

CARING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TOWARDS PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: REVIEW IN GENDER AND EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that caring has been highlighted in education since primary school, in the higher education setting, caring leadership experience among pre-service teachers has yet to be discovered. This paper discusses how caring leadership is practised among lecturers in the institute of teacher education. 331 pre-service teachers from three different institutes of teacher education in urban areas with distinct characteristics were chosen to participate in this research. A quantitative method was employed, and the sample was chosen using stratified random sampling. Classroom management, academic support, interpersonal relationships, respect, and trust are all indicators in determining caring leadership. Using an independent sample t-test, the study found that the level of caring leadership practised by lecturers is at a moderate level. When it comes to comparing the level of caring leadership based on gender, a small difference occurs between male and female pre-service teachers. This article also focused on a difference in perception of caring leadership based on education programmes, and the result shows a negative reading between newly admitted and established pre-service teachers in these training centres. Perhaps this study contributes to the emerging literature on viewing caring leadership practises in developing educators in a broad educational environment.

Keywords: *Caring Leadership, Teaching Profession, Pre-service Teachers.*

INTRODUCTION

Caring leadership has been brought from caring sciences in nursing and healthcare fields and has been implemented in education since it has a high priority in assisting students in their education (Anderson et al., 2020; Tabroni & Bumi, 2022). For decades, a lot of studies have claimed that caring is important in education (Paulsen & McCormick, 2020; Strachan, 2020; Webster, 2021). In addition, previous research has found that caring begins with paying attention and developing an enthusiasm to reflect on our kindness in order to improve caring and learning through connection with others (Sevenhuijsen, 2018). The main focus of this paper is on caring in education, and the review is on the preparation of teachers through caring leadership demonstrated by their lecturers.

Literatures on caring is scarce especially in higher education settings. This phenomenon is raising concerns about its impact on students. In contrast, previous literature has shown that educators in higher education settings are aware that caring is one of the components of higher education learning (Lynch et al., 2020). But a case study of one lecturer who takes care of only a handful of students shows a deficiency of evidence in defining what type of caring behaviour has

the most impact on learning (Larsen, 2015). Moreover, the feeling of care that has been shown by lecturers in higher education is unclear, and their thoughts on professional obligations diverge significantly (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). Therefore, to discover caring leadership through displays of behaviour by lecturers towards their students in a higher education setting has been the focus of this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Noddings discovered the ethics of care in education in 1986 (Noddings, 2018). This ethics of care focused on the educational aim of ethics in education rather than human ethics itself. School society, parents, teachers, and the involvement of public society should implement the ethic of care. This ethic consists of "carer" and "cared for" between two individuals. In this process, "carer" refers to lecturers, and "cared for" are students (Noddings, 2018). This has to be a priority when it comes to formal education. The interpretation of caring should be understood not only by giving a task to be completed by students but also by the interaction and the behaviour of caring in teaching and learning. The sustainability of caring and development to improve caring in an educational environment should also be focused on (Diller, 2018). The Noddings' theory also clarifies that caring should be demonstrated by employing new thinking to cultivate caring in educational institutions. Based on her experience as a teacher, she indicates that care should be implemented in the classroom to encourage a caring society within the school culture (Noddings, 2018).

The theory of caring emerged when caring has been found to assist students in learning and improving their learning outcomes (Miller & Mills, 2019). Since early education, student and teacher relationships have been developed through learning interaction to build a caring environment to ensure students are learning in the best way (Pianta et al., 2020). This theory has been carried out until students have reached the maturity to enable themselves to be independent while studying at a higher learning institution. The concept of caring never ends at higher learning institutions, but it is always necessary to enhance students learning and improve their achievements. This is important for their preparation to face the real world (Clouston, 2018).

In the education field, the best institutions are those that are able to provide adequate learning facilities. Beside that, caring relationships that support the development of intellectual capacity are also essential (Noddings, 2018). But caring should never be misinterpreted as something that may initiate unpleasant issues between genders, such as students and lecturers' unnatural relationship (Lu, 2018). In some cases, lecturers have neglected their responsibilities by not showing their care for their students. This reverse effect of caring may result in students' dropping out of higher education settings (Harford, 2018).

