

## Teachers' Self-Efficacy as a Mediator of Their Perception and Behavior regarding Creative Teaching for Elementary School Students

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**Abstract.** Creativity must be considered in teaching elementary school students to prepare them to be more innovative. It needs to be fostered from an early age because children at that age are in a critical period, so it will be easier to teach them to think creatively. The teachers have roles to carry out creative teaching to foster their students' creativity. Creative teaching is influenced by the teachers' perception of creativity, which depends on several factors, one of which is the teachers' self-efficacy. This study aims to examine whether the teacher's self-efficacy can mediate the relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and their creative teaching behavior in class. Participants of this study were 38 elementary school teachers who were participants in the Creative Teaching Workshop. The measuring tools used in this study are the Creativity Fostering Teacher Index (CFTI) and Teaching for Creativity Scale (TFCS). The data obtained were analyzed quantitatively using correlation tests (Pearson's correlation) and mediation tests with Macro PROCESS. The results found that teachers' self-efficacy partially mediated teachers' perceptions of creativity and creative teaching behavior, which means that the relationship between teachers' perceptions and behaviors can be explained directly and indirectly through the teachers' self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** creativity; creative teaching; teachers' perspective; teachers' self-efficacy; teachers' behavior

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**INTRODUCTION** ~ Creativity is essential to be developed, especially at this present time because it is not only related to art but also to the cognitive processes affecting a person's mindset and skills. Creativity is defined as the skill to produce new work that is original, unique, and also useful (Hao et al., 2017). The World Economic Forum highlights creativity as one of the skills needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Soffel, 2016). Therefore, every individual needs to develop their creativity, especially early school-age children. According to Lee and Kemple (2014), every child has the ability and potential to be creative and all children can actualize their creativity. In addition to the abilities and potential of children, the environment and people around children have a fundamental role to develop creativity in each child (Ata-Akturk & Sevimli-Celik, 2020; Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000; Wright, 2010).

Children at early school age (kindergarten and elementary school) are in a developmental period where they are faster to learn certain skills, so it is highly recommended for them to learn

about creative skills, so adults have the role to support children's creative thinking to lay the foundation for their future potential (Leggett, 2017). During that period, the teachers' role is significant to develop students' creativity (Barbot et al., 2015). Teachers as educators are responsible for developing creative abilities, shaping students' personality traits and attitudes in a conducive manner, and helping students think and solve problems creatively (Lee & Kemple, 2014). Teachers' competence regarding creativity itself has been defined and described in in the Law No 20/2003 concerning National Education System (Sisdiknas, *Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*) and Permendiknas No.16/2007 concerning Academic Qualification Standards and Teachers Competence, which explains that the educators and education staffs are obliged to create a meaningful educational atmosphere, dynamic, creative, dialogical, fun and also able to creatively develop learning materials. Based on these laws and regulations, the application of creative teaching is an obligation that must be carried out by teachers in the classroom to help develop students' creativity.

The various benefits of creativity for students shows that the role of creativity in education is clear and important (Rinkevich, 2011). However, there are not many teachers that able to do creative teaching as an effort to stimulate creativity in the context of education and learning, even some studies have shown that creativity in the classroom is often not recommended (Beghetto, 2007; Freund & Holling, 2008; Rinkevich, 2011; Scott, 1999). This thing happens in Indonesia, data from the Global Creativity Index (GCI) in 2015 assessing students' creative performance shows that Indonesia was ranked 115th out of 139 countries (Florida et al., 2015) and sadly, Indonesia also consistently ranks low in assessments related to creativity from time to time.

There are several things that make it difficult for teachers to implement creative teaching in the classroom, one of which is the teachers' perception of creativity itself. Several studies show that although teachers claim to value creativity, they do not esteem creative behavior or behavior that is considered different (Beghetto, 2006; Freund & Holling, 2008; Rinkevich, 2011; Scott, 1999). Scott (1999, as cited in Rubenstein et al., 2013) states that teachers tend to see creative children as more troublesome to the classroom environment. Teachers themselves also prefer expected or relevant answers to questions over unique responses from students who show their creativity (Beghetto, 2007, 2009; Rubenstein et al., 2013). In addition, Beghetto (2007, as cited in Rinkevich, 2011) also affirms that teachers view creativity as a new responsibility or as something "extra". The teachers perception of creativity works as a filter to sort out the decisions, instructions and teaching actions taken by the teacher. This can cause the teachers to decide whether apply or not to apply creative teaching in the classroom. There have been many studies related to teachers' perceptions of creativity and its influence on their behaviors (Kettler et al., 2018; Mullet et al., 2016; Rubenstein et al., 2013; Rubenstein et al., 2018). However, those studies do not explain in-depth the factors shaping perceptions of

