

The Influence of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum on the Religious Development of Students in Makassar City Middle Schools

Sandi Pratama

Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar; sandipratama@unismuh.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Kurikulum Merdeka;
Pembinaan; keagamaan

Article history:

Received 2025-12-10

Revised 2025-12-12

Accepted 2026-02-20

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in junior high schools (SMP) in Makassar City aims not only to improve student academic achievement but also to strengthen moral and spiritual values. Religious guidance is a crucial aspect of this curriculum, which is expected to shape students' character and noble morals. This study was conducted to determine the influence of the Independent Curriculum on the religious guidance patterns of junior high school students in Makassar City. This research used a survey method with a quantitative approach. The quantitative approach aims to test specific theories by examining the relationships between the variables studied. These variables are measured using research instruments, resulting in numerical data that can then be analyzed using statistical procedures. The sample in this study consisted of 30 junior high school teachers in Makassar City who were randomly selected using a random sampling method. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to respondents and conducting documentation. The results showed that the significance value obtained was 0.002, which is smaller than the alpha of 0.05. This indicates that there is a significant influence between the Independent Curriculum (X) and religious guidance (Y) of students in Makassar City Junior High Schools. This test is strengthened by the F count result of 11.56, while the F table value for n: 30 is 2.27. Because the F count value is greater than the F table (11.56 > 2.27), it can be concluded that the Independent Curriculum has a significant influence on students' religious guidance.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Sandi Pratama: Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar; sandipratama@unismuh.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia continues to experience developments and adjustments in order to achieve national development goals. In 2020, the Government of Indonesia introduced the Independent Curriculum Concept as part of education reform. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to give more freedom to educational institutions, including junior high schools (SMP), in developing education that suits local needs and characteristics. The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational initiative to give schools more freedom to design their own curriculum, with more emphasis on their local needs and conditions (MASKUR, 2023)(Dirgantoro & Soesanto, 2023),(Bait et al., 2025),(Ardianti & Amalia, 2022). This approach marks a shift from a more nationally centralized curriculum to a more decentralized and broader learning outcome-oriented approach.(Trisna et al., 2013),(Ningsi et al., 2025; Pratami et al., 2025; Tunas & Pangkey, 2024). The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum is expected to have a positive impact on students, including increasing knowledge, skills, and character, thereby producing students who are smart, skilled, and have good ethics (Indriani et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum also gives students independence in choosing the most appropriate learning method according to their needs(Kusnadi, 2011),(Nashir & Pratama, 2022a).

In the context of religious formation, the Merdeka Curriculum can have a significant impact. First, by giving schools more freedom in designing their own curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum allows educational institutions to customize religious learning approaches according to local values, student needs and the dominant religious beliefs in the region. Second, the Merdeka Curriculum can also enable better integration between religious values and general education. By allowing more flexibility in curriculum design, schools can emphasize teaching religious values in the broader context of learning, such as ethics, morality and social skills. However, there are also potential risks and challenges to consider. One of these is the potential

for abuse of the freedom granted by the Merdeka Curriculum, where schools may use this authority to promote one particular religion or exclude others. Therefore, it is important to ensure that this approach remains mindful of the principles of equity, diversity, and respect for all religious beliefs. Overall, the Merdeka Curriculum's influence on religious formation can be an opportunity to increase the relevance, flexibility and integration of religious values in education. However, it is important to be mindful of the challenges that may arise and ensure that this approach is implemented with due regard to diversity and equity..(Hartoyo & Melati, 2023)

Junior high schools in Makassar City have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. With the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in these schools, significant changes are expected in the pattern of students' religious guidance. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to provide greater freedom and flexibility in the teaching and learning process, which allows teachers to adapt subject matter to the needs and characteristics of students (Munauwarah & Achadi, 2023). The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Makassar City Junior High School not only aims to improve students' academic achievement but also to strengthen moral and spiritual values. Religious development is one of the important aspects of this curriculum, which is expected to shape students' character to be better and noble.

