
SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON RECENT CURRICULUM REFORM IN SOUTH SUMATERA: RESOURCES AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES

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Abstract

Curriculum reform remains a central strategy for improving educational quality; however, its success largely depends on teachers' perspectives and readiness to implement reform. This study investigates the perspectives of Indonesian secondary school teachers in South Sumatra regarding recent curriculum reforms, identifies the resources that influence these perspectives, and examines the role of demographic characteristics. Employing a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 342 secondary school teachers using a structured questionnaire. Analyses included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, post-hoc Tukey HSD tests, and multiple regression. The findings indicate that teachers hold moderately positive but cautious perspectives toward curriculum reform ($M = 3.47$). Teachers strongly acknowledge the necessity of curriculum reform, yet express reservations regarding implementation challenges and the adequacy of support and resources. Correlation and regression analyses reveal that adequate training, administrative support, and resource availability significantly and positively influence teachers' perspectives, collectively explaining 52.3% of the variance. Demographic analyses show urban teachers report more positive perspectives than rural ones, while early-career teachers hold more favorable views than their more experienced counterparts. Overall, the results suggest that teachers are not resistant to curriculum reform; rather, their perspectives are shaped by the extent of institutional support, professional learning opportunities, and contextual conditions. The study highlights the need for sustained professional development, strong school leadership, and equitable resource distribution, particularly in rural schools, to ensure effective curriculum implementation.

Keywords: curriculum reform, implementation readiness, professional training, support resources, teacher perspectives

Introduction

Each curriculum reform introduces new instructional frameworks, assessment standards, and learning models that require teachers to continuously adapt their pedagogical practices within the realities of their classrooms. These ongoing reforms have placed increasing demands on teachers' daily instructional work (Marzoan, 2024; Wahyono et al., 2024). The success of such reforms, particularly *Kurikulum Merdeka* with its emphasis on student-centred learning and differentiated instruction, is inherently contingent upon teachers' capacity to interpret and enact these reforms within their specific classroom contexts (Katie et al., 2020; Vinnervik, 2022).

Teachers' perspectives play a critical role in determining the success of curriculum reform. It is because teacher viewpoints shape how reforms are interpreted, the pace at which they are adopted, the depth of teacher learning, and ultimately the effectiveness of curricular reform (Chang et al., 2025). Research consistently shows a persistent gap between policy and classroom practice where the intended objectives of reform are not fully realized due to factors such as inadequate teacher readiness, insufficient institutional support, and misalignment between policy design and on-the-ground realities. Consequently, even well-designed curricula may fail to achieve their intended impact if teachers feel underprepared or unsupported. Teachers' perceptions are thus critical, as they directly influence the fidelity, pace, and ultimate success of educational innovation (Ahmad & Shah, 2025; Anam, 2021).

Therefore, understanding teachers' perspectives is essential for identifying the structural and contextual barriers, as well as the potential opportunities, that influence the enactment of new curricula. Such insights provide a foundation for developing targeted, evidence-based action plans that can enhance implementation fidelity and maximize the effectiveness of educational reforms. Within this framework, the present study investigates Indonesian teachers' perceptions of Kurikulum Merdeka, with the objective of illuminating the challenges and opportunities encountered at the grassroots level.

Although prior research in the Indonesian context has begun to examine this issue, existing studies remain constrained by several notable limitations. Much of the current literature relies heavily on qualitative approaches, including small-scale interviews and single-case studies (Hidayah et al., 2022; Limiansi et al., 2023), which, despite offering valuable contextual insights, provide limited generalizability. In addition, the geographical scope of these studies has been largely concentrated in Java and major urban centres, resulting in the underrepresentation of teachers from other regions who may encounter distinct infrastructural and resource-related challenges (Patekur et al., 2022). Additionally, whereas earlier research has typically examined individual factors such as training, support mechanisms, or resource availability, the present study integrates descriptive and inferential statistical approaches to uncover deeper relationships among variables. This includes examining associations among continuous predictors, conducting group comparisons, and identifying key determinants that shape teacher perspectives on curriculum reform.

Overall, this study contributes methodological and empirical innovation by integrating a large, demographically diverse sample with rigorous statistical procedures, thereby moving beyond the simple identification of implementation challenges. It offers a data-driven analytical framework that illuminates the critical factors shaping teacher perceptions and provides more credible, evidence-based implications for policymakers. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) What are the perspectives of Indonesian secondary school teachers in South Sumatra regarding recent curriculum reforms?
- (2) Which resources influence teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform?
- (3) How do demographic characteristics affect teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform?

By combining a demographically diverse sample with robust statistical analysis, this research seeks to generate credible, evidence-based insights. The findings are intended to inform policymakers and educational leaders, offering targeted strategies to enhance teacher support, mitigate implementation challenges, and ultimately contribute to the successful enactment of *Kurikulum Merdeka* across Indonesia's diverse educational landscape.