On the other hand, when measuring is gender-neutral, it yields an intriguing finding that these notions demonstrate instructors as being more caring and professional in the receiver's eyes (Fleck & Richmond, 2022). Sometimes, the perception of caring in education is not based on gender. In an educational setting, previous literature has shown the acceptance of care from educators towards their students is based on individual, not gender influence (Huber & Traxl, 2018). This individual, which refers to educators, might have certain influence where gender has not been taken into account in measuring caring that they have shown (Ramberg et al., 2019). Therefore, the broad idea of egalitarianism believes that caring is not emphasised by gender, but it is a joint responsibility and individual choice to make (Grunow et al., 2018).

When it comes to education environment itself, gender bias has always occurred (Gråstén, et al., 2022; King-Lewis et al., 2021). The Noddings' ethic of care and education distinguishes gender by stating that males are more likely to perceive indirect care and receive care than females (Diller, 2018). In the review of gender, the most thought-provoking part is that caring is always connected with feminism. Some literature supports the theory that females are naturally more caring than males (Mooneyhan, 2019; Stone & O'Shea, 2021). In some parts of the perception about gender, caring is associated closely with certain genders when caring is more of a female's responsibility (Bryson, 2021). Not to mention that in a learning environment, caring is occasionally provided with gender bias. (Klein et al., 2019; Sharma, 2019) Furthermore, the majority of female educator care for their students, and female students perceive that their teachers are taking good care of them, demonstrating the connection between gender and caring in education (Olson et al., 2019; Tangalakakis et al., 2022).

Previous literature has shown that caring is a characteristic of a good lecturer in the eyes of the students (Eloff et al., 2021; Mata et al., 2022). Students judge an excellent lecturer by how much they care about their students' behaviour. Therefore, this lecturer would make a significant effort to show their care to ensure that the students were involved in the learning process and set goals for their passion for learning (Anderson et al., 2020). When it comes to supporting the growth of a great teacher who will be prepared to meet the complicated demands of the new era of education in the world, there has historically been a lack of attention in the view of teacher education offered by lecturers as higher education instructors (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The issue of student retention has received attention recently in higher education settings (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022). Reliable research universities with high credibility have conducted research and discovered that there are contradictions about this particular issue. At first, research has revealed the missing characteristic of care, which implies one of the reasons students' drop-out in higher education institutions (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019). Even worse, this problem occurred in institutes of teacher education while teachers were still in training (Azzolini et al., 2022; Schaack et al., 2022). In contrast, a study on teachers' intake shows a declining number of students who pursue their studies in the institute of teacher education in Malaysia (Amzat et al., 2022). Since there has been a lot of written material detailing the decrease in the number of teachers in Malaysia in recent years, it is important to consider this event (Amzat et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2020)

The feelings of neglect make teachers demotivated when caring, which is one of the factors that accelerates teacher drop-outs from service. (Rabin, 2020; Santoro, 2021). Caring should be assessed during the teacher preparation stage based on student feedback as well as lecturers' perspectives. This is crucial to avoid lecturers' bias by considering that they are caring enough, but the students do not feel the same way. The importance of caring is measured not only by how lecturers practice caring for their students but also by how students perceive the presence of caring practiced by their lecturers (Pranjić, 2021). Caring also needs to be measured by both parties, which are students and lecturers at the same time, since the perception of students towards their lecturers is the fortitude in determining students and lecturers' healthy relationship (Gasser et al., 2018).

Practicing care is also important in showing care from lecturers to their students. Caring should not only be mentioned in words but also need to be practiced (Shirley et al., 2020). At

some point, words mean nothing, but caring is more about showing care to someone you care for (Yale, 2019). The act of caring should be cultured in the higher education system through caring and practicality. According to some studies, caring can be demonstrated through kind actions and thus does not require practice (Waghid et al., 2019). Therefore, in this grey area, practical caring is essential in measuring the concept of caring from lecturers to their students. As a result, caring should be measured not only through words but also through action and practice.

In a related theory of relationships between students and lecturers, grounded theory has discovered that caring is a manifestation of behaviour that builds character in students and lecturers' relationships (Karpouza, & Emvalotis, 2019). But, the issues come when lecturers do not show their care for their students by neglecting them (Ayllón et al., 2019). Some lecturers think that they show enough care for their students. In fact, lecturers do not know their students' perceptions of their caring practices (Kagawa et al., 2022; Swartz et al., 2018). Even worse, the new generation of students never even bothers to be cared for since the element of caring has been missing. These are the results since they have been neglected by their lecturers in their faculty (Miller & Mills, 2019).

