

The Effectiveness of the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum Physical Learning Strategies on Motivation and Student's Achievement

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Abstract: The study focused on increasing student motivation and academic achievement in physical education, sports, and health (PJOK) subjects at PGRI Kundi Junior High School by implementing Merdeka curriculum-based strategies. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and questionnaires involving 10 eighth-grade students, 2 teachers of physical education, sports, and health subjects, and the school principal. The data analysis revealed that both teachers and students experienced improved learning motivation and academic outcomes. The collaborative approach between teachers and students fostered a more relevant and dynamic learning environment, further enhancing the quality of education. The effectiveness of this strategy highlights the potential for more contextual and relevant learning methods that align with the demands of the Merdeka curriculum. By engaging students in a more flexible, student-centered curriculum, their enthusiasm and commitment to learning are significantly heightened. The positive changes in teaching methods and assessments have not only improved students' physical skills but also supported their overall academic performance. This approach has proven particularly beneficial in fostering a deeper connection between students and their learning processes. Teachers play a crucial role in maintaining this momentum by continually adapting their strategies to the evolving needs of their students. The success of the Merdeka curriculum in this context suggests that similar approaches could be effective in other subjects as well. Ultimately, this model presents a promising avenue for enhancing educational outcomes in diverse learning environments.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, Motivation, Physical Learning Strategy, Students' Achievement

A. Introduction

Education is a systematic process that aims to transfer knowledge, skills, values, and culture from one generation to the next (González-Salamanca et al., 2020). Education is an internal part with life. Informal education is also recognized as an important

part of the education system in Indonesia, where knowledge and skills are acquired through the family and community environment. One of them is physical education and sports.

Physical education, sports, and health is an integral component in the education system that plays an important role in the development of character, physical and mental health of students (Suyato et al., 2024). The Merdeka curriculum, introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and culture, gives schools the freedom to design and implement learning strategies that are innovative and relevant to students' needs (Luthfi, 2023). With physical education, students will obtain expressions that are closely related to pleasant personal impressions and various expressions that are creative, innovative, have physical fitness healthy living habits and have knowledge and understanding of human movement. PGRI Kundi Junior High School has adopted Merdeka curriculum in an effort to improve the quality of education, including in physical education, sports, and health subjects.

Physical education, sports, and health in the Merdeka curriculum underwent several changes and new approaches to improve its relevance, flexibility, and effectiveness in the learning process in Indonesia (Sepriani et al., 2024). Physical education is an integral part of education as a whole. The purpose of physical education is to develop aspects of sports fitness and health that are planned systematically in order to achieve national education goals and aspects of healthy lifestyles, introduction to a clean environment through physical activity (Opstoel et al., 2020). Physical education is very important, which gives students the opportunity to be directly involved in various learning experiences through activities, play and sports that are carried out systematically (Sierra-Díaz et al., 2019). PJOK in the Merdeka curriculum not only focuses on sports and physical fitness aspects, but also integrates health and welfare education more broadly. This includes an understanding of healthy living, nutrition, hygiene, and the psychological and social aspects of health. In addition to improving students' physical skills, PJOK in the Merdeka curriculum also aims to develop mental skills such as teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution. This is expected to help students in better coping with the challenges of everyday life.

The Merdeka curriculum gives schools the freedom to design PJOK learning to suit the needs of students and their local conditions (Ibrahim et al., 2023). This allows the development of learning programs that are more contextual and relevant to the school environment and the surrounding community. According W et al. (2023) the merdeka curriculum is a curriculum that covers a wide range of intra curricular learning, optimizing content to give students enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies.

Curriculum of Merdeka is one of the educational innovations designed to provide freedom and flexibility to schools in developing learning programs that match local

needs and potentials. Evaluation of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, especially in PJOK subjects, is important to determine its effectiveness and provide feedback for continuous improvement (Alhumary et al., 2024). The Merdeka curriculum aims to create a more flexible and contextual learning environment, allowing schools to tailor learning to local needs and student potential. In the context of PJOK, effective learning strategies are expected to improve students' learning motivation and their academic achievement. High learning motivation can encourage students to be more actively involved in the learning process, while good academic performance reflects students' understanding and ability to master the material taught (Mega et al., 2014).

