Edutec
Journal of Education And Technology
2597-9221 (Online)
Volume 9 Number 1 September 2025

Islamic Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Building the Religious Character of State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Students in Binjai City

Azmaliah[1], Zailani[2], Nur Rahmah Amini[3]
Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
azmaliahsag42@gmail.com[1], zailani@umsu.ac.id[2], nurrahmah@umsu.ac.id[3]

Corresponding Author: azmaliahsag42@gmail.com

Article History	Received : July 13th 2025 Revision : August 17th 2025 Publication : Sep 30th 2025

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the perceptions of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers toward the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) Kota Binjai and its contribution to strengthening students' religious character. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach through interviews, observations, and documentation. The study involved five informants, consisting of the principal and four IRE teachers. The findings reveal that Islamic Religious Education teachers at MIN Kota Binjai have a positive perception of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, viewing it as an effort aligned with strengthening students' religious character and adapting education to contemporary needs. Although they face challenges such as limited learning facilities and insufficient technical training, the teachers demonstrate strong commitment through participation in MGMP (Subject Teacher Forum), internal training, and collaborative module development. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has significantly contributed to shaping students' religious character through Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) projects, worship activities, and reflective learning that instills values of honesty, discipline, and tolerance. Optimization efforts are carried out through technology-based learning innovations, integration of Islamic values across subjects, and the creation of a religious learning environment. Overall, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Curriculum has been effectively utilized as an essential instrument in developing a generation that is intellectually, spiritually, and morally excellent.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum; Islamic Religious Education; Teachers' Perceptions; Religious Character; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*

© 2024 by the authors.
This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education plays a central role in shaping students' morals and character from an early age, serving as the foundation for their personal development and spirituality. The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), aims to provide greater flexibility and freedom for both teachers and students in the learning process. However, its implementation in schools that teach Islamic Religious Education remains a subject of debate and requires further study.

In general, the Merdeka Curriculum promotes a learning model that is more student-centered and contextualized to local needs. It allows teachers to be more

creative in delivering materials and more adaptive to students' needs. One of its key elements is strengthening students' character, which aligns with the objectives of national education as stated in the National Education System Act (Law No. 20 of 2003): to produce a generation that is balanced in academic competence, morality, and spirituality. Islamic Education plays a vital role in strengthening religious character, as it contains teachings that serve as life guidance for Muslims, including students at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Binjai City.

As stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-'Alaq verses 1–2:

1. "Read in the name of your Lord who created,
2. Who created man from a clot of blood."

These verses highlight the importance of education as part of the process of shaping human character, including building a good understanding of religion from an early age.

Initial observations at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Binjai City reveal differences of opinion among Islamic Religious Education teachers regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Some teachers find it difficult to implement due to limited understanding of how to align learning approaches with the principles of the new curriculum, particularly in religious education. Although government training has been provided, in practice many teachers still feel less confident in shifting from their conventional teaching methods. This presents a major challenge in creating a learning environment that supports the development of students' religious character.

Another challenge faced by Islamic Education teachers at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Binjai City relates to the diversity of students' religious backgrounds. Students come from families and communities with varied understandings of Islam, which influences their attitudes and behaviors in daily life. Strengthening religious character through Islamic Religious Education becomes more complex in this context. Students from families with strong religious backgrounds tend to adapt more easily to religious values, while those from different backgrounds may require more careful and personalized approaches in order to internalize Islamic values effectively.

In this regard, Allah's words in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 286 serve as an important guide for teachers in educating students with patience and compassion:

"Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us, forgive us, and have mercy upon us. You are our Protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people."

This verse teaches that each individual has different learning capacities, and therefore teachers need to adopt flexible methods suited to students' needs.

The Merdeka Curriculum, with its student-centered approach, offers teachers the opportunity to adjust teaching materials according to students' conditions. However, its implementation requires significant adaptation in teaching, assessment, and the development of methods and learning media. Some teachers remain trapped in traditional methods that prioritize rote memorization rather than the development of Islamic attitudes and behaviors. If teaching approaches do not align with the curriculum's flexible, student-oriented principles, the goal of nurturing religious character may be hindered.

Another problem is the lack of communication between IRE teachers and school administrators in curriculum planning and evaluation. Some teachers feel they lack opportunities to discuss and share experiences about the curriculum's implementation, making it difficult for them to design lesson plans that integrate religious character-building within the Merdeka framework. Therefore, it is crucial to explore teachers' perceptions of this curriculum, particularly regarding their readiness and ability to implement it in shaping students' religious character.

