

## The Relationship Between Readiness and Motivation of Early Childhood Education Teachers (RA) in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Tonjong District Brebes Regency

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**Abstract:** Teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions in Tonjong District exhibited a high level of readiness (57%) and strong motivation (60.5%) in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Teacher readiness and motivation are crucial factors in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This quantitative study, employing a correlational design, aimed to investigate the relationship between ECE teachers' readiness and motivation in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Tonjong District, Brebes Regency. A total population of 40 ECE teachers was involved in the study, with all teachers included in the sample. Data was collected through a questionnaire. Spearman's rank correlation test was utilized to analyze the data and test the hypothesis. The results of this study using the Spearman Rank Test obtained a significance value of 0.033, which means that the significance value is less than 0.05, so it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the readiness and motivation of RA teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. From the Spearman Rank Test, a correlation coefficient value of 0.388 was also obtained, which is included in the level of fairly strong relationship strength.

**Keywords:** Readiness, Motivation, Merdeka Curriculum, Early Childhood Education Teachers.

### INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is one of the most fundamental components in educational field. As explained in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (2003) Article 1 (paragraph 19) that the curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and subject matter as well as the method used as a guideline for the organizer of learning activities to achieve educational goals. In 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbud) issued a new curriculum, namely the independent curriculum. The independent curriculum is a curriculum in which there are a variety of intra-curricular learning whose the materials are ensured to be optimal in providing students with sufficient opportunities to understand the concepts and improve their skills (Munawar, 2022).

The process of implementing the independent curriculum in each school also has various circumstances. As explained in the research conducted by Rahayu (2022) This research shows that the implementation of the curriculum in school mover has been carried out optimally, although there are still many shortcomings and obstacles in its implementation. The important thing to ensure that the independent curriculum implemented properly is the readiness of teachers (Aini, 2020).

According Slameto (2013) Readiness is the overall state of a person that makes him/her ready to respond in a particular way and situation. Teacher readiness is the main foundation in implementing the curriculum, because it is the key that must be considered in implementing an independent curriculum (Ihsan, 2022). It is also highlighted by Dara Fayola & Rahmawati (2023), in their research that the readiness of teachers in elementary schools in implementing the independent curriculum is required in achieving a successful curriculum.

Moreover, motivation also plays an important role in the process of implementing the independent curriculum. Motivation is a psychological factor that encourage individuals to act (Oktiani, 2017). Uno (2021) argues that Motivation is the strength or encouragement that comes from within or outside to move an individual to take an action to achieve a predetermined goal. As explained by Ningrum, n.d. (2022), motivation has a significant effect on teachers' readiness to implement the independent curriculum. Motivation plays an important role in human efforts to achieve various goals, including in the context of education and other things (Rumhadi, 2017). According to Mulyasa in Alhusaini (2020), a teacher will give full dedication to his/her work when he/she has a strong and positive motivation. Motivation can also affect a person's mental readiness in studying and working. The success of achieving goals is greatly influenced by a person's motivation. In other words, having a great motivation can encourage a person to increase readiness and encourage them to achieve the expected success (Ficha Andreini, 2023).

The teacher readiness in applying the independent curriculum to the learning process in schools can be known based on how much a teacher understands the concept of the independent curriculum. Therefore, teacher motivation has an important role in growing and improving teacher readiness. Karlina (2022) pointes that having a great motivation may lead to influence someone's readiness in his/her work environment. Based on this case, teacher readiness and motivation are the most substantial thing in implementing independent curriculum properly.

It is also stated by Dara Fayola & Rahmawati (2023) in their research that teacher readiness has a crucial role in applying independent curriculum. In addition, support and guidance are required to improve the teacher readiness in implementing independent curriculum.

Although a number of previous studies have discussed the importance of teacher readiness and motivation in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the majority of these studies have focused on the elementary school or driving school level that has received full support from the government (Ningrum, 2022; Dara Fayola & Rahmawati, 2023). However, there have not been many studies that specifically examine the relationship between the readiness and motivation of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers, especially in the Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institution located in rural areas such as Tonjong District. This context is important because the challenges of curriculum implementation in RA are often unique, such as limitations in assessment training, resources, and an uneven level of understanding of the curriculum. Therefore, this research is important to fill this gap and provide an empirical picture of how the readiness and motivation of early childhood education teachers can affect the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Based on preliminary observations conducted by researchers at the RA institution in Tonjong district and an interview with Mrs. Markonah as the chairperson of the Raudhatul Athfal Teachers Association (IGRA) PC Tonjong, the RA institution in Tonjong District explained that the implementation of the independent curriculum has not been implemented optimally. It occurs because of several reasons and considerations, such as facilities and infrastructure that have not yet been supported. In addition, the lack of training for teacher also is one of the main factors in the lack of teacher's knowledge about the concept of assessment in the independent curriculum. RA teachers in Tonjong District showed high readiness of 57% and strong motivation of 60.5% in implementing the independent curriculum. Teachers' readiness and motivation are important factors in implementing the independent curriculum.