Implementation is an action or implementation of a plan that has been prepared in a mature and detailed. However, although the implementation of an Merdeka curriculum promises many benefits, in-depth research is still needed to understand the extent to which this learning strategy is successfully applied and its impact on students (Penuel et al., 2007). PGRI Kundi Junior High School, as one of the schools that implement the Merdeka curriculum, is an ideal location to evaluate the effectiveness of this PJOK learning strategy.

Learning motivation is an important factor that affects the active participation of students in teaching and learning activities (Filgona et al., 2020). Motivation is an effort to provide certain conditions, so that someone is willing and want to do something, and trying to negate or move the feeling of dislike, so motivation is created through factors from outside but the motivation will grow inside a person. Motivation is a psychological impulse that is a change in energy in a person to continue to be excited and persevere to do something in accordance with the direction and goals he wants to achieve both consciously and unconsciously (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022). Motivation also has different types that can be viewed from different points of view. The implementation of appropriate learning strategies in PJOK is expected to increase this motivation, which in turn will contribute to better academic achievement.

Academic achievement in PJOK includes not only physical skills but also theoretical understanding and attitudes towards health and exercise. Motivation in the understanding that develops in society is often equated with 'spirit' (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019). Learning outcomes are the results achieved by an individual in developing abilities through a process carried out with efforts with cognitive, affective, psychomotor and mixed abilities that are owned to gain experience in a relatively long period of time so that someone can develop their abilities. The individual experiences a change and knowledge of what he observes both directly and indirectly will stick to him permanently, learning outcomes can be seen from the evaluation scores obtained by students.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of physical education learning strategies curriculum Merdeka in junior PGRI Kundi on motivation and student achievement. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for educators and policy makers in developing more effective and contextual learning strategies in accordance with the Merdeka curriculum, as well as contributing to improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

B. Methods

The research on “The Effectiveness of the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum Physical Education Learning Strategies on Motivation and Student Achievement in PGRI Kundi Junior High School” reveals compelling findings that highlight the substantial impact of this curriculum reform. The study indicates that the adoption of Merdeka curriculum, characterized by its flexible, student-centered approach, has significantly enhanced student motivation in physical education classes. This is evidenced by increased levels of engagement, enthusiasm, and active participation among students, as well as improved attendance rates. Furthermore, the research shows that the revised teaching strategies and assessment methods tailored to individual needs have led to notable improvements in student achievement. The emphasis on aligning physical education activities with students’ interests and developmental needs has not only fostered better performance in physical skills but also contributed positively to their overall health and well-being. The findings suggest that the Merdeka curriculum serves as an effective model for enhancing both motivational and academic outcomes in physical education. For sustained success, it is recommended that these strategies be continually refined and evaluated to address the evolving needs and expectations of students, ensuring that the curriculum remains responsive and impactful. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of Merdeka curriculum Physical Education Learning Strategies in PGRI Kundi Junior High School on student motivation and learning achievement. Implementation of this strategy involves the use of technology in learning, a project-based approach, and collaboration between teachers and students to create a more interactive and relevant learning experience.

Implementation of Learning Strategies, PJOK teachers at PGRI Kundi Junior High School have implemented various innovative learning strategies to answer the demands of the Merdeka curriculum, especially Class VIII. One of the main strategies adopted is the use of technology in learning. This includes the software that supports the interactivity and visualization of the material, allowing the student to learn in a more interesting and effective way. In addition, a project-based approach has been implemented.

It gives students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real contexts, such as

designing a fitness program, organizing a sports tournament, or putting together a community physical activity program. This approach not only enhances students' practical skills but also enhances their understanding of the theoretical concepts taught. The collaborative approach between teachers and students is also widely applied. Teachers collaborate with students in designing curricula and determining learning priorities, providing space for students to express their interests and needs in PJOK learning.