This study aims to provide deeper insights into how IRE teachers at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Binjai City understand and implement the Merdeka Curriculum in fostering students' religious character. By understanding teachers' perceptions, effective strategies can be identified to overcome existing challenges. The findings are also expected to provide input for schools and government policymakers in designing more targeted programs and training for educators.

Teachers' involvement in religious character education is critical, as they are at the forefront of the learning process. Understanding their perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum is a first step toward developing strategies to improve the quality of Islamic education and students' character formation. Strong religious character will only be achieved through cooperation between curriculum, teachers, students, parents, and a supportive environment.

The religious character expected of students at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Binjai goes beyond mere textual understanding of religion; it encompasses the practical application of Islamic teachings in daily life. In this context, the Merdeka Curriculum, with its emphasis on developing students' potential and character, is highly relevant in strengthening religious character. Thus, this study not only seeks to assess the curriculum's implementation but also to evaluate its impact on reinforcing students' religious values, the core objective of Islamic Religious Education.

In practice, religious character formation cannot be confined to classroom learning. It also emerges through students' interactions within the school environment, with peers, and with their families. This makes religious character education a complex process influenced by multiple factors. One of this study's aims is to examine how Islamic Education teachers perceive the Merdeka Curriculum in creating an environment conducive to fostering strong religious character among students.

The study will also identify the challenges teachers face in implementing the curriculum and the strategies they use to address them. In addition, it will explore the extent to which teachers feel supported by schools and government in this process. A deeper understanding of these challenges will enable more effective solutions to enhance teaching quality and religious character-building.

One of the curriculum's important components is granting teachers the freedom to design lessons suited to students' needs and characteristics. In Islamic Religious Education, this freedom can be used to develop methods that go beyond knowledge transfer to emphasize attitudes and values that shape students' religious character. It is therefore essential to understand how teachers utilize this freedom in their teaching and how they perceive its impact on students' character formation.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Binjai City presents unique challenges, given the school's significant role in shaping students' religious identity. This study will therefore not only assess how far the curriculum has been applied but also evaluate its contribution to strengthening students' religious character. The role of Islamic Education teachers is crucial here, as they are directly engaged in both teaching and character-building.

This research will provide valuable insights into how teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum influence the development of students' religious character. By understanding their views, more appropriate strategies can be developed to implement the curriculum—not only to enhance students' academic competence but also to establish strong religious character in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Several previous studies have examined related topics. For instance, Sari (2021), in "Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Enhancing Religious Character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah", explored how the curriculum was applied in Islamic Education learning. She found that although the curriculum offers flexibility, implementation remains limited due to difficulties in understanding and adapting teaching materials. Her study suggested the need for further teacher training.

Rahmawati (2020), in "Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Perceptions of Strengthening Students' Character in Elementary Schools", focused on teachers' perspectives and found that religious character formation is more influenced by teaching approaches that connect with students' daily lives rather than rote memorization.

Wibowo (2022), in "Evaluation of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education at Junior High Schools", discovered that despite curricular flexibility, teachers often felt constrained by limited time and resources. Many PAI teachers also lacked opportunities to apply deeper approaches to religious character-building beyond formal activities.

Hidayat (2023), in "The Influence of the Merdeka Curriculum on the Development of Religious Character in Madrasah Aliyah", showed that student-centered approaches yielded positive results for strengthening students' religious attitudes, though challenges in teacher understanding remained. His study

highlighted the importance of synergy among curriculum, school support, and parental involvement.

The main distinction of the present study lies in its specific focus on the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Binjai City, examining teachers' perceptions within this unique local and cultural context. Unlike previous studies, this research explores directly how teachers interpret and adapt the Merdeka Curriculum in primary-level Islamic education and how they perceive its impact on students' religious character.

With these foundations, this research intends to examine the topic under the title: "Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Building the Religious Character of State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Students in Binjai City."

METHOD

This research will be conducted at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MIN) in Binjai City, located at Jalan Ikan Bawal No. 6, Binjai Timur District, North Sumatra. The study is scheduled to take place from January 2025 to July 2025.

The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on data in the form of words and observations rather than numerical values. According to Bogdan and Taylor, as cited by Moleong, qualitative research is a process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and observed behaviors. This descriptive method aims to systematically and factually describe the perceptions of Islamic Education teachers toward the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in building students' religious character at MIN Binjai.

The data in this research consist of information from the principal and four teachers at MIN Binjai, making a total of five informants. These participants provide perspectives on how the Merdeka Curriculum is understood and applied in the context of religious character development.

The data will be collected using three techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is used to gather information on the school's facilities, programs, and teaching processes. Interviews, conducted with the principal and teachers, explore their roles, experiences, and challenges in implementing the curriculum. Documentation is used to obtain supporting materials such as school profiles, organizational structures, facilities, and official reports.

