman et al. (2019) has explored the effects of gender on ability group placement, pedagogical approaches, teacher-student relationships, and perceptions of gender roles in early childhood education settings.

Furthermore, examining the Ghanaian context is essential to understanding the specific factors influencing the gender imbalance in kindergarten within the Agona West Municipality. Studies such as Laryea et al. (2020) and Dorigen & Anthony (2022) provide insights into the experiences of Ghanaian male early childhood educators and the instructional strategies employed by kindergarten teachers in Agona West Municipality. Additionally, Nyarko (2018) has explored the perspectives of school administrators on preschool teacher recruitment and retention in Ghana. These studies contribute to the understanding of the local dynamics surrounding the recruitment, retention, and career development of male teachers in early childhood education.

The findings from the previous research underscore the urgency of addressing the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms. Not only does this issue limit the career opportunities for male educators, but it also deprives children of diverse role models and teaching approaches. The limited representation of male teachers may perpetuate gender stereotypes, hinder the holistic development of children, and impact their educational outcomes (Bryan & Browder, 2013; Catsambis et al., 2012).

To address the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms within the Agona West Municipality, it is crucial to identify the underlying causes and develop targeted strategies for the recruitment, retention, and professional development of male teachers

in the municipality. Again, to ensure role modelling and diversity, the presence of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms is essential for providing diverse role models to young children. Research suggests that children benefit from exposure to a diverse range of teaching styles, communication patterns, and perspectives. Against this background, this research aimed to explore gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms with particular emphasis on male teachers' placement in the kindergarten in the Agona West Municipality.

1.2 Statement to the Problem

The role of teachers in early childhood education is crucial in shaping the cognitive, emotional, and social development of young learners. However, there exists a significant gender imbalance in the kindergarten classrooms, particularly in the underrepresentation of male teachers. Existing literature acknowledges the underrepresentation of male teachers in early childhood education settings but provides limited insights into the specific factors contributing to this gender imbalance. While some studies have explored the experiences and perspectives of male teachers (Bryan & Browder, 2013; Bryan & Milton, 2017), others have not sufficiently examined the unique factors that may contribute to the gender imbalance in kindergarten (Akman et al., 2014; Reich-Shapiro, Cole, & Plaisir, 2021; Sumsion, 2005). In the Ghanaian context, limited research has been conducted specifically on the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms. However, some studies have explored related aspects, such as the experiences of male early childhood educators (Laryea et al., unpublished) and preschool teacher recruitment and retention (Nyarko, 2018).

Male teachers serve as Role model: children learn from what they see and having male teachers as role model can help boys develop a more positive attitude towards education. (Martinez, 2017), male teachers bring a unique perspective to the classroom,

which can enrich the learning environment and provide a more well- rounded education. (Hargreaves,2017).

According to Horn, 2017, Male teachers serve Father-child relationship: for children who may not have a positive relationship with their fathers, male teachers can provide a positive nurturing relationship. Having male teachers can help address the gender gap in education providing a more balance and inclusive learning environment. (OECD,2017).

These studies provide a foundation for understanding the experiences and perspectives of male teachers have predominantly focused on male early childhood educators' experiences in different regions and contexts.

There is, therefore, a lack of research in the context of Agona West Municipality on the issue of gender imbalance in the in the kindergarten. The Electronic Management Information System (EMIS-2023) and data from the Early Childhood Coordinator indicate that out of 166 teachers only 3 are males and 163 are females at the kindergarten level of the Municipal Education Directorate. Research suggests that the presence of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms can offer diverse role models, promote gender equity, and enhance children's overall educational experiences (Bryan, 2021; Granbom, 2015; Silman, Bozcan, & Koran, 2019). Additionally, male teachers may bring unique teaching styles and pedagogies that can positively influence children's learning outcomes (Bryan, 2021; Reich-Shapiro et al., 2021). Research shows that many kindergarten classrooms continue to experience a significant gender imbalance, with an overwhelming majority of female teachers (85%-90%) and a scarcity of male teachers (10%-15%) (Baker, 2018). This gender disparity can have far-reaching consequences, including limited male role models for young children,

particularly boys (Horn, 2017); perpetuation of traditional gender stereotypes and biases (Ladson-Billings, 2017); imbalanced representation of gender perspectives and experiences (Noddings, 2017); potential negative impact on boys' academic achievement and social-emotional development (Santamaria, 2017) and restrictions on children's exploration of diverse interests and talents (Pellegrini, 2017). Thus, the scarcity of male teachers in Agona West Municipality kindergarten classrooms limits the potential benefits and diverse perspectives that they can offer. In situations where we are experiencing teacher attrition, most male professional teachers are not placed at the kindergarten by their headteachers but rather would employ female unprofessional SHS graduates to handle the kindergarten learners (researchers' Routine Visit to Schools 2022). In addition to a lack of research, there is also a lack of understanding regarding the factors contributing to the gender imbalance in kindergarten in Agona West Municipality that may hinder effective policy formulation and intervention strategies. Without a comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes, it becomes challenging to develop targeted initiatives that address recruitment and retention challenges specific to male teachers in the municipality and Ghana as a whole.

Consequently, the limited research conducted within this specific context restricts the applicability of findings and recommendations to the Agona West Municipality, hampering local efforts to improve gender balance and diversity in early childhood education settings. To bridge this knowledge gap and provide insights relevant to the context of Agona West Municipality, this research aimed to investigate the factors influencing the gender imbalance in kindergarten and provide insights into the local factors that shape male teachers' career choices and experiences in early childhood education. The underrepresentation of male teachers deprives children, especially boys, of positive male role models during their formative years. This study aimed to highlight

the importance of diverse teacher representation and emphasize the positive impact that male teachers can have on children's social, emotional, and educational development.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality, with a specific focus on male teachers.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

1. investigate the factors contributing to the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms, in the Agona West Municipality.
2. determine the criteria of teacher classification that causes gender imbalance in the kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality.
3. find out the challenges headteachers face in placing male teachers in the kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality.
4. identify strategies that could be used to retain male teachers in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the factors contributing to the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality?
2. What criteria is used in assigning teachers in the kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality?
3. What challenges do headteachers face in placing male teachers in the kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality?
4. What strategies could be used to retain male teachers in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study holds significant implications for both policy and practice in the field of education. By investigating the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms, this research hoped to inform policy-makers, administrators, and stakeholders about the need for gender diversity and equity.

From a policy perspective, this study addresses the issue of gender equity within the educational system. By identifying the underlying causes of the gender imbalance, the research could contribute to the development of policies and interventions aimed at promoting more balance and equitable teachers. These policies could help ensure that all qualified teachers, regardless of their gender, have equal opportunities for employment in kindergarten classrooms. By addressing gender disparities, educational policies could create a more inclusive and diverse teaching workforce, which benefits both male teachers and students.

In terms of practice and theory, this study highlights the importance of diverse teacher representation and the role of male teachers in early childhood education. Research has shown that children benefit from exposure to a variety of teaching styles and perspectives. The underrepresentation of male teachers deprives children, especially boys, of positive male role models during their critical formative years. By emphasizing the positive impact that male teachers can have on children's social, emotional, and educational development, this research emphasizes the need for a diverse teaching workforce.

Furthermore, this study challenges societal stereotypes and biases by addressing the dominance of female teachers in kindergarten classrooms. By understanding the factors contributing to this gender imbalance, the research aimed to challenge systemic biases and promote inclusivity within the educational system. The findings could help develop

strategies to overcome stereotypes and biases based on merit and qualifications rather than gender.

Moreover, the study contributes to enhancing teaching quality and student outcomes. The presence of male teachers can provide unique perspectives and teaching approaches that complement those of female teachers. By exploring the reasons for the gender imbalance, this research could inform the development of strategies that promote a diverse teaching workforce. This, in turn, has the potential to improve teaching quality and student outcomes by offering students a broader range of instructional approaches and role models.

Overall, the empirical findings of this research could inform educational policies and interventions at various levels. By considering the factors influencing the gender imbalance, policymakers can develop targeted initiatives to attract and retain male teachers in kindergarten classrooms, fostering a more balanced and inclusive educational environment. The study's insights could contribute to the ongoing efforts to create a more equitable and diverse teaching workforce, ultimately benefiting teachers and students in early childhood education.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The scope of this study aimed to investigate the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality, with a specific focus on male teachers. The research would explore the reasons behind the underrepresentation of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms and examine the potential influence of this gender imbalance on students, teachers, and the overall educational environment.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The first chapter covered an introduction to the study, offering a background context, identifying the problem of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom, and presenting the purpose, research questions, and objectives. It also discussed the scope and significance of the study, and concluded with an outline of the entire work. Chapter Two consisted of an empirical review of relevant literature that forms the foundation of this research. It explored existing theories and concepts related to gender imbalance and provided a comprehensive analysis of previous studies in this field. Chapter Three focused on the methodology employed in this research. It described the research design used, specified the target population for the study, and outlined the sampling techniques employed. Additionally, it discussed the data sources and the methods used for data analysis. Chapter Four presented the findings obtained from the data analysis and engaged in an in-depth discussion of these findings. It examined the implications of the results and explored the factors contributing to the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. The final chapter, Chapter Five summarized the research study, reiterating the key findings. It offered conclusive remarks on the implications of the research and discusses the policy implications resulting from the study's outcomes. The chapter concluded with recommendations for addressing the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. Additionally, it acknowledged the limitations of the study and suggested avenues for future research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter explored a collection of scholarly articles that provide insights into the gender imbalances observed in kindergarten classrooms. It examined theories related to social and gender roles within society and their potential impact on the development of children. By reviewing existing literature, the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding gender disparities in early education settings and their implications for children's growth and learning.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The comprehension of the intricate dynamics of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality, with a specific focus on male teachers, necessitates a deep understanding of the underlying theoretical perspectives. In this regard, two theoretical frameworks, namely Social Role Theory and Gender Schema Theory, offer illuminating insights into the social and cognitive processes that engender gender disparities.

Social Role Theory postulates that societal expectations and gender-associated stereotypes primarily drive the gender disparities observed in occupational roles and choices. This theory underscores the influence of traditional labor division and societal norms, which often associate teaching, especially in early childhood education, with femininity and nurturing attributes. As a result, societal pressures and stereotypes may deter men from considering careers as kindergarten teachers. These societal biases and expectations shape individuals' perceptions and choices, thereby influencing the gender composition within the teaching profession (Wang, & Degol, 2017).

The Gender Schema Theory highlights the role of cognitive processes in shaping individuals' understanding and behaviors related to gender. According to this theory, individuals develop mental frameworks known as gender schemas, which serve as cognitive structures that help in organizing and guiding perceptions and behaviors concerning gender (Bem, 1981). These schemas are acquired through socialization and provide a foundation for interpreting and categorizing information based on gender norms (Martin & Ruble, 2004).

In the context of kindergarten teaching, gender schemas may lead to preconceived notions about the roles of male and female teachers in early childhood education. Research suggests that societal expectations often position early childhood education as a female-dominated field, leading to biases in recruitment and hiring practices (Sumsion, 2005; Warin, 2017). These gendered perceptions can influence individuals' career aspirations and professional choices, discouraging male educators from pursuing roles in kindergarten teaching (Cushman, 2012).

Recent studies have further confirmed that gender schemas not only shape individual career decisions but also impact workplace dynamics and student-teacher interactions. For instance, Bullough (2015) noted that male early childhood educators often face scrutiny and stereotyping, affecting their professional identity and experiences in the field. Similarly, Brody (2021) highlighted that challenging traditional gender schemas through policy reforms and awareness campaigns could help create more inclusive early childhood education environments.

Applying Gender Schema Theory to the teaching of literacy in kindergarten underscores the importance of addressing gender biases in ICT integration. Teachers' perceptions of gender roles may influence how they incorporate technology into literacy instruction, potentially reinforcing stereotypes about male and female teachers'

competencies in ICT-based teaching (Van Hek et al., 2019). Addressing these biases through targeted training and policy interventions can promote a more equitable and effective use of ICT in kindergarten literacy education.

By scrutinizing the intersections of Social Role Theory and Gender Schema Theory within the context of kindergarten classroom teaching in Agona West Municipality, a more profound understanding of gender imbalance and its root causes can be achieved. Social Role Theory posits that societal norms and expectations dictate the roles individuals assume based on their gender, reinforcing stereotypes that associate early childhood teaching with femininity (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Similarly, Gender Schema Theory suggests that individuals develop cognitive frameworks that categorize and internalize gender roles from an early age, influencing their career choices and perceptions of male teachers in early childhood education (Bem, 1981; Martin & Ruble, 2010).

These theoretical frameworks provide a lens through which societal expectations, stereotypes, and cognitive processes shaping gender roles in kindergarten teaching can be examined. Research indicates that persistent stereotypes about caregiving and nurturing being inherently feminine traits contribute to the underrepresentation of male teachers in early childhood education (Sumsion, 2005; Cushman, 2012). Moreover, implicit biases may affect recruitment and hiring practices, reinforcing the gender disparity in the profession (Brody, 2015).

A thorough analysis of these theories will elucidate the complexities of gender imbalance in kindergarten teaching and inform potential strategies to foster gender diversity and equality. Interventions such as mentorship programs, gender-neutral recruitment policies, and awareness campaigns aimed at challenging societal biases have been suggested as measures to encourage male participation in early childhood

education (Warin, 2017; Peeters, Rohrmann, & Emilsen, 2015). Addressing these issues through a theoretical framework ensures a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing gender representation and promotes more inclusive educational environments.

2.1.1 Social Role Theory (Eagle and Wood (2012))

Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood's Social Role Theory offers a comprehensive framework for examining the ways in which societal roles, expectations, and stereotypes inform gender differences and similarities in behavior, attitudes, and occupational choices. This theoretical lens is particularly useful for understanding the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality, specifically the underrepresentation of male teachers. A critical analysis of key scholarly works, including Eagly and Wood (2012), Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann (2000), Koenig and Eagly (2014), Eagly, Wood, and Johannesen-Schmidt (2004), and Eagly (2013), allows for a nuanced exploration of how social roles contribute to the scarcity of male teachers in early childhood education.

The Social Role Theory posits that gender roles, as shaped by societal expectations and stereotypes, significantly influence occupational choices. As Eagly and Wood (2012) argued, certain professions, such as teaching, are traditionally associated with femininity and nurturing characteristics. This societal perception contributes to the underrepresentation of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms. Eagly (2013) further elucidates that social role guide individuals' behavior by establishing normative expectations, which are deeply ingrained in the occupational choices of both men and women. Within the context of Agona West Municipality, these gender roles and stereotypes may deter men from considering careers in early childhood education, thereby perpetuating the gender imbalance.