Literature Review

This literature review establishes the theoretical and empirical foundation of the study, focusing on the theoretical framework of curriculum reform, teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform, and factors influencing teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform. It presents the relevant concepts and theories about this study.

Curriculum reform

Teachers are more likely to adopt new instructional strategies and materials when they are recognized as change agents and actively involved in curriculum reform. Such involvement fosters ownership, motivation, and meaningful classroom implementation. In contrast, curricula introduced without teacher consultation or adequate support often face resistance or superficial adoption, as teachers may view these reforms as disconnected from classroom realities (Ngeno, 2023; Taufik & Rindaningsih, 2024).

Implementing a new curriculum requires teachers to develop new pedagogical skills, deepen content knowledge, and adjust assessment practices that demand considerable time and effort. These challenges are intensified when teachers receive minimal guidance while simultaneously managing increased workloads, administrative demands, and whole-school expectations for resource use (Haug & Mork, 2021; Mundiri & Dini, 2023; Senduk, 2024). In short, curriculum reform is most effective when teachers are supported, consulted, and empowered throughout the reform process. Without sustained professional support and recognition of teachers' roles as agents of change, curriculum initiatives are unlikely to be implemented successfully or lead to meaningful improvements in teaching and learning.

Strengthening teachers' essential skills plays a pivotal role in elevating their motivation and capacity for innovation within the classroom. When teachers possess strong professional competencies, they are more likely to engage deeply with instructional tasks, experiment with new pedagogical methods, and maintain high levels of job satisfaction. These factors collectively enhance the quality of teaching and directly enrich students' learning experiences (Alam et al., 2024; Ekmekci & Serrano, 2022). Teachers with well-developed skills are more willing to experiment with new pedagogical methods and adapt their instruction to meet students' needs. Such innovation allows teachers to create more dynamic, engaging, and effective learning environments. At the same time, improved competencies contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction and sustained enthusiasm for teaching (Kusumawati & Umam, 2025; Rahmi & Rasanjani, 2025). Overall, investing in the development of teachers' essential skills strengthens instructional quality and fosters innovation in practice. This, in turn, enriches students' learning experiences and supports improved educational outcomes.

Teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform

Any teacher generally feels that a reform in curriculum is necessary to meet the needs of students who are continuously changing and to meet the demands of society, technology, and, at times, locally or globally. They generally agree that education requires reforms to be relevant and meaningful. For many teachers, the new curriculum reform offers tangible benefits such as an improvement in student learning, a shift towards more active, student-centered learning, and a more creative and flexible

approach to teaching (Noviandari, 2024; Nur 'Azah et al., 2024).

Research conducted by Dang et al.(2023) revealed that many teachers also agree that meaningful educational improvement cannot occur without periodic curriculum renewal. Reforms in content, teaching approaches, and learning objectives are seen as vital for equipping students with the competencies required for contemporary life. Rather than viewing reform as a disruption, teachers often perceive it as an opportunity to enhance educational quality. For many educators, according to Yembergenova et al. (2024), new curricula provide tangible benefits, including improved student learning outcomes, a stronger focus on active and student-centered learning, and increased creativity and flexibility in teaching practices. These shifts allow teachers to design more engaging lessons and promote deeper student participation and critical thinking. In short, teachers tend to view curriculum reform as a necessary and positive process that supports relevance, innovation, and improved learning outcomes. When effectively implemented, curriculum reform can enhance teaching practices and better prepare students to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

However, teachers also identified challenges to the implementation of curriculum reform. Reform can often be imposed with ambiguous directions, and calendars and workloads in schools make transitioning to new approaches a challenge for teachers. Rural schools may present problems that make it more difficult for teachers than urban schools. It is equally important to understand that teachers feel a need for support and resources (Dikgale & Chauke, 2024). Material, facilities, and institutional support are critically important, and lacking those resources compromises the reform. Finally, teachers outlined the need for professional development. They regarded ongoing training and workshops as an essential part of understanding new ideologies and approaches to build their confidence, and feel assured that the curriculum reform could be integrated sustainably. If not properly addressed, this can lead to a significant gap between the aspirational goals of curriculum reform and its practical implementation in the classroom (Clark, 2022; Dimmock et al., 2021).

Overall, while teachers acknowledge the importance of curriculum reform, its successful implementation is often constrained by unclear directives, heavy workloads, contextual challenges, particularly in rural settings, and insufficient support. The lack of adequate resources, facilities, and institutional backing can significantly hinder teachers' ability to enact reform effectively. Furthermore, the absence of sustained professional development limits teachers' confidence and understanding of new approaches. Without clear guidance, sufficient resources, and ongoing training, curriculum reform risks creating a gap between its intended goals and actual classroom practice, ultimately undermining the sustainability and impact of educational reform.

