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**Perception of Preschool Teacher's about Children's Learning through Creativity: In the case of Government and Private Preschools of Bahir Dar city: A Means for intervention, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia****Mezgebu Bayu Bezabih**

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**Abstract**

The main purpose of this study was to examine the perception of preschool teachers about children's learning through creativity. Cross sectional research design was employed and 76 sample pre-primary school teachers were selected through simple random sampling technique. The required data was collected via adapted instruments from previously conducted researches by (Humaira Irfan, 2012) and then the data was analyzed by using independent sample t-test one sample t-test and one way ANOVA as well as post Hoc test was run. The independent sample t-test showed that there was statistically significant difference between male and female preschool teachers at ( $t = .341, df = 74, p < 0.05$ ) in which female teachers have positive perception towards children's learning through creativity. Besides, the result of independent t-test also displayed that statistical significant difference was observed in perception of creativity between governmental and nongovernmental preschools at ( $t = 36 = -2.269, P < 0.05$ ). In line to this, the result of one sample t-test portrayed that, the level of perception is low about children's learning through creativity among preschool teachers of the sample schools. The result on one way ANOVA displayed that there was statistical significant difference among respondents perception with regard to their educational qualification ( $F(2, 74) = 17.084, P < 0.05$ ). In conclusion, female teacher's perception towards creativity of children is than male teachers counter parts.

**Key Words:** Perception, preschool teachers, learning, Creativity

**Background of the Study**

Creativity is about creating something new original and worthwhile (Mumford, 2003; Plucker et al., 2004). Creativity is considered to be an essential skill in our highly complex and changing society (craft, 2003) as it helps children develop a level of adaptability to ensure they can become part of an effective future work force.

A number of them suggest that creativity is the generation of imaginative new ideas (Newell, A., & Simon, H. A., 1972) involving a radical newness innovation or solution to a problem. According to Ogilvie (1998), imagination, which involves the generation of ideas not previously available as well as the generation of different ways of seeing events, is important to achieve creative actions. Students should feel freedom to express their idea; they should not be worried about prevention factors to create new opinions (Tokuhama Espinosa, 2010). Educators and other experts need to focus on developing creativity levels, using some approach which includes the individual spirit, ability and culture of students (Baldensperger, 2014).

According to Boden (1998), there are three main types of creativity, involving different ways of generating the novel ideas: “combinational” creativity that involves new combinations of familiar ideas, the “exploratory” creativity involves the generation of new ideas by the exploration of structured concepts and the “transformational” creativity involves the transformation of some dimension of the structure, so that new structures can be generated.

What underlies a creativity fostering teacher is a classroom organizational climate that is challenging, meaningful, supporting and trusting that allows for spontaneous behavior that contribute to the creative learning process (Ekvall&Ryhammer,1999). It is important to recognize and not discount the responsibility teachers have to make productive use of student’s time in the class and ensure that the activities they do are meaningful and contribute to intellectual growth teachers are expected to be open to contemporary knowledge of creativity and also teachers are expected to cultivate children’s creative ability and they should build the children’s belief in their ability to produce creative outcomes. Creativity as the development of novel and useful ideas requires recognition of what novelty is an understanding of culturally –valued utility and successful adaptation community needs and norms. Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another and so extend their understanding. Children have a different combination of abilities, personality traits and home experiences that make them more or less able to express their creative potentials.

Teacher’s conception of creativity is influenced by the context in which they work and live. Critical and creative thinking are the keys to work and economic prosperity in the twenty –first century. Creativity oriented jobs that ask people to engage in analysis and to make judgments. Teachers who wish to nurture creative skills in their children can encourage different activities of children which are expected to foster the development of creativity and reward divergent ideas and problem solving. They can also facilitate creative actions in their children by giving opportunities to communicate their ideas to others.

Creativity is considered to be an essential skill in our highly complex and changing society (craft,2003) as it helps children develop a level of adaptability to ensure they can become part of an effective future work force .children’s motivation will increase if creative approaches to teaching and learning are adopted and this in turn will enhance their sense of personal well-being thus, creativity is highlighted as an important skill for children to develop during their education .it is the responsibility of teachers to deliver this vast area.