According to the Social Role Theory, gendered expectations and the treatment resulting from these social roles influence individuals' behavior and interactions. Eagly, Wood, and Johannesen-Schmidt (2004) contended that gendered expectations impact individuals' preferences for and evaluations of potential partners. Transposing this argument to the context of Agona West Municipality, it can be inferred that gendered expectations also shape perceptions of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms. The gender imbalance may be rooted in societal expectations that associate men with roles of authority, while viewing nurturing and caretaking roles as predominantly female. As a result, male teachers may encounter differential treatment or scrutiny due to these gendered expectations, which could potentially discourage them from pursuing careers in early childhood education.

Social Role Theory proposes that individuals' perceptions of the alignment between gender roles and occupations influence their career choices. Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann (2000) explained that the perceived congruity between an individual's gender role and the demands of an occupation affects their occupational preferences. In the context of kindergarten in Agona West Municipality, the perception of teaching as a role incongruent with masculinity might dissuade men from pursuing careers in this field. Male teachers may perceive their gender role as misaligned with the nurturing and caregiving expectations associated with early childhood education. To address this issue, it is necessary to challenge the perception of incongruity and promote the notion that men can indeed excel in nurturing roles.

2.1.2 Gender Schema Theory (Sandra Bem 1981)

Gender Schema Theory, proposed by Sandra Bem (1981), provides a valuable framework for understanding the cognitive processes underlying gender development and its implications for gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms. This theoretical

perspective posits that individuals develop mental frameworks, known as gender schemas, that shape their understanding of gender roles, identities, and expectations. These schemas influence the way individuals process and interpret information related to gender, ultimately affecting their behavior and career choices (Martin & Ruble, 2010). The application of Gender Schema Theory to the topic of gender imbalance in kindergarten teaching can shed light on the cognitive and social factors contributing to the underrepresentation of male teachers and inform strategies to address this issue effectively.

Gender Schema Theory emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in shaping individuals' understanding of gender and subsequent behavior. According to Bem (1981), children develop gender schemas through the process of gender typing, where they actively seek and process information about gender. These schemas serve as mental frameworks that organize and guide individuals' perceptions, interpretations, and memories related to gender (Liben & Bigler, 2002). Gender schemas include both gender-constancy schemas, which promote adherence to traditional gender norms, and gender-aschematic schemas, which foster flexibility and a disregard for gender stereotypes (Leaper, 2015).

In the context of kindergarten teaching, individuals may internalize gender schemas that associate early childhood education with caregiving and nurturing—traits traditionally linked to femininity. Research indicates that these cognitive frameworks influence recruitment and hiring practices, career aspirations, and the professional experiences of male teachers in early childhood education (Sumsion, 2005; Cushman, 2012). Male educators often encounter stereotypes that question their suitability for working with young children, reinforcing gender-based occupational segregation (Peeters, Rohrmann, & Emilsen, 2015).

Addressing gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms requires interventions that challenge traditional gender schemas and promote gender-neutral perspectives in early childhood education. Studies suggest that strategies such as gender-sensitive teacher training, public awareness campaigns, and policy reforms can help dismantle cognitive biases and encourage male participation in the profession (Warin, 2017; Brody, 2015). By integrating Gender Schema Theory into discussions on gender imbalance, stakeholders can better understand the underlying cognitive barriers and develop targeted approaches to fostering gender diversity in kindergarten teaching.

In the context of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom, the influence of gender schemas becomes significant. Bem (1983) argued that in a gender-schematic society, where gender stereotypes are reinforced and prevalent, individuals are more likely to develop gender-constancy schemas that align with societal expectations. This gendered cognition can contribute to the underrepresentation of male teachers, as teaching is often stereotypically associated with femininity and nurturing qualities. The presence of gender-constancy schemas may deter men from pursuing careers in early childhood education, perpetuating the gender imbalance.

Bem (1984) further extended Gender Schema Theory by integrating the concept of androgyny, which refers to possessing both stereotypically masculine and feminine traits. According to Bem, androgynous individuals are more likely to have gender-aschematic schemas, allowing them to freely incorporate both traditionally masculine and feminine behaviors without strict adherence to gender norms. In the context of kindergarten classroom, individuals with androgynous traits may be more open to pursuing careers in early childhood education, regardless of gender stereotypes. Promoting androgyny and gender-aschematic thinking may help address the gender

imbalance by challenging traditional gender roles and encouraging male teachers to enter the field.

Bem (1983) emphasizes that raising gender-aschematic children in a gender-schematic society is crucial for challenging and transforming gender stereotypes. In the case of Agona West Municipality, where gender stereotypes and societal expectations may influence career choices, promoting gender-aschematic thinking can encourage male teachers to consider and pursue careers in kindergarten classrooms, thereby addressing the gender imbalance. Bem (1984) suggests that androgynous individuals, who possess a blend of masculine and feminine traits, are more likely to have gender-aschematic schemas. Interventions and strategies that foster androgyny and challenge gender stereotypes can provide opportunities for male teachers to enter the field without conforming to traditional gender norms, thus promoting a more balanced gender representation in kindergarten classrooms. Bem's (1981) cognitive account of sex typing highlights the role of cognitive processes in shaping individuals' understanding and development of gender. Understanding how gender schemas are formed and how they influence individuals' career choices can inform targeted interventions and policies that challenge gender stereotypes and create an inclusive environment for male teachers in early childhood education.

By applying Gender Schema Theory to the context of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality, this theoretical framework elucidates the cognitive processes involved in shaping individuals' perceptions of gender and highlights strategies for promoting gender diversity in the teaching profession. It underscores the importance of challenging traditional gender roles, fostering gender-aschematic thinking, and encouraging male teachers to contribute to early childhood education.

2.2 Factors Influencing Gender Imbalance in Kindergarten

The gender disparity in kindergarten teaching positions, marked by a pronounced scarcity of male educators juxtaposed with a prevalence of female counterparts, has profound ramifications for both the pedagogical journey of students and the overarching landscape of the teaching vocation. This disparity transcends mere numerical imbalances, mirroring ingrained societal conventions and prejudices that shape the recruitment, appointment, and retention trajectories of early childhood educators.

A salient catalyst underpinning this gender skew is the enduring influence of conventional gender roles and stereotypes, especially within the preschool educational sphere. Lu (2022) offered an incisive dissection of this dynamic within the Chinese pedagogical milieu, underscoring how societal paradigms and expectations can dissuade men from venturing into early childhood pedagogy. This trend isn't exclusive to China; Block et al. (2019) embarked on an exhaustive scrutiny of societal perceptions vis-à-vis gender roles in caregiving vocations, unearthing a pervasive predisposition that aligns caregiving and by extension, teaching with femininity. This often-latent bias can wield considerable sway over teacher appointments, engendering a self-sustaining cycle of female ascendancy in kindergarten settings.

The modus operandi of recruitment and appointment in early childhood pedagogy further entrenches this gender dichotomy. Carrington et al. (2008) unearthed that these mechanisms exhibit a proclivity towards female aspirants, thereby sidelining potential male educators. The conspicuous absence of recruitment blueprints tailored for male prospects, amalgamated with inherent biases in the selection matrix, intensifies the gender chasm in the pedagogical realm. In redressing this imbalance, the study accentuates the imperative of embracing more egalitarian hiring paradigms that actively champion male educator involvement.

Upon induction, male educators frequently grapple with distinct hurdles that can stymie their professional evolution and longevity. Drudy (2008) elucidated these gender-specific impediments, encompassing a paucity of male exemplars, inadequate support structures, and societal reservations tethered to men occupying traditionally 'feminine' niches. These challenges spotlight the exigency for bespoke professional growth initiatives and bolstered support frameworks to facilitate male educators in charting their professional trajectories.

The gender asymmetry in kindergarten educator appointments bears significant repercussions for the holistic development of students. Sumsion's (2005) investigative study accentuated the indispensability of a diverse pedagogical tapestry in nascent educational environs. It posits that interfacing with both male and female educators can inculcate a more encompassing comprehension of gender dynamics from an embryonic age. The study further extols the virtues of diversity in amplifying the pedagogical odyssey, positing that male educators can infuse distinct pedagogical nuances and methodologies, thereby enriching the academic tapestry.

To encapsulate, the gender incongruence in kindergarten educator assignments is a complex conundrum necessitating a holistic redressal strategy. From contesting age-old gender archetypes to overhauling recruitment and appointment protocols, and proffering specialized support to male educators, there's an unequivocal call for synergized endeavours to galvanize gender pluralism in early childhood pedagogy. As scholarly insights corroborate, such endeavours are pivotal not merely for rectifying the gender tilt in the pedagogical domain but also for elevating the academic sojourn of students, fostering a milieu replete with inclusivity and diverse pedagogical perspectives.

2.2.1 Societal Perceptions and Stereotypes

The gender disparity in kindergarten teaching positions is a complex conundrum, deeply entrenched in societal viewpoints and entrenched stereotypes. Factors such as cultural norms, the alignment of teaching with feminine and caregiving attributes, the conspicuous absence of male exemplars in early childhood pedagogy, and the unfounded apprehension surrounding male educators as potential perpetrators of child maltreatment collectively fuel this imbalance.

Cultural conventions and societal paradigms exert a profound influence on gender dynamics within the educational sphere. Lu (2022) emphasized that in certain societies, like China, age-old gender norms accentuate male supremacy and primary breadwinner roles, inadvertently relegating professions predominantly helmed by females, such as teaching, to a lower stature. Echoing this sentiment, Drudy (2008) contended that societal convictions surrounding gender roles, which often champion the idea that males should gravitate towards vocations perceived as more illustrious and economically lucrative, play a pivotal role in skewing the gender equilibrium in teaching.

Gendered stereotypes are instrumental in moulding societal biases. Adedokun and Adedokun, (2023) highlighted those societal predispositions frequently correlate women with caregiving and nurturing roles, while men, in stark contrast, are unjustly perceived as potential hazards to child safety. This bias, often unfounded, casts male educators in the dubious light of potential child maltreatment culprits, a perception often devoid of empirical substantiation.

The conflation of teaching with feminine and caregiving attributes further amplifies gendered stereotypes, dissuading men from venturing into early childhood pedagogy. Carrington, Tymms, and Merrell (2008) posited that such entrenched beliefs foster the

perception that men might be bereft of the requisite acumen and attributes to excel as educators. Sumsion (2005) further elucidated those societal perceptions, which erroneously link child maltreatment predominantly with males, perpetuate detrimental stereotypes, thereby deterring potential male educators.

The dearth of male role models in nascent educational settings is frequently spotlighted as a deterrent to the induction and retention of male educators. Scholarly insights indicate that male educators can serve as positive role models for both genders, debunking gendered stereotypes and engendering a diverse pedagogical milieu. Block et al. (2019) emphasized that the scarcity of male educators potentially curtails students' exposure to a diverse pedagogical tapestry, inadvertently reinforcing gender norms and circumscribing educational vistas.

Halper, Cowgill, and Rios (2019) embarked on a meticulous exploration of gender biases in caregiving vocations, encompassing early childhood pedagogy. Their findings revealed a pronounced bias towards women when gauging warmth, a quintessential caregiving attribute. This predisposition potentially casts aspersions on the ability of male educators to provide emotional succour, stemming from ingrained societal paradigms.

Pruit (2015) delved into the realm of suspicion within preschool pedagogy, unearthing how these suspicions are often anchored in societal apprehensions and stereotypes. This narrative of suspicion amplifies the unfounded fears surrounding male educators as potential child maltreatment culprits, potentially side-lining them within the profession. Brody (2015) scrutinized the intricate tapestry of masculine identity among male early childhood educators, revealing their struggles in reconciling societal expectations with their caregiving roles. This dichotomy potentially fuels the unfounded association between male educators and child maltreatment risks, as elucidated by Nentwich et al.

(2013). Newport (2001) and Biernat and Sesko (2018) further delved into the persistence of gender-specific stereotypes and the cognitive underpinnings of gender biases, respectively. Their insights underscore the potential pitfalls of these biases, which might unjustly cast male educators in a negative light. One of the primary challenges headteachers encounter is the societal perception of male teachers. According to Leogrande (2020), societal views often discourage men from entering the teaching field, despite numerous positive media representations. This perception is particularly strong in early childhood education, where teaching is often seen as a predominantly female profession (Leogrande, 2020). Headteachers may find it challenging to counter these societal perceptions when attempting to place male teachers in early childhood settings. In essence, the gender incongruence in kindergarten teaching positions is a multifaceted issue, deeply rooted in societal perceptions, biases, and entrenched stereotypes. Addressing this requires a holistic approach, encompassing societal re-education, policy reforms, and concerted efforts to debunk unfounded myths and apprehensions.

2.2.2 Recruitment

The gender imbalance in early childhood education, particularly the underrepresentation of male teachers, is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. The study examined the intricacies of this problem, focusing on the role of recruitment in shaping the gender dynamics within the teaching profession. It drew upon a range of studies to explore the biases in recruitment and selection processes, lack of targeted outreach and recruitment strategies for male teachers, and the insufficient incentives and support for men considering careers in early education.

The feminization of the teaching profession is a well-documented phenomenon, with societal perceptions and stereotypes associating teaching with nurturing qualities

traditionally attributed to women. This bias is not only prevalent in societal attitudes but also manifests in recruitment and selection processes that favour female candidates for teaching positions. Kelleher et al. (2011) provided a compelling argument on this issue, highlighting the feminization of the teaching profession. Similarly, a systematic review by Isaac, Lee, and Carnes (2009) found evidence of implicit bias favoring female candidates in various fields, including academia. This bias, they argue, contributes to gender disparities in employment outcomes. Mocanu's (2022) study further underscored this issue, revealing the impact of gender biases in employment and setting committees. These findings underscore the need for more equitable processes that mitigate biases and promote gender diversity.

The underrepresentation of male teachers in early education is also exacerbated by the lack of targeted outreach and recruitment strategies. Johnson's (2008) work illuminated this issue, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to increase male representation in public education. Barnard et al. (2000) echoed this sentiment, highlighting the importance of improving recruitment efforts to attract male teachers. Their study, which focused on the viewpoints of female early childhood education professionals, underlined the need for targeted strategies to challenge stereotypes and promote male participation in the field. Richardson and Watt's (2006) exploration of the motivations of individuals choosing teaching as a profession further supports this argument, suggesting that gender-specific recruitment strategies could help address the underrepresentation of males in teaching.

However, even with targeted recruitment strategies, the lack of adequate incentives and support for male teachers considering careers in early education remains a significant barrier. Agezo's (2010) study on the reasons behind teachers leaving the profession in Ghana found that challenges related to salary, promotion, and inadequate support

systems were significant factors. Mertler's (2016) examination of teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and perceptions of retention corroborates this, suggested that factors such as compensation, professional development opportunities, and work environment are crucial for retaining teachers. Brill and McCartney (2008) further emphasized the need for improved working conditions, professional development opportunities, and mentorship programs to attract and retain male teachers.

2.2.3 Professional and Career Development in Male Kindergarten Teachers

Professional and career developments play crucial roles in shaping the experiences and trajectories of teachers in the field of early childhood education. However, research suggests that male teachers in this domain face unique challenges and limited opportunities for growth and advancement.