Data will be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure validity, triangulation will be applied through multiple sources, methods, and times of data collection. This process includes cross-checking information from observations, interviews, and documents to obtain accurate and reliable findings regarding teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Teachers' Perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum at MIN Binjai

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the State Madrasah

Ibtidaiyah (MIN) in Binjai has significantly influenced the perspectives of Islamic Education teachers in designing and delivering religious instruction. Based on interviews and observations, most teachers welcomed the curriculum's spirit of flexibility, freedom of thought, and emphasis on strengthening students' religious character through contextual, learner-centered approaches. Teachers viewed the curriculum as providing greater space to develop Islamic education that is meaningful and engaging—moving away from rigid lectures toward reflective, collaborative, and project-based methods that are more relevant to students' daily lives.

Nevertheless, teachers' comprehension of the curriculum's technical structure, particularly regarding Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran/CP), Learning Objectives Flow (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP), and teaching modules, remains uneven. While they grasp the essence of the values to be instilled, many struggle to translate these into systematic instructional designs. This is consistent with findings by Sukmawarti et al. (2021), who observed that many elementary-level teachers find it difficult to prepare teaching materials aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in religious studies where moral and spiritual values dominate. Similarly, Desrianti & Yuliana Nelisma (2022) noted that transitioning from older formats to CP and ATP requires continuous guidance, particularly to internalize the philosophy of essential competencies and differentiated learning.

Teachers at MIN Binjai generally recognize that the Merdeka Curriculum responds to contemporary educational demands requiring more adaptive, contextual, and empowering instruction. They view the flexibility to choose methods and materials as consistent with Islamic approaches to teaching, which emphasize wisdom (hikmah), benevolence (maw'izhah hasanah), and dialogue (mujadalah). This aligns with Imam Al-Ghazali's philosophy in Ihya' Ulum al-Din, which stresses that education must engage the soul, intellect, and morality simultaneously. Teachers also see the principle of "freedom to learn" as harmonious with Islam's mission of dakwah: guiding individuals to act with moral consciousness rather than compulsion (Ghazali, 1939).

In practice, however, many teachers feel that the curriculum forces them to leave behind their comfort zone of lectures and memorization. They are now encouraged to act as facilitators and mentors rather than sole sources of knowledge. This role shift has not been easy, particularly for teachers accustomed to traditional methods. Yet, as Ngadiyono & Sukidjo (2019) argue, this transformation is inevitable if teachers are to address the demands of the times and develop students who are critical, creative, and virtuous. At MIN Binjai, teachers have begun designing projects such as Friday charity, daily journals of good deeds, and value-based discussions to embody their new roles in guiding value-oriented learning.

The curriculum also encourages teachers to integrate digital learning tools and varied resources. Teachers at MIN Binjai have started using children's Islamic

videos, Islamic quiz applications, and online reflection platforms. Subiyanto et al. (2018) emphasize that the digital world is part of children's learning ecosystems today, and religious education must engage with it without losing substance. Teachers also involve students in reflective practices, such as daily journals and class forums, to foster gradual and sustainable awareness of values.

The principal and vice-principal for curriculum fully support these initiatives by promoting internal training and encouraging teacher collaboration through working groups (KKG). Nadhiroh & Anshori (2023) note that institutional support is vital for curriculum transformation, ensuring that teachers do not feel isolated. At MIN Binjai, collective efforts such as co-developing teaching modules and sharing best practices through local MGMP forums have proven effective in strengthening teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation.

From a spiritual perspective, the Merdeka Curriculum offers significant opportunities for teachers to instill Islamic values more deeply. As Qolbiyyah (2020) observes, Islamic education is not merely about transmitting verses or hadiths but shaping noble character through role modeling, habituation, and reflective inner experiences. Teachers at MIN Binjai recognize that character development requires more than moral lectures; it demands reinforcement through daily practices like congregational prayer, social projects, and reflective activities that encourage students to internalize good deeds.

Despite these advances, challenges remain. Teachers still face limitations in specialized training for Islamic Education, a lack of thematic teaching modules suited to madrasah contexts, and uneven comprehension across staff. They hope for stronger synergy between madrasahs, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and local governments to provide more targeted training and teaching resources. As Latifah (2023) argues, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education requires curricula designed with sensitivity to local culture and strong religious values to avoid disorientation in moral education.

Overall, teachers at MIN Binjai hold positive and optimistic perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum, despite concerns over technical burdens and insufficient support. Their openness to change, collaborative spirit, and determination to improve Islamic Religious Education provide a strong foundation for successfully implementing the curriculum. This reflects an awareness of the need for contextual, reflective, and grounded learning, enabling religious education to become a dynamic process of value internalization relevant to students' realities.