What underlies a creativity fostering teacher is a classroom organizational climate that is challenging , meaningful, supporting and trusting that allows for spontaneous behavior that contribute to the creative learning process (Jon-Arild Johannessen, 2019).

Rogers also emphasized the need for an appropriate environment to stimulate creativity, drawing on the need for an open, inclusive space with ample support and room for trial and error in order to allow students to reach their fullest creative potential (Lubart & Georgsdottir, 2004; Rogers, 1954). The themes and concepts brought forth by Rogers are echoed by Cropley’s creativity-fostering teacher behaviors’ (Cropley, 2001).

Critical experiences throughout learning that involve the shaping of new ideas and achievements are internalized, providing a scaffold for creating new ideas to further intellectual and personal development.

Problem solving under experienced peer or adult guidance provides a framework for the identification of personal and global rules and truths, while allowing the individual learner to shape and construct the cognitive formations that form the basis of that understanding (Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004). Children's desire to draw and make up stories is other examples of exactly this same type of imagination and play. Ribot tells of a little boy of three and a half who saw a lame man walking on the street and cried, "Mama, look at that poor man's leg." Then he began to make up a story: the man had been riding a big horse, he fell on a large rock, he hurt his leg badly, and some kind of medicine had to be found to make him better. In this case, the combinatorial operation of the imagination is extremely clear. What we have here is a situation the child has created. All the elements of this situation, of course, are known to the child from his previous experience, otherwise he could not have come up with them; however, the combination of these elements is something new, creative, something that belongs to the child himself, and does not simply reproduce what the child happened to observe or see. It is this ability to combine elements to produce a structure, to combine the old in new ways that is the basis of creativity. Many authors, with complete justification, suggest that the roots of such creative combination may be noted in the play of animals.

As early as 1961, Karnes et al. found that creativity was related significantly to educational achievement, revealing that overachieving students had measurably higher creative ability than underachieving students. Though their study suffers from methodological flaws, it set off a range of related research aimed at determining how creativity can be fostered, and what classroom environments lead to students developing both creative and academic skills. Following from the work of Karnes et al. (1961), Guilford (1967) and Torrance (1963) both determined that creative thinking abilities could be identified and nurtured through direct instruction. Teachers who use direct methods of developing creativity, such as using an inquiry-discovery or problem-solving approach deliberately provide students with hands-on opportunities to generate new ideas, and enhance complementary skills such as fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality (Fasco, 2001).

Most teachers claim to favor creativity and praise the advantages of creative exploration; though in practice teachers may resist the creative efforts and behaviors of their students (Runco & Johnson, 2002; Scott, 1999; Erik Westby, (1997) Statements and deliberate actions teachers make regarding creative abilities, students, and practices, demonstrate teachers' personal explicit theories and beliefs regarding creativity. Explicit theories of creativity differ from implicit theories because explicit theories rely on teachers' definitions of creativity, and reference the deliberate actions teachers take toward creativity, such as the types of projects they assign, the organization of the classroom environment, and the time they allow for creative exploration and decision-making. Both implicit and explicit theories of creativity determine how a teacher behaves and fosters creative behaviors in his or her students. Both contribute to the environments in which children learn.

Teachers who deliberately set out to construct a creative environment for their students may adopt programs such as those identified earlier, such as the Osborn-Parents Creative Problem-Solving Program (Parnes, 2000) or adopt the recommendations of 21st century skills reports (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009), but in many cases creativity fostering is a less formal but no less deliberate activity.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teacher perceptions of creativity are essential to deciding how teachers respond to young children creativity in the classroom and whether creativity is being fostered. The problem is current standards-based educational practices are not enabling students to develop the creative thinking needed to be successful in today's globalized society. Current research has focused on creativity in the classroom, at the early childhood, elementary, and postsecondary level. However, understanding the teacher perception is instrumental in understanding how creativity is established in the classroom environment, as well as whether creative practices are being enhanced within the classroom generating the skills necessary for college and career

success. Therefore, understanding the teacher perception of creativity is fundamental to understanding the use of creativity in the classroom and overall (Christina Lynn Scott, 1999).