Studies such as Scarparolo and Hammond (2018), Martin et al. (2008), and McNerney et al. (2006) shed light on the need for targeted professional development opportunities for male teachers in early education. Scarparolo and Hammond (2018) found that a professional development model focusing on beginning reading instruction positively influenced the teaching practices of early childhood educators. However, there is a lack of research specifically examining professional development programs tailored to the unique needs and experiences of male teachers in this context. Research indicated that male teachers face gender barriers to career progression and leadership roles within the education system. Sanderson and Whitehead (2016) explored barriers to women managers' progression in the gendered international school context, highlighting the broader issues of gender inequality within educational institutions. Similarly, Khan and Siriwardhane (2021) examined barriers to career progression in the higher education sector and found that gender biases and stereotypes persist, limiting opportunities for female academics. While the literature primarily focused on the barriers faced by

women, it is essential to acknowledge that male teachers may also encounter challenges related to gender expectations and assumptions.

Work-life balance is a critical aspect of professional and career development for male teachers. Studies such as Evans et al. (2013) and Kay (2003) emphasized the importance of addressing work-life balance for men. Evans et al. (2013) discussed the counselling implications of work-life balance for men, highlighting the need for support systems and policies that enable men to balance their professional and personal lives effectively. Societal expectations of masculinity, which often prioritize work commitments over personal life, may further complicate the work-life balance for male teachers (Gambles et al., 2006). Studies by Aldoory et al. (2008) and Tanquerel (2022) shed light on work-life balance challenges faced by men in specific professional contexts and advocate for more inclusive work environments.

The literature reviewed highlighted the need for tailored professional development opportunities for male teachers in early education, addressing the gendered barriers to career progression, and promoting work-life balance. Efforts should be made to create professional development programs that consider the unique experiences and needs of male teachers. Additionally, policies and initiatives should aim to challenge gender biases and stereotypes within the education system, creating equal opportunities for career advancement. Furthermore, fostering work environments that support work-life balance for male teachers can contribute to their overall job satisfaction and well-being. By addressing these issues, education systems can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for male kindergarten teachers, ultimately benefiting students, teachers, and the broader community.

2.2.4 Educational Policies, Institutional and Economic Factors

Educational policies and institutional factors also contribute to gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. Recruitment practices, promotional pathways, and professional development opportunities are often not gender-neutral, inadvertently favoring women over men. Additionally, the lack of male role models in early childhood education perpetuates the cycle of gender imbalance (Skelton, 2003). Economic factors, including salary and job security, significantly influence gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. The relatively low pay and perceived lower prestige associated with early childhood education compared to other teaching levels or professions may deter men, who are often socially conditioned to be the primary breadwinners in their families, from entering the field (Thornton & Bricheno, 2006).

2.3 Criteria Used In Assigning Teachers in the Kindergarten

The assignment of teachers in kindergarten is guided by various standards and criteria, which prioritize the qualifications, skills and experience of teachers (NAEYC,2020); Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation,2020).Research emphasizes the importance of bachelor's degree in early childhood education or elementary education as well as state -approved test (National Education Association,2020;U.S Department of Education,2020) Moreover, teachers' knowledge of child development and educational theories, creative teaching abilities and strong communication skills are essential for effective teaching and learning(Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff,2011;Danielson, 2007) this mean there is the need to ensure that teachers assigned at the kindergarten should possess the qualities to bring about effective teaching and learning at the kindergarten centres.

Experiences working with young children demands patience, flexibility and familiarity with best practices in early childhood education are also valuable assets for teachers (Webster- Stratton, 2018, National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020). By considering these criteria, school administration can ensure that kindergarten teachers are well-equipped to provide high-quality education and support the developmental needs of young children.

A study published in the journal of Educational Psychology (2018) found that teachers professional development programs positively impact kindergarten teachers' practice and student outcomes, highlight the need for ongoing support. In 2017, in the journal, it indicated a significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and student achievement in kindergarten, emphasizing the importance of assigning qualified teachers (JER, 2017).

Further research shows that teachers experience significantly influences kindergarten students' social and economic development, stressing the value of experience teachers (JECTE,2016)

By considering these factors and qualities, school administrators need to ensure high -quality education and support the developmental needs of young children. These notwithstanding, in Agona West Municipality most school lack teachers, headteachers when assigning teachers especially with all male staff place them at the upper, junior high classes irrespective of their educational experiences. They prefer employing female inexperienced teachers to mind the kindergarten classes the reason the researcher wanted to unearth that perception of the headteachers.

2.3.1 Implications of Gender Imbalance in Kindergarten

Gender balance and the presence of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms significantly influence children's perceptions, social-emotional development, and learning experiences. Research suggests that male teachers help challenge gender stereotypes, broadening children's understanding of gender roles (Sumsion, 2005; Rohrmann, 2020). Their presence also supports social-emotional development by introducing diverse interactions and teaching styles (Peeters, 2007; Warin, 2018). Studies indicate that children benefit from varied teaching approaches, enhancing engagement and cognitive growth (Cushman, 2012; Jones, 2021). Exposure to both male and female teachers fosters balanced learning experiences, promoting inclusivity and equity in education (Eidevald & Engdahl, 2021). Addressing gender imbalance in early childhood education is crucial for fostering holistic development (Cameron, 2020).

2.3.2 Influence on Children's Development

Children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes are influenced by the presence or absence of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms. Hughes and Seta (2003) found that children tend to associate gender-stereotypical behaviors with teachers of their own gender. For example, boys may view male teachers as more authoritative and stricter, while girls may perceive male teachers as less nurturing. This association reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and limits children's understanding of diverse gender roles. Similarly, Frawley (2005) emphasized that children develop and reinforce gender biases when exposed to predominantly female teaching staff, contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequalities.

Research suggested that children develop perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes at an early age, influenced by various factors, including societal norms and media

representations. Hughes and Seta (2003) found that children exhibited compensatory behavior in response to violations of gender roles, emphasizing the strength of gender stereotypes in shaping children's perceptions. Gender bias and stereotypes within the teaching profession, as discussed by Drudy (2008) and Sumsion (2005), further reinforced traditional gender roles and limit children's exposure to diverse role models. These perceptions and stereotypes can impact children's self-perception, aspirations, and attitudes toward their own and others' abilities.

The presence of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms has potential implications for children's social and emotional development. Sumsion (2005) argued that male teachers provide unique perspectives and interaction styles that can challenge traditional gender norms and promote positive behavior in children. Male teachers often bring different strengths, such as physical play and assertiveness, which can benefit children's socialization and emotional well-being (Carrington et al., 2008). Furthermore, the absence of male teachers can limit children's exposure to diverse role models and hinder their understanding and acceptance of different gender expressions and identities (Erden et al., 2011). Carrington et al. (2008) highlighted the importance of positive role models in influencing students' academic and personal development, suggesting that teachers of both genders can bring out the best in boys and girls. Conversely, a lack of gender diversity in the teaching profession may limit children's exposure to diverse perspectives and hinder their understanding of gender equality. Frawley (2005) further emphasized the role of teachers in challenging gender bias in the classroom and promoting inclusive environments that support all children's emotional well-being.

The presence of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms offers diverse teaching styles and approaches, contributing to differential learning experiences for children. Sumsion (2000) highlighted that male teacher tend to engage in physical activities and outdoor

play, which can enhance children's motor skills and confidence. This contrasts with the typically nurturing and language-focused teaching styles associated with female teachers. Such diversity in teaching styles can benefit children by accommodating various learning preferences and promoting holistic development (Bryan & Browder, 2013). Moreover, Bryan and Milton Williams (2017) emphasized that culturally relevant Black male teachers bring unique perspectives and knowledge that enhance children's cultural competence and identity development. The gender imbalance in the teaching profession can lead to differential learning experiences for boys and girls. Additionally, Sumsion (2005) discussed the benefits of male teachers in early childhood education, including their unique teaching styles and approaches that may engage and inspire boys. Conversely, Gansen (2019) highlighted how teachers' gendered beliefs and expectations for behavior can influence disciplinary practices, potentially perpetuating gendered patterns of behavior. Exposure to diverse teaching styles and approaches is crucial for promoting inclusive learning environments where all children can thrive academically and socially.

Children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes are shaped by the presence or absence of male teachers, potentially reinforcing traditional gender biases. The presence of male teachers also has implications for children's social and emotional development by providing diverse role models and interaction styles. Furthermore, male teachers offer different teaching styles and approaches, creating differential learning experiences that cater to diverse learning preferences. To promote positive development, it is crucial to address the underrepresentation of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms and ensure gender balance, fostering inclusive environments that support children's holistic growth and challenge traditional gender stereotypes.

2.3.3 Teacher-Student Dynamics

The teacher-student dynamic plays a crucial role in shaping students' educational experiences, engagement, behavior, and academic outcomes. The study explored the importance of diverse role models for students' educational experiences and aspirations, the potential impact of teacher-student dynamics on students' engagement, behavior, and academic outcomes, and the enhancement of cultural competence and understanding through diverse teacher representation.

Study by Zimmermann (2018) examined kindergarten teachers' perceptions of problem behaviors and student-teacher conflict by the intersection of race and gender. The study emphasized the importance of diverse role models, highlighting how teachers' biases can contribute to differential treatment of students. This finding resonated with the work of Pardhan (2011), who explored the influence of teacher-student interactions on kindergarten children's developing gender identity within Pakistani urban classroom culture. The presence of diverse role models helps students form a broader understanding of their own identities and fosters a sense of belonging.

Additionally, Spilt et al. (2012) investigated the dynamics of teacher-student relationships across elementary school and their influence on children's academic success. Their findings demonstrated that positive and supportive relationships between teachers and students significantly contribute to students' engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. Conversely, Beaman et al. (2006) highlighted the differential teacher attention given to boys and girls in the classroom. Such biases can affect students' behavior, self-esteem, and academic performance, emphasizing the importance of equitable teacher-student interactions.

Cultural competence is a critical component of effective teacher-student dynamics. Wubbels et al. (2016) indicated the significance of teacher-student relationships in promoting student achievement. By fostering cultural competence, teachers can create inclusive environments where students from diverse backgrounds feel valued and supported. Moreover, Stromquist (2007) explored the gender socialization process in schools across different countries, underscoring the role of teachers in challenging or reinforcing gender stereotypes. Rakshit & Sahoo (2023) presented evidence from India, highlighting the negative impact of biased teachers on the gender gap in learning outcomes.

Teacher-student relationships also have implications beyond academic achievement. San-Martín et al. (2021) examined the role of entrepreneurship teachers as role models and their impact on students' perceptions. The study found that positive teacher role modelling can inspire and motivate students. Similarly, Hughes et al. (2014) investigated the effect of peer nominations of teacher-student support on social and academic outcomes, emphasizing the importance of supportive teacher-student relationships for students' overall development. Cultural competence is not only beneficial for students but also for teachers themselves. Trumbull & Pacheco (2005) advocated for cultural competencies in teacher preparation and professional development, emphasizing the importance of teachers understanding and respecting diverse cultures. Burgess (2019) explored the transformative potential of Aboriginal community-controlled cultural immersion in teacher professional learning, highlighting the value of authentic cultural experiences in fostering cultural competence.

The findings from the reviewed literature emphasize the need for equitable and inclusive teacher-student interactions to promote positive educational outcomes and support the holistic development of students. By fostering diverse role models,

establishing supportive relationships, and promoting cultural competence, educators can create inclusive learning environments that empower students to thrive academically and personally.

2.4 Early Childhood Education in Ghana – Overview and Challenges

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a critical role in shaping a child's development and providing a foundation for lifelong learning. In Ghana, ECE has gained increasing recognition as an essential component of the education system. This comprehensive literature review explores the landscape of ECE in Ghana, focusing on two key areas: an overview of ECE in Ghana and the challenges faced in its implementation.

Early childhood education in Ghana has evolved over the years to prioritize the education and holistic development of young children. The government has made significant efforts to expand access to ECE, recognizing its role in fostering children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development (Nyarko & Mate-Kole, 2016). The Ghana Education Service (GES) oversees the implementation of ECE policies and guidelines, emphasizing the importance of play-based learning, child-centered approaches, and the involvement of parents and communities (Aheto-Tsegah, 2011).

ECE in Ghana comprises various types of programs, including kindergartens, nursery schools, and community-based early childhood centers. These programs aim to provide a stimulating and nurturing environment for children aged 3-5 years, laying the foundation for their formal education (Fosu-Ayarkwah et al., 2022). The government has also focused on enhancing access to ECE through the introduction of initiatives such as the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) policy, which aims to provide comprehensive services to children in their early years (Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012).

Despite the progress made in ECE, Ghana faces several challenges in effectively implementing and improving the quality of early education programs. These challenges have significant implications for children's learning outcomes and overall educational development. Ghana's ECE sector grapples with inadequate infrastructure, including a lack of classrooms, play areas, and teaching materials (Armah, 2017). Insufficient resources hinder the provision of quality learning environments, limiting children's opportunities for exploration, creativity, and development. The quality and capacity of ECE teachers in Ghana remain a concern. Limited access to quality pre-service and in-service teacher training programs affects teachers' ability to provide developmentally appropriate and effective instruction (Nyarko & Mate-Kole, 2016). There is a need for contextualized teacher education that emphasizes practical skills and pedagogical approaches suitable for young learners. Parental involvement and community engagement are vital for the success of ECE programs. However, there is often limited collaboration between parents, teachers, and communities, resulting in missed opportunities to support children's learning and development (Asare, 2020). Building strong partnerships between schools and families can enhance children's educational experiences. The assessment practices used in Ghana's ECE settings present a challenge. Assessment methods often focus on rote memorization and formal examinations, neglecting holistic and child-centered approaches (Anane & Anhwere, 2013). There is a need for comprehensive and developmentally appropriate assessment strategies that capture children's progress across multiple domains. Access to quality ECE programs in Ghana is not equitable, with disparities existing between urban and rural areas, as well as among socio-economic groups (Abdulai, 2014). Limited availability, affordability, and geographical accessibility of ECE services contribute to these inequities.

Another contentious issue in education is the choice of language as the medium of instruction. Prior to 2002, a Ghanaian language (L1) was used as the medium of instruction from grade one to the end of lower primary (Erling et al., 2021). Ghanaian languages encompass local languages such as Akan (Fante and Twi), Nzema, Ga, Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani, and Dagaare. Research has indicated that children who receive education in their mother tongue tend to grasp educational concepts more quickly and easily compared to when they are taught in other languages (Baffoe & Amoah, 2015). This suggests that proficiency and command over one's native language can establish a strong foundation for better comprehension of educational principles.

Early Childhood Education in Ghana has made significant strides in recent years aiming to provide quality education and development opportunities to young children. However, challenges related to infrastructure, teacher quality, parental involvement, assessment practices, and access persist. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, parents, and communities. Enhancing infrastructure, providing targeted professional development for teachers, promoting parental engagement, adopting appropriate assessment practices, and prioritizing equitable access are crucial steps toward improving ECE in Ghana and ensuring the optimal development of young learners.