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze the relationship between the readiness and motivation of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers in implementing the independent curriculum in Tonjong District, Brebes Regency.

## METHODS

This research was conducted at the Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institution in Tonjong District, Brebes Regency. This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research is a research based on the philosophy of positivism as a scientific method because it has fulfilled scientific principles concretely or empirically, objectively, rigorously, rationally, and systematically. The correlational design in this study aims to determine the relationship between variable X and variable Y.

The sample used in this study amounted to 40 people using saturated sampling techniques. The saturated sampling technique is a sampling technique where the entire population is a member of the sample (Sugiyono, 2019). The data collection technique used in this study is a questionnaire addressed to RA teachers in Tonjong District, Brebes Regency with alternative answers that have been provided using the Likert scale.

The data validity technique used in this study is the validity and reliability technique. The results of the validity test on the research instrument can be said to be valid if the value  $r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$ . Meanwhile, the results of the reliability test can be said to be reliable if the value of Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )  $> 0.70$  or equal to  $0.70$ . From the results of the validity test in this study, there are 37 valid statements and 18 invalid statements. The results of the reliability test on variable X are  $0.769$  and variable Y is  $0.834$ . The result of the two variables  $> 0.70$  which means that both variables are very reliable.

The analysis techniques used in this study were normality tests with the Shapiro-Wilk formula, linearity tests and hypothesis tests using the Spearman Rank test. This normality test aims to find out whether the analyzed data is normally distributed or not. According to Sugiyono (2019), the Shapiro Wilk test is a test that is carried out to find out the random data of a sample that is no more than 50 samples. The linearity test is used to find out whether two variables in the study have a significant linear relationship. The Spearman Rank test is used to determine the relationship or influence between ordinal-scale variables (Sugiyono, 2019).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tonjong District is one of the sub-districts in Brebes Regency. Tonjong District is located in the southern part of Brebes Regency which is directly adjacent to Sirampog, Bumiayu, Paguyangan and Bantarkawung Districts. In Tonjong District, there are 9 Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institutions which are almost spread across all villages in this district. Based on the results of the descriptive statistical test, readiness obtains the highest score of 80 and the lowest score of 65. Meanwhile, the descriptive statistical test of motivation obtains the highest score of 95 and the lowest score of 74. For more details, you can see the following table:

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Readiness	40	65	80	73.20	4.274
Motivation	40	74	95	85.50	5.552

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis data above, it shows that in the readiness variable, the respondent (N) is 40 with a minimum value of 65, the maximum value is 80, and a mean value of 73.20 with a standard deviation of 4.274. Meanwhile, in the motivation variable, it showed that the number of

respondents (N) was 40 with a minimum value of 74, a maximum value of 95, a mean value of 85.50 with a standard deviation of 5.552.

Based on the results, the level of readiness of RA teachers in Tonjong District in implementing the Independent Curriculum is in the high category. This is in line with the indicators used in this study, namely understanding the curriculum structure, lesson plan development, implementation, construction of teaching modules, and evaluation of instruction (Pratiwi & Arafat, 2023). However, compared to the Minimum Performance Indicators (IKM) for early childhood education services set by the Ministry of Education, there is a gap in understanding the curriculum range because teachers should not only understand the curriculum structure but also conduct a thorough contextual assessment of child development. Although the results show readiness in understanding the curriculum, it is a fact that assessment remains a weak area, especially since most teachers have not been in-depth trained on authentic assessments in the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance the professional development of teachers through continuous training focused on the development of evaluation instruments and the design of formative assessments tailored to preschool learners.

The results of the normality test using Shapiro-wilk showed that the significance of the readiness variable was 0.063. Meanwhile, the motivation variable obtained a significance value of 0.259. Based on the decision-making reference in the Shapiro-wilk normality test, the two data each obtained a significance value of  $< 0.05$ , so it can be concluded that the data on both variables are normally distributed.

The results of the linearity test were obtained with a significance value on the readiness and motivation variables obtained a significance value of 0.565. Based on the decision-making reference in the linearity test, the two variables in this study have a linear relationship, because the result of the data is  $> 0.05$ .

