Men in a Women's World: Motivations and Perceptions on the Teaching Profession of Male Early Childhood Pre-service Teachers

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Abstract. Crucial in shaping future generations, the teaching profession is a nation- building career. Thus, motivations and perceptions in choosing this vocation become crucial as they play key roles in the development of pre-service teachers' identity as teachers. Despite some professions' gender balances appearing to be shifting toward equality, the teaching profession remains feminized and, hence, dominated by females. As such, the present qualitative descriptive study explored the career motivations and perceptions toward the teaching profession of five male early childhood education pre-service teachers. Regarding participants' perceptions of the teaching profession, findings showed 11 emerging themes focusing on the teachers' roles, characteristics, and responsibilities inside the classroom and their societal status. While the findings imply that they did not have any negative perceptions of the teaching profession, they were aware of how others construct negative views and stereotypes of it. In terms of the participants' career motivations, results showed five recurring themes, highlighting love for children, support for children's growth and development, and desire to change the common negative perspectives on male teachers. Furthermore, influences from their direct environment, such as their families and teachers, were also indicated as their driving force.

Keywords: Motivations · Perceptions · Teaching Professions · Early Childhood Education

1 Introduction

There are numerous and diverse reasons to choose teaching as a career [1]. Considering that teaching is regarded as a "nation-building profession," studies regarding the perceptions and motivations of pre-service teachers in selecting this profession would be

interesting [2]. In fact, researchers have already been studying the reasons why students pursue teaching careers for the last three decades, see [3–7], and it is still a significant concern for them to explore in order to continue to attract and retain educators [8]. Moreover, it is also important to consider that reasons for pursuing or rejecting a career in teaching have many factors, considering individuals' diverse values, cultures, expectations, and perceptions toward the teaching profession [9]. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the existence of motives and perceptions among pre-service teachers toward their future profession could play a significant role and influence the development of their identity as teachers, even if they are still in the early stage of training [10]. While strategies are undeniably relevant in recruiting teachers, the motivation of a person who chooses a teaching career plays a significant role because "wrong motives" in choosing this career might result in unprecedented consequences, which can lead to dropping or shifting from the course. In terms of training in teacher education programs, research revealed that applicants' interest in the field drives the demand for the course [6].

The gender imbalance in childcare and the early childhood teaching profession is highly evident [11], as teaching in this area has always been dominated by women [12–14]. According to Sumsion [15], early childhood education is still one of the most gender-biased professions. In fact, the population of male teachers in early childhood education has remained consistently low all over the world, ranging from only 1% to 3% in most countries [7]. The reasons why there are few male teachers in this field are linked to various reasons, including the gender roles expected of men, social norms, and contradicting beliefs in femininity and masculinity [16–18]. In addition, Pruit [13] conducted a study that investigated the practices and experiences of male teachers in Early Childhood education and found out that the identities of male teachers in the field are assumed as "suspicious". This suspicion includes the possibility of men being violent, pedophiles, homosexual, and feminine, which are considered and viewed to be threatening to the safety of the children. Due to these notions, fewer men engage in early childhood education. Conversely, there are potential benefits and advantages of having male teachers in the classroom that must be realized. Male participation would be more commonly and universally recognized if they effectively demonstrated their ability to fulfill their roles as teachers in the classroom [16]. However, it's difficult to prove or reject these claims since there's a dearth of empirical data on the impact of male early childhood teachers. Despite the strong rhetoric's appeal, the perspectives and responses of children to having male teachers remain unexplored [15]. Weaver-Hightower [19] posited that "in-service teachers" or employed teachers have been the subject of numerous studies that focus on the experiences of male teachers in the field of teaching. While these studies have provided vital views and discoveries in the field of education, the perspective and experiences of "Pre-service teachers" remain isolated and under-researched. Additionally, it is evident that there have been numerous studies that quantitatively explored the motivations in choosing the teaching profession in predefined categories such as intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations, sees [4, 20–23]. However, there is a lack of research focusing on qualitative data. Thus, the importance of comprehensive and varied data is highlighted rather than the use of predefined categories. [10]. These notions are also true in the Philippine context, much to the researcher's knowledge. The concern regarding contextualization came to be relevant since Ozturk-Akar [24] revealed that most of the

research studies conducted regarding motivations for choosing the teaching profession were mostly found in the North American context and New Zealand as the Australian context. Since there may be potential similarities, limitations, or irrelevancies of interpretations in various contexts, there is currently a need for large-scale, cross-cultural, or longitudinal investigations. Furthermore, it is true that male participation in early childhood education has not increased despite some professions' gender balances appearing to be shifting toward equality [12]. Additionally, the 'trend' that education courses or programs are more popular among females than males is another contributory factor to the underrepresentation of men in teaching courses [25–27]. Reasons for this concern include stereotypes and perceptions toward the teaching profession, which include low status and pay, and the fear of males of being accused of sexual abuse. However, along with female teachers, men can contribute significantly to the field of early childhood education. Teachers who are men can encourage kids by being caring adults. It is essential to change how people perceive gender-related issues in the early childhood education field [16]. Sumsion [28] also suggested that additional in-depth investigation, policy reform, and modifications to pre-service programs are required to address gender-based perceptions about males who choose to work in childcare and their challenges. Furthermore, investigations regarding future early childhood education teachers' motivations are still dearth [23]. Thus, this qualitative study aimed to explore the career motivations and perceptions of male pre-service early childhood education teachers toward the teaching profession.

1.1   Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated based on the objectives of the study:

a) What are the perceptions of male early childhood education pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession?
b) What are the motivations of male early childhood education pre-service teachers in pursuing a teaching career?

2   Review of Related Literature

2.1   Career Motivations in the Teaching Profession

There are various and diverse reasons on why people choose a career in teaching. Some prospective teachers will pursue this professional path in order to build a better society, while others will do so, in order to work with children or to ensure a flexible time that would be allotted for their families [1]. In addition, Gordon [29] posited that the desire to pursue a career in education, as well as the perseverance required to complete the process of becoming a teacher, are the results of a complex and diverse array of influences on the individual. Considering that education is crucial in shaping future generations, selecting qualified and dedicated teachers is critical. As a result, deciding on a career such as teaching becomes even more critical [30]. Thus, motivation becomes a core quality and aspect in the teaching profession. Hence, motivational components,

including career choice motivation, were included in the modeling and empirical studies of teachers' competencies [8]. Furthermore, the topic regarding motivations in choosing a teaching career is of current relevance to the contemporary culture; yet studies in the field remain insufficient, and the demand for open arguments is growing in order to establish a connection and cope with the rapid changes of the contemporary world [31].

The pedagogical literature covers three types of motivations that drive students to pursue a career in teaching, and these are Intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations [4, 20–22, 31]. Intrinsic motivation refers to "doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable." When a person is intrinsically motivated, he or she is motivated to act for the sake of enjoyment or challenge rather than for any external nudges, pressures, or rewards. [32]. It also includes the desire for personal growth, working in a learning environment, and the joy of teaching [21, 31]. Moreover, intrinsic motivation is generated through the "inner personality structures," which include competence, enthusiasm, and interest in the field. This type of motivation is considered "the key to success" and an essential component in entering the teaching profession as it is directly tied up with the content of the career. Thus, it is more beneficial and long-lasting than any other type of motivation [22]. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand, refers to "doing something because it leads to a separable outcome" [32], such as material benefits, job security [4, 21], the flexibility of time [22], and the societal prestige regarded to teaching profession [22]. Other examples of Extrinsic motivations include "nothing else to do", "to earn a living", "teaching was the only choice", and "Undecided about the future or nothing else available [4]. Lastly is altruistic motivation, which refers to the interest and desire to work with children and extend help and services in the community [4, 21]. It is also regarded as "social utility" motivation [1] as it is related to the concept of "pro-sociality," which encompasses doing things on purpose to help other individuals or communities [33]. Other altruistic motivations also include "serving the nation" and "furthering knowledge" [4].