The results of this study, based on interviews with PJOK teachers at PGRI Junior High School Kundi, reveal a positive shift in student engagement due to the implementation of new learning strategies. They watched the students more active and enthusiastic in following the material taught. By utilizing technologies such as learning apps and interactive multimedia, teachers can create a more dynamic and engaging learning experience for students (Haleem et al., 2022). The implementation of project-based and collaborative learning strategies has also helped make PJOK learning more relevant to students' daily lives. Teachers are able to associate theoretical concepts with practical applications in physical activities and sports, so that students can see the value of what they learn in a real context.

The use of technology in PJOK learning received a positive response from teachers (Firmansyah, 2022). They see that technology not only facilitates more effective teaching but also increases interactivity in the classroom. By utilizing learning videos, virtual simulations, or fitness tracking apps, teachers can bring more fun and rewarding learning to students. Positive opinions and responses from PJOK teachers show that innovative approaches in the Merdeka curriculum have brought significant changes in teaching and learning at PGRI Kundi junior high school. By continuously integrating technology and project-based learning strategies, schools can strengthen student engagement and improve the effectiveness of physical education in the future.

Students

10 students at PGRI Kundi Junior High School responded positively to the use of this new learning strategy. They report that learning PJOK becomes more fun and rewarding. Students are more involved in the learning process, feel heard in curriculum development, and have the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of learning programs. The students of Class VIII in PGRI Kundi Junior High School gave positive responses to the implementation of new learning strategies in PJOK subjects. Based on the results of interviews and observations, here is a further overview of their responses:

Learning becomes More Fun

Students reported that physical education (PJOK) classes became significantly more enjoyable following the implementation of the new learning strategy. They expressed a strong preference for the more interactive and engaging approach that the new strategy introduced, noting that it made lessons feel more relevant to their everyday lives. The shift towards hands-on, student-centered activities and real-world applications of physical education concepts has resonated with students, making their learning experiences not only more enjoyable but also more meaningful. This increased enjoyment and relevance have fostered a more positive attitude towards physical education, leading to higher levels of enthusiasm and participation in class. Overall, the new strategy has successfully transformed PJOK into a more dynamic and engaging subject, better aligning with students' interests and daily experiences. The use of technology in learning, such as applications for physical exercise or simulation of sports movements, makes learning more dynamic and interesting for them (Zulkifli & Danis, 2022).

Feeling listened to in Curriculum Development

Students feel a heightened sense of being listened to and included in the curriculum development process, thanks to the collaborative approach between teachers and students in determining learning materials. This involvement has significantly enhanced their perception of having an active role in their educational journey. By participating in the decision-making process regarding the content and methods used in PJOK learning, students have the opportunity to express their interests and needs, which in turn helps tailor the curriculum to better align with their expectations and preferences. This collaborative dynamic not only empowers students but also fosters a more engaged and motivated learning environment, as they feel their input is valued and directly impacts their educational experience. The alignment of the curriculum with students' interests and needs contributes to a more relevant and personalized learning experience, making physical education more engaging and meaningful for them.

Opportunity to contribute

The implementation of new learning strategies has also created valuable opportunities for students to engage more actively in the preparation of learning programs. This approach encourages students to take a proactive role in shaping their educational experiences by involving them in discussions and decision-making processes related to the curriculum. As a result, students can contribute their ideas and perspectives on what content and activities they find most relevant and engaging. This increased involvement not only enhances their sense of ownership over their learning but also ensures that the learning programs are more closely

aligned with their interests and needs. By giving students a voice in the development of the curriculum, the new strategies foster a more collaborative and inclusive educational environment, where students feel empowered and invested in their own learning journey (Mpuangnan & Ntombela, 2024). This active participation helps to create a more dynamic and responsive learning atmosphere, ultimately leading to improved student engagement and satisfaction with their educational experience. They engage in project-based learning projects that enable them to apply their knowledge and skills in real situations. This not only increases their learning motivation but also prepares them for future challenges.