Through a more holistic and integrative approach, the Merdeka Curriculum provides space for students' religious development through various activities, such as religious lectures, group discussions, and other religious activities. Thus, it is hoped that students can experience an increase in their understanding and practice of religious teachings, and be able to apply religious values in their daily lives. In addition, with the flexibility in the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers can more easily integrate religious values in each subject. For example, the values of honesty, discipline, and responsibility can be inserted in math, science, and other subjects(Sucipto et al., 2023). This is expected to create a conducive learning

environment that supports students' moral and spiritual development.(Nashir & Pratama, 2022b)

Overall, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Makassar City Junior High School not only improves the quality of education in general but also brings positive changes in students' religious development, so that they can grow into individuals with achievements and good character. Religion has an important role in shaping students' character and morals, and religious guidance at school has a profound impact on students' personal development. This study examines the influence of an independent curriculum on students' religious development patterns, which is a topic that has not been widely researched before. This research was conducted in the scope of Junior High School (SMP) in Makassar City, which has unique characteristics and socio-cultural backgrounds. This research tries to explore the relationship between the implementation of the concept of free learning in the curriculum and aspects of students' religious development, which is an interesting and important combination to research. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the impact of Merdeka Curriculum on religious guidance patterns in Makassar City Junior High Schools, considering that curriculum changes can affect the approach, methods, and objectives of religious guidance. In addition, Makassar, as a school location, has cultural and religious diversity that needs to be considered in the context of education. How Merdeka Curriculum responds to and integrates local and religious values in this particular context is the focus of attention in evaluating the impact of the curriculum on religious formation patterns in Makassar City Junior High School. By understanding this background, in-depth research on the impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' religious development in Makassar City Junior High Schools can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the curriculum in responding to the needs of religious education at the junior high school level. The formulation of the problem in this study is to find out how the independent curriculum affects the religious development patterns of junior high school students in Makassar City.

2. METHODS

This research uses a type of survey research with a quantitative approach. The quantitative approach aims to test the validity of certain theories by analyzing the relationship between the various variables studied. To measure these variables, special research instruments are used so that the data collected are in the form of numbers which can then be analyzed using statistical methods. Respondents in this study amounted to 30 people who were junior high school teachers in Makassar City who were randomly selected using the random sampling method. The data collection process was carried out by distributing questionnaires (questionnaires) to respondents and documenting.

Research instruments are designed by researchers to measure the value of the variables under study, with the aim of producing accurate quantitative data. The questionnaire used for religious guidance aims to measure the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum has succeeded in influencing students' religious guidance patterns in Makassar City Junior High School. This questionnaire is closed and will be distributed to students to fill out. Each statement in the questionnaire that reveals religious behavior is accompanied by the following scoring:

| Pernyataan | Skor |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Sangat Setuju | 5 |
| Setuju | 4 |
| Cukup Setuju | 3 |
| Tidak Setuju | 2 |
| Sangat Tidak Setuju | 1 |

The data management techniques used include several stages, namely editing, coding, and scoring. Editing is the process of checking and reviewing data obtained from questionnaires and observations to ensure that the data is complete enough and does not require improvement. Coding is the process of categorizing data from

respondents' responses by providing certain codes or symbols. While scoring is the stage of giving a value or score to each statement item contained in the questionnaire and observations made.

To determine the effect between the variables of the Merdeka Curriculum (X) and religious guidance (Y) of students in Makassar City Junior High School, data analysis is carried out using regression statistical methods. This analysis aims to test the extent to which the independent variable (Merdeka Curriculum) can predict the dependent variable (religious guidance). In this analysis, the significant value is tested by comparing the p-value with alpha 0.05. In addition, the Fcount value is compared with Ftable to assess the significance of the regression model. The coefficient of determination (R Square) is also calculated to see the percentage of variability in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The ideas and ideas behind the independent curriculum continue to be refined in line with advances in theories and practices in the field of education and provide students with freedom in learning that is designed in a fun way (Arif Kurniawan & Falah, 2023),(Monalisa, 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum is an innovation and a new approach implemented in the education system in Indonesia. By prioritizing the principle of freedom of learning, this curriculum not only aims to improve students' cognitive knowledge, but also emphasizes the importance of character building and noble morals. In the Merdeka Curriculum, the learning process is no longer fixated on conventional methods that tend to be monotonous and boring. Instead, this curriculum opens opportunities for students to be actively involved in fun and meaningful learning activities (Trimukti Mahanani et al., 2023). Through interactive and contextual learning, students can develop critical thinking skills, creativity, and the ability to solve problems effectively. (Darmayani & Amelia, 2023)