2. Teachers' Solutions to Challenges in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

In facing challenges, Islamic Education teachers at MIN Binjai have taken proactive steps. Individually, they seek teaching resources and references through digital platforms such as YouTube, *Merdeka Mengajar*, and online Islamic Education forums. As Harfiani (2022) highlights, strengthening teachers' digital literacy is essential for renewing religious learning in the Merdeka era. Teachers not only download existing modules but also adapt and modify them to fit students' character

needs, such as by using children's Islamic videos or moral-value infographics.

Teachers also adopt creative projects to instill religious values, including Daily Good Deeds Journals, Friday charity, and storytelling of prophetic narratives. This is consistent with Al-Ghazali's emphasis that values must be instilled through lived experiences (Ihya' Ulum al-Din, 2020). Such practices demonstrate teachers' efforts to align the Merdeka Curriculum with continuous religious character formation.

Collaborative solutions are pursued through teacher forums such as KKG and MGMP. According to Kahar (2022), teacher collaboration is key to accelerating curriculum adaptation. At MIN Binjai, teachers collectively review CPs and ATPs, share modules, and exchange experiences, enriching approaches to religious character education.

Internal workshops and capacity-building initiatives are also important. The principal has introduced internal training sessions to compensate for limited external support. Harmawati et al. (2016) note that strengthening internal capacity-building is essential when external provisions fall short. These workshops include practices for designing Islamic-themed modules and student reflection strategies.

The development of a thematic teaching material bank has also been initiated to address gaps in learning resources. At MIN Binjai, teachers collectively compile a bank of modules rooted in local life and religious themes. This echoes findings by Hulaimi et al. (2025), who found that shared material references positively influence Islamic Education teaching quality.

Simple digital tools like portable projectors and interactive quiz apps (Quizizz, Wordwall) have been used as practical solutions to limited facilities. Oommen (2020) stresses that even simple digital media can optimize the Merdeka Curriculum, and MIN Binjai demonstrates its effective application in practice.

Teachers have also institutionalized student reflection and journals as part of religious character evaluation. As Yulia Zahrotun Nais et al. (2024) argue, affective evaluation through reflection promotes deeper value internalization. At MIN Binjai, teachers use student journals to document spiritual growth.

Parental involvement is also emphasized through school–home communication books, encouraging the negotiation of values at home. This aligns with Sudjana & Djudju (2006), who stressed the importance of extending value education beyond school walls.

Finally, systemic solutions include supervisory support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and recognition of teacher innovation. Supervisors engage not only in administrative checks but also in in-depth mentoring, while principals reward innovative teachers informally. As Fiteriani (2015) noted, recognition increases motivation and sustains innovation. Together, these solutions reflect both bottom-up and systemic approaches to overcoming challenges.

3. Contributions of the Merdeka Curriculum to Students' Religious Character

Teachers at MIN Binjai affirm that the Merdeka Curriculum contributes significantly to the formation of students' religious character. The curriculum's

flexible structure, particularly in defining CPs and character-strengthening projects, enables value education to be conducted contextually and reflectively. This has led to increased student participation in spiritual practices such as congregational prayer, collective supplications, and worship activities—now undertaken more consciously rather than as mere routines.

One clear indicator is students' growing initiative in religious activities. Some take the lead in prayers, remind peers to pray, and organize Friday charity programs. This demonstrates that religious character must be practiced, not merely taught (Anwar, 2019).

Projects under the Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile (P5) program also serve as effective vehicles for embedding Islamic values. Teachers design themes such as "Sharing and Caring" or "Ramadan with Character," which engage students in socially grounded religious projects. This supports Al-Ghazali's (2020) view that moral education must involve concrete actions to become deeply internalized.

Teachers' freedom in choosing methods and materials further strengthens character education. At MIN Binjai, strategies such as prophetic storytelling, Islamic animation videos, and daily reflections are used, which students find more engaging than conventional lectures (Darlis et al., 2020).

Assessment has shifted from a purely cognitive focus to character-based evaluation. Teachers employ journals, behavioral observations, and character portfolios, consistent with Merdeka Curriculum principles of formative assessment (Desrianti & Yuliana Nelisma, 2022).

Integration of Islamic values into other subjects reinforces character formation. For example, honesty is emphasized in Indonesian language lessons, while discipline is instilled during physical education. This reflects integrative Islamic education models championed by Hasan Langgulung (2003).

Teachers also employ digital tools such as YouTube and Quizizz to introduce values like amanah and tawakal through interactive media (Oommen, 2020). Students are encouraged to maintain character journals, documenting spiritual practices such as helping parents or praying on time, with personalized teacher feedback.