2.4.1 Early Childhood Education: Policies and Practice

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a critical role in shaping a child's development and laying the foundation for lifelong learning. This literature review examined the policies and practices of ECE from a global perspective, with a focus on the regional African context and Ghana. By analysing a range of articles from various scholars, the

review aimed to identify key themes, challenges, and recommendations for enhancing ECE policies and practices.

Early childhood education policies and practices are shaped by global trends, research, and international frameworks. Yoshikawa and Kabay (2015) emphasized the evidence-based approach to ECE and highlight the importance of investing in high-quality programs. Urban et al. (2012) argued for competent systems in ECE, emphasizing the need for integrated policies and collaboration across sectors to support young children's holistic development. Faas, Wu, and Geiger (2017) shed light on the significance of play in ECE and critically assess current policies and practices in Germany and Hong Kong. Yang, Li, and Ang (2021) explore the glocalization of ECE curriculum policies and practices in Singapore, emphasizing the balance between global influences and local context.

Mwamwenda (2014) provided an overview of ECE in Africa, discussing the historical context, challenges, and future prospects. Prochner and Kabiru (2008) examined the historical perspective of ECE in Africa, highlighting the contributions of indigenous knowledge and the need for culturally relevant pedagogies. Lemaire et al. (2013) investigated the perceptions of stakeholders regarding ECE in the Western Region of Ghana, emphasizing the importance of community involvement and teacher training. Ackah-Jnr and Udah (2021) explored the interplay between exclusion, teacher qualities, professional development, and inclusive education in Ghana, highlighting the need for comprehensive policies and supportive environments.

Agbenyega (2018) examined the ECE system in Ghana through a Bourdieuan lens, advocating for a transformational approach to pedagogy and addressing the issues of inequity and marginalization. Dillard (2009) on the other hand discussed efforts to increase educational opportunities for ECE in Ghana, highlighting the importance of

community engagement and sustainable models. Also, Oppong Frimpong (2021) emphasized the role of teaching and learning materials and interaction in quality ECE in the Agona East District of Ghana and underscored the need for appropriate resources and supportive environments. Finally, Ackah-Jnr (2021) explored parental involvement in ECE in Ghana and found the significance of collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers.

2.4.2 Implications, Challenges and Opportunities

The literature review revealed several implications and recommendations for ECE policies and practices. There is a need for evidence-based approaches that prioritize quality, teacher training, and support systems. Culturally relevant pedagogies that incorporate indigenous knowledge and engage communities are crucial. Inclusive education must be promoted, addressing exclusion and ensuring teacher qualities and professional development align with inclusive practices. Policies should emphasize the importance of play, provide appropriate teaching and learning materials, and foster parental involvement in ECE.

Ensuring access to quality early childhood education is essential for promoting educational equity. Policies play a crucial role in reducing educational inequalities by providing equal opportunities for all children (Haslip & Gullo, 2018). It is vital to address the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged children through targeted policies and inclusive practices (Agbenyega, 2008).

The quality of ECE programs significantly impacts children's development, and policies must strive to ensure high-quality standards for all children, regardless of their backgrounds (Britto et al., 2011). The competence and qualifications of early childhood educators have a profound impact on the quality of education provided to young children. Policies should prioritize the training and professional development of

teachers especially males to enhance their pedagogical skills and knowledge (Abdulai, 2018). Continuous professional development opportunities are crucial for equipping teachers with the latest research-based practices and strategies (Ackah-Jnr & Udah, 2021). Parental involvement is a key factor in supporting children's learning and development in the early years. Policies should promote strong partnerships between parents and early childhood education programs, fostering open communication and active involvement (Ackah-Jnr, 2021).

Community engagement initiatives can enhance the effectiveness of ECE by incorporating local resources, knowledge, and cultural values (Yang et al., 2021). Developmentally appropriate curricula that prioritize play-based approaches have been widely recognized as effective in promoting children's holistic development (Faas et al., 2017). Policies should support the development and implementation of curricula that consider children's interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. It is crucial to strike a balance between global influences and local contexts to ensure culturally relevant and meaningful learning experiences (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015). Recognizing and integrating indigenous knowledge and practices in early childhood education policies and programs is vital for respecting and valuing diverse cultural identities (Pence & Shafer, 2006). Embracing indigenous knowledge systems can contribute to a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to ECE. Understanding the historical perspectives of ECE in Africa and other regions helps inform policy development that aligns with cultural relevance (Prochner & Kabiru, 2008).

Adequate funding is essential for ensuring the availability of quality early childhood education programs. Policies should prioritize budget allocations and resource distribution to support effective ECE implementation (Urban et al., 2012). Overcoming

financial constraints and promoting equitable access to resources are key challenges that need to be addressed (Dillard, 2009). While policies provide a roadmap for early childhood education, their effective implementation remains a challenge. Bridging the gap between policy and practice requires attention to the contextual realities and active collaboration among policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders (Ackah-Jnr & Uдах, 2021). Policy implementation strategies should focus on capacity-building, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure the intended outcomes are achieved (Arnold, 2004). Comparative analysis of ECE policies and practices across different countries provides valuable insights into effective approaches. Examining international perspectives, such as those from Germany, Hong Kong, and Singapore, can inspire policymakers to adopt best practices and adapt them to their local contexts (Faas et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2021). International collaborations and knowledge sharing offer opportunities for mutual learning and improvement in ECE.

2.4.3 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy 2004

The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy of 2004 is a significant milestone in shaping the provision of early childhood services and programs. This review drew insights and perspectives from several articles to examine the ECCD Policy and its implications for early childhood development in Africa, considering the historical context, policy development, and the role of indigenous knowledge.

Prochner and Kabiru (2008) provided a historical perspective of early childhood development (ECD) in Africa, shedding light on the contextual factors that influenced the development of ECCD policies. They discuss the colonial legacy, cultural values, and the emergence of ECD programs in response to social and economic changes. Understanding the historical background helps in contextualizing the ECCD Policy of 2004 and its significance in Africa.

Pence et al. (2004) explored the policy development and implementation of ECCD in Africa, focusing on key challenges and strategies. The study emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement, intersectoral collaboration, and participatory approaches in policy development processes. It highlights the need for holistic and comprehensive policies that address the diverse needs of young children and their families.

Arnold (2004) also discussed the positioning of ECCD in the 21st century, highlighting the changing social, economic, and educational contexts that influence policy development. The study unearthed the importance of integrating ECCD into broader national development agendas and the need for evidence-based practices and research to inform policy decisions. It also underscored the significance of promoting equitable access to quality ECCD services.

Similarly, Pence and Shafer (2006) explored the role of indigenous knowledge in early childhood development in Africa, focusing on the Early Childhood Development Virtual University initiative. They stressed on the importance of integrating local cultural practices, beliefs, and knowledge systems into ECCD policies and programs. The study furthermore emphasized the value of indigenous knowledge in supporting children's holistic development and fostering culturally responsive approaches in ECCD.

The ECCD Policy 2004 emphasized the holistic development of young children, recognizing the interconnectedness of their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. The policy called for comprehensive programs that address all aspects of children's development (Pence et al., 2004).

It also highlighted the importance of collaboration across sectors, such as education, health, and social welfare, to ensure the effective implementation of ECCD programs.

Intersectoral coordination and partnerships are crucial for providing integrated services and support for children and their families (Pence et al., 2004).

Again, the policy emphasizes the importance of inclusive practices and equitable access to ECCD services. It recognizes the diverse needs of children and aims to address barriers related to gender, disability, socio-economic status, and cultural diversity (Arnold, 2004). It encourages the integration of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices into ECCD programs. This integration recognizes and values local knowledge systems, promoting culturally responsive approaches that resonate with the communities being served (Pence and Shafer, 2006).

2.5 Strategies to Retain Male Teachers in Kindergarten Classrooms

2.5.1 Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Male Teachers in Early

Education

The recruitment and retention of male teachers in early education settings has gained considerable attention due to the persistent gender imbalance in the field. The study explored various strategies employed to attract and retain male teachers in kindergarten classrooms. Specifically, it focused on targeted recruitment efforts, mentorship and support programs, and promoting positive narratives while challenging stereotypes surrounding male teachers.

Research has highlighted the importance of implementing targeted recruitment strategies to attract male candidates to early education programs. For instance, Akman et al. (2014) conducted a study in Turkish pre-schools and found that parental perceptions played a crucial role in shaping the appointment of male teachers. By actively engaging parents and addressing their concerns, schools can enhance recruitment efforts. Similarly, Mathwasa (2019) emphasized the need for policy-level interventions to increase male participation in pre-schools, suggesting that governments

and education authorities should develop targeted initiatives to encourage men to pursue careers in early education.

Mentorship and support programs have emerged as effective strategies for retaining male teachers in early education. Besides, Bryan and Browder (2013) conducted a qualitative study exploring the experiences of an African American male kindergarten teacher and found that mentorship relationships played a significant role in supporting his professional growth and resilience. Moreover, Bryan and Milton Williams (2017) emphasized the importance of culturally relevant mentorship programs for Black male teachers, enabling them to navigate challenges and thrive in the profession. According to them, providing male teachers with guidance, role models, and professional networks can contribute to their job satisfaction and retention.

Promoting positive narratives and challenging stereotypes surrounding male teachers are vital in attracting and retaining them in early education, Granbom (2015) emphasized the significance of teachers' beliefs and values regarding gender equality in pre-schools. Educators can challenge gender stereotypes by incorporating diverse teaching practices and encouraging equal participation and opportunities for all children. By promoting positive narratives about male teachers, the wider community can play a role in dismantling societal biases. In this instance, Bryan (2021) conducted a study focused on Black maternal caregivers' perceptions of a Black male kindergarten teacher, highlighting the positive impact of his teaching practices on children's learning and development.

Targeted recruitment efforts that address parental concerns, policy-level interventions, and mentorship programs can enhance male participation in the field (Cameron, 2020). Additionally, promoting positive narratives and challenging stereotypes can contribute to creating a supportive environment for male teachers (Warin, 2018). These reviews

highlight the importance of implementing comprehensive strategies that encompass recruitment, mentorship, and changing societal perceptions to foster gender diversity in early education classrooms (Peeters, 2007; Rohrmann, 2020). Future research should continue to explore innovative approaches and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in different cultural and educational contexts (Sumsion, 2005).

2.5.2 Professional Development and Training

Addressing the gender imbalance in early childhood education, particularly the underrepresentation of male teachers, requires targeted efforts to provide professional development opportunities, equip teachers with strategies to challenge gender biases, and foster collaboration among educators. The study explored the existing research on these key areas, drawing insights from a range of scholarly articles. By examining the experiences, perceptions, and strategies identified in the literature, this study aimed to shed light on effective approaches to address the gender imbalance in professional development and training within the early childhood education context.

Several studies emphasized the importance of tailored professional development for male teachers, recognizing their distinct needs and challenges. Akman et al. (2014) in exploring parents' views on male teachers in Turkish pre-schools emphasized the significance of professional development to enhance male teachers' competencies and promote their acceptance by the community. Similarly, Reich-Shapiro et al. (2021) delve into male educators' conceptualizations of their impact on the early childhood classroom, underscoring the need for professional development programs that address gender-related issues and build teachers' skills and confidence.

Research highlighted the significance of empowering teachers with strategies to challenge gender biases and create inclusive learning environments. Once again, Bryan and Milton Williams (2017) stressed the need for culturally relevant approaches to

recruit and retain Black male teachers in early childhood education. They suggested that professional development should focus on equipping teachers with tools to address stereotypes and promote positive narratives about diverse gender roles. Similarly, Granbom (2015) examined teachers' beliefs, norms, and values related to gender equality in pre-schools, and found the role of professional development in challenging traditional gender stereotypes and promoting equitable practices.

Collaboration among teachers, regardless of gender, is essential for creating supportive and inclusive learning environments. In this regard, Dos Santos (2020) explored the career decisions and development of male teachers using the social cognitive career approach and emphasized the importance of peer support and collaboration. Bryan and Browder (2013) shed light on the lived experiences of an African American male kindergarten teacher, highlighting the significance of collaboration with colleagues and supportive administrators in navigating professional challenges and biases. Furthermore, Wood et al (2020) examined the relationships between Black male kindergartners and their teachers, and discovered the need for supportive interactions and collaborations to foster positive educational experiences.

Addressing the gender imbalance in professional development and training within the early childhood education context requires targeted efforts to meet the unique needs of male teachers, challenge gender biases in the classroom, and foster collaboration among educators. The reviewed literature provided valuable insights into effective strategies for promoting gender diversity, including the provision of tailored professional development opportunities, equipping teachers with strategies to challenge biases, and fostering collaborative environments. Implementing these strategies will not only help address the gender imbalance but also contribute to creating inclusive, equitable, and enriching learning experiences for all children in kindergarten classrooms.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology employed in this study, encompassing various approaches and strategies. It outlined the research paradigm, approach, design, study population, sampling and sampling technique, sources of data,

data collection methodology, data analysis, research trustworthiness, research ethics, and Positionality.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research on gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality, with a focus on male teachers, is guided by a specific research philosophy and paradigm that shape the overall research methodology and methods employed.

The chosen research philosophy for this study recognizes the socially constructed and subjective nature of knowledge and reality, emphasizing the importance of multiple perspectives and interpretations. It aligns with the interpretive paradigm, which focuses on understanding subjective meanings and interpretations of individuals assign to their experiences (Scotland, 2012). By adopting this philosophical underpinning, the study acknowledges that gender imbalance in is a socially constructed phenomenon influenced by various factors such as cultural norms, societal expectations, and power dynamics.

Epistemologically, this research embraces a constructivist stance, which recognizes that knowledge is co-constructed through interactions, interpretations, and social contexts. Kaplan and Maxwell (2005) argued that constructivist epistemology aligns with the interpretive paradigm's aim of uncovering subjective meanings and interpretations individuals attribute to their experiences. In the context of gender imbalance, this epistemological stance acknowledges the existence of multiple truths and seeks to capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of stakeholders involved.

Ontologically, this research adopts a social constructionist perspective, viewing reality as socially constructed through the interactions, discourses, and power dynamics of individuals and groups. It recognizes that gender imbalance in kindergarten not a fixed or natural occurrence but rather shaped by cultural and political contexts. The social

constructionist ontology aligns with the interpretive paradigm's goal of understanding social reality through the meanings and interpretations individuals and groups ascribe to their experiences (Scotland, 2012).

By grounding the research on this philosophical underpinning and within the interpretive paradigm, this study aimed to explore the socially constructed nature of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality. It acknowledged the importance of diverse perspectives, subjective interpretations, and the influence of social interactions, discourses, and power dynamics in understanding the factors contributing to the gender imbalance. The research sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of this issue and provide insights for policy recommendations and interventions to promote gender equity.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach employed in this study was qualitative research approach. This approach was chosen to delve into the complexities and nuances surrounding the gender imbalance, particularly the underrepresentation of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms. By utilizing qualitative research approach, the study aimed to gain insights into the subjective perspectives and meanings ascribed by individuals and groups to this phenomenon.