Studies have covered the career motivations of Pre-service teachers in choosing the teaching profession. For instance, Bastick [4] surveyed 1444 pre-service teachers, which accounts for approximately one-third of the total population of teacher trainees in Jamaica in both rural and urban areas. All three types of motivations identified in pedagogical literature: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motives were present among all Jamaican pre-service teachers, according to its findings. Extrinsic motivation, in particular, ranked the highest among all types of motivation, followed by altruistic motivation, and finally, intrinsic motivation which ranked the lowest. Through close analysis, detailed extrinsic motivations of the Jamaican pre-service teachers are the following, ranked from the most to least important: (1) Teaching is the profession with the most holidays; (2) Fees for Teachers' College are affordable; (3) I will have enough time to earn extra money; (4) It allows me to be a manager; (5) It offers job security; (6) The salary will be adequate to meet my demands; and (7) Teachers enjoy a good status in the society as a whole. The following are for altruistic motivations: (1) I can make a worthwhile contribution to the social development of others; (2) I can make a worthwhile contribution to the academic development of others; and (3) I love children. And lastly, for intrinsic motivations: (1) It is the profession I have always wanted; (2) I wanted to, and

(3) I see it as a life-long career. In terms of gender differences, male pre-service teachers' motivational structure differs from those of females. Whereas, Female pre-service teachers are extrinsically motivated, while male pre-service teachers are predominantly motivated by intrinsic and altruistic motivations.

Moreover, Weiss et al. [23] conducted a study comparing the career choice motivations of Early Childhood education pre-service teachers across four European countries, namely Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, and Romania. The study found that the respondents across countries have significantly higher intrinsic motivation than extrinsic motivation. In light to this, intrinsic motivation in terms of pedagogical motives, which refer to the drive to form relationships with children and youth, to provide them with stability, and to support students with special needs, is more evident to German and Swiss Early childhood education pre-service teachers. Additionally, early childhood education pre-service teachers from Germany were recorded to have the highest degree of idealism, which means that they desire to "fulfill students' needs", "support students' growth and development' and contribute in society. Conversely, Swiss early childhood education pre-service teachers tend to give least importance on this aspect as they focus on "imparting knowledge to young children." The reported differences across countries can be explained by their diverse "working conditions," "training structures," "and current status of countries' professionalization processes", "professional images", "traditions and aspirations as well as problem areas".

A shift in determining and exploring the motivations and perceptions of pre-service teachers in choosing teaching as a career without limiting their responses to any existing and predefined categories was evident in the qualitative investigation of Bergmark et al. [10]. Thus, the study encouraged "openness" and "mix of multiple" responses, experiences, perceptions, and motivations in choosing teaching as a career. The study found out the following themes: "(Re) creating the caring school" (the desire to make the school a secured and safe place for growth and development where students' needs will be catered.); "Creating a desirable (professional) life" (Various perspectives about the state of the teaching profession that influenced their viewpoint and reasons for choosing the profession); "Fostering the upright human being" (the desire to provide an impact and difference on people and, by extension, society); and "Forming valuable knowledge" (the desire to instill 'valuable' knowledge in their specialized area).

Moreover, Beltman [34] focused on the "social aspect of motivation" in choosing teaching as a career of 303 Australian and German pre-service teachers. The investigation revealed that people had influenced them to pursue the teaching profession. Specifically, the immediate family, which includes parents, siblings, etc., has significantly influenced their decision to take a teaching career. This influence specifically refers to "general support." However, the negative influence was also indicated in the findings of the study, which refers to the negative social perceptions and opinions toward teaching, the education program, and the perceived "low" status of teachers in society. These findings are evident in both countries.

2.2 Perceptions Toward the Teaching Profession

Professionals' perceptions of themselves and the quality of their services impact their job efficiency and productivity. In the teaching profession, public opinion appears to have

a significant influence in forming teachers' perceptions of their own chosen profession. As a result of these perceptions about the significance of their profession and service, teachers are "humbled" and "psychologically handicapped." Moreover, regardless of the fact that teaching is an "irreplaceable job", this career is still not accepted as a "profession" by the public [2]. Additionally, Everton et al. [35] claimed that it is evident that teachers influence and are influenced by their own public image.

In this connection, Yüce et al. [8] posited that the reasons behind the depleting quality of the teaching profession and the decreasing prestige of teachers perceived by society are the following: (1) the decrease of teachers' wages; (2) the increasing cost of living; (3) a massive growth in the percentage of teachers; and (4) recruitment of "unqualified teachers". Furthermore, in Turkish society, the teaching profession is regarded as a "less desirable profession." It appears to be perceived as a career that anyone can do, with a prevalent statement in their context being "If you're unfit for anything else, be a teacher!".

Similarly, in Christensen's [36] dissertation review of literature, which explored both students' and teachers' perceptions of the Teaching profession, found that perceptions of teaching include low pay, increasingly challenging workloads, difficulty dealing with disruptive students and parents, and the teaching profession's reduced prestige. The aforementioned perceptions also became why qualified individuals do not consider teaching a career. The "compensation package" in general and the emotional demand of the profession also contribute as a factor to this aspect. In addition, Symeonidis [37] reported on the Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession, based on extensive surveys from 73 Education International (EI) member organizations from all regions and a literature review of teacher status issues, found that the teaching profession is generally perceived as "average status" across all educational sectors, with the exception of higher education. Early childhood education, vocational courses, and educational support staff were recorded to have "lower status." The status of the teaching profession has reduced over the last decade, according to over 50% of the respondents. The reported differences in the status of the teaching profession compared to other professions and the decline of its status over time were predominantly attributed to teachers' "wages and working conditions", "the quality of teacher education programs", "standards for entering the profession", "media image", "government consultation with unions and teachers", "trust in teachers" "professional judgment", and "the extent to which market-based policies are introduced in certain countries". In addition, the study gathered feedback on the status of teachers and educational support personnel in comparison to other occupations with equivalent qualifications, concluding that "teachers and education professionals in the Philippines are overworked and underpaid," as claimed by Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT). In the most recent report of the Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession conducted by Thompson [38] revealed that even the concerns in the 2018 Report about compensations, working conditions, "accountability pressures", and "media representations of teachers" are still existing as concerns for unions in 2021. Thus, teachers' status is still in "flux."

Despite these profound perceptions and reasons for not selecting teaching as a career, the literature revealed a range of reasons why eligible individuals still prefer teaching careers and hence become teachers. In contrast, teaching is perceived as a fulfilling and enjoyable job as it intends to impart knowledge and experiences on a regular basis.

Moreover, teachers have the opportunity to reach out and guide young and disadvantaged students in the right direction. Additionally, teachers' positive contributions to society add value to the profession's "appealing aspect." Furthermore, teachers who pursue their teaching career since they are able to function in society tend to have a high level of personal satisfaction and pleasure [36]. In light to these claims, [8] added that teaching is a profession that necessitates a high level of accountability and altruism. Thus, Education International, 2011, Article XI states, "Teachers should be accorded a high professional status in society commensurate with their professional responsibilities, qualifications and skills, and the contribution which their profession makes to the development of society" [37].