In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes the importance of character education and noble morals. The independent curriculum will be one of the main pillars in the development of cultured and moral humans.(Zainal Arifin¹, Rizky Maulana Aziz², 2023). Education in the independent curriculum is able to foster morals in students (Kholisah, 2023). By integrating moral and ethical values in the learning process, students are not only taught academic knowledge, but also guided to become individuals who are faithful, responsible, honest, disciplined, and care about the surrounding environment (Pilhandoki et al., 2023). The holistic approach in Merdeka Curriculum allows students to grow into a generation that is intellectually smart and morally wise.

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new breakthrough in the field of Indonesian education designed to provide greater flexibility and freedom to teachers and students in carrying out teaching and learning activities. One of the main focuses of the Merdeka Curriculum is character development and fostering integral religious values in student education. Religious education in schools has an important role in shaping students' character and morals. Therefore, this study examines how the Merdeka Curriculum, which is expected to provide a more holistic and integrated approach, can affect students' religious development.

1. The influence of the independent curriculum on the pattern of religious guidance of students in Makassar City Junior High School

In measuring the effect of the independent curriculum on student coaching patterns in Makassar City, the analysis uses simple linear analysis.

| | <i>Coefficients</i> | <i>Standard Error</i> | <i>t Stat</i> | <i>P-value</i> | <i>Lower 95%</i> | <i>Upper 95%</i> | <i>Lower 95.0%</i> | <i>Upper 95.0%</i> |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept | 21.43631406 | 4.339911 | 4.939344 | 3.27E-05 | 12.54641 | 30.32622 | 12.54641 | 30.32622 |
| X | 0.425178957 | 0.125041 | 3.400309 | 0.002041 | 0.169044 | 0.681314 | 0.169044 | 0.681314 |

Based on the data obtained, it is known that the regression coefficient for the independent curriculum variable (X) is 0.425, so the regression equation formed is $Y = 21.63 + 0.425X$. This model shows that the constant (a) is 21.63, which means that if the independent curriculum is positive, then the effect is also positive, which is 21.63. The regression coefficient of the religious guidance variable is 0.425. This finding shows that every one-level increase in the quality of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the religious coaching pattern of junior high school students in Makassar City will increase by 0.425. Conversely, if there is a one-level decrease in the quality of implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the religious formation pattern of junior high school students in Makassar City will also decrease by 0.425. This data provides an overview of the significant influence exerted by the independent curriculum on the religious formation patterns of junior high school students in Makassar City, both in the positive and negative directions.

This finding confirms that the implementation of the independent curriculum in schools has a considerable impact on students' religious development. The better and more effective the implementation of the independent curriculum, the more the quality of religious guidance received by junior high school students in Makassar City will improve. Conversely, if the independent curriculum is not implemented properly, then students' religious development will also be hampered. Therefore, schools and related stakeholders need to ensure the optimal implementation of the independent curriculum so that it can have a positive impact on students' religious development.

2. Hypothesis testing in measuring the effect of

The results of hypothesis testing to measure the effect of the independent curriculum on the pattern of student religious guidance in Makassar City Junior High School can be seen in the following table:

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------------------|
| | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>Significance F</i> |
| Regression | 1 | 53.03399 | 53.03399 | 11.5621 | 0.002041 |
| Residual | 28 | 128.4327 | 4.586881 | | |
| Total | 29 | 181.4667 | | | |

Based on the results of the table above, it can be seen that the significant value obtained is 0.002, which is smaller than alpha 0.05. This shows that there is a significant influence between Merdeka Curriculum (X) and religious guidance (Y) of students in Makassar City Junior High School. This test is reinforced by the Fcount result of 11.56, while the Ftable value for n: 30 is 2.27. Therefore, the Fcount value which is greater than Ftable (11.56 > 2.27) indicates that Merdeka Curriculum has a significant influence on students' religious development.