Teachers note clear differences in students' character since adopting the Merdeka Curriculum: greater openness to discussing values, more initiative in worship, and engagement in faith-based environmental projects. Overall, they conclude that the curriculum strengthens students' religiosity through transformative, experiential learning.

4. Teachers' Efforts to Optimize the Merdeka Curriculum

To optimize the curriculum, Islamic Education teachers at MIN Binjai actively adjust lesson plans in line with its principles, ensuring attention to spiritual, social, and moral dimensions alongside cognitive goals. They create thematic modules emphasizing virtues such as honesty and prayer discipline contextualized to local culture.

Teaching methods are transformed through project-based and experiential learning, including daily good-deeds journals, Friday charity, and storytelling, enabling students to practice values firsthand (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Digital tools like Canva, Quizizz, and mobile projectors further support these efforts (Oommen, 2020).

Character evaluation is diversified through student reflections, behavioral observations, and project portfolios. Teachers collaborate in KKG and MGMP forums to refine teaching tools and share innovations. Internal workshops organized by the principal provide further mentoring and capacity-building.

Teachers also act as role models, embodying Islamic values in their conduct, as Yulia Zahrotun Nais et al. (2024) highlight the importance of teacher exemplarity in shaping students' morality. The madrasah reinforces this through a spiritual ecosystem—Islamic posters, prayer spaces, and clean environments—supporting value internalization.

Family involvement is another strategy: students are tasked with joint worship at home or family-based charity projects, ensuring synergy between school and household education (Ngadiyono & Sukidjo, 2019). Extracurriculars such as tahfiz, tilawah, and Islamic speeches serve as platforms for religious character development.

Teachers also employ contextual and problem-based learning by discussing ethical dilemmas (e.g., dishonesty, broken promises) through Islamic perspectives. They use limited facilities creatively—such as posters, "character trees," and the school mosque as a "values laboratory."

Religious holidays and events are integrated into lessons as opportunities for character formation, such as Ramadan camps or collective qurban. Teachers continue professional development by reading contemporary Islamic education literature, while the school adopts reward systems (e.g., "Weekly Exemplary Student") to reinforce values.

Ultimately, Islamic Education teachers at MIN Binjai combine adaptive planning, innovative methods, authentic assessment, and broad collaboration to maximize the Merdeka Curriculum's potential. Their commitment demonstrates that character-building succeeds not only through curriculum design but through teachers' creativity, consistency, and moral leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research conducted at the State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MIN) in Binjai, it can be concluded that the perceptions of Islamic Education teachers toward the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum are generally positive and enthusiastic. Teachers recognize that this curriculum represents the government's effort to adapt education to contemporary needs while strengthening character values, particularly religious ones. Although challenges remain in fully understanding new structures and concepts such as Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and formative assessment, teachers have

demonstrated openness to continuous learning and adaptation.

Islamic Education teachers view the flexibility offered by the Merdeka Curriculum as an opportunity to create more contextual, active, and engaging learning experiences. They respond positively to the freedom of choosing teaching methods and materials suited to students' characteristics, enabling a more holistic and natural integration of Islamic values into the learning process. Their acceptance of differentiated instruction also reflects their awareness of the importance of tailoring education to students' diverse backgrounds and abilities, including in religious aspects.

In practice, the Merdeka Curriculum has made a significant contribution to the formation of students' religious character. Through character-strengthening projects under the Pancasila Student Profile (P5), religious practices, and social-religious activities, students have begun to exhibit positive behavioral changes, such as greater awareness of worship, honesty, and empathy for others. Teachers note that religious education has shifted from being merely knowledge transfer to emphasizing the reflective and practical internalization of values.

Findings from observations and interviews indicate clear indicators of religious character development since the curriculum's implementation, including greater participation in worship, discipline in fulfilling religious obligations, and attitudes of tolerance and respect toward peers. Moreover, methods such as Islamic ethical discussions, reflective journals, and prophetic storytelling have proven effective in nurturing students' spirituality. Comparisons between student behavior before and after implementation highlight notable improvements in both social and spiritual interactions.

On the other hand, teachers continue to face challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, ranging from limited teaching facilities, insufficient technical training from relevant authorities, to initial gaps in understanding the concept of "independent learning." Nevertheless, these obstacles have not diminished teachers' motivation to adapt and innovate. Instead, they have initiated various forms of individual and collective innovation to address these challenges.

Practical efforts are carried out through MGMP teacher forums, internal madrasah training, and collaborative development of teaching modules. The madrasah itself has supported capacity-building by inviting external experts and encouraging character-based initiatives. Teachers also strive to create a religious and reflective learning environment, providing spiritual spaces both inside classrooms and within the school setting.