creativity to ultimately influence creative teaching behaviors in the classroom. Hence, this study tries to look at the role of another variable, namely the self-efficacy of elementary school teachers in explaining the influence of teachers' perceptions on creative teaching behaviors in the classroom.

The selection of self-efficacy constructs is based on Bandura's findings (1997, as cited in Rubenstein et al., 2013), which show that individual beliefs about their abilities can affect their motivation and actual actions. Teachers' self-efficacy is important with the application of creative teaching in the classroom because it can affect the behaviors shown by the teacher in fostering creativity and also involves the teachers' awareness to identify the extent of their ability to teach and guide students to be creative (Sarıçam & Sakız, 2014). Self-efficacy does also not only affect a person's behaviors but also their perception of something. According to Rubenstein et al (2013), teachers with high self-efficacy about their skills in teaching creatively tend to have good perceptions as well about creativity.

Based on the explanation above, it appears that self-efficacy, teachers' behaviors and perceptions regarding creative teaching for elementary school students need to be investigated further. The novelty of this research is a more in-depth discussion of creative teaching behaviors with elementary school teachers in Indonesia as the main subjects and by looking at the factors that can influence teachers to do creative teaching. Several studies on creative teaching have not been found to directly explain the relationship between the factors influencing creative teachings such as teachers' self-efficacy and perceptions of creativity. Several studies found only discussed the concept of teachers' self-efficacy, teachers' perceptions of creativity and creative teaching behaviors separately (Al-Dababneh et al., 2017 Kettler et al., 2018; Mullet et al., 2016; Rubenstein et al., 2013; Rubenstein et al., 2018; Sarıçam & Sakız, 2014). The hypothesis in this study is that teachers' self-efficacy can mediate the relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and creative teaching behaviors in elementary school students.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Creativity**

Creativity as a concept is ambiguous yet familiar. Most people have a basic understanding of what creativity is but when it comes to describing creativity thoroughly and widely agreed upon, the concept becomes difficult to define (Morrell, 2015). Many researchers have their definitions regarding creativity, according to Guilford (1959, as cited in Fatmawiyati, 2018), creativity is an individual's capacity to generate ideas based on divergent thinking rather than convergent thinking. Munandar (2009, as cited in Fatmawiyati, 2018) defines creativity as the ability to create new combinations based on existing data, information, or elements. Furthermore, APA (American Psychological Association) Dictionary explains that creativity is

also the ability to produce or develop original works, theories, techniques, or thoughts. A creative individual usually displays originality, imagination, and expressiveness.

Based on these definitions, creativity can be said as individual capacity to generate new thoughts, ideas and works based on existing data and information and use divergent ways of thinking. According to Runco (2008, as cited in Morrell, 2015), the concept of creativity is traditionally accompanied by two biases: artistic bias and productivity bias. The view of creativity from an artistic bias sees that creativity is mostly the domain of artists, for example, musicians, photographers, sculptors, dancers, and painters. These artists generally express their creativity through their artistic creations. The view of creativity based on productivity bias is related to contributions, creations, inventions or things produced that have social significance. Famous theorists and inventors along with their ideas and discoveries fall into this category. This shows that creativity is not limited to a certain aspect but exists in every aspect of life.

### **Creative Teaching**

Creative teaching is defined as a unique, customized and meaningful exchange of knowledge for all students in a learning context (Rinkevich, 2011). In the creative teaching process, teachers arise students' interest in learning materials, then direct students to find their own problems creatively, or presents certain problems and asks students to apply all kinds of available resources to find the best solution. By applying creative teaching in the classroom, students are expected to be able to train themselves to be creative individuals. Teaching can be considered creative when a teacher combines existing knowledge in some new or unique way or introduces a new process to cultivate cognition to get outcomes that are beneficial for students (Reilly et al., 2011). Elementary school-age children are in a transitional phase where their mid-year abilities develop rapidly, the age period from 5 to 8 years is also usually defined as a turning point in a child's development. At that age, children become able to accurately learn, understand reality and also able to perceiving reality. Cognitive and emotional maturity allows children to be able to function independently and learn new skills that prepare them for adulthood (Davies, 2010).