Factors influencing teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform

A complex interplay of professional, institutional, and contextual factors shapes teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reforms. One of the most influential factors, according to Kafanabo (2024), is professional development. When teachers receive continuous, relevant, and practice-based training, they are more likely to feel confident and prepared to implement new curricular approaches. Inadequate or one-time training, however, often results in uncertainty and resistance. In conclusion, effective and continuous professional development is a key determinant of teachers' readiness and attitudes toward curriculum reform. When training is relevant and practice-oriented, it builds teachers' confidence and supports successful implementation, whereas insufficient preparation increases uncertainty and resistance, ultimately hindering the effectiveness of curriculum reform.

Teacher agency and involvement in the reform process also strongly influence their perspectives. Teachers tend to respond more positively to curriculum reforms when they are consulted, included in decision-making, and treated as active contributors rather than passive implementers (Muhammadiyah et al., 2022). This sense of ownership increases their commitment and willingness to embrace reform. In a nutshell, involving teachers as active agents in the curriculum reform process is crucial for fostering positive perspectives and sustained commitment. When teachers are consulted and empowered in decision-making, they develop a sense of ownership that strengthens their willingness to embrace and successfully implement curriculum reforms.

Institutional support and the availability of resources play a critical role in shaping teachers' attitudes. Access to appropriate instructional materials, technology, facilities, and administrative support enables teachers to implement curriculum reforms effectively (Seno & Paglinawan, 2024). When resources are insufficient, teachers may perceive reforms as unrealistic or overly demanding. Furthermore, school leadership, based on research conducted by Ponce et al. (2025), further affects teachers' perspectives by providing direction, encouragement, and a supportive school culture. Clear communication, collaborative leadership, and ongoing guidance help reduce uncertainty and build trust during periods of reform. In contrast, weak leadership can intensify confusion and resistance. In essence, adequate institutional support, sufficient resources, and effective school leadership are essential for fostering positive teacher attitudes toward curriculum reform. When teachers are supported with clear guidance, appropriate resources, and collaborative leadership, they are more likely to view reforms as achievable and meaningful. Conversely, limited resources and weak leadership can undermine teachers' confidence, increase resistance, and hinder successful curriculum implementation.

Workload, time constraints, and contextual conditions, such as school location and student characteristics, according to Dang et al. (2023), also influence how teachers experience curriculum reform. Yongtao (2025) in her research found that increased administrative demands, complex assessment systems, and new technological requirements can create stress if not accompanied by adequate support. Additionally, teachers' prior beliefs, experiences, and alignment with the goals of the reform shape how they interpret and respond to reform. In brief, teachers' responses to curriculum reform are strongly influenced by practical constraints and personal factors. Heavy workloads, limited time, contextual challenges, and increased administrative and technical demands can generate stress and hinder implementation when adequate support is lacking. Moreover, teachers' prior beliefs and experiences shape how they interpret reforms, highlighting the need for supportive conditions and alignment between reform goals and classroom realities to ensure successful curriculum reform.

Methodology

Research design and approach of the study

The research employed a quantitative survey research design to systematically examine Indonesian secondary school teachers' perspectives on recent curriculum reforms in South Sumatra. This design was chosen because it is appropriate for identifying patterns, relationships, and variations in teachers' attitudes across a large population using measurable and comparable data (Bihu, 2021; Zimba & Gasparyan, 2023). More specifically, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which involves collecting data from participants at a single point in time. This approach is particularly suitable for educational research conducted across diverse contexts, as it allows for efficient data collection

from teachers working in different school types, locations, and demographic backgrounds within South Sumatra. The cross-sectional design enabled the researchers to capture a snapshot of teachers' views during the early stages of curriculum reform implementation, providing timely insights into their readiness, concerns, and levels of acceptance. In other words, a cross-sectional survey design was adopted, which is particularly effective for collecting data from a large number of participants at a single point in time across multiple school types and geographical regions (Cvetkovic-Vega et al., 2021; Pérez-Guerrero et al., 2024). This design enabled the researchers to obtain generalizable data on teachers' views of the curriculum reform either preceding or following its implementation within the context of secondary education in South Sumatra.

The research purpose was threefold: (1) to examine teachers' overall perspectives toward recent curriculum reforms, (2) to identify key resources and supports influencing these perspectives, and (3) to analyze how demographic characteristics shape teachers' views. These purposes guided the problem formulation, which focused on understanding not only whether teachers perceive curriculum reform positively or negatively, but also why such perceptions emerge and how contextual and personal factors contribute to them. Overall, the chosen research design aligns closely with the study's objectives, as it allows for broad generalization, statistical comparison, and evidence-based conclusions regarding curriculum reform in secondary education within the South Sumatran context.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the study followed four major stages. The first stage involved careful preparation, during which the researchers established the research goals, designed an appropriate questionnaire, and verified its validity and reliability to ensure the instrument accurately measured the intended constructs. The second stage focused on data collection, where teachers were invited to complete the survey, either online or in print, depending on accessibility. The third stage consisted of data analysis, during which the researchers calculated descriptive and inferential statistics to summarize average responses and examine relationships among variables. Finally, in the fourth stage, the researchers interpreted the results by contextualizing the statistical findings and discussing their implications for understanding teachers' perceptions of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This systematic process aligns with the established procedures for quantitative survey research in education (Fraenkel et al., 2016).

