

Research Article

The Influence of Organizational Culture and Teacher Competence on Teacher Commitment in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

One of the important factors influencing the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is teacher commitment. Teachers are expected to demonstrate a high level of commitment in understanding the curriculum philosophy, applying student-centered learning, and consistently implementing differentiated instruction and Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects. However, variations in teacher commitment indicate the need to examine factors that may strengthen or weaken this commitment. Two factors considered crucial in this context are organizational culture and teacher competence. This study aimed to analyze the influence of organizational culture and teacher competence on teacher commitment in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The research employed a quantitative approach with a causal research design. Data were collected from 179 elementary school teachers participating in Sekolah Penggerak in North Aceh Regency using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that organizational culture has a positive and significant effect on teacher commitment, whereas teacher competence does not show a significant influence. These results indicate that a supportive organizational culture plays a more decisive role in fostering teacher commitment than individual competence alone in the context of curriculum reform.

Keywords: Organizational culture; Teacher competence; Teacher commitment; Merdeka Curriculum; Sekolah Penggerak

1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of education in Indonesia through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum represents a strategic initiative by the government to realize the Pancasila Student Profile, characterized by faith, independence, creativity, collaboration, critical reasoning, and global diversity (Fauzan et al., 2023; Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). The School Transformation Program has become one of the flagship policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to accelerate this transformation. Sekolah Penggerak functions as a model for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing differentiated instruction, character strengthening, and competency development based on students' potential (Musa, 2022; Fatimah et al., 2024).

The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum largely depends on internal school factors, particularly organizational culture and teacher competence (Sholeh et al., 2024; Syofyan et al., 2024). A strong organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping values, attitudes, and work behaviors that support instructional innovation (Robbins et al., 2017; Emma, 2024). Deal and Kennedy (2022) argue that a collaborative organizational culture fosters a positive work environment, strengthens a sense of belonging, and enhances members' commitment to shared organizational goals. In the school context, an adaptive and learning-oriented organizational culture encourages teachers to actively engage in educational policy changes (Aboobaker, 2021; Kareem et al., 2025).

In addition to organizational culture, teacher competence is a key determinant of the effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum implementation (Kusumawati, 2025; Syukri et al., 2025). Teachers who possess strong pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies are better prepared to apply student-centered learning principles (Darling-Hammond, 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2025). High levels of competence enable teachers to design differentiated instruction, develop instructional modules, and implement projects aimed at strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile

effectively (Pawartani & Suciptaningsih, 2024; Yudisti et al., 2025). However, observations conducted in several Sekolah Penggerak in North Aceh Regency indicate that not all teachers demonstrate an equivalent level of competence in understanding and applying the Merdeka Curriculum.

Teacher commitment in this context reflects the extent to which teachers exhibit affective, normative, and continuance attachment to their profession (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Wang et al., 2021; Nugrohowati et al., 2019). High levels of commitment encourage teachers to consistently implement instruction, innovate, and adapt to curriculum changes (Nadelson et al., 2015; Yayak & Yayuk, 2025). Conversely, low teacher commitment often results in suboptimal instructional practices and resistance to educational reforms (Rahman & Azizah, 2022; Mustofa et al., 2023).

Previous studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between organizational culture, teacher competence, and teacher commitment (Bektiarso, 2022; Husnah et al., 2021; Hadi & Damarsa, 2024). Organizational cultures tend to achieve higher success rates in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Darmayanti, 2024; Efendi, 2023). Furthermore, continuous professional development and principal support have been shown to enhance teachers' capacity to implement innovative learning practices (Kemdikbudristek, 2023; Nor & Suriansyah, 2024). Nevertheless, empirical studies specifically examining the influence of organizational culture and teacher competence on teacher commitment within Sekolah Penggerak at the elementary school level, particularly in North Aceh Regency, remain limited.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the influence of organizational culture and teacher competence on teacher commitment in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Sekolah Penggerak at the elementary school level in North Aceh Regency. The findings are expected to provide empirical contributions to strengthening internal school factors that support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal research design to analyze the influence of organizational culture and teacher competence on teacher commitment in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This approach allows for the objective examination of causal relationships among variables through inferential statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2022). The population consisted of all teachers working in Sekolah Penggerak at the elementary school level in North Aceh Regency, totaling 323 teachers. A sample of 179 teachers was selected using purposive sampling based on criteria of active involvement in Merdeka Curriculum implementation, thereby ensuring representativeness of the population (Arikunto, 2021). Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to measure organizational culture, teacher competence, and teacher commitment. The research instruments underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure measurement accuracy and consistency (Arikunto, 2021). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 29, employing descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis. Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were performed to ensure the suitability of the regression model, with statistical significance values used as the basis for decision-making (George, 2024).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results of Organizational Culture Analysis