Since there is little empirical study in this field, the caring dimension should be explored in a variety of institutional settings in a broader context (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). This article is important to review the lecturers caring leadership in higher education since they are close to students. Beside that, lecturers have to manage their workloads, administrative requirements, consulting work, and other obligations, which can be challenging for practicing their care for their students. Students' and lecturers' expectations of caring might be diverse according to their perceptions based on their institutional culture (Walker-Gleaves, 2019). Based on those circumstances, this paper explores the caring leadership practices in the involved institutions.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach to collect all the data. An online survey has been employed to collect data from respondents indicating their perspective on their lecturers' caring leadership practices. This study involved respondents among students who perceived their lecturers' caring leadership. The measurement of lecturers' caring leadership using the A Survey of Behavioural Characteristics of Caring Teacher Questionnaire developed by Professor Dr. Tak Cheng Chan from Kennesaw State University, which has been endorsed to be used by experts in this field. In the survey questionnaire, the constructs of caring leadership were classroom management, academic support, interpersonal relationships, and respect and trust. The indicators for measuring the importance of caring leadership are used on a scale from one to five. Score one as the "least important" and five as the "most important."

Table 1: Samples of population

Institution	Population	Proportional Random Sampling	Percent
ITE A	831	117	35.3
ITE B	768	109	32.9
ITE C	745	105	31.7
Total	2344	331	100.0

This study was implemented in three institutes of teacher education (ITE). These institutes have a distinct character, which is more into physical education and special education expertise,

national language training, and international language expertise. All three different ITEs are located on the outskirts of urban areas. Respondents involved in this research were chosen using stratified random sampling from less than a thousand pre-service teachers in each ITE. These various samples of respondents are from a total population of 2344 in this study. Respondents from ITE A represent the majority of respondents involved in this study (N = 831). Following that were ITE B (N = 768) and ITE C (N = 745). When stratified random sampling is applied, 35.3% (n = 117) were chosen from ITE A, 32.9% (n = 109) were from ITE B, and 31.7% (n = 105) from ITE C were involved.

Table 2: Respondent profiles

Respondent Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	93	28.1
Female	238	71.9
Age		
18 to 21 years old	274	82.8
22 to 25 years old	57	17.2
Education Level		
PPISMP	189	57.1
PISMP	142	42.9

Table 2 displays the respondents profiles according to gender. A total of 93 male (28.1%) and 238 female (71.9%) respondents were involved in this study. The age range of respondents was 18 to 25 years, which were divided into two groups. The first group of respondents is in the range of 18 to 21 years old, with a number of 274 (82.8%), and the other respondents are in the range of 22 to 25 years old, with a number of 57 (17.2%). respondents The study employed two groups of respondents, which are the preparatory programmes known as *Program Persediaan Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan* (PPISMP) with a number of 189 (57.1%) and *Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan* (PISMP) with a number of 142 (42.9%). This respondent passed the preparatory programme and continued their studies in the actual training to become a teacher in four years.

RESULTS

Several results have been produced from this study to explain the level of lecturers' caring leadership as perceived by students. The inferens analysis that measures the difference in caring leadership according to gender and educational background is presented in the tables below.

Table 3: Level of caring leadership among lecturers on pre-service teachers.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Level Caring Leadership	331	2	5	3.96	.429

Table 3 above depicts the descriptive statistics of caring leadership among lecturers towards pre-service teachers in all involved ITEs, with a mean of 3.96 (SD = .429) in the total samples (N = 331) involved in this study. From the reading, it can be seen that the caring leadership are at a high level with a score of a minimum of two and a maximum of five in this result.

Table 4: Mean indicators of caring leadership

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Classroom Management	4.51	.461	High
Academic Support	4.26	.498	High
Interpersonal Relationship	4.26	.525	High
Respect and Trust	4.52	.478	High

In Table 4, the results show that the indicator of classroom management in caring leadership indicates a reading of 4.51 (SD=.461), followed by academic support at 4.26 (SD=.498). The reading of the interpersonal relationship indicator is 4.26 (SD=.525) and the respect and trust in caring leadership shows the reading of 4.52 (SD=.478). It is clear from the responses that pre-service teachers value their lecturer's care in every indicator above four in the measurement. The mean score of the "most important" scale represents a high level of caring leadership as perceived by students.