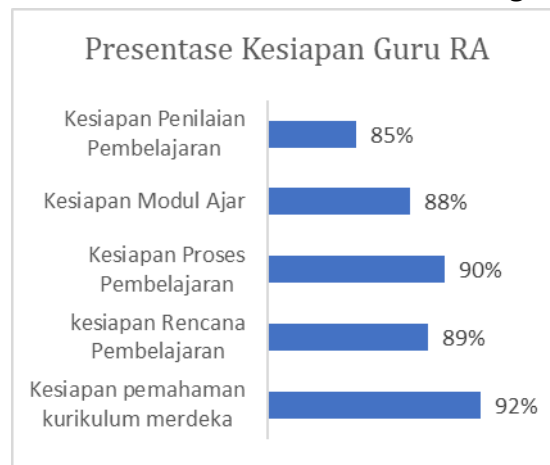
In the Spearman Rank test, the basis for decision-making is seen based on the significance value (sig),  $H_a$  – there is a relationship if the significance value is  $< 0.05$ . Meanwhile, there is no relationship with  $H_o$  if the significance value is  $> 0.05$ . The hypothesis in this study is  $H_a$  = There is a relationship between the readiness and motivation of RA teachers in implementing the independent curriculum in Tonjong District, Brebes Regency.  $H_o$  = There is no relationship between the readiness and motivation of RA teachers in implementing the independent curriculum in Tonjong District, Brebes Regency.

### Correlations

			Readines s	Motivati on
Spearman's rho	Readines s	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.338*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.033
		N	40	40
	Motivati on	Correlation Coefficient	.338*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.
		N	40	40

Based on the table above, it is known that the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is  $0.033 < 0.05$ , so  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_o$  is rejected. It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the readiness variable and the motivation variable. Based on the Rank Spearman test, a correlation coefficient value of 0.338 was also obtained, which is included in the level of strength of the relationship is quite strong and the direction of the relationship between the two variables is positive and unidirectional.

Judging from the results of the descriptive analysis, the readiness of RA teachers in implementing the independent curriculum obtained an average of 73.20 which is classified as high category. This readiness variable is measured using indicators sourced from Mia Marsela Pratiwi & Yasir Arafat (2023) which totals 5 indicators, namely readiness to understand the curriculum structure, readiness of learning plans, readiness of learning processes, readiness of teaching modules, and readiness of learning. The results of the percentage of RA teachers' readiness in implementing the independent curriculum can be known in the figure below:

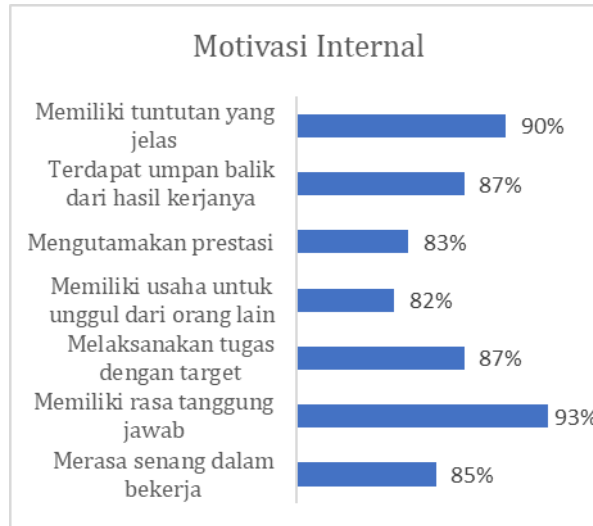


Based on the figure above, the readiness of RA teachers in understanding the independent curriculum has the highest percentage, which is 92%. It proves that most of the RA teachers in Tonjong District have a very high readiness condition in implementing the independent curriculum in the learning process. The existence of socialization related to the independent curriculum which is held periodically is the reason for the high readiness of teachers in understanding the independent curriculum. This is in line with the research of Fitriyah & Wardani (2022) to improve teachers' good understanding of the independent curriculum by preparing themselves and improving the competence of educators by exploring information and insights related to the independent curriculum. With this very high readiness, RA teachers in Tonjong sub-district will be able to obtain good goals in the development process in the independent curriculum.

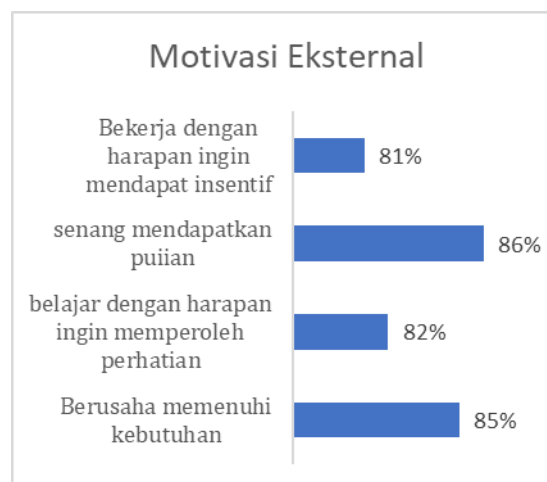
In the figure above, it is also known that the lowest readiness is found in the learning assessment category, which is 85%. Assessment of the independent curriculum is carried out by adjusting to the flow of learning objectives (ATP) to be achieved and identifying learning objectives (TP) and by evaluating through the provision of written or oral tests. Thus, teachers need more training related to assessment in the independent curriculum. The research of Febrianningsih & Ramadan (2023) also explained that the low readiness of assessments in the independent curriculum is caused by project-based assessments that are confusing for teachers

because there are many types of assessments such as presentations, projects, products, oral, written, etc.