Qualitative research, as defined by Teherani et al. (2015), involves exploring and comprehending the subjective meanings attached to social or human problems. It provides a flexible approach that allows for the emergence of research questions and procedures, data collection in natural settings, and an inductive process of data analysis. This approach is well-suited to investigating the gender imbalance as it enables a deeper exploration of the experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of various stakeholders involved in the educational system.

The choice of qualitative research approach is supported by the work of Creswell et al. (2007), which provides valuable insights into the selection and implementation of qualitative research designs.

Additionally, research by Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004) underscores the value of qualitative inquiry in obtaining a deep understanding of complex social phenomena. It endorses the use of qualitative research to explore the intricate relationships between gender disparities. Moreover, the insights provided by Pathak et al. (2013) regarding the application of qualitative research in exploring human experiences and perspectives further support the adoption of a qualitative approach in understanding the subjective experiences and the motivations that are underlying the gender.

By adopting qualitative research approach, this study aimed to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and narratives of individuals and groups involved in the kindergarten education system in Agona West Municipality. It sought to explore the contextual factors, societal attitudes, and institutional practices that contribute to the underrepresentation of male teachers. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding the gender imbalance and informs potential strategies and interventions to promote gender equity in the educational system.

Overall, qualitative research approach chosen for this study facilitates an in-depth exploration of the gender imbalance, providing valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders involved. Through this approach, the study contributes to the broader discourse on promoting gender diversity and equity in the field of early childhood education.

3.3 Research Design

The research design chosen for this study was case study, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the specific context and dynamics of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality. Case study design is particularly suitable for this research as it enabled a comprehensive understanding of a specific case or event within its natural real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). By focusing on the Agona West Municipality, the researcher delved into the intricate factors, causes, and implications related to the underrepresentation of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms.

Case study design provided an opportunity to investigate the complexities and dynamics of gender imbalance in Agona West Municipality, drawing insights from the specific incidents and experiences of various stakeholders involved. It facilitated a deep understanding of the factors contributing to the gender imbalance and offers insights into potential strategies for addressing this issue. Moreover, the case study design aligns with an interpretivist perspective, as it seeks to understand the subjective meaning and experiences of individuals directly involved in the teaching process (Yin, 2012; Levitt, et al., 2018).

By adopting this research design, the study closely examined the specific policies, practices, and underlying social and cultural factors that contribute to the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. The study explored the experiences and perspectives of school administrators, policymakers, parents, and male teachers themselves to gain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by male teachers in securing teaching positions in kindergarten classrooms. The case study design allows for a nuanced exploration of the unique factors and dynamics that contribute to the gender imbalance in this specific context.

The research design's focused on Agona West Municipality ensured that the study remains closely tied to the real-life context practices in Ghana. This localized approach enabled the researcher to capture the nuances and intricacies of the gender imbalance issue within the municipality, providing valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders. Case study design, with its emphasis on context and real-life experiences, allows for a holistic understanding of the problem, paving the way for evidence-based policy recommendations and interventions to address the gender imbalance.

In conclusion, case study design was well-suited to investigate the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality. It offered an opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of the specific context, factors, and experiences related to the underrepresentation of male teachers. By adopting an interpretivist lens, the study aimed to capture the subjective meaning of gender imbalance for those directly involved, contributing to the existing literature and informing policy and practice in early childhood education (Crowe et al., 2011; Yin, 2012).

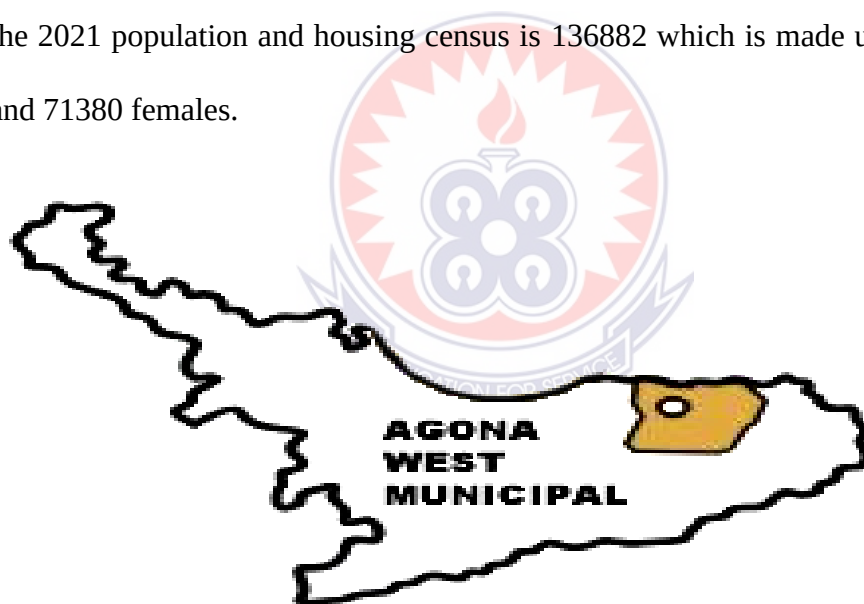
3.4 Study Population

The study focused on the Agona West Municipality in the Central Region. The Agona West Municipality comprises 74 schools, 72 of which have kindergarten attached to them. The study population included all head teachers responsible for managing these schools, and in the decision-making processes related to classification in the municipality. These individuals were selected as the study population due to their direct involvement in early childhood education, making them particularly suitable for providing valuable insights and perspectives.

3.5 Study Area

The study was conducted in the Agona West Municipality, in the Central Region of Ghana because the was where researcher identified the problem for the study. Agona

West Municipality is among Ghana's 260 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in Ghana. It is well-connected with neighboring districts such as Agona East, Gomoa West, and Asikuma Odoben Brakwa. This strategic location makes it a key area to explore educational challenges and innovations, as it offers a mix of urban and rural settings. The Agona West Municipal Assembly (AWMA) was created out of the former Agona District Assembly (ADA) on 25th February, 2008 by LI 1920. AWMA is one of the twenty (20) political and administrative districts in the Central Region of Ghana. The Municipality is bordered to the North by Agona East, to the South by Gomoa West and to the Northwest and West by Asikuma, Odoben, Brakwa and Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam Districts. The population of the Municipality according to the 2021 population and housing census is 136882 which is made up of 65502 males and 71380 females.



Map of Agona West Municipality

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

In assessing the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality, a focus on male teachers, a non-probability sampling technique was employed. Specifically, purposive sampling technique was utilized, which involves the

researcher's expertise in selecting a sample that is most relevant to the research objectives (Bryman, 2016).

The research aimed to target a specific population that could provide valuable insights and perspectives regarding classification in Agona West Municipality. With this in mind, the researcher purposefully selected a sample size of fifteen (15) participants.

The sample for the study was selected from basic school heads that have kindergarten centres attached and have been heads for 10 years. The selection of the sample size was based on what Taherdoost (2016) explain that a study aiming at exploring a phenomenon is best achieved using a sample size of 5-20 participants. In addition, Rallis, and Rossman, (2014) are of the view that with qualitative research, a sample size as small as 5 and as large as 30 can be used.

These schools were selected based on gender imbalance situation in them. The choice of this sample size was influenced by the study's focus on classification that is anchored on headteachers' decision making and discretions. The aim was to gather in-depth information and perspectives from the participants, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of the gender imbalances.

By including 15 participants, the study sought to understand the nuances of experiences, perceptions, and knowledge regarding gender imbalances in kindergarten classrooms (Bryman, 2016; Guest et al., 2006). The purposive sampling approach ensured that the selected participants had direct experience or involvement with the placement processes that proceed recruitment and hiring into the teaching profession, providing valuable insights into the topic (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Thus, utilization of purposive sampling method and a sample size of 15 participants, ensured a targeted and comprehensive investigation into the gender imbalance in

kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality. The study considered saturation point and realised that the 15 participants provided the needed information that this study needed for the investigation. Sampling decisions were guided by the research objectives aimed to provide valuable insights and perspectives on the topic.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

To investigate the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms in Agona West Municipality, this study employed a combination of qualitative data collection methods to gather comprehensive insights and contextual information. The primary data source was in-depth interviews, while secondary sources included documentation and reports. A multi-method approach enhances the validity and depth of research findings by triangulating data from different sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study conducted in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in kindergarten teacher placement and classroom experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used, allowing participants to share their experiences, views, and insights regarding gender imbalance, challenges faced by male teachers in early childhood education, and the impact of gender imbalance on young learners' educational experiences and outcomes. Semi-structured interviews are widely recognized for their flexibility and ability to provide rich, detailed responses that capture participants' perspectives (Brinkmann, 2018). These interviews explored factors contributing to gender imbalance and strategies to promote the recruitment and retention of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms. The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate data capture, and written notes were taken to cross-check and verify information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The interviews were conducted in various locations based on participants' convenience. Headteachers were interviewed in their respective offices to facilitate an environment

conducive to open discussions. While English was the primary language of the interviews, participants were encouraged to use Twi or Fante when necessary to ensure clear and accurate communication. Using participants' preferred languages in research interviews can enhance data reliability and reduce misinterpretation, especially in multilingual contexts (King et al., 2019).

To complement the insights obtained from the interviews, document analysis was conducted. This involved collecting and examining relevant documents, reports, policies, and academic studies related to kindergarten classrooms and male teachers' experiences. Document analysis helps provide additional context and background information, supporting a more nuanced understanding of gender imbalance in early childhood education (Bowen, 2009). By reviewing policy documents and institutional reports, the study identified trends, patterns, and institutional perspectives on the role of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms.

By utilizing a combination of in-depth interviews and document analysis, the study ensured a comprehensive and multi-perspective approach to data collection. The interviews provided firsthand insights from key stakeholders, while document analysis enriched the findings with relevant contextual information and existing research. A multi-method approach strengthens the validity of qualitative studies by allowing for data triangulation and corroboration (Patton, 2015). This approach allowed for a thorough exploration of the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms in Agona West Municipality, with a specific focus on male teachers.

3.6 Data Analysis

In this study, a systematic four-step process was employed to analyze the collected data, focusing on the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality. The data analysis process encompassed data organization, coding,

generation of themes, and interpretation, which facilitated the exploration of the research objectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

To begin, the data was organized into manageable segments, ensuring easy accessibility for analysis. The segments were carefully labeled and categorized based on their content or meaning, allowing for a systematic approach to the subsequent coding process. The coding process followed established qualitative research techniques, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Appropriate codes were assigned to the data segments, capturing key concepts and ideas related to the gender imbalance.

This systematic coding facilitated the identification of patterns and themes within the dataset. The researcher examined the underlying meanings and connections between different codes, categories, and concepts, resulting in the emergence of themes. The process was guided by theoretical frameworks and coding schemes, ensuring the trustworthiness of the identified themes (Saldaña, 2016). By drawing on the literature related to gender imbalance, the researcher incorporated existing knowledge into the analysis process, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Bryman, 2016).

Once the themes were developed, the researcher proceeded to interpret the data and draw conclusions. A thorough examination of patterns and connections between themes was conducted to determine their relevance to the research question and objectives. The researcher utilized a deductive approach, analyzing the relationships between the identified themes and the existing literature. This process yielded valuable insights into the factors contributing to the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality (Bryman, 2016).

To enhance the credibility and robustness of the analysis, the findings were compared with existing literature, documents, reports, and policies. These documents were carefully reviewed and analyzed for key themes and patterns related to gender imbalance. A systematic review of relevant scholarly works was conducted to identify similarities and differences between the research findings and previous studies. This triangulation process helped validate the research findings and provided a broader understanding of the research topic (Flick, 2018).

3.7 Trustworthiness

In the study on gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality, it was essential to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. Trustworthiness refers to the reliability, validity, and transparency of the research process, which is crucial for maintaining the integrity and usefulness of the study (Cope, 2014). The study explored the criteria of trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, and how they were addressed in the research.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility focuses on establishing the truthfulness and authenticity of the data and interpretations. In this study, credibility was ensured through robust engagement with the study participants and the use of appropriate research instruments. The researcher actively involved the participants in interviews, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher also utilized reliable research methods and techniques to collect data, ensuring that the information gathered accurately represented the participants' viewpoints.

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the data under similar conditions. In this study, dependability was achieved through the use of reliable research methods. The researcher employed consistent and systematic procedures throughout the data collection and analysis process. By following standardized protocols and documenting the research procedures, the study's findings could be replicated and verified in similar contexts (Connelly, 2016).

3.7.3 Confirmability

Confirmability ensures that the data reflect the participants' responses rather than the researcher's biases or preconceptions. To establish confirmability, the researcher extensively presented rich quotes from participants that depicted each emerging theme. By including direct participant quotations, the researcher allowed readers to assess the alignment between the data and the interpretations made (Polit & Beck, 2012). This approach enhanced the transparency and objectivity of the research process.

3.7.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied to other settings or groups. It involves determining the generalizability of the results beyond the immediate study participants. To ensure transferability, the researcher provided clear and comprehensive descriptions of the research context, methods, and results. This allowed readers to assess the applicability of the findings to their own contexts (Houghton et al., 2013). By providing detailed information, the researchers facilitated the transferability of the study's outcomes to other educational settings.

Maintaining the trustworthiness of the research findings was vital in the study of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. Through establishing credibility, dependability,

confirmability, and transferability, the researcher ensured the reliability, validity, and transparency of the study. These efforts contributed to the overall quality and integrity of the research, enhancing confidence in the findings and their applicability to other educational contexts.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in research, particularly when examining sensitive topics such as the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. Adhering to ethical principles safeguards the rights, well-being, and dignity of research participants while maintaining the integrity and validity of the study (Bhandari, 2020). In this study several key ethical considerations were followed to ensure the ethical conduct of the research.

Firstly, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Education Ethics Committee. This step was crucial to ensure that the research adhered to ethical standards and was conducted in accordance with established guidelines and regulations. The approval process involved a comprehensive review of the study's design, methodology, potential risks, and benefits to the participants.

Informed consent was a fundamental ethical consideration in this study. Participants, including male teachers, administrators, and other relevant stakeholders, were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and any potential risks or discomforts. They were given the opportunity to voluntarily participate and were assured that their decision to participate or decline would not have any negative consequences. Informed consent forms were obtained from all participants, indicating their understanding of the research and their willingness to take part.

Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained to protect the participants' identities and ensure their privacy. Participants' personal information and responses were treated as strictly confidential, and steps were taken to ensure that data were stored securely and accessible only to authorized researchers. Any personally identifiable information was removed or anonymized during data analysis and reporting to further protect the participants' confidentiality.

