

Teachers' Perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 18, North Pontianak Subdistrict (Case Study of the Independent Curriculum)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji persepsi guru terhadap implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di SDN 18 Kecamatan Pontianak Utara. Permasalahan yang diangkat dalam penelitian ini adalah bagaimana persepsi guru memengaruhi efektivitas implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, serta faktor-faktor apa saja yang menjadi penghambat dan pendukung dalam penerapannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kuantitatif, di mana data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dari 23 guru dan kepala sekolah dengan analisis data korelasi. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa terdapat korelasi yang signifikan antara persepsi guru dan keberhasilan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, dengan nilai koefisien korelasi Pearson sebesar 0,825 ($p < 0,001$). Faktor-faktor yang mendukung penerapan kurikulum ini meliputi fleksibilitas dalam pengajaran dan peningkatan keterlibatan siswa, sementara hambatan utama adalah kurangnya pelatihan dan dukungan teknis bagi guru. Kesimpulannya, persepsi positif dari guru merupakan elemen kunci dalam kesuksesan Kurikulum Merdeka, dan diperlukan upaya lebih lanjut untuk meningkatkan kesiapan guru melalui pelatihan dan pendampingan yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam memahami dinamika penerapan kurikulum baru di sekolah dasar.

Kata Kunci : Persepsi, Guru, Kurikulum Merdeka

Abstract

This study aims to examine teachers' perceptions of the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 18, North Pontianak District. The problems raised in this study are how teachers' perceptions affect the effectiveness of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as what factors are the obstacles and supporters in its implementation. This research uses quantitative research methods, where quantitative data is collected through questionnaires from 23 teachers and principals with correlation data analysis. The results of the analysis show that there is a significant correlation between teacher perceptions and the successful implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, with a Pearson correlation coefficient value of 0.825 ($p < 0.001$). Factors that support the implementation of this curriculum include flexibility in teaching and increased student engagement, while the main obstacles are the lack of training and technical support for teachers. In conclusion, positive perceptions from teachers are a key element in the success of Merdeka Curriculum, and further efforts are needed to improve teacher readiness through continuous training and mentoring. This research makes an important contribution to understanding the dynamics of implementing the new curriculum in primary schools.

Keyword : Perception, Teacher, Merdeka Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The urgency of Merdeka Curriculum is high in Indonesia's current educational landscape, as it is specifically designed to give schools and educators greater autonomy in structuring learning experiences. This curriculum is essentially geared towards the holistic development of students' competencies and character, in line with the multifaceted requirements of the 21st century (Nazhifah, 2024). Through the core principles of flexibility, creativity and relevance, Merdeka Curriculum is anticipated to effectively address the various challenges posed by globalisation and rapid advances in technology (Aghnaita, 2021; Sudarti, 2020). Consequently, the curriculum is positioned as a strategic response to the evolving educational needs of Indonesian students in an increasingly interconnected and dynamic world (Bucci, 2023; Sahoo, 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum places a strong emphasis on the application of flexibility and creativity in the educational process (Ainissyifa, 2024). This theory highlights the important role of educators as facilitators who have the ability to customise educational materials according to the unique requirements and preferences of their students (Aditiya & Fatonah, 2023). Furthermore, Merdeka Curriculum emphasises the importance of creating conducive learning environments that encourage exploration and foster innovation (Haq & Fitriani, 2024). It also emphasises the value of fostering collaboration between teachers, students and the wider community to enhance the overall educational experience (Sulolipu et al., 2023).

These perceptions include various aspects such as the perceived flexibility of the curriculum, the degree of ease associated with its implementation, and the potential impact it may have on the teaching and learning process (Chai, 2021). Favourable perceptions held by teachers towards the curriculum have the potential to enhance its overall effectiveness, leading to positive outcomes in educational settings (Oke, 2020). Conversely, negative perceptions among teachers can pose significant challenges to the successful implementation of the curriculum, potentially hindering its intended impact on teaching and learning experiences (Walsh, 2020).

Although a significant amount of literature has investigated the Merdeka Curriculum, there are still important gaps in theory regarding its practical application in diverse educational settings characterised by various features. These existing shortcomings highlight the need for additional scholarly enquiry aimed at investigating the various factors that influence curriculum implementation in educational settings (Harianto, 2023; Ramadhani & Hindun, 2023). Therefore, there is an urgent need for further investigation to investigate the complexities of how different variables influence curriculum implementation in the field of education.

Empirically, there is a notable dearth of research with respect to examining teachers' perspectives on Merdeka Curriculum in primary education institutions in Indonesia, particularly with a focus on the North Pontianak region (Purwulan, 2024; Setioyuliani & Andaryani, 2023). The current investigation seeks to address this research gap by conducting a thorough exploration into the perspectives held by teachers at SDN 18 in North Pontianak sub-district. By highlighting this unexplored territory, this study aims to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on Curriculum Mandiri and its implementation in primary schools, particularly in the context of the North Pontianak area.