The results of the descriptive analysis of the RA teachers' motivation in implementing the independent curriculum obtained an average of 83.73 which is classified as high category. According to Uno (2021), work motivation indicators consist of two dimensions, namely the internal dimension and the external dimension. The results of the percentage of the internal dimension of teacher motivation can be seen in the graph below:



Based on the picture above, it is known that the biggest internal motivation possessed by RA teachers is to have responsibility with the highest percentage, which is 93%. The high sense of responsibility possessed by RA teachers can form great motivation in carrying out their duties. According to Uno (2021) and Sastrohardiwiroyo in Saleh & Utomo (2018) explained that one of the important indicators of motivation is a sense of responsibility in completing tasks. This proves that most of the RA teachers in Tonjong District have high motivation in implementing the independent curriculum in the learning process. Great motivation will be able to encourage RA teachers to achieve learning goals well. In addition, with this great motivation, teachers can guide students well. Another study conducted by Aesti & Aryani (2023) also explains that high teacher learning motivation influences understanding the independent curriculum with a high category. In addition, the results of the percentage of external motivation can be seen in the following figure:





Based on the picture above, it is known that the biggest external motivation possessed by RA teachers is to be happy to receive praise with the highest percentage, which is 86%. This proves that RA teachers in Tonjong District can increase motivation to work with rewards or praise. According to Sholeh (2023), rewards or praise have a crucial role in increasing teacher motivation in the context of human resource management (HR) in educational institutions.

This research is also in line with Rohmah & Halimah (2022) explaining that there is a significant influence between rewards or praise and the work motivation of Al-Jamal Islamic Elementary School teachers. This explains that the higher the reward given to teachers, it can increase teacher performance motivation.

Based on these two dimensions, the motivation of RA teachers in Tonjong District can be seen from a broader view. There is already important capital that has been optimized to have a positive impact on helping the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, especially at the early childhood education level, which explicitly encourages the need for creativity, patience, and partiality towards children. Minimum Performance Indicators (IKM) key indicators in early childhood education, nurturing stages, safe and fun learning provocations increase the direct role of teachers in such activism. Teachers with a strong internal encouragement of responsibility and commitment tend to be reflective on the implementation of project-based learning, while external encouragement of praise also needs to be balanced with professional orientation rather than just instrumental. Therefore, steps to improve the quality of early childhood education need to seek and encourage. It is directly related to motivational strategies that are in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum.

Based on this study, it is shown that teachers' readiness and motivation are related or correlated. RA teachers with high readiness and great motivation will be able to have a positive impact on learning in the independent curriculum.

In addition, teachers who have great motivation can also have a good impact on learning. According to M. Ngalim Purwanto in Abdurrahin (2021), motivation can encourage, determine direction, and help analyze the performance carried out by teachers. With great readiness and great motivation, it is also able to ensure the smooth learning process, and shape the quality of education to be even better, especially in the independent curriculum.

These results are in line with research conducted by Dara Fayora & Rahmawati (2023) explaining that teacher readiness has a crucial role in education, which is an important key to effective learning management. Another study by Sari (2022) also explains that increasing learning motivation will further facilitate the implementation of the independent curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of research data that has been carried out, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between teachers' readiness and motivation in implementing the independent curriculum. It can be proven from the results of the analysis test that has been obtained from the hypothesis test, namely Rank Spearman. From the results of the Rank Spearman test that has been carried out, a significance value of 0.033 is obtained because the significance value  $< 0.05$ , which means that there is a significant relationship between the readiness variable and the motivation variable. Based

on Rank Spearman test, it obtains a correlation coefficient value of 0.338, which is included in the level of strength of the relationship is quite strong and the direction of the relationship between the two variables is positive and unidirectional. Positive and unidirectional relationship shows that the higher the level of readiness, the higher the level of motivation. In addition, this research proves that motivation is considered an important factor in implementing the independent curriculum and readiness is the key. This research also found that the aspect of readiness in understanding the independent curriculum is the highest. Therefore, the aspect of readiness that needs more attention is readiness of learning assessment.

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