In addition, this result is also supported by the coefficient of determination which shows the magnitude of the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination for the Merdeka Curriculum and students' religious guidance in Makassar City Junior High School can be seen in the following table. This determination coefficient value illustrates the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum variable is able to explain variations in student religious development.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Makassar City Junior High School has a positive and significant impact on students' religious development. In other words, the better the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the better the religious guidance received by students. This finding is important for education policy makers to consider strengthening religious aspects in the school curriculum to support students' moral and spiritual development..

Regression Statistics

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Multiple R | 0.540603327 |
| R Square | 0.292251958 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.266975242 |
| Standard Error | 2.141700577 |
| Observations | 30 |

In the table above, there are several regression statistics that describe the relationship between the Merdeka Curriculum variable (X) and the religious guidance variable (Y). The Multiple R value of 0.5406 indicates a correlation between these two variables of 0.54, which is included in the moderate correlation category. This indicates that there is a fairly strong positive relationship between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the religious guidance of students in Makassar City Junior High School.

The R Square value of 0.2923 or 29.23% indicates that the Merdeka Curriculum variable is able to explain 29.23% of the variation that occurs in the religious guidance variable. However, the Adjusted R Square value that is more relevant in this context is 0.2670 or 26.7%. This Adjusted R Square takes into account the number of variables in the model and provides a more accurate estimate. In other words, Merdeka Curriculum can explain 26.7% of the variation in religious coaching, while the remaining 73.3% is influenced by other factors not included in this regression model. The Standard Error of 2.1417 shows how far the observation data deviates from the regression line. With a total of 30 observations, this result provides a fairly clear picture of how well the regression model used in this study.

Overall, the results of this table indicate that Merdeka Curriculum has a significant but limited influence on students' religious development in Makassar City Junior High Schools. While the relationship between these two variables is quite

strong, most of the variation in religious development is still influenced by other factors that need to be further identified and analyzed to gain a more comprehensive understanding. These findings are important as input for education policy makers in developing more effective strategies to improve religious formation through curriculum approaches.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Makassar City Junior High School has a significant but limited influence on students' religious development. The results of statistical analysis reveal a significance value smaller than alpha 0.05 and a calculated F value greater than the F table, indicating a significant influence between Merdeka Curriculum and student religious development. The moderate correlation value (Multiple R = 0.5406) also indicates a fairly strong positive relationship between the two variables. However, Merdeka Curriculum is only able to explain about 26.7% of the variation in religious guidance, while the rest is influenced by other factors that need to be further identified to gain a more comprehensive understanding in order to increase the effectiveness of students' religious guidance through the curriculum approach and other supporting factors.

REFERENCES

- Ardianti, Y., & Amalia, N. (2022). Kurikulum Merdeka: Pemaknaan Merdeka dalam Perencanaan Pembelajaran di Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Profesi Guru*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.23887/jppp.v6i3.55749>
- Arif Kurniawan, M., & Falah, S. (2023). Pengaruh Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Terhadap Kinerja Guru Di Sma Ibnu Aqil Bogor. *Jurnal DIALOGIKA : Manajemen Dan Administrasi*, 5(1), 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.31949/dialogika.v5i1.7485>
- Bait, E. H., Mulyasari, E., Hendriawan, D., Arwasih, A., & Ulwan, M. N. (2025). Kurikulum Merdeka dan Dinamika Tujuan Pendidikan: Integrasi Capaian Pembelajaran (CP), Tujuan Pembelajaran (TP), dan Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP). *Kalam Cendekia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.20961/jkc.v13i1.97505>