Table 5. Independent t-test for caring leadership by genders

Indicators	Mean		Std. Deviation		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Classroom Management	4.50	4.51	.525	.435	-.251	329	.802
Academic Support	4.23	4.27	.499	.498	-.717	329	.474
Interpersonal Relationship	4.33	4.23	.490	.536	1.490	329	.137
Respect and Trust	4.53	4.52	.451	.489	.253	329	.800

Table 5 represents the measurement of the difference among male and female respondents in perceiving caring leadership displays by their lecturers. In this result, an independent sample t-test was used to segregate the data obtained from the respondents. The study's findings show that caring leadership is nearly the same for both genders when measured by indicators of classroom management. Both male (M = 4.50, SD = .525) and female (M = 4.51, SD = .435) respondents scores are identical. This shows that the perception of classroom management is perceived as similar, according to this result: $t(329) = -.251$, $p = .802$. The academic support indicators show that the mean readings of respondents are within the close range between male (M = 4.23, SD = .499) and female (M = 4.27, SD = .498). This result indicated that academic support as perceived by male and female respondents is also similar; $t(329) = -.717$, $p = .474$.

At the same time, interpersonal relationships show almost similar readings among male (M = 4.33, SD = .490) and female (M = 4.23, SD = .536) respondents. Therefore, no significant difference in these indicators among both male and female respondents; $t(329) = 1.490$, $p = .137$. In both male (M = 4.53, SD = .451) and female (M = 4.52, SD = .489) respondents, respect and trust indicate a close reading result. This indicator shows an insignificant difference was recorded while comparing male and female respondents; $t(329) = .253$, $p = .800$. To summarise, all results show an insignificant difference ($p > .05$) in comparing caring leadership indicators between male and female respondents.

Table 6: Independent t-test for caring leadership by gender (overall)

Indicators	Mean		Std. Deviation		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	t	df	p
Level of Caring Leadership	4.38	4.37	.403	.400	.162	329	.871

The results from the t-test analysis in Table 6 compare mean scores based on gender. Reading has shown that the mean of male ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .403$) and female ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .400$) scores in perceiving caring leadership has shown almost similar results; $t(329) = .162$, $p = .871$. This indicates that there is statistical insignificance in the t-test score when comparing the perception of caring leadership based on gender ($p > .05$).

Table 7. Independent t-test for caring leadership by education programme

Indicators	Mean		Std. Deviation		t-test for Equality of Means		
	PPISMP	PISMP	PPISMP	PISMP	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Classroom Management	4.47	4.55	.467	.451	-1.499	329	.135
Academic Support	4.24	4.28	.482	.519	-.838	329	.403
Interpersonal Relationship	4.23	4.29	.494	.563	-1.020	329	.308
Respect and Trust	4.50	4.56	.476	.481	-1.110	329	.268

The education programmes are also taken into account in defining which level of education best perceives caring leadership. In the classroom management indicator, PPISMP students ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .467$) showed slightly lower reading than PISMP students ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .451$), but no significant difference was found; $t(329) = -1.499$, $p = .135$. In the academic support indicator, PPISMP students ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .482$) also recorded a lower reading of the mean compared to PISMP students ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .519$), with no significant difference found; $t(329) = -.838$, $p = .403$. Interpersonal relationship indicator also recorded the same result, which means the PPSIMP ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .494$) group has a much lower reading in mean compared to PISMP ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .563$). This result indicates no significant result in comparing this group; $t(329) = -1.020$, $p = .308$. The last indicator, namely respect and trust, shows the same result where the PPISMP group ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .476$) reading is lower than established PISMP respondents ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .481$). Again, no significant difference was recorded in comparing these two groups; $t(329) = -1.110$, $p = .268$.

Table 8: Independent t-test for overall caring leadership by education programme.

	Mean		SD		t-test for Equality of Means		
	PPISMP	PISMP	PPISMP	PISMP	t	df	p
Level Caring Leadership	4.35	4.41	.389	.414	-1.330	329	.184

In the final analysis, the overall mean for the PPISMP group ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .389$) is smaller than the PISMP ($M = 4.41$, $SD = .414$), showing that there is an insignificant difference between the study programmes; $t(329) = -1.330$, $p = .184$.