Organizational culture is one of the key factors influencing behavior, performance, and the overall developmental direction of an institution. Through the analysis of the organizational culture variable, this study seeks to examine the extent to which shared values, norms, and habitual practices within the organization contribute to the achievement of institutional objectives. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The complete results of the organizational culture analysis are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Culture

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P1	179	3.00	5.00	4.0950	0.37764
P2	179	3.00	5.00	4.7374	0.45382
P3	179	3.00	5.00	4.1117	0.59853
P4	179	2.00	5.00	3.7989	0.79592
P5	179	3.00	5.00	3.9162	0.62595
P6	179	2.00	5.00	3.7709	0.81973
P7	179	3.00	5.00	4.2291	0.48349
P8	179	3.00	5.00	4.2849	0.54293
P9	179	3.00	5.00	4.0838	0.47252
P10	179	3.00	5.00	4.1620	0.55233
P11	179	3.00	5.00	4.1620	0.62845
Valid N (listwise)	179				

Based on the descriptive analysis of responses from 179 participants, the minimum scores across all items (P1–P11) ranged from 2.00 to 3.00, while the maximum score consistently reached 5.00. The mean values ranged from 3.77 to 4.73, indicating that respondents generally provided positive and relatively high evaluations of organizational culture. Item P2 recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 4.74; SD = 0.45), suggesting a strong level of agreement or satisfaction among respondents regarding this particular aspect of organizational culture. In contrast, item P6 exhibited the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.77; SD = 0.82), indicating that this aspect was perceived less positively compared to the other items. Overall, the standard deviation values ranged from 0.38 to 0.82, reflecting a moderate level of response variability. The greatest dispersion of responses was observed in items P6 and P4, whereas item P1 showed the most homogeneous responses among participants.

3.2 Results of Teacher Competence Analysis

Teacher competence constitutes a fundamental factor in determining the quality of the learning process and the achievement of educational objectives. Through the analysis of the teacher competence variable, this study seeks to examine the extent to which teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies contribute to the improvement of educational quality. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The complete results of the teacher competence analysis are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Competence

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P12	179	2.00	5.00	4.1788	0.64599
P13	179	1.00	5.00	3.8715	0.97163
P14	179	2.00	5.00	3.6592	0.71191
P15	179	3.00	5.00	4.2235	0.63184
P16	179	1.00	5.00	3.9106	0.94384
P17	179	3.00	5.00	4.1453	0.42548
P18	179	4.00	5.00	4.5084	0.50133
P19	179	3.00	5.00	4.4637	0.53272
P20	179	3.00	5.00	4.3520	0.51291
P21	179	3.00	5.00	4.2570	0.46313
P22	179	4.00	5.00	4.2291	0.42140
Valid N (listwise)	179				

Based on the descriptive analysis of responses from 179 participants, all items (P12–P22) exhibited minimum scores ranging from 1.00 to 4.00, while the maximum score consistently reached 5.00. The mean values ranged from 3.66 to 4.51, indicating that respondents generally evaluated teacher competence positively, although variations in the level of appreciation across items were evident. Item P18 recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 4.51; SD = 0.50), followed by item P19 (Mean = 4.46; SD = 0.53), suggesting that these aspects of teacher competence were perceived very positively by respondents with relatively low response variability. In contrast, the lowest mean score was observed for item P14 (Mean = 3.66; SD = 0.71), indicating that this aspect of competence had not yet been optimally perceived. Overall, the results demonstrate that most aspects of teacher competence were rated positively, with several items (P18, P19, and P20) emerging as key strengths, while items such as P13, P14, and P16 require greater attention due to their relatively lower mean scores and higher variability in responses.

3.3 Results of Teacher Commitment Analysis

Teacher commitment in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum within Sekolah Penggerak constitutes a critical indicator of the success of educational transformation programs. This commitment encompasses teachers' willingness to understand the philosophical foundations of the Merdeka Curriculum, to adapt student-centered instructional strategies, and to consistently implement differentiated learning as well as the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects (P5). With strong commitment, teachers function not only as implementers of policy but also as key agents of change who foster a more inclusive, creative, and future-oriented learning culture. Through the analysis of the teacher commitment variable, this study seeks to examine the extent to which teachers demonstrate dedication in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Sekolah Penggerak, encompassing planning, instructional implementation, and learning evaluation. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The complete results of the teacher commitment analysis are presented in [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Commitment