From a methodological perspective, many past research efforts have largely utilised qualitative methodologies to investigate the complex realm of teacher perceptions (Armini, 2024; Manullang & Marpaung, 2024). Nevertheless, a real void exists in the utilisation of quantitative approaches, which have the potential to generate more easily scalable data and facilitate a wider scope of generalisation in terms of research findings. By incorporating quantitative methods into the research framework, scholars can not only enhance the robustness of their studies but also extend the applicability of their conclusions to a more diverse range of educational settings.

This research endeavour presents a systematic approach through quantitative methodology, which aims to offer a more holistic understanding of educators' viewpoints regarding Merdeka Curriculum. By adopting this innovative methodological framework, this research seeks to enrich current knowledge and offer new insights that can potentially inform policymakers in formulating improved strategies for curriculum implementation. Consequently, the anticipated outcomes of this research are not only geared towards advancing the academic literature but also to provide practical guidance for policymakers seeking to improve the implementation of the education curriculum.

The purpose of this research endeavour was to determine and examine educators' perspectives regarding Merdeka Curriculum within SDN 18 located in North Pontianak sub-district. This investigation was fuelled by a desire to delve



further into the various elements that make up teachers' perspectives, aiming to shed light on their significance for the effective implementation of this educational framework. Understanding teachers' perceptions is critical to gauging the potential challenges and advantages associated with implementing alternative curricula in educational settings.

Merdeka Curriculum encapsulates profound ideas regarding the transformation of the educational paradigm with a strong emphasis on fostering freedom and nurturing creativity among learners (Salmiyanti & Desyandri, 2023). This theory sets the stage for a paradigm shift in education, advocating a more student-centred approach that empowers individuals to think critically and express themselves authentically (Ahmad, 2024). This analysis delves into the pragmatic aspects of curriculum implementation in school settings and at the classroom level, involving practical adjustments to educational materials and teaching methodologies to align with curriculum principles (Afianti & Murti, 2024). Furthermore, the application of this framework delves into the important aspect of examining teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the practical application of Merdeka Curriculum in the real-world context of the school environment, highlighting the importance of educator support and engagement for successful implementation.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative research method approach that incorporates a sequential explanatory design, which combines quantitative data collection and analysis techniques (Efendi & Mustofa, 2024). By utilising this method, the researcher can first collect and analyse quantitative data to build a basic understanding of the research topic. This sequential explanatory design not only allows for a comprehensive examination of the research subject but also facilitates a more thorough exploration of the relationships between different variables, thus improving the overall quality and robustness of the research findings (Rosyidah & Masykuroh, 2024).

This research was conducted at SDN 18 North Pontianak sub-district, a public primary school that exhibits a variety of characteristics stemming from the social aspects and various backgrounds of the teachers involved. The diverse nature of the school environment provides a rich setting to explore the implications of such heterogeneity on educational outcomes and teacher-student interactions. This study focused on examining the demographic characteristics and professional experiences of educators at SDN 18 North Pontianak sub-district, which included a group of 23 individuals in total, comprising teachers and principals. This particular group was selected as the main population for the research investigation.

Sampling for research purposes involves the systematic selection of a subset of individuals or items from a larger population to make inferences about the whole (Sofyani, 2023). In quantitative research methodology, it is usually recommended to use a sample size that accounts for at least 20% of the total population to ensure statistical reliability and validity (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). This usually translates to about 5-6 participants in a small-scale study, with the aim of capturing the diversity and characteristics of the wider population being studied.

Data collection is done through the utilisation of carefully designed and validated structured questionnaires that have undergone rigorous testing to ensure their reliability and validity (Iqbal & Salsabila, 2023). The questionnaire was carefully crafted with several sections, each dedicated to measuring teachers' perceptions of various aspects related to Merdeka Curriculum. The questionnaire aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of teachers' viewpoints and insights into various dimensions of the curriculum, allowing for a thorough analysis of their perceptions and attitudes towards the Merdeka Curriculum.

Quantitative data analysis involves utilising correlation analysis statistics, facilitated by statistical software such as JASP, to examine numerical data (Dahri, 2020). This process allows researchers to uncover patterns, trends and relationships in the data, providing valuable insights for decision-making and further research (Martias, 2021). Through this method, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and emotions of research participants, enriching the qualitative findings and contributing to the overall research outcome.

RESULT

Pearson's Correlations

		n	Pearson's r	p	VS-MPR†	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Effect size (Fisher's z)	SE Effect size	Covariance
Persepsi Guru	- Kurikulum Merdeka	25	0.825*	<.001	62901.842	0.637	0.920	1.171	0.213	28.397

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

† Vovk-Sellke Maximum p -Ratio: Based on the p -value, the maximum possible odds in favor of H_1 over H_0 equals $1/(-e p \log(p))$ for $p \leq .37$ (Sellke, Bayarri, & Berger, 2001).