Furthermore, strategies such as integrating values across all subjects, utilizing technology for religious instruction, and embedding Islamic-based extracurricular activities form part of a holistic approach to strengthening character. These efforts illustrate that Islamic Education teachers serve not only as educators, but also as facilitators, role models, and leaders of students' spiritual growth.

Overall, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka

Curriculum at MIN Binjai, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education, has been successfully utilized by teachers as a tool for strengthening students' religious character. Through adaptive, innovative, and value-based strategies rooted in Islamic teachings, Islamic Education teachers have been able to transform the curriculum into a golden opportunity to nurture a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also spiritually and morally mature. Moving forward, continued support and guidance from the government and the madrasah will be essential to ensure that this positive transformation is sustained and evenly implemented..

REFERENCES

Amiruddin, dkk, (2022). *Analisis Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Mengembangkan Karakter Pancasila Di Smpn 5 Satu Atap Kerajaan Pardomuan*. Jurnal Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Pengajaran. Journal Homepage: http://jurnal.umsu.ac.id/index.php

Al-Munâwi, & abdur Rauf, Z. (n.d.). Faydh al-Qadîr Syarh Jami' as-Shaghîr. al-maktabah at-Tijariyah al-kubrâ, 2, 244–245.

Al-Qur'an. (n.d.). Al-Qur'an Al-Karim: Terjemahan dan Tafsiran. Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia.

Ami Latifah. (2023). Strategi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Kearifan Lokal dalam Membangun Karakter Islami Siswa. Jurnal An Najah (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam dan Sosial Keagamaan), 2(3). https://journal.nabest.id/index.php/annajah/issue/view/12

Anwar, B. (2019). Kompetensi Pedagogik sebagai Agen Pembelajaran. Shaut al Arabiyyah. https://doi.org/10.24252/saa.v6i2.7129

Arifianto, A. (2022). Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Meningkatkan Karakter Religius pada Siswa MI. Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam, 14(2), 87-98.

Aziz, M,. Dkk, 2025. Implementation of Islamic Education Curriculum in Instilling Tauhid Education at MIS Al-Washliyah Siamporik North Labuhanbatu. Intiqad Jurnal Agama dan Pendidikan Islam. Vol 17, No 1 (2025). Implementation of Islamic Education Curriculum in Instilling Tauhid Education at MIS Al-Washliyah Siamporik North Labuhanbatu | Aziz | Intiqad: Jurnal Agama dan Pendidikan Islam

Bukhari, M. (2021). Sahih al-Bukhari: The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Bukhari (Reprint Edition). Darussalam Publishers.

Darlis, A., Supawi, M., & Haniah, M. (2020). Penerapan Metode Pembelajaran Cooperative Integreted Reading and Composition untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam pada Siswa Kelas Viii Smp Negeri 1 Padang Tualang. Mimbar Kampus: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Agama Islam, 19(2), 109–122. https://doi.org/10.47467/mk.v19i2.582

Desrianti, & Yuliana Nelisma. (2022). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Perpektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam. Al-fahim : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 4(2), 158–172.

https://doi.org/10.54396/alfahim.v4i2.309
Eysenck, M. W., & Keane, M. T. (2020). Cognitive Psychology: A Student's Handbook (8th ed.). Psychology Press.
Fauziyah, F. (2023). Dampak Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Terhadap Karakter Religius Siswa Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar, 25(1), 45- 58.
Fiteriani, I. (2021). Membudayakan Iklim Semangat Belajar Pada Siswa Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Terampil Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Dasar, 2(1), 120–123. Fitriani, F. (2021). Persepsi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka dan Dampaknya pada Karakter Religius Siswa di Sekolah Dasar.
Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam, 12(1), 35-49. Ghazali, A. (1939). Ihya 'Ulum Al Ddîn. Dar al-Fikr.
Harmawati, Y., Abdulkarim, A., & -, R. (2016). Nilai Budaya Tradisi Dieng Culture Festival sebagai Kearifan Lokal untuk Membangun Karakter Bangsa. Journal of Urban Society's Arts, 3(2), 82–95. https://doi.org/10.24821/jousa.v3i2.1477
Hasan, A. (2021). Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Pembentukan Karakter Religius di Sekolah. Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam, 18(1), 55–70.
Hidayat, M. (2023). Pengaruh Kurikulum Merdeka terhadap Pengembangan Karakter Religius di Madrasah Aliyah. Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam, 45(2), 120-130.
Istiawati, N. F. (2022). PENDIDIKAN KARAKTER BERBASIS NILAI-NILAI KEARIFAN LOKAL ADAT AMMATOA DALAM MENUMBUHKAN
KARAKTER KONSERVASI. CENDEKIA: Journal of Education and Teaching, 10(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.30957/cendekia.v10i1.78
Julianti, (2022), Rancangan Pendidikan Karakter Imam Al-Ghazali (Studi Analisis Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin), Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan Agama Islam, Vol 2, Nomor, 4 tahun 2022
Juraidah, (2022) Konsep Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Pembelajaran Di Kelas, Education Journal of Indonesia is Published by University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Vol 3 Nomor 2 Tahun 2022
Kahar, S. (2022). ESTABLISHMENT OF SANTRI CHARACTERS THROUGH INCLUSIVE SOFT SKILL-BASED EXTRACURICULAR ACTIVITIES
IN DAYAH DARUL IMAN ACEH TENGGARA. Journal Of Education And Teaching Learning (JETL), 4(3), 186–201. https://doi.org/10.51178/jetl.v4i3.644
Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia. (2020). Pedoman Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia. (2021). Kurikulum Merdeka: Menyongsong Masa Depan Pendidikan Indonesia. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia. (2021). Pedoman Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam. Jakarta: Kemendikbud.
Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi. (2022). Pedoman Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/kurikulum-merdeka
Mansur Hidayat Pasaribu, M. F. Z. (2020). CURRICULUM PLANNING IN BOARDING