Throughout the transition process in the teaching career, pre-service teachers' primary and developing perceptions and beliefs about the teaching profession are crucial [39]. In fact, there had been studies that explored different perceptions of the teaching profession. For instance, in a quantitative study of Nenty et al. [2] investigated how preservice teachers at the University of Botswana (UB) perceive teaching as a profession and the impact of those perceptions on teaching. Using 54 closed-ended validated Likert-type items, the study revealed that the respondents perceive teaching as a profession, which is more evident among female respondents. Moreover, pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding teaching as a profession have influenced the following: (1) their motivation to do well in their teacher training programme (TTP); (2) their attitude towards teacher training programme (AtTTP); (3) the value they attached to the programme (VaTTP); and their (4) perceived effectiveness of the programme (ETTP). Furthermore, this level of perception has also positively influenced pre-service teachers' "willingness to teach," "attitude towards teaching," and the level of their perceptions toward the stereotypes of the teaching career.

Moreover, in Moses et al. [40], it was found out that pre-service teachers perceive the teaching profession positively and view it as a "high status occupation". Additionally, the respondents had shown an awareness of societal perceptions toward teaching profession which include "low salary" and "low status." Hence, they have given their stance against these prejudices. Furthermore, it was also found out that "committed passionate student-teachers" who are characterized as students who made teaching as their first choice, had determined some issues and concerns in the teaching profession but did not take it as a limitation to their commitment to be a teacher and expressed preparedness in teaching despite the diversities they might face. These issues and concerns include "poor working conditions", "student misbehavior"," ineffective school leadership," and "poor government policies."

2.3   Gender and Teaching Profession

There is just not enough empirical information to prove whether men and women choose to become teachers for the same or varying reasons. Studies have indicated that the teaching career is becoming more feminized [33]. Hence, the marginalization of male teachers in the teaching profession calls for an urgent discussion. In order to assess the severity of the problem, it is important to examine the issue of teaching as a feminized profession among pre-service teachers [41].

This section reviews existing studies on Pre-service teachers' career motivations and perceptions toward the teaching profession. Since the present study focused on males who pursued a teaching career, thus, this section will include myriad studies regarding career motivations and perceptions in association with gender.

In the quantitative study of Azman [3], the researcher asked a total of 425 student teachers to fill out a survey in which they were asked to rate variables that influenced their decision to become teachers, and then a gender comparison was made. It was found out that most of the Malaysian pre-service teachers in both genders were altruistically motivated. Specifically, these altruistic motives include Societal contribution, serving moral values in society, helping in achieving the government's 2020 vision, and the belief that teaching is a "respected career". On the other hand, "No other choice" and "Good salary" came lowest among all motives. Moreover, it was also revealed through a factor analysis that altruistic and extrinsic motivations were predominant factors that influenced participants in choosing a teaching career.

In contrast to the findings of the previous study, Yüce et al. [8] quantitatively and qualitatively examined 283 pre-service teachers regarding their career motivations and were asked about their decision to teach, career perceptions, and major expectations. Through descriptive, statistical, and inductive methods, the results revealed that students who choose teaching as a career are extrinsically, altruistically, and intrinsically motivated. However, based on a deeper analysis, it was also found out that altruistic motivation is the dominant motivation of female participants, while male participants were rather extrinsically motivated (mercenary-based).

In terms of male focus, Anliak and Beyazkurk [16] conducted a qualitative study that comprehensively explored the perceptions and ideas of male early childhood education pre-service teachers toward teaching career and found out that the participants in this study felt that the attribution and impression of early childhood teaching as "women's work" was the most noticeable issue that needed to be changed. Therefore, the students emphasized the importance of promoting the participation of male teachers in early childhood settings in order to refute the conventional belief that early childhood education is primarily the purview of women. Moreover, the study was also able to extract themes from the responses of the participants. These themes include the following: (1) "Attitudes towards male teacher identity," which discussed the perceived job identity of a male teacher, an unsuitable job for males (societal view), and the possibility of being "ridiculed" for choosing a feminine job; (2) "Advantages of being a male teacher" which includes the notion that as a male early childhood educator, they will be able to connect their family life in taking care of the children and be able to share to the public their capacity to educate and take responsibility of child's development. Moreover, more advantages were discussed like the competition between genders that would make the quality in early childhood education better; they would be the male role models for children and prepare them to be familiar with male teachers with the possibility of meeting more male teachers in their succeeding academic life; (3) "Disadvantages of being a male teacher" which brought up the various concerns of male pre-service teachers, such as the inappropriateness of their gender in a traditionally female profession that can result in "disapprovals" from the parents, the potential for isolating themselves from female colleagues, and the concerns over aging as it would be more difficult to deal with

children as they grow older; (4) "Male teachers in the future" It emphasized the shift of perceptions regarding the stereotypes of male early childhood educators and asserted that when people realized that men were capable of handling a wide range of responsibilities with young children, male engagement would be more widely accepted. The perception of childcare as a woman's job could be modified with the inclusion of more male teachers; (5) "Future plans related to jobs" This theme examined the pre-service teachers' future plans and revealed that the most of them are still conflicted and puzzled about their choices, though one has decided to pursue in this field while the other has decided not to pursue.

In another qualitative research focusing on the male participant, Sumsion [28] investigated the perceptions of male early childhood education pre-service teachers towards a teaching career, emphasizing the "potential rewards and risks" on their unconventional career choice as well as the "gender-related tensions" they experienced in their pre-service programme. The study revealed that the male early childhood pre-service teachers perceived a variety of rewards in there are of specialization which includes: (1) "Making a difference" (to resist stereotypes towards male teachers; 'provide good male role modes', contribution to gender reform); and (2) "Personal growth" (Potential interaction with other men in the field in the development of alternative concepts of masculinity that would assist them in transgressing stereotypes; Opportunity to be part of a minority; Possibility to balance one's personal and professional lives). Moreover, although male pre-service teachers have seen a broad variety of opportunities, tensions over the gender-based restrictions on early childhood education tend to surface in their perceptions, which include: (1) "A feminized professional culture" ('highly gendered profession'; physical passivity as feminine preference); and (2) "The need to counter community and collegial distrust" (Parents and staffs' acceptance on male teachers). Furthermore, regarding the risks, the participants perceived (1) "Emotional Distress" (loss of self-esteem caused by discrimination; self-doubt and guilt; fear of social perceptions towards male teachers); and (2) "Loss of career and loss of alternative career options" (Fear of potential false accusations and allegations of child sexual abuse which could result to loss of career and limited job opportunities).

Furthermore, Rentzou and Ziganitidou [42] investigated Greek men's perspectives of their chosen profession as early childhood educators, as well as how other social groups reacted to their entry into that field. The study found out that the participants are happy and excited in working with children and have a good and affectionate relationship with them. In terms of their relationship with their relationship with their colleagues and children's parents are also positive. The study also reported people's attitudes toward the participants, specifically regarding their career choice. For instance, male participants reiterated that their friends have positive reactions on their chosen career and have an in-depth understanding of their potential contribution in the field. However, in terms of their families, their parents have shown negative reactions and even objections on their chosen careers. Moreover, in terms of gender differences in the teaching profession, two respondents indicated that there are no differences between male and female teachers as they observe unity and collaboration. Conversely, three participants enumerated differences between genders, including activity preferences stating that male teachers emphasize physical and energetic activities while female teachers are more focused in

discipline and prefer reading activities. Furthermore, male teachers also claim that the small population of males in the early childhood education teaching profession is due to the following: improper career guidance and understanding, unjust and conventional perceptions, a societal perception that males are incapable of taking care and teaching children; and that early childhood education is a female profession.