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P35	179	3.00	5.00	4.0950	0.37764
P36	179	4.00	5.00	4.7430	0.43820
P37	179	3.00	5.00	4.0782	0.60385
P38	179	1.00	5.00	3.5754	0.77797
P39	179	3.00	5.00	3.7989	0.57455
P40	179	1.00	5.00	3.4804	0.80267
P41	179	4.00	5.00	4.1732	0.37947
P42	179	3.00	5.00	4.2123	0.44930
P43	179	3.00	5.00	4.0168	0.38911
P44	179	3.00	5.00	4.1117	0.51802
P45	179	2.00	5.00	4.0950	0.65936
P46	179	1.00	5.00	3.4804	0.81655
P47	179	2.00	5.00	3.6480	0.85731
P48	179	3.00	5.00	4.5587	0.53071
P49	179	1.00	5.00	3.6536	1.28195
P50	179	3.00	5.00	4.1676	0.44325
P51	179	4.00	5.00	4.4581	0.49964
P52	179	3.00	5.00	4.4469	0.53130
P53	179	3.00	5.00	4.4413	0.53071
P54	179	3.00	5.00	4.1676	0.41713
P55	179	4.00	5.00	4.2737	0.44713
P56	179	3.00	5.00	4.2123	0.44930
P57	179	3.00	5.00	4.0168	0.38911
Valid N (listwise)	179				

Based on the descriptive analysis of responses from 179 participants, items P35–P57 exhibited minimum scores ranging from 1.00 to 4.00, while the maximum score consistently reached 5.00. The mean values ranged from 3.48 to 4.74, indicating that respondents generally provided relatively high evaluations of teacher commitment, although several items reflected lower levels of agreement. Item P36 recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 4.74; SD = 0.44), followed by item P48 (Mean = 4.56; SD = 0.53) and item P51 (Mean = 4.46; SD = 0.50). These results indicate that the corresponding aspects of teacher commitment were perceived very positively, with relatively consistent response patterns. In contrast, the lowest mean scores were observed for item P40 (Mean = 3.48; SD = 0.80) and item P49 (Mean = 3.65; SD = 1.28). Notably, item P49 exhibited a substantially high standard deviation, suggesting considerable variability in respondents' perceptions and indicating divergent views among teachers. Overall, these findings suggest that several aspects of teacher commitment, particularly those represented by items P36, P48, P51, P52, and P53, constitute key strengths due to their high mean scores and stable response distributions. However, items such as P38, P40, P46, P47, and P49 warrant further attention, as they demonstrate relatively lower mean values and greater variability, indicating areas that may require targeted organizational or policy-level interventions.

3.4 Results of Hypothesis Testing

This hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the extent to which organizational culture and teacher competence simultaneously influence teacher commitment in Sekolah Penggerak at the elementary school level in North Aceh Regency. To address this objective, a multiple linear regression analysis was employed. This analysis was intended to assess the combined explanatory power of the two independent variables in accounting for variations in the dependent variable. Accordingly, the statistical results presented in **Table 4** provide an overview of the significance levels and the magnitude of contribution of organizational culture and teacher competence to teacher commitment.

Table 4. The Effect of Organizational Culture and Teacher Competence on Teacher Commitment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.926	0.322	—	9.082	0.000
Mean Organizational Culture	0.304	0.049	0.421	6.161	0.000
Mean Teacher Competence	-0.023	0.059	-0.027	-0.397	0.692

Dependent Variable: Mean Teacher Commitment

Based on the results presented in **Table 4**, the multiple regression equation can be formulated as follows:

$$Y = 2.926 + 0.304X_1 - 0.023X_2$$

The regression results indicate that organizational culture has a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher commitment, as evidenced by a regression coefficient of 0.304, a t-value of 6.161, and a significance level of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This finding implies that improvements in organizational culture within schools are associated with higher levels of teacher commitment in carrying out their professional responsibilities. In contrast, teacher competence exhibits a regression coefficient of -0.023 , with a t-value of -0.397 and a significance level of 0.692, which exceeds the 0.05 significance criterion. This result indicates that teacher competence does not have a statistically significant effect on teacher commitment in Sekolah Penggerak at the elementary school level in North Aceh Regency. Consequently, within this regression model, only organizational culture is empirically proven to exert a meaningful influence on teacher commitment, whereas teacher competence does not contribute significantly.

3.5 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that teacher commitment in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is more strongly influenced by organizational contextual factors than by individual factors such as teacher competence (Efendi et al., 2023; Utami & Yuliana, 2025). Conceptually, this result reinforces the view that the success of educational reform is not determined solely by individual competence, but rather by the organizational ecosystem in which teachers operate (Mahmudah et al., 2025; Febriantina et al., 2018). This perspective is consistent with organizational culture theory, which positions shared values, norms, and collective practices as primary determinants of organizational members' behavior, as articulated by Schein (2015).