SCHOOL TAHFIZIL QUR'AN ISLAMIC CENTER FOUNDATION. Journal Of Education And Teaching Learning (JETL), 2(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.51178/jetl.v2i1.50

Moleong, L. J. (2021). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif (Edisi revisi). Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Mulyasa, E. (2021). Manajemen Kurikulum: Teori, Konsep, dan Aplikasi (Cet. ke- 4). Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Munir, F. (2020). Pendidikan Karakter dalam Perspektif Islam: Teori dan Implementasi dalam Dunia Pendidikan. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Nadhiroh, S., & Anshori, I. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dalam Pengembangan Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis pada Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. Fitrah: Journal of Islamic Education, 4(1), 56–68. https://doi.org/10.53802/fitrah.v4i1.292

Nasution, H. (2022). Pengajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam: Teori, Metode, dan Praktik (Edisi revisi). Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.

Nasution, S. (2020). Metodologi Penelitian Naturalistik Kualitatif (Cet. ke-4). Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.

Ngadiyono, N., & Sukidjo, S. (2019). Implementasi pendidikan karakter di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Harmoni Sosial: Jurnal Pendidikan IPS, 6(1), 86–99. https://doi.org/10.21831/hsjpi.v6i1.15397

Nugroho, S. (2023). Persepsi Guru terhadap Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Menengah Atas. Jurnal Pendidikan, 15(3), 22-30.

Oommen, B. E. (2020). Impact of Social Media on Sustainable Development. International Journal of Science and Research, 9(11), 1689–1691. https://doi.org/10.21275/SR201126192153

Qolbiyyah, S. (2020). Keteladanan Luqmân Al-Hakim Dalam Membentuk Akhlak Anak(Kajian Tafsir Surat Luqmân Ayat 12-19. 5(1), 197–221.

Rahmawati, N. (2020). Persepsi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam terhadap Penguatan Karakter Siswa di Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar, 28(3), 85-94.

Rahmawati, R. (2021). Evaluasi Pengaruh Kurikulum Merdeka Terhadap Pembentukan Karakter Religius di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, 19(2), 105-118.

Rohmawati, A. (2022). EFEKTIVITAS PEMBELAJARAN. JURNAL PENDIDIKAN USIA DINI, 9(1), 2015. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21009/JPUD.091

Sari, D. (2021). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Meningkatkan Karakter Religius di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 35(1), 45-56.

Sharma, A., & Zander, M. (2022). Persepsi Guru dalam Mengelola Pendidikan Agama Islam di Era Kurikulum Merdeka. Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam, 17(4), 34-40.

Slamet, D., & Hidayati, A. (2020). Pengaruh Pengalaman Mengajar Guru terhadap Persepsi dan Implementasi Kurikulum di Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran, 11(2), 45-53.

Subiyanto, Supriyati, I., & Markamah, N. (2018). Pelatihan E-learning Menggunakan Edmodo pada para Guru SMK NU Ungaran. Abdimas, 22(1), 83–88.

Sudjana, & Djudju. (2023). Evaluasi Program Pendidikan Luar Sekolah. Remaja Rosdakarya.

Sugiyono. (2021). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D (Edisi terbaru). Bandung: Alfabeta.