DISCUSSION

The level of lecturers' caring leadership as perceived by pre-service teachers as students is at a moderate level. Based on the research outcome, insufficient caring leadership did not occur in this part. This result supports the growing body of research that has found that caring is essential nowadays (Buskirk-Cohen & Plants, 2019; Rudaz, 2021). The importance of cultivating a caring culture in higher education institutions cannot be overstated, and leadership plays a critical role in making this a reality (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2018). Unfortunately, even though this caring leadership has been implemented, the issue of pre-service teacher retention still exists. The possibility that other factors contributed to retention issues is still present, since caring leadership is not part of this issue. In this paper, results have shown that caring leadership, as perceived by male respondents, is slightly higher than that of all female respondents, even though the number of male respondents is slightly lower than that of female respondents. It is interesting to know that pre-service teachers' perceptions of care have been similar by gender. Therefore, this paper suggests that measuring caring leadership by gender has become similar in the eyes of pre-service teachers. This is supported by findings that show a non-significant difference in perceptions of caring leadership based on gender.

For some reason, comparing gender and educational levels in perceiving caring leadership might be beneficial for future research. In education, caring grows in parallel with learning, where the more time students spend with their educators, the more they learn about caring (Cavanagh et al., 2018). Students learn better when they feel their lecturer cares for them (Bates et al., 2020). In higher education learning, caring for students is one of the essential skills to ensure the caring relationship between lecturer and student is a success for both parties (Hawkins, 2019). When students feel their lecturers do not care at all for them, their education level in perceiving caring never plays a role in this situation. Where the caring relationship was never built, no matter how long they were in the same educational institution together, the perception of caring was still the same.

In this article, education level has been taken into account in determining the caring leadership perception of the pre-service teachers towards their lecturers. Since education level is a significant factor in determining perception (Al-Dossary et al., 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020), this study investigates how education affects students' perceptions of caring. However, based on students' educational backgrounds, findings on students' perceptions of their lecturers' caring leadership remain the same. The result indicated that pre-service teachers at the beginning of their training perceive their lecturers caring leadership to be at the same level as the pre-service teachers that have been established in their training.

Therefore, the indicators of classroom management, academic support, interpersonal relationships, respect, and trust in measuring caring leadership practices should be continued. Lecturers should apply their caring leadership style in this situation. The results of this study support the idea that caring is always important in education since the philosophy of caring is closely connected to higher education and is being implemented everywhere (Simonton et al., 2021; Walls, 2022). Furthermore, in order to implement caring leadership in higher education, gender and educational level play an important role in determining caring leadership practices as perceived by pre-service teachers in educational settings. Previous literature revealed that gender has shown insignificant differences among responses to caring leadership. This refutes the notion that women predominate in acts of caring (Olson et al., 2019; Tangelakis et al., 2022). Thus, education programmes also showed a different outcome than the theory that education always

plays an important role in determining perception (Al-Dossary et al., 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020) in caring leadership. Therefore, this study suggests future studies should be conducted to measure this perception in the future.

CONCLUSION

In higher education institutions, lecturers and students is suggesting to build a caring relationship from the start by approaching it intentionally, thoughtfully, and consciously (Simel Pranjić, 2021). In this part, student's retention issues could be prevented in a higher education setting. When pre-service teachers feel that they have been cared enough, they feel intends to remain in their institution. This include the significance of caring in higher education, should not be overlooked (Tight, 2020). When it comes to gender differences, males and females' pre-service teachers have shown no significant difference in perceiving the caring leadership shown by their lecturer. To put it another way, this result supports the egalitarians' argument that caring has never been connected to a certain gender (Grunow et al., 2018; Isaksen & Näre, 2019). Therefore, the results from this study have shown that even though gender has been known to be biased in perceiving caring (Diller, 2018), in this particular subject it does not appear to be so.

Education helps with the ability to make decisions (Brighouse et al., 2018; Madani, 2019). This includes the perception of caring leadership by pre-service teachers, who measure the lecturer's care from their point of view. This study has compared the education group to identify an indication of perceived caring in education. However, both pre-service teachers, from the beginning of their studies, had already established perceived caring as shown by their lecturer in the same way. When caring leadership is viewed as the same by diverse genders and different groups of education stages, more studies should be conducted to review this perception. It is hoped that the gender differences review and comparison among education groups in pre-service teachers' society when assessing caring leadership in higher education will be revisited. This is essential to overcome the shortage of teachers problems, which are still rising in the education world from a caring leadership perspective.

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