This rapid cognitive development then prepares children to understand the world through logical and systematic thinking, so at this time teachers must try to make variations in their teaching approach in the classroom. Teachers who teach with creativity in the classroom can provoke their students to be more motivated and involved in learning, this is evidenced by research from Schacter, Thum, and Zifkin (2006, as cited in Rinkevich, 2011) which shows that creative teaching resulted in substantially improved students' achievement at the elementary level.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy of the teacher is one of the factors affecting teachers' perception and behaviors. Teachers' self-efficacy is related to their ability to foster creativity in the classroom because

they must be able to take the initiative and control to teach more creatively (Çayırdağ, 2017). Bandura (2006) defines teachers' self-efficacy as their belief about their ability to organize and carry out an action in a particular teaching task. These beliefs will affect how much effort, how long the teachers can endure when they face obstacles, how resilient the teachers are in the face of failure, and how much stress or depression the teacher feels in dealing with stressful situations (Friedman & Kass, 2002).

Self-efficacy can affect the teachers' mental structure of teachers affecting learning activities and their capacity to carry out activities in the classroom (Pendergast et al., 2011). Hence, it can be said that the level of teachers' self-efficacy can affect the teaching practice of teachers. High levels of self-efficacy can increase the teachers' desire to show their best performance, while low levels of self-efficacy can cause them to avoid effective implementation of competencies (Ekinci, 2012).

## METHOD

### Research design

This study uses a quantitative approach with the accidental sampling method. This method is chosen based on the convenience of data collection. The data obtained then was processed with a simple mediation analysis design which aims to see the role of teachers' self-efficacy (M) in mediating teachers' perceptions (X) and teachers' behaviors (Y) in creative teaching in the classroom for elementary school students. This research was conducted in July 2021, the data processing process lasted approximately a week after questionnaire distribution.

### Participants

The selection of the sample was done using the accidental sampling method. The participants involved in this study were elementary school teachers from several cities in Indonesia (Jabodetabek, Aceh and Pekalongan) who were participants in Creative Teaching Training. A total of 38 trainee teachers were willing to participate in this study. Out of 38 participants, the majority of participants are female teachers, as many as 31 participants (81.6%) and the other 7 (18.4%) were male teachers. The age of the participants ranged from 22-56 years ( $M = 34.78$  and  $SD = 9.88$ ). The range of participant teaching experience was from less than 1 year up to 35 years with the majority of 26 people (68.4%) had been teaching for 1 to 10 years and 5.2% had been teaching for more than 31 years. The majority of participants had bachelor's degrees (92.1%). A total of 26 people (68.4%) of the participants still did not have teacher certification. A more complete description of participants is described in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Participants Demographic Data

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	81.6%
	Male	18.4%

Teaching Experience	<1 – 10 years	68.4 %
	11 – 20 years	15.7%
	21 – 30 years	10.5%
	>31 years	5.2%
Last Degree	Bachelor (S-1)	92.1%
	Master (S-2)	7.9%
Teacher Certification	Have	31.6%
	Do not have	68.4%

### Instruments

This study used two measuring tools, namely the Creative Fostering Teacher Index (CFTI) and the Teaching for Creativity Scales (TFCS). The CFTI in this study was compiled by Soh (2000) to measure the creative fostering teachers' behaviors (CFTB) construct. CFTB construct is a form of teachers' behaviors variety that can support the growth of creativity in students (Soh, 2000). This construct collects all teachers' behaviors that support the formation of creativity in students according to the findings of Cropley (1997). Cropley (1997) explains that teachers can help develop students' creativity if they show certain behaviors consistently. Cropley (1997) states there are 9 from teachers' behaviors that can be used as a reference to develop students' creativity. The nine behaviors developed into behavioral indicators in measuring how far teachers encourage students' creativity as defined in the CFTB construct. The CFTI measuring instrument consists of 45 items which are all arranged in favorable items, covering 9 dimensions of the CFTB behaviors indicator with the example of the item is "Encourage students to think in different directions". Each dimension consists of 5 items, with response choices in Likert scale format and ranging from 1 which means "Never" to 6 which means "Always". The greater the number filled in by the participants on these items, the greater the frequency of participants in displaying CFTB behaviors to the students they teach. The CFTI in this study is an adaptation to Indonesian which has been used in the research of Kurniawati et al. (2021) with a sample of 534 middle and high school teachers from 8 provinces in Indonesia, which was then retested for reliability by researchers and obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.957.