Enthusiasm in following the lesson

Students have demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm for attending PJOK lessons, significantly more engaged than before. Their increased participation is evident in both physical activities and theoretical discussions, reflecting a broader involvement in all aspects of the curriculum. This heightened enthusiasm can be attributed to the implementation of varied and engaging learning strategies that have made lessons more stimulating and enjoyable. The introduction of diverse and interactive methods has not only captured their interest but also fostered a deeper motivation to learn and excel in both practical and theoretical components of physical education. By integrating innovative approaches and aligning them with students' interests, the curriculum has effectively enhanced their overall experience, encouraging them to actively participate and strive for continuous improvement in their skills. This comprehensive engagement signifies a positive shift in students' attitudes toward physical education, resulting in a more dynamic and effective learning environment. It can be concluded that the opinions and positive responses of grade VIII students in PGRI Kundi Junior High School to the implementation of new learning strategies in PJOK show that this approach has succeeded in creating a more stimulating and motivating learning environment. By considering students' input in curriculum development and providing them with opportunities to play an active role in learning, schools can continue to improve the quality of education and overall student engagement (Nsengimana et al., 2024).

Principal

The principal observed that the implementation of this learning strategy has brought about positive changes in school life. The impact can be seen from increased student motivation and better academic results in PJOK subjects. The principal also highlighted that the collaboration between teachers and students in designing the curriculum has strengthened the involvement of students in the educational process. The results of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum physical education learning strategy at PGRI Kundi Junior High School show that this innovative approach is effective in improving the quality of learning and student learning

outcomes. By incorporating technology, project-based learning, and fostering collaboration between teachers and students, schools can cultivate a more dynamic and relevant learning environment that aligns with contemporary advancements and the evolving needs of students (Eswaran, 2024). Technology integration allows for innovative teaching methods and interactive learning experiences that engage students in new ways, making lessons more accessible and engaging (Serrano et al., 2019). Project-based learning, on the other hand, provides students with hands-on, real-world challenges that enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing them for future academic and career endeavors. Collaboration between educators and students further enriches this environment by ensuring that the curriculum is responsive to students' interests and needs, promoting a more personalized and effective educational experience. Together, these elements create a learning atmosphere that not only keeps pace with technological and educational advancements but also equips students with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate and succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Effectiveness of Implementation

The results of interviews with students, coupled with direct observations, clearly indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum learning strategy has significantly enhanced student involvement in the PJOK learning process. Students have reported a marked increase in their engagement levels, reflecting a deeper connection with the subject matter and a more active participation in class activities. This heightened involvement can be attributed to the curriculum's emphasis on flexible, student-centered approaches that cater to individual interests and needs. Direct observations further corroborate these findings, revealing that students are more enthusiastic and proactive during physical education classes, actively contributing to discussions and engaging more effectively in both physical and theoretical aspects of the curriculum. The positive impact of the Merdeka curriculum is evident in the improved interaction between students and teachers, as well as in the overall enhancement of the learning environment, which has fostered greater student motivation and a more immersive educational experiences (Hosaini et al., 2024). Students showed greater interest in PJOK subjects, which was reflected in their active participation in each class activity. They are more involved in discussions, exercises, and practical activities, and are more proactive in seeking additional information related to the topics studied.

Students showed significant interest in PJOK lessons after the implementation of The Merdeka curriculum strategy (Ibrahim et al., 2023). They like a more dynamic approach to learning, including the use of technology and project-based learning. This heightened interest affects their level of activeness in each learning activity, helping to increase their understanding of the importance of fitness and health. Direct observation in the classroom also revealed that students were more active in

participating in the physical and theoretical activities taught (Martin & Murtagh, 2017). Classroom observations consistently show an improvement in students' physical skills and fitness following the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum strategy (Naylor et al., 2015). Students have demonstrated notable progress in their Physical techniques and capacities, as evidenced by improvements in physical test results and motor skills evaluations. This progress highlights the effectiveness of an active, hands-on, experience-based learning approach in enhancing students' physical health and fitness. The hands-on nature of the learning strategies allows students to directly apply and refine their skills in practical settings, leading to measurable gains in their physical performance. By engaging in dynamic, experiential activities that challenge their abilities and encourage continuous practice, students have achieved better outcomes in their fitness assessments and motor skills evaluations.