- Darmayani, E., & Amelia, M. A. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Terhadap Pola Belajar Di Tk Ceria Demangan. *Yaa Bunayya : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(2), 146. <https://doi.org/10.24853/yby.7.2.146-156>
- Dirgantoro, K. P. S., & Soesanto, R. H. (2023). Towards a Paradigm Shift: Analysis of Student Teachers' and Teacher Education Institutions' Readiness on Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, 8(2), 185–201. <https://doi.org/10.24832/jpnk.v8i2.4271>
- Hartoyo, A., & Melati, R. (2023). DAMPAK PELAKSANAAN KURIKULUM MERDEKA DAN KESIAPAN DI SEKOLAH Pendahuluan Pelaksanaan pendidikan strategi makro memerlukan program yang melibatkan skenario yang disusun yang berjalan dengan baik , sehingga tujuan dalam matang . Perencanaan tersebut secara. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Perkhasa*, 9(2), 412–428.
- Indriani, N., Suryani, I., & Mukaromah, ul. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Disiplin Peserta Didik Di Sekolah Dasar. *Khazanah Pendidikan* , 17(1), 242–252. <https://doi.org/10.30595/jkp.v17i1.16228>
- Kholisah, N. (2023). Relevansi Kurikulum Merdeka Terhadap Pendidikan Akhlak Perspektif Buya Hamka. *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Isu-Isu Sosial*, 21(2), 114–124.
- Kusnadi, A. (2011). IMPLEMENTASI KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR DALAM PEMBINAAN AKHLAK SISWA DI SEKOLAH DASAR ISLAM AL AZHAR 13 RAWAMANGUN , JAKARTA TIMUR Asep Kusnadi dan Fasfahis Sofhatul. *Phys. Rev. E*, 24.
- MASKUR, M. (2023). Dampak Pergantian Kurikulum Pendidikan Terhadap Peserta Didik Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan (JKIP)*, 1(3), 190–203. <https://doi.org/10.61116/jkip.v1i3.172>
- Monalisa, M. (2023). Pengaruh Game Based Learning Mata Pelajaran Informatika Kurikulum Merdeka Terhadap Motivasi Dan Prestasi Belajar. *Padma Sari: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(01), 19–29. <https://doi.org/10.53977/ps.v3i01.908>
- Munauwarah, R., & Achadi, Muh. W. (2023). Pembelajaran PAI dan Budi Pekerti Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar untuk Meningkatkan Kreativitas Siswa SMAN 1 Dompu. *Journal Islamic Pedagogia*, 3(1), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.31943/pedagogia.v3i1.87>
- Nashir, A., & Pratama, S. (2022a). Peran Guru ISMUBA dalam Pembinaan Akhlak pada Elemen Profil Pelajar Pancasila Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Hikmah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), 80–90.

- Nashir, A., & Pratama, S. (2022b). Peran Guru ISMUBA dalam Pembinaan Akhlak pada Elemen Profil Pelajar Pancasila Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Hikmah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), 80–90.
- Ningsi, A., Sukiman, S., Agustina, A., Hardiyana, M. R., & Nirmala, S. U. (2025). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pembelajaran di Sekolah Dasar: Tantangan dan Solusi. *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang*, 11(1), 121–127. <https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v11i01.4930>
- Pilhandoki, M. D., Wachidi, W., & Mustofa, T. A. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar pada Mata Pelajaran PAI dan Budi Pekerti. *Jiip - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6(10), 7765–7774. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v6i10.3001>
- Pratami, W., Charolina, A. D., Nirwana, E. S., Maharani, W. I., Heriyani, R., & Dewi, R. M. (2025). Tantangan dan Strategi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Dasar: Studi Literatur Kualitatif. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 9(6), 1739–1747. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v9i6.10806>
- Sucipto, L., Salim, M., & Suratman, S. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Berbasis Masyarakat Di Kutai Lama. *Sanskara Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 1(03), 117–125. <https://doi.org/10.58812/spp.v1i03.140>
- Trimukti Mahanani, R., Restian, A., & Supradana, A. (2023). Pengaruh Pemberian Reward Pada Mata Pelajaran Matematika Kurikulum Merdeka Terhadap Hasil Belajar Peserta Didik Kelas Iv. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 8(1), 3379–3389. <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v8i1.8283>
- Trisna, L., Rizki, L., Gozali, N., Suryadi, R. A., & Cianjur, S. (2013). Implementasi Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Kelas 1 Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Di SDN Sukamantri 2. 3, 715–726.
- Tunas, K. O., & Pangkey, R. D. H. (2024). Kurikulum Merdeka: Meningkatkan Kualitas Pembelajaran dengan Kebebasan dan Fleksibilitas. *Journal on Education*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v6i4.6324>
- Zainal Arifin¹, Rizky Maulana Aziz², M. N. (2023). KOMPARASI KURIKULUM 2013 DAN KURIKULUM MERDEKA DALAM PENDIDIKAN NILAI, KARAKTER DAN AKHLAK. *JMPT: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Tihamah*.