The second measuring instrument used is the Teaching for creativity scales (TFCS) compiled by Rubenstein et al. (2013). TFCS is an instrument that measures the implicit teachers' beliefs that affect their ability to teach students to be more creative. TFCS consists of 45 items with 4 dimensions, namely Teachers' Self-Efficacy, Environmental Encouragement, Societal Value and Student Potential with response options in Likert scale format and ranging from 7 as "strongly agree" and 1 as "strongly disagree". The TFCS used in this study was adapted directly from the original scale so that it needed to go through a translation process (back-to-back translation), expert judgment, and be tested on 33 teachers with the same characteristics as the participants in this study. In this study, researchers only used 2 dimensions of the TFCS measuring instrument, namely Societal Value and Teachers' Self-Efficacy.

The Societal Value dimension is used to measure teachers' perceptions of creativity. This dimension consists of 10 items with an example item "Innovative ideas can move society forward". The result of the coefficient test is 0.919 with a range of crIT values (0.416 – 0.857) so it can be said that the societal value dimension that measures teachers' perceptions of creativity in the TFCS measuring tool can be used. Teachers' Self-Efficacy was used to measure the teachers' self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach students to be more creative which consists of 13 items with the example of the item "I am capable of helping my students to see the world from new perspectives". The result of the coefficient test was 0.923, but item number 13 had a corrected-item total correlation (crIT) value < 0.30 so item number 13 must be eliminated. The results of the retest showed a coefficient of 0.95 with a crIT value range of (0.317 – 0.883), therefore, this dimension in the TFCS measuring instrument can be used.

### Data Analysis Technique

This study aims to see whether teachers' self-efficacy can mediate the relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and creative teaching behaviors for elementary school students. There is 1 X variable (independent variable), 1 Y variable (dependent variable), and 1 M variable (mediator). The researcher then used a simple mediation analysis technique using the model 4 macro-PROCESS for SPSS (Hayes, 2013).

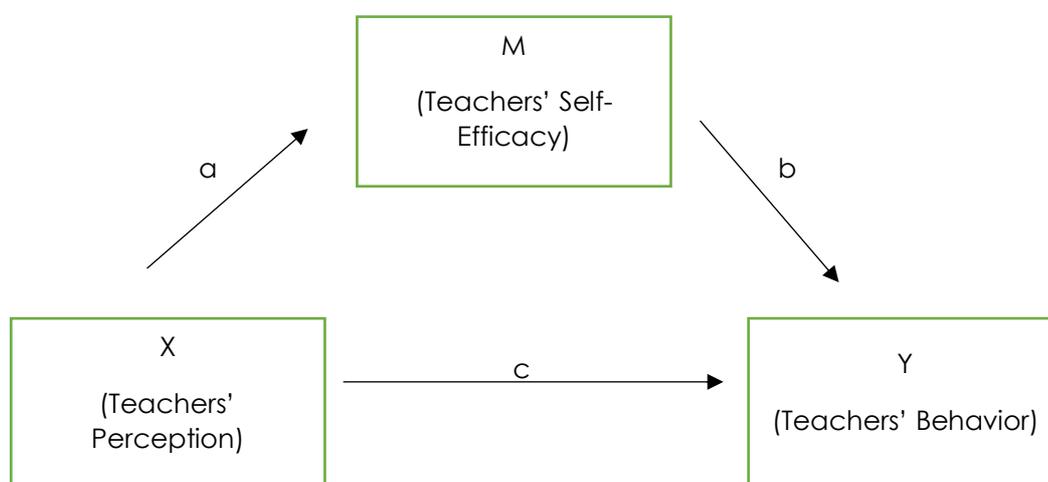


Figure 1. Simple Mediation Analysis Diagram

### FINDINGS

The results of descriptive statistical tests of each research variable is presented in Table 2, in which the average score of teachers' behaviors was 243.13 with the lowest score obtained by participants was 168 and the highest score was 270. The standard deviation obtained from the Teachers' Behavior score of the CFTI measuring instrument was 22.58. The average score for the teachers' self-efficacy variable was 72.50 with the lowest score of 45 and the highest score of 84. The standard deviation of the teachers' self-efficacy variable was 9.25. Lastly, teachers'