David H. Cropley, Timothy J. Patston (2019) study on the perception of teachers about creativity, demonstrates that understanding the perception of teachers about the meaning of creativity that can help to produce practical methods to foster creativity in the classroom therefore, teachers should have positive understanding about the children's creativity in the class and as well as outside the classroom environment. In the context of creativity education, teachers are agents of change (Aljughaiman, A., & Mowrer-Reynolds. E.2005). In line with this teachers are expected to facilitate independent learning, construct stimulating environments for critical and creative thinking, and role model creativity-fostering behavior (Cropley,1997).The social environment that children would need to be focused in childhood include a shifting and dynamic global economy the need to readily and easily adopt new technologies and being prepared for globalization.

In Ethiopian Context, some related studies such as, conception and of parents and teachers about children's play was carried out by (Kassahun Tadese, 2016), at Mettu Town, Ilubabor Zone, Thus, due to limited empirical studies on perception of preschool teachers about children's learning through creativity in the Ethiopia in general and Bahir Dar city in particular, this study tried to examine the perception of preschool teachers about children's learning through creativity in the case of Government and Private Preschools of Bahir Dar city and attempted to fill the identified gap.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the perception of preschool teachers about children's creativity, whether there exists significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to their perception about children's learning through creativity, to examine significant difference between government and private preschool teachers about creativity as well as to examine whether significant difference exists between preschool teachers level of education and their perception about creativity of preschool children.

### Methods

The study design was cross sectional. This study was conducted in Bahir Dar city with in a total of 38pre-primary schools. 16 government and 22 non-government preschools were selected to be samples of the study. Based on availability sampling technique, 76 teachers who have been teaching and caring children in the academic year of 2018/19 that is two teachers from each pre-primary school were selected. Among theses, 54 are females and the reaming 22 are males. To collect the required data, Likert scale, items was adopted from (Humaira Irfan, 2012). The collected data was analyzed via quantitative method of data analysis that inculcated independent t- test, one sample t- test one way ANOVA and Post-Hock comparison (Tukey).

### Result

**Table 1: Demographical information of the respondent**

	Sex	
	Frequency	Percent
Female	54	71.053
Male	22	28.947
Total	76	100.0

As indicated on table, 1 males account 22(28.947%) and the remaining 54(71.053%) of respondents are females.

**Table 2: Independent sample t-test on gender difference with regard to their perception about creativity of children (N= 76)**

Variables	Groups	N	M	SD	df	T	Sig.
Sex	Male	22	40.130	9.101	74	.341	.002
	Female	54	48.754	12.471			

\* $p > .05$  M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation DF = Degree of Freedom

As it is displayed on table 2 statistical analysis revealed that there was statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their perception about creativity of children ( $t = .341$ ,  $df = 74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The descriptive statistics were also computed to find out the differences of perception in line with sex. As the table 2 indicated male teachers had the mean of 40.130 with standard deviation of 9.101 and the mean of female teachers was 48.754 with standard deviation of 12.471. This implies that females have positive attitude than male teachers towards children's learning through creativity.

**Table 3: The extent of preschool teacher's perception about children's learning through creativity**

Variable	N	M	SD	$\mu$	Df	t-calculated	t-observed	Sig.
Perception	76	4.348	.53321	2.5	75	-4.323	2.011	.000

$P < 0.05$ ;  $\mu$  = expected mean; SD = standard deviation, M= sample mean

As shown in table, the calculated t-value, i.e. -4.323 are smaller than the critical t-value of (2.011) at 0.05 alpha levels. This shows that there is significance difference between the observed sample mean(-4.348) and the expected mean (2.5) of teachers' response to the perception scale. Thus indicated that the level of perception is low about children's learning through creativity among preschool teachers of the sample schools.