Research site and participants

The study was carried out in South Sumatra Province, Indonesia, a region that reflects diverse educational conditions due to its mix of urban and rural settings, variations in school infrastructure, and differing levels of access to professional development and resources. This site was strategically selected to provide a contextualized understanding of how recent curriculum reforms, particularly *Kurikulum Merdeka*, are perceived and implemented across heterogeneous school environments. By including schools from both urban centers and more remote rural areas, the study was able to capture contextual disparities that are often critical in shaping teachers' experiences of policy implementation.

The participants comprised 342 secondary school teachers drawn from public and private schools, ensuring representation of the two dominant institutional sectors in Indonesian secondary education. The sample size determination was guided by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population (Jamil et al., 2023; Sathyanarayana et al., 2024). The teachers varied in gender, age, educational background, and teaching experience, ranging from early-career educators to highly experienced practitioners. All participants were actively involved in classroom instruction and directly engaged with curriculum implementation, making them well-

positioned to provide informed perspectives on both the philosophical aims and practical challenges of the reform. This diverse and professionally experienced sample strengthened the study's capacity to examine how demographic and contextual factors influence teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform and thereby enhanced the credibility and relevance of the findings for policy and practice.

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics of the research participants*

| Variable | Category | Frequency (N) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | Female | 214 | 62.6 |
| | Male | 128 | 37.4 |
| Age | 20-30 years | 89 | 26.0 |
| | 31-40 years | 134 | 39.2 |
| | 41-50 years | 87 | 25.4 |
| | > 51 years | 32 | 9.4 |
| Teaching Experience | 1-5 years | 76 | 22.2 |
| | 6-10 years | 98 | 28.7 |
| | 11-15 years | 89 | 26.0 |
| | ≥ 16 years | 79 | 23.1 |
| Educational Background | Bachelor's degree | 176 | 51.46 |
| | Master's degree | 166 | 48.54 |
| School Type | Public school | 234 | 68.4 |
| | Private school | 108 | 31.6 |
| School Location | Urban | 198 | 57.9 |
| | Rural | 144 | 42.1 |

The table presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the research participants, shows how the participant are distributed by gender, age, teaching experience, educational background, school type, and school location in the study, and provides contextual background for the research by describing who the participants are and the professional settings in which they work, which is essential for interpreting teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform and understanding how demographic and contextual factors may influence the study's findings.

Data collection

To obtain a comprehensive set of data relevant to the objectives of this study, the questionnaire was systematically designed into four sections. Section A collected demographic information, including gender, age, education level, years of teaching experience, school location, and school type. These variables were included for context and analysis in groups. Section B collected overall responses of teachers to curriculum reform through 25 items and a five-point Likert scale of responses, from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Section C collected factors that influenced those overall perceptions, such as adequacy of training, administrative support, availability of resources, and professional learning opportunities. Lastly, Section D included several open-ended questions asking for participants' thoughts and recommendations about the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. All four sections allowed a depth and breadth of information to be collected: quantitative measures,

for statistical detail, and qualitative information to assist in better understanding teachers' experiences and perspectives.

The mode and timing of data collection followed a cross-sectional design, conducted at a single point in time during the early phase of *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation. The structured questionnaires were distributed both physically and digitally, allowing teachers from six South Sumatran districts (Palembang City, Ogan Ilir, Ogan Komering Ilir, Muara Enim, Banyuasin, and Musi Banyuasin) to participate conveniently. The cross-sectional timing was chosen to capture teachers' immediate perceptions while policy implementation was still ongoing, ensuring the data reflected authentic reactions to a reform in progress.

Regarding formulation and validation, the instrument was developed based on a comprehensive review of prior research on curriculum reform and teacher perceptions. The development process involved adapting key constructs and indicators from validated instruments in similar studies (Dikgale & Chauke, 2024; Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025) to suit the Indonesian secondary education context. To ensure content validity, the survey underwent expert review by three curriculum specialists and two senior teachers, who assessed each item for clarity, cultural relevance, and alignment with research objectives. Their feedback was incorporated to refine wording and ensure representativeness of all dimensions of teachers' perceptions.