perception had an average score of 65.76 with the lowest score of 44 and the highest score of 70, the standard deviation of teachers' perception was 6.49.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistical Analysis Results Data

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Teachers' Behavior	168	270	243.13	22.58
Teachers' Self-Efficacy	45	84	72.50	9.25
Teachers' Perception	44	70	65.76	6.49

Before conducting the mediation test stage, the researchers first conducted a bivariate correlation analysis to see the relationship between research variables using Pearson (product-moment correlation) in SPSS. The results of the analysis showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between teachers' perceptions and teachers' self-efficacy ( $r=0.616$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The correlation of teachers' self-efficacy and behaviors also showed a strong and significant positive relationship ( $r=0.830$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The results of the correlation between teachers' perceptions and teachers' behaviors also showed a positive and significant correlation ( $r = 0.656$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 3.** Results of Mediation Analysis

Notation Path	Coefficient	t	p
a	0.876	4.686	0.000
b	1.674	6.078	0.000
c	2.278	5.211	0.000
c'	0.810	2.064	0.046

Description:

Track a: IV – M (Teachers' Perception – Teachers' Self-Efficacy)

Track b: M – DV (Teachers' Self-Efficacy – Teachers' Behavior)

Track c: Total Effect IV – DV (Teachers' Perception – Teachers' Behavior)

Track c': Direct Effect IV – DV (Teachers' Perception – Teachers' Perception)

**Table 4.** Mediation Effect Analysis

Notation Path	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Direct Effect	0.810	0.134	1.606
Indirect Effect	1.468	0.631	3.144

The results of the simple mediation analysis test using PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 shows that the test results of all notation paths (a-c') had significant results, with p-value  $<0.05$ . According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation role was proven to exist, if: 1) the role of IV on DV is direct and significant (sig.  $<0.05$ ), 2) the role of IV on the moderator variable is direct and significant (sig.  $<0.05$ ), and 3) the mediator variable on DV where IV was entered was significant (sig.  $<0.05$ ). Based on this reference, the notation

paths a and b which showed significant results, it can be concluded that there was a mediating role of self-efficacy on the teachers' perception and behaviors.

Meanwhile, Table 4, the indirect effect of IV (teachers' perception) on DV (teachers' behaviors) showed significant results as seen from the BootLLCI and BootULCI values  $> 0$  (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In addition, the effect value of the indirect effect (1.458) was greater than the value of the direct effect (0.810), thus, it can be inferred that the mediator variable was proven able to mediate IV and DV. The occurring mediation was partial, because the mediating variable (self-efficacy) contributed to some but not all the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables.

## DISCUSSION

The hypothesis of this study is that teachers' self-efficacy can mediate the relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and their creative teaching behaviors for elementary school students. The results of the analysis obtained from 38 participants showed that the hypothesis proposed in this study was accepted. Creative teaching is a way that can be done by teachers to shape and foster student creativity, teachers in this case play an important role in realizing creative teaching in the classroom. A teacher can directly strengthen creativity through their interaction with students by appreciating the students' creative efforts (process), results (product) and recognizing their creative characteristics (person). Teachers can also indirectly influence students' creativity by creating a supportive social environment through their words and actions (Soh, 2000).