2.4 Early Childhood Education

The span from birth to age eight, known as early childhood, is crucial for a child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Early life experiences, including those that occur before birth, have a significant impact on future health and social implications. They also lay the groundwork for developing human resources, as children who are healthy and socially fit have a higher likelihood of developing into people who are economically successful [43]. In support to this claim, early childhood is indeed a crucial period for young children to achieve significant and interrelated developments in their "cognitive," "linguistic," "emotional," "social," "regulatory," and "moral" development. Hence, every aspect mentioned must me catered with a focus [44]. Thus, the goal of pre-primary programmes is to assist children's holistic development by introducing young children to organized instruction outside of the family environment. Many of the qualities that children need to be academically prepared and able to start primary grades are also developed by them. Pre-primary education is a crucial part of" early childhood development", which makes reference to all of the other necessary plans and practices to support a child's well-being from birth to age eight, including "health", "nutrition", "protection", "early learning opportunities,", and "responsive caregiving". Additionally, "a young child's brain is full of innate potential." This formative period provides an indispensable avenue to lay the foundation for success in primary school and beyond, and a positive learning path is produced by high-quality early childhood education while limited access to pre-primary education widens achievement inequalities and limits chances [45]. Quality is, therefore, crucial when it comes to early childhood education programs. Children who attend a high-quality preschool have a head start on their journey to college or a profession. Professional guidelines indicate that high-quality early childhood education programs must be based on "early learning standards" that address academic, social, emotional, and physical dimensions of development to make sure kids are developing in all the ways that make them able to be healthy and prepared for school [46]. In this connection, the International standard classification of early childhood education and care from the International Standard Classification of Education indicated that: (1) *"The educational properties of early childhood educational development are characterized by a learning environment that is visually stimulating and rich in language. These programs foster self-expression, with an emphasis on language acquisition and the use of language for meaningful communication. There are opportunities for active play, so that children can exercise their coordination and motor skills under supervision and through interaction with staff. Programs providing only childcare (supervision, nutrition, and health) are not covered by ISCED;" (2) "The educational properties of early childhood education are characterized by interaction with peers and educators, through which children improve their use of language and social skills, start to develop logical and reasoning skills, and talk through their thought processes. They are also introduced*

to alphabetical and mathematical concepts and encouraged to explore their surrounding world and environment. Supervised gross motor activities (i.e., physical exercise through games and other activities) and play-based activities can be used as learning opportunities to promote social interactions with peers and to develop skills, autonomy, and school readiness. ISCED 02 is the focus of this report and is referred to as early childhood education (ECE)" [47].

Initiatives in the Philippines to promote early childhood education are intended to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDG 4) Educational objectives for "inclusive and equitable quality education for all children". The nation is dedicated to offering educational support and activities to its youngest citizens, notwithstanding political and economic limitations and a population increase [48]. With the implementation of the K–12 curriculum in the Philippines, Kindergarten was declared to be a "compulsory" and "mandatory" point of reference for basic education in accordance with Republic Act 10157, often known as "The Kindergarten Education Act." According to Sect. 2 of this Act, "all five (5) year old children shall be given equal opportunities for Kindergarten Education to effectively support their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development, including value formation, so they will be ready for school." Given that age five (5) is within the important years in which positive experiences must be developed to determine academic readiness, the Department of Education (DepEd) believes that Kindergarten is the transition stage from informal to formal literacy, which includes Grades 1–12 [49].

This literature review has captured a number of studies that have explored reasons why people choose to teach as a career and their perceptions towards the teaching profession. However, it is evident from the related studies that covering early childhood education, qualitative data, male pre-service teachers, and the Philippine context are at dearth. With this in mind, the present investigation of career motivations and perspectives towards the teaching profession aims to fill these gaps.

3   Methodology

3.1   Pedagogical Setting and Participants

Purposive sampling was utilized in selecting the qualified participants in this study. Lambert and Lambert [50] claimed that any purposeful sampling could be used in a qualitative descriptive design since the objective, as with any other qualitative research design, is to collect narratives that are regarded to be information-rich in order to saturate the data needed. A total of five respondents participated in the study, which is considered sufficient as Lao et al. [51] claimed that five to ten respondents are preferable when the study aims to saturate rich information regarding a specific phenomenon. Moreover, to obtain accurate data from the respondents, inclusion criteria were made to follow, which include: (a) The pre-service teacher must be biologically male; (b) The pre-service teacher must be specializing in early childhood education, and (c) must be enrolled in Western Mindanao State University for the academic year 2021–2022. Furthermore, the participants were interviewed individually and were encouraged to use the language that they were most comfortable with during the interview as Marschan-Piekkari, and Reis

[52] posited that a multilingual approach must be utilized in order to gather "valid" and "trustworthy" data from non-English contexts.

3.2 Design of the Study

The qualitative descriptive research design was utilized in the present study as this enables researchers to make a thorough investigation to explore how people learn, behave, and perceive their experiences Lao et al. [52] as well as develop methods to consider various perspectives towards the focused topic of the research study Alieto and Omaga [53]. Thus, this study regarding the career motivations and perceptions of early childhood education male pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession will allow the participants to openly speak about their views on the teaching profession and their motivations for choosing a teaching career. Moreover, in order to carry out the needed information, one-on-one interview was conducted as Creswell, cited in Aieto et al. [54] claimed that this enabled the researchers to raise open-ended questions and get detailed information of the respondents' experiences.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to explore the career motivations and perceptions of early childhood education male pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession, the researcher administered a semi-structured interview. The researcher developed an interview protocol to set as a guide in the interview and to be validated by the experts in the field. According to Montoya [55], an interview protocol is an "instrument of inquiry" consisting of questions and statements that seek to gather information related to the topic and objectives of the research study. Moreover, the interview protocol, which includes the overall flow of the interview and open-ended questions for each research question (4 for the first research question and 5 for the second research question) was reviewed and validated by four (4) experts at Western Mindanao State University. Upon receiving feedback from the experts, corrections, changes, and suggestions were respectively followed by the researcher.

To determine whether the interview questions and probes can effectively address the objectives of the current study, a pilot test of the semi-structured interview protocol was conducted. As Yeong et al. [56] posited that in order to gather quality data from an interview, a reliable interview protocol must be observed. The protocol must be easily understood to obtain the necessary information from the respondents. Hence, two respondents were interviewed for the pilot testing. According to Kallio et al. [57], pilot testing the interview guide will verify the accuracy and applicability of the information in the developed preliminary guide, as well as any potential need to rephrase the interview questions and evaluate its application. This process would allow the researcher to make necessary changes and modifications to the developed questions. Hence, data collection quality will be improved [57]. Thus, the results gained from the pilot test allowed the researcher to make further refinements on the questioning and probing technique, which led to the finalized protocol used throughout the interviews.

The needed data were collected through a semi-structured one-on-one interview which, according to Raworth et al. [58] is a commonly used data collection methodology in the field of research and development. Semi-structured interviews capitalize on

particular themes but discuss them in a natural conversation as opposed to formal interviews, which adhere to a fixed pattern of predetermined questions. This method is the best way to explore people's motivations for particular choices, "attitudes and beliefs", and the effect of particular events or policies on their lives. Moreover, the respondents were approached through messenger to request their participation in the study, and the students who agreed to participate were scheduled respectively. The interviews were conducted through phone calls and messenger calls due to pandemic constraints which made it impossible to conduct a face-to-face interview. During the interview, the respondents were given the necessary information about the present research study, the confidentiality of the interview, and their consent of participation. The interview lasted ranging from 20 to 40 min for every participant as according to Adams [59], a semi-structured interview must not exceed to one hour, in order to avoid "fatigues" for both interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, with the respondents' permission, the interviews were recorded using a recording program in order to record the data accurately and completely. The audio-recorded responses were manually transcribed and translated through Microsoft word for data analysis. Hence, no program or software was used in the process. The transcribed responses were checked and reviewed by an English language major student (for peer checking) and an expert in the field of language and education by crosschecking the audio file against the transcript to ensure the accuracy of the data.