Sukmawarti, Hidayat, & Suwanto. (2021). Desain Lembar aktivitas Siswa Berbasis Problem Posing Pada Pembelajaran Matematika SD. Jurnal MathEducation Nusantara, 4(1), 10–18. https://doi.org/10.32696/jmn.v4i1.118

Sulaiman, S. (2022). Persepsi Guru terhadap Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah Dasar. Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 23(3), 121-134.

Sulastri, R. (2021). Persepsi Guru PAI terhadap Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Menengah Pertama. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 19(1), 56-67.

Suwarno, P. (2021). Kurikulum Merdeka dan Tantangan Pembelajaran Agama Islam di Sekolah. Jurnal Pendidikan, 25(2), 73–90.

Suyadi, H. (2021). Pengembangan Karakter Religius Siswa melalui Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Menengah Atas. Jurnal Pendidikan Agama, 19(3), 78- 88.

Suyanto, E. (2022). Persepsi Guru terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. Jurnal Pendidikan Agama, 16(2), 60-70.

Toha, S. M. (2018). Pelaksanaan Metode Active Learning dalam Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Siswa pada Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 7(1), 79–93. https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v7i1.1364

Wahyudi, T. (2021). Peran Guru dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam. Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter, 8(1), 99–115.

Wibowo, A. (2022). Evaluasi Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah Menengah Pertama. Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah Menengah, 18(4), 202-215.

Yulia Zahrotun Nais, Marlina, M., & Romdloni, R. (2024). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar PAI Di SMP NU Tebat Jaya. Al-I'tibar : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 11(3), 245–250. https://doi.org/10.30599/jpia.v11i3.3767

Yusuf, M. (2022). Pemahaman Guru terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran, 20(2), 89-98.

Yusuf, Y. (2021). Persepsi Guru terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka dan Pembentukan Karakter Religius di Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP). Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter, 13(2), 72-85.

Zaini, I. (2020). Membangun Karakter Religius Siswa dalam Konteks Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah Dasar. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu.

(2023). Analysis of implementing Realistic Mathematics Education principles to enhance mathematics competence of slow learner students. Journal on Mathematics Education. https://doi.org/10.22342/jme.v14i4.pp683-700

Luo, M., Zhang, H., & Luo, H. (2022). Cartesian coordinates scaffold stable spatial perception over time. Journal of Vision. https://doi.org/10.1167/jov.22.8.13

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook. In Sage Publications, Inc.

Nieminen, J. H., & Atjonen, P. (2023). The Assessment Culture of Mathematics in Finland: a student perspective. Research in Mathematics Education. https://doi.org/10.1080/14794802.2022.2045626

Nuraina, N., Fauzi, K. M. A., & Simbolon, N. (2021). The Effect of Realistic Mathematics Educations (RME) Approach Based on Ethnomatics on the Improvement of Concept Understanding Ability and Students' Learning Motivation in Elementary School Al-Kausar City of Langsa. Budapest International Research and Critics in Linguistics and Education (BirLE) Journal. https://doi.org/10.33258/birle.v4i1.1707

Purohit, M., Kumar, V., Solanki, V. K., & Kumar, V. (2022). Integrating Mathematics Education with Technology. World Journal of English Language. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n3p25

Riskayanti, I., & Samsudin, A. (2023). Penerapan model RME (Realistic Mathematic Education) untuk mengetahui gambaran kemampuan pemahaman konsep matematis pada siswa kelas II SD. COLLASE (Creative of Learning Students ….

Situngkir, F. L., & Dewi, I. (2022). The view of mathematics education as science. International Journal of Trends in Mathematics Education Research. https://doi.org/10.33122/ijtmer.v5i3.155

Sugandi, E., Prayogo, P., & Faizah, H. (2023). Analisis Kemampuan Komunikasi Matematis Siswa Smp Melalui Pembelajaran Matematika Realistik Berbasis Etnomatematika Candi Tikus. JP2M (Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Matematika). https://doi.org/10.29100/jp2m.v9i2.4772

Susanti, E., Sholikin, N. W., Marhayati, M., & Turmudi, T. (2020). Designing culturally-rich local games for mathematics learning. Beta: Jurnal Tadris Matematika. https://doi.org/10.20414/betajtm.v13i1.354

Turmudi, T., Susanti, E., Rosikhoh, D., & Marhayati, M. (2021). Ethnomathematics: Mathematical concept in the local game of tong tong galitong ji for high school. Participatory Educational Research. https://doi.org/10.17275/per.21.12.8.1

Widyanti, S. U., & Khabibah, S. (2020). Students' Strategic Competence Profiles In Solving Mathematics Problem Based On Learning Styles. MATHEdunesa. https://doi.org/10.26740/mathedunesa.v9n2.p319-328