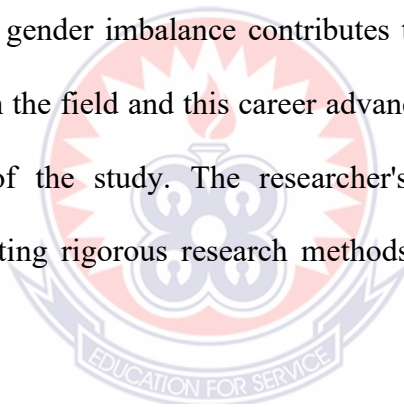
Furthermore, the researcher adopted a respectful and inclusive approach throughout the study. They fostered a supportive and non-judgmental environment, allowing participants to freely express their perspectives and experiences. Participants' voices were valued and represented accurately in the research findings, maintaining the principle of respect for human dignity and cultural sensitivity.

By adhering to these ethical considerations, this study ensured the protection of participants' rights, welfare, and confidentiality. The ethical conduct of the research not only upholds the integrity of the study but also contributes to the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

3.9 Positionality

Positionality refers to the researcher's self-awareness and acknowledgment of his/her own beliefs, experiences, and potential influence on the research process. In the study on gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in Agona West Municipality, positionality played a crucial role in ensuring a fair and unbiased approach to the research. To minimize bias and partisan perspectives, the researcher-maintained reflexivity throughout the study. Reflexivity involves critically reflecting on one's own background, beliefs, and potential biases. By acknowledging these factors, the researcher aimed to approach the study with an open mind and ensure a fair

representation of participants' perspectives (Bourke, 2014). This reflexivity was essential in exploring the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom without imposing preconceived notions or assumptions. The researcher adopted an interpretivist perspective in conducting the study. This philosophical standpoint recognizes the subjectivity of individuals and emphasizes the importance of understanding their lived experiences and interpretations (Holmes, 2020). In the context of the study on gender imbalance, an interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to delve into the diverse viewpoints of participants and gain a nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of male teachers. The researcher's career advancement in academics influenced her motivation to undertake this research. Conducting a study on a significant issue like gender imbalance contributes to the researcher's professional growth and expertise in the field and this career advancement does not undermine the integrity or validity of the study. The researcher's commitment to maintaining reflexivity and conducting rigorous research methods ensured the reliability of the findings.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented a concise exploration of the findings and discussions derived from interviews, focusing on the impact of male teachers in early childhood education. The analysis was organized into themes that reflected the study's objectives and research questions, highlighting the importance of gender diversity in shaping educational outcomes as well as perceptions of gender roles. The chapter also engaged in a critical synthesis of the findings through triangulation, comparing interview data with existing literature to validate the conclusions drawn.

4.2 Findings

In this study, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What are the factors contributing to the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality?
2. What are the criteria used in assigning teachers in the kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality?
3. What are the challenges headteachers face in placing male teachers in the kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality?
4. What strategies could be used to retain male teachers in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality?

4.3 Factors contributing to the gender imbalance in the kindergarten classroom

4.3.1 Societal and Cultural Perceptions

Societal and cultural norms significantly impact the distribution of genders in early childhood education roles, with a prevailing belief that caregiving and nurturing are inherently female attributes. This perception is reinforced by traditional gender roles

that have historically placed women in the caretaker role in the home and educational settings (Cushman, 2005). Such stereotypes suggest that women are more suited to the emotional and developmental needs of young children, which can discourage men from entering the field due to fear of social stigma or questioning of their masculinity (Sargent, 2001).

Participants in the study echoed these sentiments, expressing those societal expectations significantly influence the gender dynamics within kindergarten classrooms. For example, one participant mentioned,

In our society, it's generally expected that women take on roles that involve nurturing, like teaching young children. It's not just about what's happening in schools; it's about what we've been taught to believe men and women should do. (Participant 8, Field Interview, 2023)

In many cultures, there's still a prevailing belief that caregiving roles, such as teaching in kindergarten, are more suitable for women. This stereotype can deter men from pursuing careers in early childhood education, leading to a significant gender imbalance among kindergarten teachers (Participant 3, Field Interview, 2023)

This quote emphasizes the profound convictions that perpetuate gender inequality, demonstrating how cultural expectations and societal norms extend beyond the classroom to influence the professional landscape of early childhood education. Farquhar et al.'s (2019) global perspective reinforces this idea, revealing that the difficulties male educators encounter in early childhood education are not restricted to any particular nation, but rather constitute a universal problem. These obstacles stem from prevalent cultural and societal attitudes that define and restrict gender roles within the field. Warin (2015) suggested that increasing gender balance and flexibility in professional roles can contribute to a more inclusive environment, which is crucial for developing a diverse and effective educational workforce.

4.3.2 Early Childhood Education as a Less Desirable Role for Males

Early childhood education, especially at the kindergarten level, is often perceived as an extension of traditional caregiving roles that have mainly been assigned to women. This association contributes to undervaluing the profession, which discourages male participation. It frames the profession as less prestigious, less intellectually stimulating, and less financially rewarding compared to other teaching or professional roles (Cunningham & MacFarlane, 2016). Participants' quotes shed light on these perceptions. For example, one participant expressed,

People often say, teaching kindergarten is just playing with kids all day, is not a kind of job for a man
(Participants 4, Field Interview, 2023)

This sentiment reflects how early childhood education is often viewed as trivial because it is associated with play rather than serious, foundational learning and development.

Another participant pointed out,

My friends joked about me getting a 'real' job when I mentioned wanting to teach younger children. (Participant 4, Field Interview, 2023).

These quotes underscore the societal pressures and stereotypes that male teachers face, which can deter their entry into early childhood education.

Sargent's research in 2017 delved deeper into the devaluation of early childhood education when compared to other educational sectors. The study attributes this devaluation to the association with caregiving roles and the feminization of the workforce. This aligns with the initial discussion, which highlights how gender stereotypes and societal norms contribute to the gender imbalance in the profession. The study reinforces the notion that the teaching of young children is less valued and, therefore, deemed less suitable for men.

However, the positive impact male teachers can have in early childhood settings, particularly in providing diverse role models for children, cannot be overstated (Warin,

2018). This counters the trivialization of the profession by emphasizing the significant, positive contributions male educators can bring to early childhood education, challenging the stereotypes that limit male participation. Neugebauer and Brown (2019) provided empirical evidence of the societal pressures and stereotypes that play a crucial role in discouraging men from entering early childhood education.

4.3.3 Resistance and Lack of Interest from Male Teachers

In the matter of resistance and lack of interest from male teachers, Cushman (2005) underscored the influence of societal perceptions and gender stereotypes, which often depict teaching younger children as a profession lacking in prestige and more suited to women due to traditional caregiving roles. These stereotypes not only discourage men from entering the profession but also foster a fear of stigma and questioning of their masculinity, contributing to the gender imbalance in early childhood education in the Agona West. One participant noted:

Male teachers do not have interest teaching at the KG
(Participant 2, Field Interview, 2023)

Lack of visibility and representation of male teachers in early childhood education. Many individuals, especially young boys, may not even consider teaching in kindergarten as a viable career option simply because they haven't seen men in those roles Participant 11, Field Interview, 2023)

The work environment in early childhood education, often dominated by female staff, contributed to male teachers' sense of isolation and affected their job satisfaction and retention. Farquhar (1997) provided insight into the experiences of male educators in these settings, highlighting the challenges they face, including feeling marginalized within a predominantly female workforce. This sense of isolation impacted their professional identity and commitment to the field. Additionally, another participant remarked:

Being at the KG is seen as a punishment. (Participant 4, Field Interview, 2023)

Additionally, the fear of suspicion or accusations when working closely with young children is a significant barrier for male teachers. Further some headteacher put teachers at the KG as a means of punishment. King (1998) explored the anxieties surrounding societal perceptions of male interaction with children, which can lead to self-censorship or avoidance of the profession altogether. This fear of being perceived inappropriately merely because of their gender underscores the need for societal shifts in perception towards male educators in early childhood settings.

4.3.4 Institutional and Assignment Practices

Participants highlighted that the decision-making process regarding classification is influenced by deeply ingrained perceptions about gender roles. One participant noted,

When it comes to kindergarten, the immediate thought is to assign female teachers, as they are seen as naturally more nurturing and patient. (Participant 9, Field Interview, 2023)

This observation underscores the assumption that women are inherently more suited to caring for and educating young children, an assumption that guides the assignment practices in Agona West Municipal Educational Directorate. Another participant commented on the administrative perspective,

Management often prefers female teachers for KG because they believe parents feel more comfortable with women teaching their young children. (Participant 10, Field Interview, 2023)

This reflects not only institutional biases but also perceived parental preferences, which influence decisions. These insights reveal that management practices and assignment policies are not solely based on qualifications or teacher preferences but are significantly shaped by societal norms and stereotypes about gender. Supporting this observation, Jones and Myhill (2021) provided empirical evidence that gender stereotypes significantly impact hiring decisions in early childhood education. Their

study underscores the deep-rooted societal norms that shape their practices aligning with the participant's insights about the preference for female teachers based on stereotypical assumptions about gender roles (Jones & Myhill, 2021). Similarly, Thompson and Smith (2022) delved into the dynamics of parental preferences, revealing that these preferences are steeped in traditional gender roles, which further influence administrative decisions in teacher selection.

However, the discussion also integrates contrasting evidence that suggests potential pathways to mitigating gender bias. Larson and Marsh (2020) discussed the role of policy interventions in diversifying the early childhood education workforce. They argued that while stereotypes are influential, targeted policies and awareness programs can significantly reduce gender bias, promoting a more equitable distribution of teaching roles. Furthermore, Anderson and Kim (2019) emphasized the importance of teacher education programs in challenging gender stereotypes. By preparing teachers, irrespective of gender, for roles across all levels of education, including early childhood, educational institutions can begin to dismantle the stereotypes that currently limit teaching based on gender.

4.4 Criteria used in assigning teachers in the kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality?

The themes emerged from the research question is;

Theme: Gender Stereotypes and perception

One participant noted:

“When it comes to kindergarten, the immediate thought is to assign female teachers, as they are seen as naturally more nurturing and patient.” (Participant 9, Field Interview, 2023).

Another participant shared: *“Management often prefers female teachers for KG because they believe parents feel more comfortable with women teaching their young children” (Participant 10, Field Interview, 2023).*

This perception is deeply rooted in traditional gender roles. For a long time, society has viewed women as more caring, motherly, and suitable for looking after young children. As a result, teaching at the kindergarten level has become a female-dominated field in many parts of the world, including Ghana. The comment by Participant 9 shows that school authorities believe that female teachers are naturally better at handling young children. This belief may not be based on actual teaching skills but rather on social ideas about how women behave (UNESCO, 2019).

Participant 10's response further supports this, stating that management often chooses female teachers for kindergartens because they think parents feel more at ease when women are in charge of young learners. This idea assumes that parents trust female teachers more when it comes to taking care of small children. While this may be true for some parents, it also reflects gender bias, where men are seen as less suitable for roles that involve nurturing and emotional care (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015).

The responses also show how school leadership and societal expectations work together to influence hiring practices. When management and parents both expect female teachers to handle early childhood classes, it becomes difficult for male teachers to enter or remain in those roles. This could lead to gender imbalance in kindergarten teaching, where very few male teachers are found in those classrooms (Sumsion, 2005). This also limits the opportunities for young children to experience diverse teaching styles and learn from both male and female role models.

Another issue that comes from this trend is that it can discourage qualified and passionate male teachers from choosing a career in early childhood education. If society keeps sending the message that kindergarten teaching is for women, men who are interested in teaching young children may feel uncomfortable or unwanted in that space.

This reduces the number of male teachers available in kindergartens, which continues the gender imbalance cycle (Cameron, 2006).

In addition, the idea that women are naturally nurturing and better suited for kindergartens may ignore the need for professional training and skill development in early childhood education. Good kindergarten teaching does not come only from being kind or patient—it requires planning, knowledge of child development, and the ability to use creative teaching methods. Therefore, both men and women should be equally encouraged and supported to work in kindergarten settings if they have the interest and qualifications (Peeters, 2007).

It is also important to think about the role of gender equality in education. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and men. Part of this goal includes breaking down gender stereotypes in professions, including teaching (UN, 2015). Encouraging more male participation in early childhood education is one way to help achieve this goal. Schools and education managers need to look beyond traditional gender roles and focus more on the abilities, training, and passion of individual teachers, whether male or female.

Furthermore, some studies have shown that children benefit from having both male and female teachers, especially in their early years. Male teachers can bring different teaching styles and life experiences, which can help children develop a better understanding of gender roles and respect for diversity (Jones, 2007). For boys especially, having male teachers can also provide positive male role models, especially in communities where some children may not have strong male figures at home.

Theme: Increased Parental Involvement

One participant noted:

"Yes, I have seen a positive change. Parents are now more involved in school activities like open days and PTA meetings than they were some years back." (Participant 5, Field Interview, 2023).

Another participant shared

"I've noticed that parents now communicate more regularly with teachers. Some even request progress reports more often, which was not common before." (Participant 9, Field Interview, 2023).

The responses from the headteachers show that there has been a positive change in how parents participate in school activities and support their children's education.

One participant stated

"Yes, I have seen a positive change. Parents are now more involved in school activities like open days and PTA meetings than they were some years back." This comment suggests that schools are seeing an increase in the number of parents attending events such as open days, parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings, and other school programs. This trend is important because it shows that parents are taking an active interest in their children's school life, which is one of the key ways of supporting children's learning.

This finding supports what Epstein (2018) said about the importance of family and school partnerships. According to her, when parents are involved in school events and activities, children are more likely to attend school regularly, behave well, and perform better in class. Therefore, the increase in parental attendance at school functions could be helping to create a better learning environment for the children.

The second participant shared

"I've noticed that parents now communicate more regularly with teachers. Some even request progress reports more often, which was not common before." This response shows another aspect of increased parental involvement – communication. In the past, many parents only came to the school when there was a problem, but now, more parents are making efforts to keep in touch with teachers. This regular communication between parents and teachers is important because it helps both parties understand the needs of the child and work together to meet them (Hornby, 2011).

When parents ask for progress reports or updates, it means they are not waiting for end-of-term results to know how their child is doing. This can lead to early identification of learning challenges and quick intervention to support the child. According to Goodall and Montgomery (2014), regular parent-teacher communication improves children's academic success and builds a strong relationship between the school and the home.

Both participant responses indicate a positive shift in parental involvement, and this can be linked to wider awareness campaigns, parent education, and community engagement programs that encourage parents to take active roles in their children's education. It may also be due to schools making it easier for parents to participate by organizing meetings at convenient times or using mobile phones and WhatsApp to send reminders and updates.

The importance of this trend cannot be overemphasized. Research shows that children whose parents are involved in their schooling from an early age are more likely to develop strong language skills, perform well academically, and have better social skills (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). This is particularly important in early childhood,

where children are still learning how to interact, speak clearly, and develop basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Moreover, increased parental involvement also helps teachers. When parents support learning at home and reinforce what is taught in school, teachers find it easier to manage the classroom and achieve learning goals. According to Sheldon and Epstein (2005), schools that have strong parent involvement programs often see improvements in student behavior, attendance, and academic outcomes.