The thematic analysis procedure was utilized in analyzing the collected data of the present study. Thematic analysis is a form of qualitative analysis that is utilized to classify, categorize, and display themes or patterns associated with the data. It presents the information in great depth and employs interpretations to discuss a variety of topics [60]. Additionally, it is a tool to describe data and associate interpretations throughout the selection of "codes" and construction of "themes" [61]. In support to this claim, Anzul et al. [62] posited that when "patterns", "themes", and "issues" are revealed in the data, interpretations are made by reviewing the outcomes to one another and to more general theoretical frameworks, such as our own recently developed theories or those that exists in the body of literature. Thus, in order to interpret and make meaning out of the data collected, the construction of themes was conducted.

4   Results/Findings and Discussion

With the utilization of the data gathered from the interviews, the researcher identified emerging themes from male early childhood education pre-service teachers' career motivations and perceptions toward the teaching profession. In this connection, Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the occurrences of the themes which will be used as the basis in analyzing the career motivations and perceptions of the participants toward the teaching profession. Specifically, Table 1 shows male early childhood education pre-service teachers' perceptions toward the teaching profession, while Table 2 presents the career motivations of the male early childhood education pre-service teachers.

Table 1 presents the perceptions of the participants towards the teaching profession. There are eleven themes enumerated that illustrate their perceptions, which implies that the participants have various perceptions toward the teaching profession. Noticeably, most of the participants or 4 out of 5 of them, perceive that in the teaching profession,

teachers are responsible for children's growth and development. Moreover, the excerpt "*So the teaching profession for me is an educational field that is directly responsible for the formation young minds and heart…As an ECE teacher or future ECE teacher, you are responsible for or to nurture a child, including their social development, emotional development, physical development and of course, most importantly, their cognitive development.*" (Participant 4) evidently implies that the participant perceives those teachers to have the responsibility of nurturing and supporting children's holistic growth and development. This perspective is aligned with the claims regarding the aims of early

Table 1. The perceptions of male early childhood education pre-service teachers towards the teaching profession

Themes	Excerpts
Teachers are responsible for children's growth and development	*In supporting the dreams and little dreams as we say of the children, we provide them activities that we have. If the child wants to become a chef, we will give them art materials or activities that are appropriate to their little dreams like we give cooking activities and other activities like ball games, letter games, and number games. So, there are a lot of activities that bring out their different potentials. (Participant 1)* *…the teacher helps those students to showcase those skills and to develop it inside the classroom and to boost the confidence of the students as well as to motivate them for their future. (Participant 2)* *So, the teaching profession for me is an educational field that is directly responsible for the formation young minds and heart…As an ECE teacher or future ECE teacher, you are responsible for or to nurture a child including their social development, emotional development, physical development and of course, most importantly, their cognitive development. (Participant 4)* *Our incompetence as a teacher can be seen in our students, that's why it is really important to teach your students properly, because this is what we can give to them, a bright future, only if we teach them properly. Therefore, the growth of the students starts with us. (Participant 5)*
Teaching is a gender-neutral profession	*For me, I don't want to perceive male teachers as different from the female teachers in which both genders can fairly provide and able to develop students to be achievers someday… In terms of language, just for example in English. I have always believed that females are better than males when we talk about English, but now I know that there are male teachers, based on my experience are also good in teaching English and they can also use good grammar. (Participant 2)* *…I would be able to raise a kind of awareness that being in the profession, it is not about the gender, being in the profession is not about how you look, it's not about how people see you but, it's about in yourself, it's about how you would be able to influence others, about how could you impact others in a way that how effective you are as a teacher.(Participant 3)* *It is very rare to see male teachers in ECE because some of the people think that this profession is just for ladies but that is not true, because men can do, what females can do in the field. (Participant 5)*

Table 1. (*continued*)

Themes	Excerpts
Teachers are role models	*Teachers are good role models in a way that they show respect, they respect each other, and they respect people's origin. They also become role model as they teach students about what is right or wrong, what should be done and not, and this shows how teachers become role models wherein students look up on them to the extent where the students follow the actions that their teachers. So, if a teacher treated a child well, then the child will treat other people in a good way as well. So that's how teachers become role models. (Participant 1)* *As a teacher in the community, you are a role model. You would be able to influence others especially children in a way on how you act, in a way on how you talk, and how you socialize are big influences of a teacher, we would be able to impact others. (Participant 3)* *In ECE, you must really be careful in your actions, in your words, and everything that you do because children tend to do the things that they can see from their teachers because you are their model. That's why you must be very careful in dealing with children unlike in BSED, the students are more understanding. (Participant 5)*
A mother figure is an advantage in Early childhood education teaching profession	*…most of the time we prefer our mother than our father so, it actually contributes on going to school where we actually prefer female teachers when we were in kindergarten rather than male because a mother could handle teaching than a father. (Participant 3)* *Female teachers in ECE have more maternal instinct, like a mother. I am not generalizing nor saying all of the students, but I think most of them are close to their mothers. (Participant 4)* *Like mothers, they are the ones who are taking care of the kids, which are why people has the perception that it should be females who should teach in ECE. (Participant 5)*
Early childhood education Teaching profession requires patience	*The teaching profession in early childhood requires skills most importantly the patience because we all know that early childhood education will have students whose minds are not totally developed and matured enough to think advance unlike in elementary and secondary. (Participant 2)* *…as I have mention, children will just talk to their seatmates, loitering around, they will not pay attention to you. So that's the challenge—it is going to challenge your patience and you as a teacher on how you will handle children in your classroom. (Participant 3)* *As a male teacher in ECE, you need to have long patience because children's span of attention is very low and their focus is unstable during discussion, so patience is really important in ECE. (Participant 4)*

Table 1. (*continued*)

Themes	Excerpts
Early childhood education teachers are responsible for teaching good values	*…we look up on teachers as they provide knowledge wherein children learn good manners and other aspects of learning…if we teach them good values, it will be the foundation of their dreams because in kindergarten, it is when small dream starts but they bring it until they grow up. (Participant 1)* *I actually taught them how to say "po" and "opo" ("yes" in a respectful manner to show respect to someone older or has a higher rank) and they are actually very adaptable on their part and in fact, during and after my community teaching, they were able to say "opo teacher"("yes teacher" in a respectful manner), "yes po teacher" ("yes teacher" in a respectful manner), "hinde po teacher" ("no teacher" in a respectful manner). There's part in me that I felt very motivated on that part because I was able to teach them good manners. (Participant 3)* *…Also, you are not only to teach them knowledge but also values in life…The basic manners like saying 'po' and 'opo' ("yes" in a respectful manner to show respect to someone older or has a higher rank), this is very important according to our core subjects wherein saying 'po' and 'opo' ("yes" in a respectful manner to show respect to someone older or has a higher rank) should be the first thing that must be taught to the students and also how to respect especially adults and how to socialize with their peers and classmates. (Participant 4)*
Society perceives teaching profession as a female job	*…the perception of the society where we belong even in the past, even up to this day was teacher should be female. (Participant 3)* *We all know that that historically, teaching in early childhood feminized and was only for women. (Participant 4)* *ECE male teachers are rare because people are thinking that teaching profession is just for females. (Participant 5)*
Teaching in Early childhood education is unlike any other specializations in teaching profession	*…we all know that early childhood education will have students whose minds are not totally developed and matured enough to think advance unlike in elementary and secondary. (Participant 2)* *…they are children, unlike intermediate or high school level you are teaching more matured students and they listen to you unlike in ECE, early childhood or the children, their span of attention is very low. (Participant 4)* *…the best teachers are found in ECE because if you would put a college professor in an ECE classroom, they cannot bear to handle it, but if you will put an ECE major in the college classroom, they can really handle the college students. (Participant 5)*

Table 1. (*continued*)