The significant influence of organizational culture on teacher commitment supports organizational commitment theory, which emphasizes that individuals' attachment to an organization is formed through the internalization of values and the meaningfulness of work, rather than technical capacity alone (Oupen et al., 2020; Efendi et al., 2023). Within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, a school organizational culture that promotes innovation, collaboration, and professional reflection enables teachers to perceive curriculum change as a collective mission rather than merely a policy mandate (Kumayas et al., 2025; Raihan, 2025). This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that positive school culture strengthens teacher commitment in the implementation of educational change agendas (Wang'ombe, 2023; Kubtiah et al., 2024; Suriansyah, 2014). Furthermore, the results of this study reinforce the person-organization fit perspective, which highlights the importance of congruence between individual values and organizational values in shaping affective commitment (Soeprijadi & Sudibjo, 2021). When teachers perceive that the core values of the Merdeka Curriculum such as student-centered learning and character development are aligned with the prevailing school culture, commitment tends to develop intrinsically. In this regard, organizational culture functions as a psychological mechanism that bridges educational policy and teacher behavior at the implementation level (Nugroho, 2021; Ali et al., 2025).

Conversely, the non-significant effect of teacher competence on teacher commitment reveals limitations in the classical assumption that professional competence automatically leads to high commitment. This finding does not negate teacher competence theory, but rather emphasizes that competence is a necessary but insufficient condition. From the perspective of self-determination theory, competence represents only one of three basic psychological needs, alongside autonomy and relatedness. Without an organizational culture that provides opportunities for participation, recognition, and trust, teacher competence tends to function at a technical level rather than at the affective level required to foster commitment (Bektiarso, 2022; Husnah et al., 2021; Darmayanti et al., 2024). These findings are aligned with prior studies by (Ariska et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2025), which demonstrate that highly competent teachers do not necessarily exhibit strong organizational commitment when their work environments lack emotional and structural support. In the context of Sekolah Penggerak, the complex demands of Merdeka Curriculum implementation such as differentiated instruction and Pancasila Student Profile projects may increase work-related strain if they are not supported by a conducive school culture. Thus, this study supports critique of education reform approaches that focus excessively on individual capacity building while overlooking organizational readiness. Moreover, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating that during the early to intermediate phases of new policy implementation, such as the Merdeka Curriculum, organizational factors tend to exert a stronger influence than individual factors. This finding contrasts with earlier studies that reported a direct effect of teacher competence on commitment and performance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). Such differences can be explained by policy context, as systemic change requires cultural stability and organizational leadership before individual competence can be optimally translated into commitment.

Accordingly, this study supports the theory of educational organizational change proposed by Michael Fullan (2020), which emphasizes that the success of educational reform depends heavily on schools' collective capacity. Organizational culture serves as the foundation that enables teacher competence to be transformed into commitment and concrete action. Without this foundation, teacher competence risks remaining an underutilized potential. Overall, the findings of this study do not contradict teacher competence theory, but rather position it within a broader contextual framework. This study reinforces organizational culture and organizational commitment theories by affirming that transformative curriculum reform requires a school environment capable of cultivating meaning, trust, and a sense of belonging among teachers. Therefore, the primary contribution of this study lies in highlighting organizational culture as a key variable in bridging

Merdeka Curriculum policy and teacher commitment at the implementation level.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of organizational culture and teacher competence on teacher commitment in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum within Sekolah Penggerak at the elementary school level in North Aceh Regency. The findings demonstrate that organizational culture has a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher commitment, whereas teacher competence does not exhibit a significant influence. These results indicate that teacher commitment in the context of curriculum reform is shaped more strongly by organizational and contextual factors than by individual professional capacity alone. The significant role of organizational culture suggests that shared values, collaborative norms, and supportive school environments are critical in fostering teachers' affective and normative attachment to curriculum implementation. A school culture that encourages innovation, mutual support, and professional reflection enables teachers to internalize the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum and to perceive curriculum change as a collective responsibility rather than an external policy demand. In this sense, organizational culture functions as a foundational mechanism that transforms policy directives into meaningful professional commitment. Conversely, the absence of a significant effect of teacher competence on commitment indicates that professional skills and knowledge, while essential for instructional quality, are not sufficient to ensure strong commitment in the absence of a supportive organizational environment. This finding implies that competence tends to operate at a technical level unless it is reinforced by organizational conditions that provide autonomy, recognition, and a sense of belonging. Therefore, efforts to strengthen teacher commitment should not rely solely on capacity-building initiatives, but must be accompanied by strategies aimed at developing a positive and adaptive school culture. Based on the practical perspective, these findings suggest that policymakers and school leaders involved in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum should prioritize the development of organizational culture alongside teacher professional development. Strengthening collaborative leadership, fostering trust among school members, and creating spaces for shared reflection may enhance teacher commitment and support sustainable curriculum reform. In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on educational change by highlighting organizational culture as a key determinant in bridging curriculum policy and teacher commitment at the implementation level. While teacher competence remains an important prerequisite for effective instruction, the success of transformative curriculum reform ultimately depends on the collective capacity and cultural readiness of schools. Future research is recommended to explore the mediating role of leadership and school climate, as well as to extend the analysis to different educational levels and regional contexts.

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