Assumption checks

Shapiro-Wilk Test for Multivariate Normality

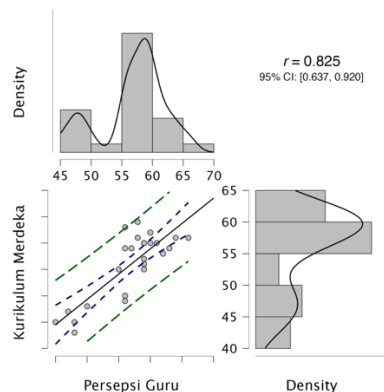
Shapiro-Wilk	p
0.980	0.967

Shapiro-Wilk Test for Bivariate Normality

		Shapiro-Wilk	p
Persepsi Guru	- Kurikulum Merdeka	0.980	0.967

Scatter plots

Teacher Perception vs. Merdeka Curriculum



The comprehensive analyses conducted yielded convincing results that clearly indicated a very strong correlation between educators' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum, as measured by a Pearson's r value of 0.825 alongside a statistically significant p value of less than 0.001. Such a high r value unequivocally signifies that the relationship between these two examined variables is not only strong but also has substantial statistical significance, thus confirming the validity of the findings. In the field of social research, it is well established that Pearson's r values close to number one indicate a very close and intimate relationship between the variables concerned, indicating a high degree of interdependence.

To articulate this more clearly, it can be inferred that when educators hold a favourable perception of Merdeka Curriculum, there is a markedly increased likelihood that they will simultaneously hold the same positive perspective regarding the overall effectiveness of this particular curriculum. Consequently, these findings underscore the importance of understanding how perceptions can influence educational outcomes, thus necessitating further examination into the factors that shape such perceptions among educators. Ultimately, the implications of these analyses are profound, as they highlight not only the interconnectedness of teacher beliefs and curriculum effectiveness but also the potential for these perceptions to inform future educational practices and policies.

These observed correlations undeniably suggest that the subjective perceptions held by educators regarding the curriculum play an important role in the overall evaluation and effectiveness of the educational framework in question. For instance, in a scenario where an educator perceives Merdeka Curriculum as a resource that offers significant adaptability and fosters creativity and innovation in the realm of teaching practices, it stands to reason that such a positive perception would likely culminate in a more favourable assessment of the curriculum's implementation and effectiveness in the educational setting. Conversely, if educators harbour sentiments that characterise this curriculum as overly burdensome or misaligned with the diverse needs and learning styles of their students, it is highly likely that they will develop negative and critical perspectives regarding the curriculum's value and overall efficacy in promoting student learning and engagement.

With a p value of less than 0.001, the findings obtained from this study strongly suggest that the observed correlations are almost unequivocally not due to random chance or extraneous variables that could distort the results. This very low p value serves to strengthen the hypothesis that the perceptions held by educators regarding Merdeka Curriculum play an important and significant role in shaping their judgement of the effectiveness and utility of the overall curriculum in educational settings.

The implications of this are significant, as they suggest that initiatives aimed at enhancing teachers' acceptance, understanding and engagement with Merdeka Curriculum have the potential to directly and profoundly influence the successful implementation and integration of the curriculum in a variety of school settings. It therefore underscores the critical need for targeted professional development and support systems that can facilitate deeper understanding among educators, ultimately fostering a more favourable context for the adoption of innovative curricular frameworks.

Furthermore, the confidence intervals, commonly referred to as CIs, that have been derived from the comprehensive correlation analysis, range from a value of 0.637 to a value of 0.920, thus indicating a very high level of certainty in

relation to the estimation of this particular correlation. These established confidence intervals clearly illustrate that the investigated correlations are not only quite strong but also highly reliable, showing relatively minimal fluctuations between their lower and upper thresholds.

In the realm of academic research, it is widely recognised that narrow confidence intervals are often interpreted as a clear indication that the results obtained have a significant degree of stability and reliability. Therefore, the implications of such confidence intervals are profound, suggesting that researchers can have greater assurance in the validity of their findings and the conclusions drawn from the data analysed.

The Shapiro-Wilk test was used as a statistical method to systematically assess the normality of the data set, which has emerged as an important prerequisite for conducting Pearson correlation analysis, thus increasing the rigour of statistical evaluation. The results obtained from the test indicated that the data set satisfactorily fulfilled the assumption of normality, as evidenced by the calculated p-values of 0.980 and 0.967, indicating strong adherence to the normal distribution. Specifically, these p-values, both of which exceed the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicate that there is insufficient evidence to refute the null hypothesis, which states that the data obeys a normal distribution, thus confirming the integrity of the analysis.