Themes	Excerpts
Male teachers are enthusiastic	*When I was in grade school, I had a male teacher, and he gave a hundred percent happiness to children. He shares stories and the actions are there. He also gives out surprises to children…being jolly to students and also, we show that we are happy with the things that we do. (Participant 1)* *I also learned in our core subject that it was identified that male teachers, have more energy and enthusiasm especially when it comes play because play is very important for kindergarten pupils. (Participant 4)*
Male teachers in early childhood education have limitations	*What I mean by the limitations are the things that are prohibited for a male teacher to do like limited touches, activities that can be perceived by children as wrong like smoking and others. (Participant 1)* *…for example, one of your students defecated and you're a male teacher, and that student is a female, so you cannot help that student because you're a male and that student is a female. (Participant 5)*
Male teachers in early childhood education should be calm	*…being calm every time in any situation even if the situation is hard, teachers should be calm because male teachers can show the worse than female. (Participant 2)* *…in early childhood education, the professors teach the correct approaches on dealing with children, like they shouldn't be threatened, and they shouldn't be pressured…The correct approach in approaching students like we should not scare them, raise our voice, or shouting. Those things are not the proper approach but rather, you must be calm in teaching them. (Participant 5)*

childhood education, including UNICEF [43] stating that the goal of pre.primary programmes is to assist children's holistic development by introducing young children to organized instruction outside of the family environment. Many of the qualities children need to be academically prepared and able to start primary grades are also developed by them; the International standard classification of early childhood education and care from the International Standard Classification of Education [47]; and DepEd [49] which states that According to Sect. 2 of this Act, "all five (5) year old children shall be given equal opportunities for Kindergarten Education to effectively support their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development, including value formation, so they will be ready for school.".

Moreover, the respondents also claimed that teachers are the ones who discover, nurture, and support children's skills and potentials through proper teaching and appropriate activities. The following excerpt supports the foregoing idea:

"In supporting the dreams and little dreams as we say of the children, we provide them activities that we have. If the child wants to become a chef, we will give them art materials or activities that are appropriate to their little dreams like we give cooking activities and other activities like ball games, letter games, and number games. So, there are a lot of activities that bring out their different potentials." (Participant 1)

This participant explains that it is important to give students various activities that are relevant to their dreams and different potential. In light to this claim, OECD [47] posited that in early childhood education, children are encouraged to explore their surroundings and environment while also being taught to alphabetical and mathematical concepts. "Play-based activities" and "supervised gross motor exercises" which includes physical activities in a form of games can be used as educational opportunities to foster social interactions between peers, as well as to improve skills, autonomy, and school preparedness.

Additionally, participants also perceive the teaching profession as a gender-neutral profession. The following excerpt shows how the participants perceive gender neutrality in the teaching profession:

> "*For me, I don't want to perceive male teachers as different from the female teachers in which both genders can fairly provide and able to develop students to be achievers someday.*" (Participant 2)

Participant 2 reiterated that teachers, regardless of the gender, are capable of developing students as achievers. Thus, teachers must not be differentiated based on their genders as they are fairly capable as teachers. This perception is similar to the findings of Rentzou and Ziganitidou [42] wherein two participants responded that there is no gender-based difference among teachers in the field as a result of collaboration within workplace. Participants have also rejected existing gender-based stereotypes and claimed that teaching is a universal profession. For instance, Participant 3 emphasized that teaching profession is not based on gender but rather the effectiveness of the teacher and the extent of their influence to the children. On the other hand, Participant 5 asserted that the society is wrong in terms of their perception that teaching is for females and posited that males are also capable of doing the works of female teachers in the field.

Conversely, the participants know that society perceives teaching as a female job. Evidently, the excerpts,

> "*…the perception of the society where we belong even in the past, even up to this day was teacher should be female.*" (Participant 3)

> "*We all know that that historically, teaching in early childhood feminized and was only for women.*" (Participant 4)

shows that the teaching profession, even in the past, has been considered to be a female job. This implies that the teaching profession has been feminized for long period of time. Anliak and Beyazkurk [16] claimed that the attribution and impression of early childhood teaching as "women's work" is the most noticeable issue that needed to be changed. Therefore, the students emphasized the importance of promoting the participation of male teachers in early childhood settings in order to refute the conventional belief that early childhood education is primarily the purview of women as Rentzou and Ziganitidou [42] posited that this is one of the reasons why lesser males are participating in this area.

Moreover, the participants have also perceived that females' maternal instinct or mother figure is an advantage in an early childhood classroom since children spend most of their time with their mothers. This is evident to the following excerpts:

> "…*most of the time we prefer our mother than our father so, it actually contributes on going to school where we actually prefer female teachers when we were in kindergarten rather than male because a mother could handle teaching than a father*". (Participant 3)

> "*Like mothers, they are the ones who are taking care of the kids, which is why people has the perception that it should be females who should teach in ECE.*" (Participant 5)

One explanation to this is the claim of David (1900) as cited in Rentzou and Ziganiti-dou, [42], stating that there is an assumption that females are more suitable for teaching children due to their maternal instincts.

Male pre-service teachers in early childhood education also mentioned the idea that teachers serve as role models. The excepts,

> "*They also become role model as they teach students about what is right or wrong, what should be done and not, and this shows how teachers become role models wherein students look up on them to the extent where the students follow the actions that their teachers. So, if a teacher treated a child well, then the child will treat other people in a good way as well.*" (Participant 1)

> "*In ECE, you must really be careful in your actions, in your words, and everything that you do because children tend to do the things that they can see from their teachers because you are their model.*" (Participant 5)

suggest that children tend to follow the actions of their teachers because they are their role models. Participant 5 emphasized how crucial are the responsibilities of teachers in early childhood education wherein they must be careful with their actions as they are highly influential to the children. In this connection, Lumpkin [63] highlighted that it is essential for teachers to function as moral and ethical role models when they interact with children by centering their professional decisions on societal and moral virtues.

Much as being a role models, the participants also reported a perception that early childhood education teachers are responsible for teaching good values. Participant 1 highlighted that good manners and values are the foundation of children's dream as they discover more of themselves with the excerpt: "…*we look up on teachers as they provide knowledge wherein children learn good manners and other aspects of learning…if we teach them good values, it will be the foundation of their dreams because in kindergarten, it is when small dream starts but they bring it until they grow up*". Halstead and Taylor (2000) stated the importance of teaching children good values and the role of the schools regarding this aspect whereas, since children are expected to have diverse values as they start schooling, the schools are primarily responsible for enhancing the values that students have already started to develop by providing additional exposure to a variety of contemporary values such as equal opportunities and respect for diversity; and for assisting students in reflecting on, understanding, and applying their own evolving values. Moreover, two of the participants have also emphasize the idea of respect in teaching values to children, the following excepts show the importance of teaching students the basic manners in the context of their own culture:

"I actually taught them how to say "po" and "opo" ("yes" in a respectful manner to show respect to someone older or has a higher rank) and they are actually very adaptable on their part" (Participant 3)

"…Also, you are not only to teach them knowledge but also values in life…The basic manners like saying 'po' and 'opo' ("yes" in a respectful manner to show respect to someone older or has a higher rank), this is very important according to our core subjects wherein saying 'po' and 'opo' ("yes" in a respectful manner to show respect to someone older or has a higher rank) should be the first thing that must be taught to the students and also how to respect especially adults and how to socialize with their peers and classmates". (Participant 4)

It is a cultural custom in the Philippines to address parents, elders, elderly persons, and those in positions of authority using the terms *"po"* and *"opo."* [64]. As such, the foregoing participants have mentioned its importance of teaching these values to students. Interestingly, participant 4 reiterated that it should be given a priority in teaching children, while participant 3 was able to teach these values to the children in their community during their community teaching.