For reliability testing, the instrument was piloted among a small group of teachers not included in the main study. Cronbach's alpha coefficients confirmed high internal consistency, with $\alpha = 0.89$ for the perception scale and $\alpha = 0.84$ for the influencing factors scale, both exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These results demonstrate that the instrument was statistically reliable and theoretically sound, supporting its suitability for use in large-scale educational research.

Validity and reliability

The content validity of the survey instrument was verified through an expert-review process involving three curriculum specialists and two veteran teachers. The curriculum specialists were selected based on the following criteria: (a) a minimum of a master's degree in curriculum and instruction or educational evaluation, (b) at least ten years of research or professional experience related to curriculum design and implementation, and (c) active affiliation with higher education institutions or education quality assurance agencies. The two veteran teachers were chosen because of their extensive classroom experience (over fifteen years each) and their direct involvement in implementing curriculum reforms in secondary education.

The expert review followed a structured evaluation protocol. Each expert received the full questionnaire and a validation checklist, which required them to assess the clarity, relevance, representativeness, and language appropriateness of each item using a four-point rating scale (1 = not relevant, 4 = highly relevant). Space was also provided for open-ended comments to solicit qualitative feedback. After the first round of review, the researchers consolidated the feedback, revised ambiguous or redundant items, and refined the wording of several statements. A second round of review was then conducted to confirm that the revisions improved alignment between item content and the intended construct domains.

The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot test conducted before the main data collection. A sample of 45 secondary school teachers from schools not included in the main study was selected using convenience sampling to ensure accessibility while maintaining representativeness

of the target population. These teachers shared similar demographic and professional characteristics with the main study population (e.g., gender ratio, teaching experience range, and school types), but they did not participate in the final survey to preserve the independence of samples. Responses were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency reliability, yielding coefficients of $\alpha = 0.89$ for the "Teachers' Perceptions" scale and $\alpha = 0.84$ for the "Influencing Factors" scale, indicating strong internal reliability.

Data analysis

The data analysis in this study was designed to directly address the three research questions by combining descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. This approach allowed the researchers to obtain a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of teachers' perspectives toward recent curriculum reforms in South Sumatra. To examine teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform, descriptive statistics were first employed. Teachers' responses to the 25 questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to summarize overall response patterns and to indicate the level of agreement and variability among teachers' perceptions. This analysis provided a clear picture of how teachers generally viewed the necessity of curriculum reform, its perceived benefits, implementation challenges, and the adequacy of support and professional development.

The analysis focused on several key dimensions of teachers' perspectives toward the Kurikulum Merdeka, including the necessity of curriculum reform, perceived benefits of the new curriculum, implementation challenges, availability of support and resources, and professional development. Overall, the use of mean scores and standard deviations provided a clear and systematic picture of teachers' general attitudes toward curriculum reform. This descriptive analysis established a foundational understanding of teachers' perspectives, which then informed subsequent inferential analyses examining influencing resources and demographic differences.

To identify the resources influencing teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform, the study employed a sequence of inferential statistical procedures. The analysis began with correlation analysis to examine the relationships between teachers' overall perspectives and key support-related factors, such as professional training, administrative support, and the availability of resources. This step allowed the researchers to determine whether and how strongly these forms of support were associated with teachers' attitudes toward curriculum reform. Following this, multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative contribution of each resource factor while controlling for other variables. By including multiple predictors in a single model, the analysis made it possible to identify which types of support played the most influential role in shaping teachers' perspectives, independent of demographic or contextual influences. This approach ensured that the effects of individual resources were not examined in isolation but within a broader explanatory framework.

Overall, the use of correlation and regression analyses provided a systematic and rigorous way to identify the most critical resources affecting teachers' views of curriculum reform. Through this process, the study was able to determine which forms of support are most essential for fostering positive teacher engagement and readiness in the implementation of curriculum reform. Finally, the influence of demographic characteristics on teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform was examined using group comparison analyses, as described in the attached file. This stage of analysis aimed to determine whether teachers' views differed significantly across demographic groups and to

identify which characteristics played a meaningful role in shaping perceptions of the Kurikulum Merdeka.

To examine differences based on school location, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare teachers working in urban and rural schools. This analysis was appropriate because the school location consisted of two distinct groups. The comparison enabled the researchers to assess whether contextual differences, such as access to resources and institutional support, were reflected in teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform. Differences related to teaching experience were analyzed using a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Teachers were grouped into several categories based on years of experience, allowing the researchers to examine whether perspectives toward curriculum reform varied across career stages. When statistically significant differences were identified, post-hoc tests were applied to determine which experience groups differed from one another. Effect size measures were also used to assess the practical significance of these differences. In addition, other demographic variables like gender, educational background, and school type (public or private) were examined using appropriate comparative statistical tests. These analyses were conducted to determine whether these characteristics were associated with variations in teachers' perspectives. The results showed that not all demographic factors had a significant influence, allowing the researchers to distinguish between characteristics that meaningfully shaped perceptions and those that did not.