This aspect is critical to the overall validity and reliability of the correlation results that have been obtained, given that the assumption of normality is a fundamental condition that supports the application of the Pearson correlation test. Consequently, confirmation of normality not only strengthens the statistical assumptions inherent in the analysis but also ensures that the interpretations drawn from the correlations are meaningful and scientifically sound. As such, the implications of these findings go beyond mere statistical significance, as they underscore the need to adhere to these basic assumptions in the quest for accurate and credible research results.

Strict adherence to these basic assumptions significantly enhances the internal validity of research studies, thus empowering researchers to extend the generalisability of their findings to a wider and more diverse population beyond the immediate sample. In other words, the implications of these results extend far beyond the specific participants involved in this investigation, as they may also have substantive relevance and applicability for educators operating in various educational institutions who are in the process of implementing Merdeka Curriculum in their own teaching paradigms. This suggests that the insights gained from this study have the potential to inform and influence pedagogical practice in many different educational settings, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the curriculum in diverse learning environments.

DISCUSSION

Secondly, the findings obtained from this study imply that positive perceptions held by educators can serve as an early indicator of the successful implementation of the educational curriculum, which is an important factor in the effectiveness of the overall teaching strategy. Therefore, before embarking on a more comprehensive evaluation of outcomes related to student learning, it would be prudent to administer a survey or conduct a detailed study focusing on teachers' perceptions to effectively determine certain areas that may require targeted improvement and enhancement.

If these perceptions held by educators are found to be negative or unfavourable, it is important to initiate early intervention strategies aimed at addressing and correcting the underlying issues before they have a chance to negatively affect student learning outcomes. Ultimately, this proactive approach not only facilitates immediate remediation but also contributes to the long-term success of the educational framework employed.

Thirdly, with respect to the formulation of future educational policy initiatives, it is becoming increasingly important for those in positions of authority and decision-making - i.e. policy-makers - to actively involve educators in the intricate processes of curriculum development, planning and subsequent evaluation. Such active participation not only has the potential to significantly improve teachers' overall perceptions and attitudes regarding the curriculum in question, but also serves to ensure that the curriculum designed and implemented is indeed relevant and customised to meet the specific needs, challenges and prevailing conditions that exist within the field of education. Therefore, teachers' collaborative engagement in these critical areas is not only beneficial but essential for the creation of an effective and responsive educational framework.

While this particular study offers significant and valuable insights into the intricate and diverse relationship that exists between educators' perceptions and the Merdeka Curriculum, it is imperative to acknowledge and recognise certain



limitations that must be considered. To begin with, the study utilised a correlational design, which inherently limits its ability to explain the causal relationships that may exist between the variables being examined in this study.

In a more detailed sense, despite the apparent relationship between the perceptions held by teachers and their evaluative perspectives regarding Merdeka Curriculum, this investigation was ultimately unable to determine definitively whether educators' perceptions influence their views on the curriculum or whether the reverse is true, thus leaving a gap in understanding the direction of this relationship. Thus, while the findings contribute to the broader discourse on educational methodology, they simultaneously highlight the need for future research efforts that can more effectively explore and clarify these complex interactions.

Secondly, it is important to note that the sample size used in the study was relatively modest, which consequently may limit the extent to which these findings can be extrapolated to cover a wider population and various demographic groups. While it is true that the results obtained are statistically significant, it is imperative to recognise that further research involving larger sample sizes may be required to improve the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn from this investigation, thereby increasing the overall robustness of the evidence presented. These considerations underline the need for future studies to be conducted with a wider group of participants to ensure that the results can be generalised with confidence across diverse populations and settings.

Ultimately, the research conducted centers around the singular educational framework known as the Merdeka Curriculum, with a particular focus on a specific group of participants, namely the educators directly involved in the implementation of this curriculum. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the broader consequences that educators' perceptions may have on various educational policies and practices in general, it is highly recommended that future investigations incorporate a broader spectrum of variables and involve a more diverse demographic population of respondents. Such an approach would not only enrich the findings but also facilitate a more nuanced analysis of the interactions between teachers' perceptions and the effectiveness of various educational initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The findings obtained from the comprehensive analysis conducted in this particular study reveal that the perceptions held by educators are significantly correlated with their interpretations and attitudes toward the Merdeka Curriculum, showing a strong and noteworthy relationship. This correlation underscores the crucial role that teachers' perceptions play in the successful implementation of the curriculum framework, while simultaneously offering valuable insights into potential strategies that could enhance the acceptance and overall effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in educational institutions.

By encouraging greater support and active participation among teachers during the implementation stage, it is hoped that this curriculum will achieve greater efficacy in fulfilling its overarching goals to improve the quality of education across Indonesia. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that the involvement of educators is not only beneficial but essential for the success of educational reforms aimed at improving learning outcomes for students nationwide.

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