Patience was also highlighted to be an important characteristic for teachers to possess in the teaching profession, specifically when teaching in an early childhood education classroom. The excerpt

"…as I have mentioned, children will just talk to their seatmates, loitering around, they will not pay attention to you. So that's the challenge—it is going to challenge your patience and you as a teacher on how you will handle children in your classroom". (Participant 3)

highlights common behavioral problems in an early childhood education classroom like noise, loitering, and attention. These issues were raised to emphasize that dealing with children requires patience and appropriate approaches in dealing with them. Colker [65] asserted that we must not expect that all children are fast learners. Children usually need a lot of reminders. Even the most effective educator still finds it challenging to face behavioral issues. Thus, "good teachers" prevent themselves to express the following explicitly: annoyance, frustrations, and anger. Hence, patience is required for effective teaching.

Furthermore, teaching in early childhood education was also perceived to be different from any other specializations in teaching profession. This perception is evident to the following excerpts:

"…we all know that early childhood education will have students whose minds are not totally developed and matured enough to think advance unlike in elementary and secondary." (Participant 2)

"…they are children, unlike intermediate or high school level you are teaching more matured students and they listen to you unlike in ECE, early childhood or the children, their span of attention are very low." (Participant 4)

Participants 2 and 4 emphasized the differences of teaching in early childhood education to other specializations such as elementary and high school, in which, the participants

believe to have more matured mindsets. Thus, teaching in an early childhood education becomes more challenging.

While there has been a perception that male and female teachers can fairly do the job of being a teacher, 2 out of 5 or 40% of the participants have reported some varying perceptions towards male teachers alone. For instance, 2 out of 5 or 40% of the participants perceived male teachers as enthusiastic individuals. The excerpt "*I also learned in our core subject that it was identified that male teachers generally, have more energy and enthusiasm especially when it comes play because play is very important for kindergarten pupils." (Participant 4)* evidently claims that male teachers tend to be energetic and enthusiastic in dealing with children more especially in play which holds an importance in early childhood education as Alieto and Omaga [53] claimed that in early childhood education settings, play is essential to the learning process. International studies show that children's learning improves when they play actively. In light to the claim that male teachers are energetic when it comes to play, the finding from the study of Rentzou and Ziganitidou [42] found that male teachers prefer more physical and energetic activities in dealing with their children, unlike female teachers who are more focused in discipline and prefer reading activities. Enthusiastic personality tends to be a key reason why students choose this career and is considered to be one of "the key to success" and essential component in entering teaching profession [22].

Despite the importance of enthusiasm in early childhood education, 2 out of 5 or 40% of the participants have also perceived that, male teachers should be calm. The excerpt "*…being calm every time in any situation even if the situation is hard, teachers should be calm because male teachers can show the worse than female."* (Participant 2) tends to emphasize that it is difficult to have a constant calmness in teaching children, however, it should still be observed as male teachers have the potential of being in a worst-case scenario. In light to this perception, Pruit [13] found that male teachers in Early Childhood identities in the field are assumed as "suspicious". This suspicion includes the possibility of men being violent which was viewed to be threatening to the safety of the children. Hence, participant 2 reiterated the importance of being calm in any situation and enumerated the inappropriate actions that must not be done in dealing with children. The following excerpt supports this notion:

> "*…in early childhood education, the professors teach the correct approaches on dealing with children, like they shouldn't be threatened, and they shouldn't be pressured…The correct approach in approaching students like we should not scare them, raise our voice, or shouting. Those things are not the proper approach but rather, you must be calm in teaching them."* (Participant 5)

Lastly, male teacher also perceived limitations of male teachers in early childhood education. These limitations focused more on touches, actions, and help that should be given to female students. This perception is supported by the findings of Pruit [13] that investigated the practices and experiences of male teachers in Early Childhood education and found out that the identities of male teachers in the field are assumed as "suspicious". This suspicion includes the possibility of men being violent, pedophiles, homosexual, and feminine, which are considered and viewed to be threatening to the safety of the

children. Due to these notions, fewer men are involved in early childhood education. This is evident in the following excerpts:

"What I mean by the limitations are the things that are prohibited for a male teacher to do like limited touches, activities that can be perceived by children as wrong like smoking and others." (Participant 1)

"…for example, one of your students defecated and you're a male teacher, and that student is a female, so you cannot help that student because you're a male and that student is a female." (Participant 5)

Noticeably participant 1 reiterated limited touches while participant 5 highlighted that a male teacher cannot fully assist female students with their needs. This can be explained by Sumsion's [28] findings, which found that one risk of dealing with children that male teachers perceived was the "Loss of career and loss of alternative career options" due to potential false accusations and allegations of child sexual abuse that could lead to career loss and limited job opportunities.

Table 2 presents the career motivations of male early childhood pre.service teachers in choosing teaching profession. A total of six emerging themes were found in the responses of the participants in the interview, which means that the participants have different motivations in choosing teaching profession.

3 out of 5 respondents reported that they have chosen teaching career because of their love for children. The respondents narrated that they love having time with children specifically teaching them and bringing out their full potential. According to Bastick [4] and Moran et al. [21], the desire to work with children and love for children is an intrinsic motivation. When a person is intrinsically motivated, he or she is motivated to act for the sake of enjoyment or challenge rather than for any external nudges, pressures, or rewards [32]. Thus, the participants have shown their desire in teaching children. The transcript's excerpts are as follows:

"First, I like teaching children. I want to teach children because there are things that they don't know yet and I want to deliver such knowledge that they need to know. And also, I like teaching children to bring out their full potential and abilities." (Participant 1)

"…how children come up with their actions and thoughts and how they interact with you fascinated me the most." (Participant 3)

"…teaching children can give you the best and most genuine feeling because if you are able to share your knowledge to the children it really feels good that you are actually teaching them." (Participant 4)

The three participants have narrated different views on how their love for teaching children motivated them. Participant 1 emphasize that he wants to fill in the knowledge gaps of the children as there are still many things that they are about to learn and discover. Similarly, Weiss et al. [23] found that Swiss early childhood education pre-service teachers focus on imparting knowledge to young children. Participant 3 highlighted that he was fascinated by the interactions with children and their process of thinking and course of actions. On the other hand, Participant 4 reiterated that teaching children gives

the most genuine feeling. This implies that the participants love children in differently but are motivated on this single aspect.

In addition, the participants are also motivated by the desire to support children's growth and development stating that they want to be the one who will guide and nurture children's talents, skills, and potential. For instance, Participant 2 narrated that,

Table 2. Motivations of male early childhood education pre-service teachers in pursuing teaching career

Themes	Excerpts
Love for children	*First, I like teaching children. I want to teach children because there are things that they don't know yet and I want to deliver such knowledge that they need to know. And also, I like teaching children to bring out their full potential and abilities. (Participant 1)* *…how children come up with their actions and thoughts and how they interact with you fascinated me the most. Just for instance, the way how they are going to participate in the class discussion, children would be able to have that kind of thought that they can give their answers in a learning environment. (Participant 3)* *I love being surrounded by children and I think that helped me in accepting this course because I love children because I also have my niece and I think that motivated me more…teaching children can give you the best and most genuine feeling because if you are able to share your knowledge to the children it really feels good that you are actually teaching them. (Participant 4)*
To support children's growth and development	*I have seen a lot of children who have the abilities and talents, but they are not able to bring it out because of poor teaching and some of their shyness. So, I want them to bring out all their abilities to be able to develop and enhance it. (Participant 1)* *My motivation to take early childhood education is my desire to stand as a guide of the children towards their growth and I want them to discover their talents and to also have their development because of me (Participant 2)* *I become interested in that kind of thinking that we will be the first one to handle the children and they should be taught properly and instill good values to them and if they grow up, they can bring that. (Participant 5)*
To eradicate gender-based stereotypes in teaching profession	*The facts that it is dominated by females give me the motivation to continue because I want to compete in a way that I will let them know that I can also do the things that they can do. (Participant 1)* *I took early childhood education to change the perspectives of the people which is similar to my perspectives in the past that are negative and I want to prove that male teachers are not limited to teach naughty things but can also teach the things that a female teacher can. (Participant 2)* *I think is about time for us to step in to change the perspective of the people towards teaching career especially when teaching children. it's about time for us to step in and raise the fact that male teacher scan also teach children as what female can do and male teachers are actually capable and effective as female teachers in terms of teaching children. (Participant 3)*