Through this structured analytical process, the study was able to provide a nuanced understanding of how demographic factors interact with teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform. By combining t-tests, ANOVA, and post-hoc analyses, the researchers ensured that conclusions about demographic influences were grounded in rigorous statistical evidence rather than assumptions.

Findings

Teachers' perspectives on recent curriculum reforms

Teachers' perspectives were measured using a 25-item Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The overall mean score was $M = 3.47$ ($SD = 0.68$), indicating a moderately positive stance toward recent curriculum reforms, particularly the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This overall result reflects cautious optimism rather than full endorsement. The teachers' perspectives in the table 2 are explained in detail below for each measured aspect.

Table 2. *Teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reforms*

| Aspect | Items | Mean | SD |
|--------------------------------|----------|------|------|
| Necessity of reform | 5 items | 3.78 | 0.72 |
| Benefits of the new curriculum | 6 items | 3.56 | 0.69 |
| Implementation challenges | 7 items | 3.24 | 0.75 |
| Support and resources | 4 items | 3.12 | 0.81 |
| Professional development | 3 items | 3.65 | 0.71 |
| Overall perspective | 25 items | 3.47 | 0.68 |

The findings clearly indicate that teachers' perspectives toward recent curriculum reforms are multifaceted, reflecting both strong conceptual support and practical concerns. Among all dimensions, the necessity of curriculum reform received the highest mean score ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.72$), demonstrating that teachers strongly recognize the importance of reform. This result suggests broad

agreement that curriculum reform is required to respond to evolving educational demands, including shifting student needs, societal expectations, and ongoing pedagogical developments. Although overall agreement is high, the moderate standard deviation indicates some variability in responses, likely influenced by differences in school contexts or teachers' prior experiences with curriculum reform. Collectively, this finding reflects teachers' ideological acceptance of curriculum reform at the conceptual level.

Teachers also reported positive perceptions of the benefits of the new curriculum ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.69$). This indicates that teachers generally believe the reform has the potential to enhance teaching and learning processes, particularly through student-centered approaches, greater flexibility, and competency-based learning. However, the mean score for perceived benefits is slightly lower than that for the necessity of reform, suggesting that while teachers accept the need for reform, they are somewhat less convinced about its tangible benefits in classroom practice. The moderate variability in responses further implies that perceived benefits may depend on contextual factors such as access to training, resources, and institutional support.

The dimension of professional development also received a relatively high mean score ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating that teachers view professional learning as an important and beneficial component of curriculum reform. This finding underscores teachers' recognition that successful implementation requires enhanced pedagogical knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, the score does not reach a strongly positive level, suggesting concerns regarding the adequacy and consistency of current training provisions. The observed variability suggests unequal access to professional development opportunities across schools and regions.

In contrast, teachers expressed greater caution regarding implementation challenges ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.75$). Although the mean remains above the midpoint, it reveals that many teachers agree that implementing the new curriculum is practically demanding. Compared to the more conceptually oriented dimensions, this lower mean reflects heightened concern about issues such as increased workload, complex assessment requirements, unclear implementation guidelines, and limited time for adaptation. The relatively higher standard deviation indicates substantial differences in teachers' experiences, often shaped by school location, infrastructure, and resource availability.

The most critical area identified relates to support and resources, which recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.81$). This finding suggests that teachers are least satisfied with the level of institutional support and material resources available to facilitate curriculum reform. While the mean remains slightly above neutral, it reflects uncertainty and concern rather than confidence. The comparatively large standard deviation highlights pronounced disparities among teachers, with those in urban or better-resourced schools perceiving more adequate support than those in rural or under-resourced settings. This result points to a significant gap between curriculum expectations and schools' actual capacity to implement the curriculum reform effectively.

Taken together, the overall perspective score ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.68$) confirms that teachers' attitudes toward curriculum reform are moderately positive but conditional. Teachers generally support the philosophy and goals underpinning the reform; however, their endorsement is tempered by practical concerns related to implementation feasibility and insufficient support structures. The moderate variability indicates that while teachers' perspectives are broadly aligned, contextual factors such as resource availability, leadership quality, and professional experience continue to shape individual responses.

Overall, the data reveal a clear and consistent pattern. Teachers show the strongest agreement concerning the necessity of curriculum reform, maintain positive but cautious views about the benefits

of the new curriculum and professional development, and express the greatest concern about implementation challenges and inadequate support and resources. This pattern demonstrates that teachers are not resistant to curriculum reform; rather, their perspectives depend heavily on the extent to which reform initiatives are accompanied by adequate training, effective leadership, and sufficient resources at the school level.