Despite this positive trend, there may still be some challenges. Not all parents are able to participate equally. Some may have time constraints, lack of education, financial struggles, or limited understanding of how to support their child's learning. As Hornby and Lafaele (2011) explained, barriers to parental involvement can be personal, societal, or school-based. Therefore, schools must continue finding ways to reach all parents, not just the active ones.

One way to address this is by using multiple communication channels, such as text messages, parent-teacher apps, and home visits. Schools can also organize workshops to help parents understand how to assist with homework, read with their children, or create a positive learning space at home. When parents feel welcomed and supported, they are more likely to stay involved.

Another key point from the participants' responses is the shift in attitudes. In many communities, there was once the belief that education was the sole responsibility of the teacher. However, the recent changes noted by the headteachers suggest that more parents now see themselves as partners in the learning process. This is a sign of growth in both parent awareness and school-parent relationships.

Furthermore, the increased demand for progress reports shows that parents want to be informed, not just involved. They are asking questions, checking up on performance, and ensuring their children stay on track. According to Harris and Goodall (2008), parental engagement that happens at home—such as monitoring school work, discussing school experiences, and setting expectations—has the greatest impact on student achievement.

4.4 Challenges faced by male teachers in early childhood education within the municipality

4.4.1 Perception of Gender Role

The perception of gender roles significantly influences the placement of teachers in kindergarten classrooms within the Agona West Municipality. This perception is deeply rooted in societal norms and cultural settings where certain roles are traditionally assigned based on gender. For instance, the societal expectation that caregiving and early childhood education are primarily women's responsibilities is a prominent theme that emerges from the participants. This cultural norm shapes the staffing of kindergarten classrooms, resulting in a significant gender imbalance.

One participant highlighted this by stating,

In our cultural settings, women take care of children. Teaching in the kindergarten is for women (Participant 9, Field Interview, 2023).

There is often a perception among parents and society that men are not as capable or suited for working with young children as women (Participant 2, Field Interview, 2023).

This quote reflects the deep-seated belief that caregiving, including teaching at the kindergarten level, is more suited to women. This perception not only influences the recruitment and assignment of teachers but also impacts the willingness of male teachers to engage in early childhood education. The belief by participants further

illustrates how societal norms dictate gender roles within educational settings, discouraging male participation in early childhood education.

...teaching in the kindergarten is for women (Participant 13,
Field Interview, 2023)

The challenge of addressing this gender imbalance is compounded by the fact that these roles are not merely about professional qualifications but are deeply intertwined with societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity. The reluctance of men to engage in roles perceived as less prestigious or challenging is a testament to the pervasive impact of these gender norms. For instance, another participant confirmed the notion that

*Men do not have interest especially when it comes to
bringing of children. It requires some level of patience which
most men do not have* (Participant 15, Field Interview, 2023)

This notion underscores the stereotype that caregiving and nurturing roles are inherently feminine, thus creating a barrier to male participation in kindergarten teaching. One participant carefully captured:

*It requires some level of patience which most men do not
have* (Participant 11, Field Interview, 2023)

This reflects stereotypes about male temperament and its suitability for teaching young learners. This stereotype not only influences the placement of teachers but also affects the experiences of male teachers who choose to work in early childhood education, as they may face skepticism regarding their suitability for such roles.

Almy and Sanatullova-Allison (n.d.) explored gender socialization within culture, society, and education, highlighting how societal and cultural conditioning of both students and teachers perpetuates gender roles in educational settings. They argued that

gender socialization is a cultural universal trait, where individuals learn roles deemed appropriate for each sex, reinforcing gender inequalities in education.

Similarly, Kutuk (2023) utilized Bandura's social cognitive theory to examine the impact of gender stereotypes on language learning experiences, revealing that societal norms and cultural expectations significantly influence the distinct learning experiences of female and male learners. That study underscored the pervasive role of gender stereotypes in shaping educational practices and experiences.

These findings align with the discussion on the placement of kindergarten teachers within the Agona West Municipality, illustrating how deeply ingrained societal norms and cultural expectations dictate gender roles in education, leading to a significant gender imbalance. Also, the study supports the notion that addressing this imbalance requires a critical examination of the societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity that influence the recruitment and assignment of teachers in early childhood education.

4.4.2 Societal Perceptions and Gender Roles

The societal perceptions and gender roles surrounding male teachers in kindergarten classrooms within the Agona West Municipality reveal a complex interplay of societal perception and gender roles. These dynamics contribute significantly to the gender imbalance observed in early childhood education settings. The experiences shared by participants in the study offer a vivid depiction of the challenges male teachers face, rooted deeply in societal expectations and professional stigmatization.

One participant eloquently captured the essence of the challenge:

It requires some level of patience which most men do not have because at that level children are very worrisome as I said and most men will not want to engage themselves in that kind of situation. I also think it is appropriate that we see at home see mother and father bringing up the children. So, if we have that mentality that it's always the women who have that passion, we also have males who can also have that

passion of giving that care (Participant 3, Field Interview, 2023).

This quote underscores the stereotype that men lack the patience required for early childhood education, a job that is often seen as more suitable for women due to its nurturing demands.

Another key insight is provided by a participant who discussed the societal expectations:

I think the Ghanaian society is very conservative and we see certain roles as for women and that men do not have interest especially when it comes to bringing up children. At that level, men see that it is the job of women to do that. (Participant 7, Field Interview, 2023).

This statement highlights how deeply ingrained gender roles influence the professional choices of men and women, contributing to the gender imbalance in the profession.

The perception of kindergarten teaching as a less dignified role for men is another significant barrier:

Well, and I think that one factor has to do with the fact that men do not see teaching at that level as dignified enough. Yes. They don't see it to be something that is within their status especially what society will see if I'm a man and I'm teaching at that level (Participant 9, Field Interview, 2023).

This quote illustrates how societal expectations and personal pride can deter men from pursuing careers in early childhood education, further exacerbating the gender imbalance.

Yang and McNair (2020) explored male teachers' perceptions in China, finding their experiences aligned with global trends of strict gender roles influencing career paths in early childhood education. The study found reframing professional development to emphasize teaching improvement and professional advancement for both genders. Chen (2023) provided a comprehensive examination of the challenges faced by male kindergarten teachers in China, uncovering themes of professional gendered challenges and strategies to reshape gender norms. The study called for societal and policy shifts

to transcend gender binaries, emphasizing pedagogical expertise over gendered preconceptions.

4.4.2 Professional Stigmatization

This stigma is not only perpetuated by society at large but is also internalized by teachers themselves, leading to a reluctance among male teachers to pursue or accept positions in kindergarten classrooms.

One participant articulated this sentiment by expressing how male teachers are perceived when they work in kindergarten settings:

There is often a societal perception that teaching young children is primarily a female-dominated profession, which can lead to male teachers being stigmatized or marginalized within the field. (Participant 5, Field Interview, 2023)

Any time you see a male teacher going to the KG classroom... people will be thinking this teacher is a lazy teacher and not academically good. (Participant 8, Field Interview, 2023)

This quote underscores the derogatory stereotypes associated with men in early childhood education, suggesting that their professional choice is seen as a lack of ambition or seriousness.

Another participant highlighted the internal conflict and resistance among male teachers regarding placements in lower grades:

Because it's from the mindset that oh that place, I'm teaching in probably class 3 or class 5. And then you move me to the KG. Why? (Participant 8, Field Interview, 2023).

This reflects a broader professional stigma, where teaching younger children is devalued and seen as less prestigious or challenging compared to teaching older students.

Qayyum (2019) explored the stress experienced by early childhood teachers, including male educators, emphasizing the impact of job demand stressors and the potential of positive psychology (PsyCap) to mitigate these effects. This study indirectly supports

the notion of professional stigmatization by highlighting the unique stresses faced by early childhood educators, which may be exacerbated for male teachers due to societal stereotypes. Again, Åberg and Maria Hedlin (2014) investigated the sociological aspects of physical interaction in early childhood education, focusing on the heightened suspicion male teachers face regarding inappropriate touching. This study directly addresses the stigma male teachers encounter, reinforcing the discussion on professional stigmatization by illustrating the gendered challenges in teacher-student interactions (Åberg & Hedlin, n.d.). Also, Zaman (2008) discussed the stigma around boys in early childhood education, which extends to male teachers. The perception of boys and, by extension, male educators as "troublemakers" underscores the professional stigmatization faced by male teachers in early childhood settings, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive teaching approaches (Zaman, 2008).

4.4.3 Challenges in Assigning Male Teachers to KG

One significant challenge is the prevailing societal perception that associates early childhood education with femininity, suggesting that men may lack the patience or inclination for such roles. This perception is underpinned by statements from the participants, such as,

Men see that it is the job of women to do that... most men will not want to engage themselves in that kind of situation,
(Participant 6, Field Interview, 2023)

Teaching at that level is also extremely difficult... requires some level of patience which most men do not have.
(Participant 10, Field Interview, 2023)

These quotes highlight a stereotypical view that questions the suitability of men for early childhood education, suggesting an inherent gender bias that discourages male participation.

Professional stigmatization also emerges as a critical challenge. The study revealed concern among male teachers about being assigned to KG as potentially damaging to their professional reputation:

Any time you see a male teacher going to the KG classroom... people will be thinking this teacher is a lazy teacher; (Participant 14, Field Interview, 2023)

Because it's from the mindset that oh that place, I'm teaching in probably class 3 or class 5. And then you move me to the KG. Why? (Participant 8, Field Interview, 2023)

These reflections indicate a fear of professional devaluation, where being assigned to a KG classroom is seen as a downgrade or an implication of laziness or incompetence.

Furthermore, institutional barriers compound these challenges. A participant expressed a that speaks volumes:

The challenge is that like I said earlier with that perception even the teacher may not be ready to go there (Participant 15, Field Interview, 2023)

Another participant regrettably noted:

"For the past 20 years that I've been in this school, there was no male teacher who has been at the KG." (Participant 1, Field Interview, 2023)

The analysed data suggests an institutional reluctance to challenge the status quo or to actively encourage male teachers to consider roles in early childhood education.

Several studies support the notion of prevailing societal perceptions and professional stigmatization as significant challenges. Chen (2023) explored the experiences of male kindergarten teachers in China, highlighting professional gendered challenges, external expectations, confronting biases, and strategies to proactively reshape gender norms. His study underscored the resilience of male educators in challenging deep-seated stereotypes and calls for societal and policy shifts in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to transcend gender binaries.

Alqahtani (2020) suggested that gender-segregated employment patterns remain tenacious due to their integration into the organizational fabric of work, affecting

leadership roles and contributing to the gender gap in various professions, including education.

Furthermore, Phillips, Roberts, and Marsh's (n.d) study parallels the challenges in early childhood education, where entrenched gender barriers serve to exclude men from prominent positions, highlighting the need for a critical examination of gender and leadership structures in trade unions and, by extension, educational settings.

4.5 Strategies and interventions in Promoting recruitment and retention of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms

4.5.1 Changing Societal Perception and Education

Tackling the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality requires addressing the foundational attitudes and beliefs held by society towards male teachers in early childhood education. Participants stressed the critical need for educational campaigns and efforts to change societal mindsets. One participant highlighted the importance of utilizing platforms such as Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings to educate parents and the community:

During PTA meetings we need to educate parents about some of these things and how these male teachers will be over. (Participant 6, Field Interview, 2023)

Highlighting the valuable contributions that male teachers bring to early childhood education. This can be done through awareness campaigns, professional development workshops, and community engagement efforts aimed at promoting the diversity of roles and talents within the teaching profession (Participant 6, Field Interview, 2023).

This suggests that direct engagement with parents and the community is seen as a vital strategy for altering perceptions, implying that misconceptions about the roles and capabilities of male teachers in early childhood settings are prevalent and need

addressing through informed discussions. Another participant emphasized the need for open discourse to facilitate change:

*...to change the mindset, they set the platform for that debate
to be hard so that everybody will express their own opinion.*

(Participant 8, Field Interview, 2023)

The excerpts point to the strategy of fostering environments where diverse viewpoints can be shared and debated, indicating a belief in the power of dialogue to challenge and ultimately shift entrenched societal norms. These insights reveal a consensus among stakeholders on the necessity of targeted educational initiatives aimed at dismantling stereotypes and biases against male teachers in kindergarten.

The focus on PTA meetings and open debates as avenues for changing societal perceptions suggest an engaging various segments of the community in dialogue and education to reshape how male educators in early childhood are viewed. By integrating these strategies, the aim is to cultivate a more inclusive understanding that teaching young children is not gender-specific but requires passion, dedication, and expertise, irrespective of the teacher's gender. This shift in perception is crucial for not only attracting more male teachers to early childhood education but also for ensuring that their contributions are valued and supported within the educational ecosystem and the broader community.

Wu (2023) emphasized the impact of gender stereotypes from parents, teachers, and media on children's perceptions, suggesting that improving conditions and salaries for educators and promoting gender awareness can help attract more male teachers to the profession, thereby challenging existing stereotypes. Peeters, Rohrmann, and Emilsen (2015) discussed the persisting gender imbalance in early childhood education (ECE), attributing it to deeply held gendered attitudes and practices. They advocated for

questioning these essentialist conceptions and creating more inclusive spaces in ECE to facilitate gender balance.

Furthermore, a study by de Souza, Ferreira, and Leal (2020) reflected on the scarcity of men in early childhood education roles, emphasizing the need for theoretical and practical efforts to overcome discriminatory attitudes towards male teachers.

Lastly, Clyde (1994) explored Australian attitudes towards men in the early childhood profession, revealing mixed perceptions about male and female teachers' roles and career longevity, highlighting the societal expectations that contribute to the gender imbalance. These studies collectively collaborate on the importance of addressing societal attitudes and stereotypes through education and dialogue. They support the argument for targeted educational initiatives and the creation of open platforms for debate as essential strategies for changing perceptions and encouraging more men to enter early childhood education.

4.5.2 Incentivization and Recognition

Incentivization and recognition emerge as crucial themes in addressing the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality, particularly for recruiting and retaining male teachers. This finding revealed the importance of both financial and non-financial incentives, alongside recognition and awards, as motivators for male educators to join and stay in early childhood education.

Financial incentives, as suggested by participants, could take various forms, such as bonuses or higher salary scales for those choosing to work in early childhood settings. This approach is rooted in the understanding that financial rewards can significantly influence career choices and commitments. One participant emphasized the need for monetary recognition, suggesting that

If the teacher teaches at the kindergarten level for sometimes, I think at the end of the year there should be some sort of award. Male teachers can be given bonuses or higher salary scales for choosing to work in the KG (Participant 6, Field Interview, 2023).

This emphasized the proposal for annual awards, which could serve as a tangible acknowledgement of the unique contributions male teachers bring to early childhood education.