Table 2. (*continued*)

Themes	Excerpts
Family influence	*Also, my family because they also want me to be a teacher which is also what I want to be. So, they are the one who supports me, and they are really giving a lot of support in the career that I am taking. (Participant 1)* *We are actually a family of teachers; my cousins are teachers under the department of education in the present. In that way, they were able to influence me to be a teacher as well in the future. So, it's actually one that motivated me in a way that I look up at them and I told myself that one day, I will be the teacher that I want to be in the future. So that's another thing that motivated me to take this career because I guess that the influence of my family is very strong in my part. (Participant 3)*
Teachers' influence	*…my teacher in high school. That teacher told me that I should take this because being a male teacher is rare and also just to fight for it because this is such a good opportunity. (Participant 1)* *My high school teacher inspired me to take this path or career. Their passion and dedication in teaching inspired me to be like them in the future…my senior high school teachers are really good in teaching; they make sure that the teaching and learning process is effective and their strategies really amazed me. It was like 'wow' this is such a good profession. (Participant 4)*

> *"My motivation to take early childhood education is my desire to stand as a guide of the children towards their growth and I want them to discover their talents and to also have their development because of me"* (Participant 2)

which shows that the participant wants to serve as a guide in developing and discovering children's talents. This finding is similar to the results of the study conducted by Weiss et al. (2018) wherein the respondents were recorded to have the highest degree of idealism, which means that they desire to "fulfill students' needs", "support students 'growth and development'.

The participants (3 out of 5 or 60%) also reported a motivation to eradicate gender-based stereotypes in teaching profession. Common stereotypes and perceptions towards teaching profession include low status and pay, the potential accusations of sexual abuse on male teachers, unsuitable job for males (societal view), and the possibility of being "ridiculed" for choosing a feminine job [16]; the possibility of men being violent, pedophiles, homosexual, and feminine, which are considered and viewed to be threatening to the safety of the children [13]; and a feminized professional culture" or 'highly gendered profession'; physical passivity as feminine preference [28]. The following excerpts support this discussion:

> *"I took early childhood education to change the perspectives of the people which is similar to my perspectives in the past that are negative, and I want to prove that male teachers are not limited to teach naughty things but can also teach the things that a female teacher can."* (Participant 2)

"I think is about time for us to step in to change the perspective of the people towards teaching career especially when teaching children. It's about time for us to step in and raise the fact that male teacher scan also teach children as what female can do and male teachers are actually capable and effective as female teachers in terms of teaching children." (Participant 3)

It is evident from the excerpts that the participants are motivated to change the gender-based perspectives of the society toward teaching profession and highlighted the males are also capable of teaching children in early childhood education. Anliak & Beyazkurk [16] emphasized the shift of perceptions on the stereotypes of male early childhood educators and asserted that when people realized that men were capable of handling a wide range of responsibilities with young children, male engagement would be more widely accepted. The perception of childcare as a woman's job could be modified with the inclusion of more male teachers.

Moreover, 2 out of 5 or 40% of the respondents reported that they are motivated in taking teaching career is because of their family. The excerpts:

"…also, my family. Because they also want me to be a teacher which is also what I want to be. So, they are the one who supports me and they are really giving a lot of support in the career that I am taking" (Participant 1)

highlights that the participant has the support of his family regarding his decision in taking the path of teaching children. Similar to the study of Beltman [34] that focused on the "social aspect of motivation" in choosing teaching as a career of 303 Australian and German pre-service teachers, it revealed that people have influenced them in pursuing teaching profession. Specifically, the immediate family which includes parents, siblings, and etc. has significantly influenced their decision to take teaching career. This influence specifically refers to "general support."

"We are actually a family of teachers; my cousins are teachers under the department of education in the present. In that way, they were able to influence me to be a teacher as well in the future." (Participant 3)

Participant 3 highlighted that being in a family of teachers motivated him to take teaching career as well. Similarly, Tomšik [22] found that social background tends to be influential in choosing teaching profession. Specifically, 42.8% of the respondents reported that they have teachers in their family.

Furthermore, the participants were also motivated by their teachers. The participants have reiterated that their got inspired by how their teachers teach them. The excerpts:

"My high school teacher inspired me to take this path or career. Their passion and dedication in teaching inspired me to be like them in the future" (Participant 4)

Participant 4 highlighted that the passion and dedication that the teachers show in their profession inspired him in taking teaching career. On the other hand, participant 1 emphasized that a teacher verbally told him to take teaching career for there are a lot of opportunities offered in this profession. The following excerpt supports this discussion:

"…my teacher in high school. That teacher told me that I should take this because being a male teacher is rare and also just to fight for it because this is such a good opportunity." (Participant 1)

It can be inferred that the participants were influenced by their teachers in diverse ways. While Participant 4 had a model of a good teacher, which inspired him to take this path, Participant 1 was directly encouraged to take teaching career.

5　Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the career motivations and perceptions of male early childhood pre-service teachers toward teaching profession. The present study revealed that male pre-service teachers have different and varying motivations in choosing teaching career and perceptions on teaching profession.

Moreover, it can be deduced from the results regarding the participants' perceptions on teaching profession that they have positive perceptions towards teaching profession while pointing out teachers' roles and responsibilities in the classroom. Their perception also revealed that they are aware of the issues associated in the profession, specifically on gender-based concerns. However, the participants did not show any agreement to these concerns. Generally, their perceptions focused more on the roles, responsibilities, and characteristics of teachers in the teaching profession.

Regarding the motivations of the male early childhood education pre-service teachers, the participants have shown their desire to deal with children and influences from their environment such as teachers and their families. Furthermore, they also addressed the need to make a change in the teaching profession specifically the gender-based stereotypes toward male teachers. Thus, it can be inferred from the findings that the participants are motivated in the career that they have chosen. Hence, the results were able to carry out the questions and objectives of the present study.

The findings of this study revealed varying perceptions and motivations of male early childhood education pre-service teachers toward teaching profession. Moreover, students, specifically males, have diverse reasons in choosing teaching career and perceptions toward the teaching profession. The perceptions include the different roles, characteristics and responsibilities of the teachers and male teachers in the classroom such as: responsibility for children's growth and development; teaching values education; being role models; expressing enthusiasm and calmness at the same time; and limitations of male teachers in an early childhood education classroom. This suggests that teachers show qualities that serve as inspiration and warning at the same time for aspiring teachers. The awareness of public's views and concerns regarding the profession also assume an importance in order to address these issues properly. However, none of the participants addressed negative perceptions toward the profession but are only aware of societal perspectives on the area specified.

This study also revealed varying career motivation of the participants in choosing teaching profession. Findings revealed that participants are passionate about their career choice as their responses have focused on how they want to help children and their love on dealing with them. Thus, it can be inferred that the participants are intrinsically motivated in choosing teaching career. Additionally, they also addressed some influences such as their families and teachers which imply that the people, they interact with can affect and inspire one's career choice. It also shows that the supports from the people in their environment tend to push them in taking the mentioned career. Hence, these results provide useful information for future research on selecting teaching as a career and exploration of perception toward teaching profession.

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