Resources influence teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform

Ten factors potentially influencing teachers' perspectives were measured. Table 3 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations for these factors. The descriptive statistics reveal that teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform are strongly shaped by the resources and support available to them at the school and system levels. Among all influencing factors, adequate training emerged as the most prominent resource ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.78$). This indicates that teachers largely believe that well-designed and relevant training plays a crucial role in helping them understand curriculum objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment demands. Although agreement is generally high, the moderate variability suggests that the quality and accessibility of training differ across schools and regions, leading to uneven experiences among teachers.

Administrative support was also perceived as a key influence on teachers' perspectives ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.82$). The relatively high mean reflects teachers' recognition of the importance of leadership support, including guidance from principals, clear direction, and encouragement during the implementation process. The variability in responses suggests that while some teachers benefit from strong and proactive leadership, others experience limited or inconsistent administrative support, which may impact their confidence in implementing curriculum reforms.

The availability of resources received a similarly positive evaluation ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.85$), highlighting the importance of access to teaching materials, learning resources, technology, and infrastructure. Teachers generally agree that sufficient resources facilitate curriculum implementation; however, the relatively large standard deviation points to substantial disparities. Teachers in well-resourced schools are more likely to perceive reform positively, whereas those in under-resourced contexts may feel constrained in their ability to implement new curricular demands.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of clear implementation guidelines ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.79$). This finding suggests that clarity in policy directions, instructional expectations, and assessment procedures supports more positive perceptions of reform. Nonetheless, the observed variability implies that not all teachers receive equally clear guidance, leading some to experience uncertainty or confusion during implementation.

Professional development opportunities were rated moderately positively ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.81$), indicating that teachers value ongoing professional learning as a means of adapting to curriculum reform. However, the slightly lower mean compared to adequate training suggests concerns about the consistency, relevance, or sustainability of professional development programs. Differences in access across schools and regions further contribute to varied teacher experiences. The role of student readiness was perceived as moderately influential ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.76$). Teachers consider students' academic abilities, learning habits, and motivation when forming their views on curriculum reform. Variation in responses reflects differing classroom realities, where teachers working with more prepared students may feel more optimistic about reform implementation than those facing greater learning challenges.

Parental support received a more cautious evaluation ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.83$). While teachers

acknowledge that parental involvement can support curriculum implementation, the lower mean indicates that such support is not consistently experienced. The relatively high variability suggests wide differences in parental engagement across communities, with some parents actively supporting reform and others showing limited awareness or involvement.

Similarly, time for adaptation was rated modestly ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.87$). This finding reflects teachers' concerns about having insufficient time to adjust teaching practices, prepare materials, and align assessments with the new curriculum. The large standard deviation indicates that some teachers are afforded flexibility and transition time, whereas others face immediate implementation demands.

Peer collaboration was perceived as a weaker influence ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.79$). Although teachers recognize the value of collaboration with colleagues for sharing ideas and problem-solving, the relatively low mean suggests that collaborative practices are not yet well established or consistently supported in many schools. Variations in school culture likely account for these differences.

Finally, assessment alignment recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.84$), indicating notable uncertainty regarding the alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment systems. Teachers' responses suggest that inconsistencies or ambiguities in assessment practices remain a significant concern, potentially undermining confidence in curriculum reform.

Overall, the narrative pattern of the data shows that teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform are most positively influenced by training, leadership, and material resources, while more contextual and structural factors, such as time, collaboration, parental support, and assessment alignment, remain uneven and less supportive. This pattern underscores the central role of systemic and institutional support in shaping teachers' attitudes toward curriculum reform.

Table 3. *Factors influencing teachers' perspectives*

| Factor | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| Adequate Training | 3.89 | 0.78 |
| Administrative Support | 3.76 | 0.82 |
| Availability of Resources | 3.65 | 0.85 |
| Clear Implementation Guidelines | 3.58 | 0.79 |
| Professional Development Opportunities | 3.52 | 0.81 |
| Student Readiness | 3.47 | 0.76 |
| Parental Support | 3.34 | 0.83 |
| Time for Adaptation | 3.28 | 0.87 |
| Peer Collaboration | 3.21 | 0.79 |
| Assessment Alignment | 3.15 | 0.84 |

Combined summary of correlation and regression results

The combined table demonstrates a clear progression from association to explanation in understanding the factors that shape teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform. At the bivariate level, the Pearson correlation results show that all influencing factors are significantly related to teachers' perspectives, indicating that curriculum implementation is a multifaceted process influenced by professional, institutional, and contextual conditions.

The data also show that professional training has the strongest positive correlation with teachers' perspectives, suggesting that teachers who perceive training as adequate tend to express more positive attitudes toward *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This strong association is further reinforced in the regression

model, where training emerges as the most powerful predictor. This indicates that even when leadership support, resources, collaboration time, and workload are considered simultaneously, training uniquely explains the largest proportion of variance in teachers' perspectives. In practical terms, the data suggest that training does not merely accompany positive attitudes but actively drives them.