**Table 4: Independent Sample t-test for difference in Perception of children's creativity**

School type	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig
Governmental	16	39.69	2.62	36	-2.269	0.02
Nongovernmental	22	44.82	3.45			

As shown in Table 4, statistical significant difference was observed in perception of creativity between governmental and nongovernmental preschools-test:[ $t(36) = -2.269$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ]. This indicates that, the mean of nongovernmental preschools (mean=44.82, SD=2.45) is significantly greater than governmental preschools (Mean=39.69, SD=2.62).

**Table 5: Summary of One Way ANOVA for comparison of teacher's perception about creativity of children by their educational level**

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	6.111	2	3.055	17.084	.000
Within groups	31.476	74	75		
Total	37.587	178			

\* $P < 0.05$  SS = Sum Squares; MS = Mean Square; Df = degree of freedom

Further to identify participant's teachers education of which category is significantly differing, a post hoc test also called post-hoc comparison (Tukey) was run and the result is displayed as well as elaborated as follows.

**Table 6: Post-Hoc tests on teacher's level of education and their perception about creativity of children (Tukey)**

Variables	(I) Teachers educational level	(J) Teachers educational level	Mean Difference(I-J)	Sig.
Perception about children's creativity	Basic education	Certificate	-2.032	3.55
		Diploma and above	-5.103*	.000
	Certificate	Basic education	2.032	.455
		Diploma and above	-3.440*	.004
	Diploma and above	Basic education	5.103*	.000
		Certificate	3.440*	.004

\*the mean difference is significant at  $p < 0.05$  As the post Hoc result indicates the mean score of respondents who had diploma and above educational level are significantly differ from teachers who had obtained both certificate and basic education. On the other hand, those preschool teachers who had certificate are significantly differing from participants with basic educational level (grade 1- 8) in their perception about children's learning through creativity.

## Discussion

### Gender and perception of creativity

In view of this, an attempt was made to assess the perception of preschool teachers towards children's learning through creativity. Hence, an independent t-test is computed to see whether there is a significant mean difference on perception of male and female teachers about creativity. The result of this study revealed that female teachers were more likely have better perception about children's learning through creativity than male preschool teacher. A similar finding was obtained by Humaira Irfan (2012). As here finding indicated, Male teachers' perception about creativity of children is quite low because they are interested in muscular activities.

### Comparison of preschool teachers' perception about children's learning through creativity by their level of education

One-way ANOVA was computed to see whether there was a statistically significant difference among preschool teachers perception with the educational level they achieved. In this regard, the result of One way ANOVA displayed that there was statistically significant difference at ( $F 17.084, P < 0.05$ ) preschool teachers level of education in which, basic education, Certificate and diploma and above holders. Previous research findings by Matthew Manning, Susanne Garvis, Christopher Fleming, Gabriel T.W. Wong(2017) noted that higher teacher qualifications are significantly positively correlated with higher quality perception in early childhood education and care.

## Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study the following conclusions were drawn.

Preschool teacher's perception is different across different educational level they have. This means is that preschool teachers who have high educational level had also better perception about children's learning via

creativity. This study also revealed that significant gender difference is observed regard to their perception about children's learning through creativity. In this junction, female teachers have better perception about children's learning via creativity than male teachers. In comparison between government and non-government preschools, there was significant difference about perception of creativity by pre-primary school teachers. In which private/ non-government preschools have positive/ good perception about creativity than government preschools.

### **Recommendations**

Depending on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were forwarded:

Universities and colleges which have been working in the area of early childhood care and education, should provide awareness creation about creativity for preschool teachers.

Regional education bureaus in collaboration with teacher training colleges should arrange and deliver training about implications of creativity for preschool teachers and school principals.

Since perception of preschool teachers about creativity is low among the sample preschools, they should update themselves via reading materials elucidating about merit of creativity and apply it in their instruction.

### **Declaration**

The undersigned, declare that this manuscript is my original work and all sources of material used for this manuscript have been duly acknowledged: Mezgebu Bayu.

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### **Competing Interest**

I declare that there is no competing interest.

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