Creative teaching can be done if the teacher itself is creative, several studies have been done to see the role of creative teaching and it shows that creative teaching and creative teachers can increase student creativity. Reilly et al. (2011) state that creative teachers are needed in both to increase students' creativity and to apply modern curricula effectively, the same thing is also said by Runco (2006 as cited in Reilly et al., 2011) who argues that teachers' creativity plays an important role in developing student creativity. Being a creative teacher who can able to do creative teaching in the classroom is certainly not something easy, especially for elementary school teachers. The biggest challenge for elementary school teachers is to adjust the learning method to match children's developmental stages (from cognitive to socio-emotional). According to Piaget (1952, as cited in Papalia & Martorell, 2015), elementary school children are in a transition from learning with something concrete to arriving at a more concept of abstract thinking. This makes the teachers need to have the creativity to provide creative teaching but still in accordance with the students' abilities of students by looking at the stages their cognitive development.

Creative teaching can be categorized as behaviors carried out by teachers to foster and shape creativity for their students. According to Bandura (2012), beliefs about the ability to do

something affect the way a person does something or elicits certain behaviors. In particular, self-efficacy affects the quality of human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decision processes. Self-efficacy also affects how well a person motivates themselves, their expectations of outcomes and causal attributions to their successes and failures. Based on research from Hadjam and Widhiarso (2011), teachers who have high self-efficacy tend to be more tenacious and open in guiding their students in class. They are also better able to cultivate themselves into a person who can express any material presented so that all students can be able to receive the material well. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001, as cited in Wangid et al., 2020) say that teachers' self-efficacy is very useful and related to the learning process in the classroom and also for the benefit of the teacher itself. Teachers' self-efficacy has been shown to have a close relationship with many useful educational outcomes such as teachers' persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, and instructional behaviors, even with student learning outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and also student efficacy. This is in line with the results of this study. In this study, it was found that self-efficacy and behaviors have a positive and strong correlation, which means that the higher the teachers' self-efficacy regarding their ability to teach creatively, the greater the behaviors shown.

The teachers' perception of creativity also plays an important role in creative teaching. Teachers' perception is defined as a professional educator's view of a problem. Perception is also involved in the difference between teachers' beliefs about a topic and their actions in response to those beliefs (Roy, 2013). Some researchers found a mismatch between what teachers said about creative thinking and what they did to promote creative thinking. In other words, in reality, teachers can inhibit creativity because they find creative characteristics in children distracting and difficult to manage (Fletcher, 2011). Westby and Dawson (1995, as cited in Roy, 2013) also assert that teachers can indirectly limit children's creativity by developing a rigid or inflexible classroom environment. Teachers' perceptions of creativity can also be influenced by teachers' self-efficacy, research from Rubenstein et al. (2013) found a high correlation between teachers' perceptions of their own creativity and the teachers' self-efficacy subscale. The three subscales of the Teaching for Creativity Scale (societal value, student potential, and teachers' self-efficacy) were significantly correlated. This is in accordance with the results of this study which showed a positive and significant correlation between teachers' perceptions and teachers' self-efficacy, this proves that the better the teachers' perception of creativity, the higher the teachers' belief in their ability to foster students to be more creative.

Based on the results of this study, it can be inferred that there was a positive and strong correlation between teachers' perceptions of creativity and creative teaching behaviors. In addition, there was a direct effect of perceptions on teachers' creative teaching behaviors with teachers' self-efficacy as a mediator variable. Teachers can promote creative

development in their classrooms, what must be done first is that they must think that creativity is valuable and deserves to be promoted (Rubenstein et al., 2013). Teachers must have the perception that creativity is needed by students and society so that it can be useful in their lives.

## CONCLUSION

This study proves the role of teachers' self-efficacy as a mediator on the relationship between teachers' behaviors in creative teaching and teachers' perceptions of creativity. The teachers' self-efficacy in this study acted as a partial mediator. Partial mediator implies that there was not only a significant relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable but also some direct relationships between the independent and dependent variables, which means that the presence of teachers' self-efficacy partially explains the role of teachers' perceptions of creativity on creative teaching behaviors. The relationship between teachers' perceptions and behaviors can be explained directly or through a mediator (teachers' self-efficacy).

Research on creative behaviors continues to grow as well as measuring tools to measure the creative behaviors. Therefore, further research is expected to explore and use other measuring tools that measure creative behaviors. Besides that, other measurement models such as performance observation can be considered as a way to see the creative teaching abilities of teachers in the classroom. Further research can also target not only elementary school teachers but also teachers at higher education levels and the factors that influence teachers' perceptions of creativity can be used as the basis for further research.

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