Academic achievement data showed an increase in student learning outcomes, both in aspects of physical skills and understanding of theories and concepts in PJOK subjects after the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. This shows that the learning strategies implemented have been effective in improving the academic achievement of students in Junior High School Kundi. Results from interviews and questionnaires showed that students found PJOK learning to be more enjoyable after the adoption of new learning strategies. They feel that the material taught is more useful and relevant to their needs, which in turn increases their interest in learning more. The use of technology in learning, such as virtual simulations or interactive applications, is also an important factor in making learning more interesting for students. Increasing student learning motivation in PJOK subjects in PGRI Kundi Junior High School shows that innovative learning strategies can have a significant impact on improving the quality of learning and student learning experience. By paying attention to input from students and continuously developing relevant strategies, schools can strengthen students' learning motivation and promote their active participation in physical education as well as other physical activities.

C. Results and Discussion

The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum physical education learning strategy at PGRI Kundi junior high school has shown a significant impact on student engagement, learning motivation, and their learning outcomes. The use of technology and a project-based approach helps to increase the relevance and effectiveness of learning, while collaboration between teachers and students strengthens the active participation of students in the educational process. The increased involvement of students is reflected in their increased enthusiasm in attending lessons, both in physical and theoretical aspects. Students also show a positive response to the use of technology in learning, which helps make learning more interactive and fun.

Thus, the results of this study indicate that an innovative approach in the Merdeka curriculum is able to create a more stimulating and motivating learning environment for students. Through continuously developing relevant strategies and paying attention to input from all educational stakeholders, schools can continue to improve the quality of learning and student learning outcomes in the field of physical education. The research on research “the effectiveness of the implementation of Merdeka curriculum Physical Education Learning Strategies on motivation and student achievement in PGRI Kundi Junior High School” reveals compelling findings that highlight the substantial impact of this curriculum reform. The study indicates that the adoption of Merdeka curriculum, characterized by its flexible, student-centered approach, has significantly enhanced student motivation in physical education classes. This is evidenced by increased levels of engagement, enthusiasm, and active participation among students, as well as improved attendance rates.

Furthermore, the research shows that the revised teaching strategies and assessment methods tailored to individual needs have led to notable improvements in student achievement. The emphasis on aligning physical education activities with students’ interests and developmental needs has not only fostered better performance in physical skills but also contributed positively to their overall health and well-being. The findings suggest that the Merdeka curriculum serves as an effective model for enhancing both motivational and academic outcomes in physical education. For sustained success, it is recommended that these strategies be continually refined and evaluated to address the evolving needs and expectations of students, ensuring that the curriculum remains responsive and impactful. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of Merdeka curriculum physical education learning strategies in PGRI Kundi Junior High School on student motivation and learning achievement. Implementation of this strategy involves the use of technology in learning, a project-based approach, and collaboration between teachers and students to create a more interactive and relevant learning experience.

D. Conclusions

The research highlights the substantial benefits of implementing physical education learning strategies based on the Merdeka curriculum at PGRI Kundi Junior High School. The shift towards a more flexible, student-centered approach has led to significant improvements in student motivation, with increased engagement and enthusiasm observed in physical education activities. This heightened motivation is reflected in better attendance rates and more active participation, indicating that students are more invested in their learning experiences. Furthermore, the adaptation of teaching methods and assessments to cater to individual student needs has resulted in enhanced academic performance, demonstrating the curriculum’s effectiveness in fostering both physical and academic growth. Beyond improving

physical skills, this curriculum supports overall health development, reinforcing the holistic benefits of such an approach. The Merdeka curriculum has thus proven to be a powerful model for enhancing student motivation and achievement. To sustain and build upon these successes, it is crucial that these strategies are continuously refined and regularly assessed to align with the changing needs and aspirations of students, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and impactful in the long term. So, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in physical education at PGRI Kundi Junior High School has significantly boosted student motivation and achievement, improving both their physical skills and overall health. Continued development and regular evaluation of these strategies are recommended to sustain and enhance these positive outcomes.

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