Non-financial incentives, on the other hand, include professional development opportunities, career advancement prospects, and public recognition of the valuable role male teachers play in early learning environments. The idea is to create a comprehensive support system that not only acknowledges the current contributions of male teachers but also invests in their future within the field. As one participant noted, there should be

a deliberate policy direction with incentive to teachers who would want to first of all pursue early childhood education.
(Participant 9, Field Interview, 2023)

This statement points towards the need for structured pathways that encourage male educators to specialize in early childhood education, recognizing their dedication through both professional growth opportunities and public acknowledgement.

Mathwasa and Sibanda (2021) emphasized the critical role of male educators in Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs, highlighting the barriers to male involvement, such as stigmatization and suspicion, and suggesting strategies for recruitment, retention, and active participation in ECD settings. Their work revealed the need for policy and teacher education reforms to support male educators (Mathwasa, & Sibanda (2021) Lian (2023) critically discussed the gendered nature of the ECEC sector and the debates surrounding the recruitment and retention of male preschool teachers. Despite various initiatives, the outcomes have often been negative, pointing to the need for new perspectives and strategies, including both top-down policy and

bottom-up approaches, to change the gender imbalance (Lian, 2023) Kolesnikova and Kudenko (2023) explored the representation and strategies used to attract male educators to preschool education in Russia, highlighting the low proportion of male educators and the complex perceptions surrounding the profession. Their findings suggest a need for a nuanced understanding and approach to addressing gender imbalances in ECE.

These studies collectively affirm the importance of incentivization and recognition in mitigating gender imbalances in early childhood education, suggesting approaches that include policy reform, societal attitude shifts, and targeted recruitment and retention strategies.

4.5.3 Professional Development and Training

The importance of professional development and training for male teachers in kindergarten classrooms in the Agona West Municipality is very necessary. This study found the necessity for both pre-service and in-service training programs tailored to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge required for effective teaching in early childhood education. The emphasis on training is rooted in the understanding that teaching young learners is not gender-specific and that men can play a crucial role in the developmental stages of children.

One participant highlighted the need for

Adequate workshops...both pre-service and in-service so that they know that teaching kids is not the work of a female only. (Participant 12, Field Interview 2023)

The quotes underline the stereotype that early childhood education is predominantly a female profession and the necessity to dismantle such misconceptions through targeted educational programs. By providing comprehensive training that addresses the unique

needs of young learners, male teachers can be better prepared to contribute positively to early childhood education environments.

Furthermore, another participant pointed to the importance of specialization and qualification, stating,

Once you decide to go and do those courses then once you are posted to the class you don't have any option than to go to those departments. (Participant, 1, Field Interview, 2023)

The above statements suggest a strategic approach to ensure that male teachers who receive specialized training in early childhood education are utilized effectively within the system. The finding emphasized the need for deliberate policy directions that not only encourage male teachers to pursue early childhood education but also ensure their placement in roles where they can make the most impact.

Collectively, these insights from participants indicate a clear consensus on the value of professional development and training in enhancing the competencies of male kindergarten teachers. By focusing on equipping male teachers with the right skills, knowledge, and understanding of early childhood education, it is possible to address the gender imbalance in the field and promote a more inclusive and diverse teaching environment that benefits all learners.

Several studies support the necessity of the importance of professional development and training for male teachers in kindergarten classrooms. Chen (2023) explored the challenges faced by male kindergarten teachers in China, highlighting the need for societal and policy shifts to transcend gender binaries in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). The study emphasized the resilience and innovative efforts of male educators to challenge stereotypes, suggesting a more inclusive ECE environment (Chen, 2023).

Tulang (2023) identified factors significantly related to kindergarten teachers' performance, including professional experiences and efficacy beliefs. The study suggested that seminar workshops and program training addressing the specific needs of kindergarten teachers can enhance teacher effectiveness, thereby fostering early childhood success.

Yang and McNair (2020) discussed male teachers' perceptions of their roles and professional development in China, indicating a global consistency in experiences influenced by strict gender roles. The study calls for a reframing of professional development with an emphasis on improving teaching for both genders. Lastly, Pasiningsih and Pancaningrum (2023) investigated the resilience factors of male teachers in the ECE field, identifying both challenges and protective factors such as support from family and colleagues. The study further underscored the importance of collaborative efforts to make the ECE field more gender-inclusive.

4.5.4 Policy and Structural Changes

The current study found key policy recommendations, incentives, and structural reforms as elucidated by participants, underscoring the urgent need for a paradigm shift in societal perceptions and educational policies. One participant pointed out the critical role of early childhood education (ECE) specialization, suggesting a strategic push towards incentivizing male teachers to pursue ECE as a viable career path. The participant noted,

A deliberate policy direction with incentive to teachers who would want to first of all pursue early childhood education.
(Participant 9, Field Interview, 2023)

This quote emphasized the necessity of creating targeted incentives to attract male educators into the ECE sphere, suggesting that financial or professional development incentives could significantly impact male teacher recruitment and retention rates.

Further, the study revealed a profound insight into the societal perceptions that deter men from pursuing teaching roles in kindergarten, with one participant highlighting the need to

...maybe educate people to do away with the perception that teaching children at that level is not dignified enough.

(Participant 4, Field Interview, 2023)

This quote stressed the societal stigma attached to men working in early childhood education and the imperative to challenge and change these outdated notions through education and awareness campaigns.

The Ministry of Education's efforts to adapt the curriculum to encourage specialization in ECE among male teachers is another pivotal point discussed. A statement from a participant suggested that policy adjustments at the national level are already underway to address this imbalance by mandating specialization that could lead to more male teachers in kindergarten classrooms.

The Ministry of Education has with the new curriculum there has been some deliberate attempt to ensure that teachers pursue courses in certain departments (Participant 2, Field Interview, 2023)

Moreover, the importance of structural reforms within educational institutions and hiring practices is highlighted. Another participant suggested that

Policies can be made that will give equal opportunities to both genders rather than basing on some cultural ideas to select teachers for the kindergarten (Participant 8, Field Interview, 2023)

This highlights the need for an equitable approach in policies, ensuring that male teachers who are qualified and interested in ECE are given fair and equal opportunities to contribute to early childhood education.

Research by Cushman (2005) and Sumsion (2005) aligned with the highlighted necessity for policy recommendations, incentives, and structural reforms to shift societal perceptions and educational policies. Cushman emphasized the importance of challenging traditional gender roles within the teaching profession, advocating for strategies similar to those suggested by participants, such as financial incentives and professional development opportunities to attract more male teachers to ECE. This approach is crucial for breaking down the societal stigma that deters men from pursuing roles in early childhood education. Similarly, Sumsion (2005) discussed the impact of societal perceptions on male teachers in ECE and the need for educational policy reforms. The research supports the call for targeted educational campaigns and curriculum adjustments to encourage male specialization in ECE, as mentioned in the analysis. Sumsion highlighted the effectiveness of such strategies in increasing male teacher recruitment and retention, further underlining the importance of structural reforms within educational institutions to provide equal opportunities for all genders. These studies corroborated the emphasis on the urgent need for a paradigm shift in societal perceptions and educational policies to foster a more inclusive and diverse teaching workforce in early childhood education.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the summary, conclusion, and the recommendations of the study. The delved into two sections. The first aspect is the summary of the research process and the second part highlighted on the key findings that emerged from the study.

5.2 Summary

The importance of male teachers in early childhood education has been underscored by several studies, which highlight their unique contributions to the development of children, especially boys (Bryan & Milton Williams, 2017; Sumsion, 2005). Despite this recognition, the presence of male teachers in kindergarten classrooms remains disproportionately low across many countries, including Ghana (Bryan & Milton Williams, 2017). To comprehend the underlying causes of this gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom, it was imperative to delve into the local trajectory of this issue. The objectives of the study were to explore the factors leading to the gender imbalance, the criteria used in assigning teachers in kindergarten classroom, and challenges headteachers face in placing male teachers in the kindergarten classroom, assess the strategies that could be used to retain male teachers in the kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality.

Grounded within the interpretive paradigm, the study sought to explore the socially constructed nature of the gender imbalance in kindergarten. Qualitative research approach was adopted, with a case study design facilitating an in-depth exploration of the specific context and dynamics of gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom in the Agona West Municipality. The study population comprised all head teachers responsible for managing schools and involved in the decision-making processes

related to classification in the municipality. A purposeful sample of fifteen (15) participants was selected, consisting of heads of basic schools with attached kindergartens, chosen based on the gender imbalance situation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the headteachers involved in kindergarten classroom and experiences. The data analysis followed a systematic four-step process, including data organization, coding, generation of themes, and interpretation, which facilitated the exploration of the research objectives. The researcher ensured the reliability, validity, and transparency of the study by establishing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Ethical considerations were adhered to, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, welfare, and confidentiality.

5.3 Key Findings

Key findings of the study included:

1. Societal and cultural perceptions play a significant role, with caregiving and nurturing roles traditionally seen as feminine.
2. Male teachers face stigmatization and isolation in a female-dominated environment. Also, there's a lack of interest among males due to societal expectations and fear of accusations when working closely with young children.
3. The gender imbalance affects the diversity of interactions and teaching styles in classrooms, potentially limiting children's exposure to varied role models and approaches to learning.
4. The study found the need for educational campaigns to change societal perceptions, financial and non-financial incentives, professional development and training tailored for male teachers, and policy and structural changes to encourage more males to pursue early childhood education.

5.4 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study draws the following conclusions:

1. The undervaluation of early childhood education as a profession for men, due to societal perceptions and traditional gender roles, reinforces the notion that caregiving and nurturing are primarily feminine roles.
2. The predominance of female teachers limits young learners' exposure to diverse teaching styles and caregiver roles, potentially affecting their social, emotional, and cognitive development.
3. Male teachers encounter stigmatization, isolation, and professional skepticism, hindering their participation in early childhood education.
4. Addressing the gender imbalance requires educational campaigns, incentives, professional development, and policy changes to create an equitable and supportive environment for male teachers.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to teachers and stakeholders who have the mandate to ensure the implementation of the standard-based curriculum. These include;

1. The District Education Directorate should initiate community-based education and awareness programs to address negative societal and cultural perceptions about male roles in early childhood education. These campaigns should emphasize the value of gender diversity in classrooms and promote early childhood education as a respectable and rewarding career path for all genders.
2. The Directorate should introduce both financial and non-financial incentives to attract and retain male teachers in early childhood settings. This may include

scholarships, salary top-ups, housing support, and public recognition to motivate more males to enter and stay in the profession.

3. The District Education Directorate should provide ongoing professional development and mentorship programs specifically designed for male teachers in early childhood education. These should address issues such as handling stigmatization, building confidence, and ensuring safe and supportive working environments.
4. The Directorate should work with stakeholders to review and implement policies that encourage gender balance in early childhood education staffing. This includes revising recruitment practices, improving workplace safety, and creating a more inclusive school culture that supports male teachers and promotes equal opportunity.

5.7 Study Limitation

The study faced various constraints. The purposeful sampling of 15 headteachers from schools with kindergartens restricts the applicability of the results. The opinions shared by these headteachers may not be indicative of the entire head teacher population in the Agona West Municipality. Excluding the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and lawmakers, which could offer a more thorough comprehension of the matter. The study is restricted by its geographical scope, being done solely within a certain municipality. The results may not be generalizable to regions with distinct cultural, social, and economic circumstances.

5.8 Suggestions for Future Studies

The following are suggestions for future studies

1. Further studies could focus specifically on the experiences, motivations, and challenges faced by male teachers in early childhood education to identify targeted strategies for recruitment and retention.
2. Future research could investigate the impact of teacher gender diversity on children's social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as their perceptions of gender roles.
3. Future studies could evaluate the effectiveness of different policies and interventions aimed at addressing the gender imbalance in early childhood education and promoting gender equity in the teaching profession.



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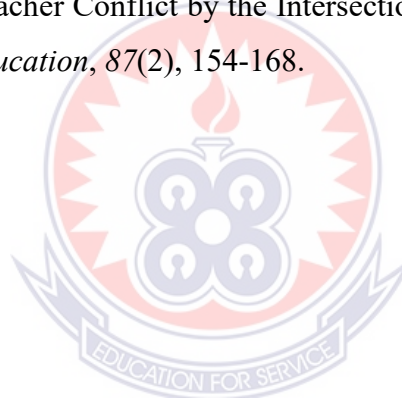
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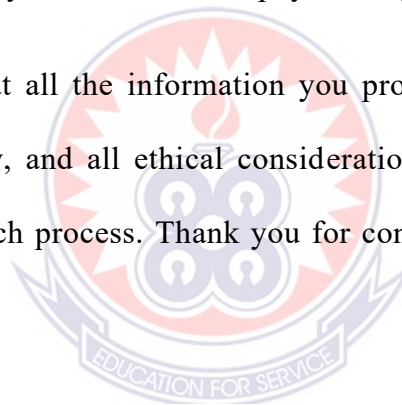
APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Semi-structured Interview Guide

Dear participant, I am EMMANUELLA PEACE HAMMOND, a final year MPhil student at the University of Education, Winneba. The purpose of this correspondence is to invite you to participate in a questionnaire designed to gather data for my research work entitled " GENDER IMBALANCE IN KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM IN AGONA WEST MUNICIPALITY: A FOCUS ON MALE TEACHERS". This research project is conducted solely for academic purposes and serves as a requirement for the completion of my Master of Philosophy in Early Childhood Education.

Please be assured that all the information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and all ethical considerations will be strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Thank you for considering your participation in this study.



Section 1: Key Factors Contributing to Gender Imbalance

1.1 Main Question:

Can you describe the current gender balance among teachers in kindergarten classrooms in your school?

1.1.1 Follow-up:

Have you noticed any trends or changes over the years in this aspect?

1.2 Main Question:

What do you believe are the key factors contributing to the gender imbalance in kindergarten classrooms here?

1.2.1 Follow-up:

How do these factors differ from other educational levels?

Section 2: Teacher-Related Criteria

2.1 Main Question:

Are there specific criteria that influence the assignment of teachers to kindergarten classrooms?

2.1.1 Follow-up:

Do these criteria contribute to the gender imbalance? If so, how?

Section 3: Challenge for Headteachers

3.1 Main Question:

What challenges do you face when trying to assign male teachers to kindergarten classrooms?

3.1.1 Follow-up:

Are these challenges unique to the kindergarten level?

3.1.2 Follow-up:

How do these challenges impact the overall staffing strategy in your school?

Section 4: Strategies for Retention

4.1 Main Question:

What strategies do you think could be effective in retaining male teachers in kindergarten classrooms?

4.1.1 Follow-up:

Are there any strategies that have been tried in the past? How effective were they?

4.1.2 Follow-up:

What barriers exist in implementing these strategies?

Closing: Thank you for sharing your insights and experiences. Your input is instrumental in understanding the complexity of the gender imbalance in kindergarten classroom. If you have any additional comments or thoughts, please feel free to share them. Your contribution will greatly contribute to advancing knowledge in the field of early childhood education.



APPENDIX B