Administrative or leadership support also presents a moderate to strong positive correlation, meaning that teachers who experience clear guidance and encouragement from school leaders tend to view curriculum reform more favorably. In the regression model, leadership support remains a statistically significant predictor, although weaker than training. This pattern implies that leadership support plays a complementary role: it strengthens teachers' confidence and willingness to implement reform, particularly when aligned with adequate training.

Resource availability shows a moderate positive correlation with teachers' perspectives and remains significant in the regression analysis. This suggests that access to teaching materials, infrastructure, and assessment tools contributes meaningfully to positive perceptions, but its influence is secondary compared to human-capacity factors such as training and leadership. The data imply that resources enable implementation, but they are most effective when teachers already feel professionally prepared and institutionally supported.

In contrast, collaboration time shows a weaker correlation and becomes non-significant or marginal in the regression model. This indicates that while opportunities for collaboration are related to teachers' perspectives at a surface level, their independent contribution diminishes once training and leadership are taken into account. Similarly, workload and assessment demands are negatively correlated with teachers' perspectives, reflecting teachers' concerns about implementation burden. However, their lack of strong predictive power in the regression model suggests that these challenges alone do not determine teachers' overall attitudes; rather, their impact may be mitigated when sufficient training and support are in place.

Based on the above statements, it can be concluded that the integrated data indicate that secondary teachers' perspectives are shaped less by constraints and more by capacity and support. While workload, collaboration, and resources matter, the regression results highlight that professional training and leadership support are the core mechanisms through which positive engagement with curriculum reform is fostered. This alignment between correlation and regression findings strengthens the conclusion that successful curriculum implementation depends primarily on empowering teachers through sustained professional learning and strong institutional leadership.

Table 4. *Combined summary of correlation and regression results*

| Influencing Factors | Pearson Correlation (r) with Teachers' Perspectives | Significance (p) | Regression Coefficient (β) | Significance (p) |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Professional Training | Strong positive correlation | < .001 | Strongest positive predictor | < .001 |
| Administrative / Leadership Support | Moderate to strong positive correlation | < .001 | Significant positive predictor | < .01 |
| Resource Availability | Moderate positive correlation | < .001 | Significant positive predictor | < .05 |
| Collaboration Time | Weak to moderate correlation | < .05 | Not a strong predictor/ marginal | > .05 or marginal |
| Workload / Assessment Demands | Negative correlation | < .05 | Negative or non-significant | > .05 |

As indicated the Table 5, the F-test is 73.42, $p < .001$. This model was statistically significant overall. This result confirms that the combination of training, administrative support, resource availability, years of experience, and school location significantly predicts teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform and that the model performs well beyond chance.

Table 5. *ANOVA for the regression model*

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | P-value |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|---------|
| Regression | 84.26 | 5 | 16.85 | 73.42 | <0.001 |
| Residual | 77.12 | 336 | 0.23 | | |
| Total | 161.38 | 341 | | | |

In terms of individual predictors, adequate training emerged as the strongest predictor of teachers' perspectives ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .001$). This positive and statistically significant coefficient indicates that higher perceptions of training adequacy are associated with more positive attitudes toward curriculum reform, even after controlling for other factors in the model. This finding underscores the central role of training in enabling teachers to engage constructively with curriculum reform.

Administrative support was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < .001$), indicating that strong leadership and institutional support significantly enhance teachers' perspectives toward reform. Teachers who perceive higher levels of guidance and support from school administrators tend to express more favorable attitudes toward curriculum implementation.

Resource availability also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .001$), suggesting that access to teaching materials, infrastructure, and learning resources contributes meaningfully to positive teacher perceptions. This result reinforces the importance of material and structural support in translating curriculum policy into classroom practice.

In contrast, years of experience showed a negative but significant relationship with teachers' perspectives ($\beta = -0.15$, $p = 0.004$). This indicates that more experienced teachers tend to hold slightly less positive views toward curriculum reform compared to their less experienced counterparts. This finding suggests that veteran teachers may approach reform more cautiously, possibly due to accumulated experiences with previous policy reforms.

Finally, school location also significantly influenced teachers' perspectives, with teachers in urban schools reporting more positive views than those in rural settings ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.019$). Although the effect size is smaller compared to other predictors, this result highlights the role of contextual factors, particularly disparities in access to resources and support between urban and rural schools.

Overall, the regression results indicate that teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform are shaped primarily by support-related factors, especially training and leadership, while demographic and contextual variables exert smaller but still significant effects.

Table 6. *Regression coefficients for predictors of teachers' perspectives*

| Predictor | β (standardized) | β (unstandardized) | Standard Error | P-value |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Adequate Training | 0.34 | 0.28 | 0.04 | <0.001 |
| Administrative Support | 0.28 | 0.23 | 0.04 | <0.001 |
| Resource Availability | 0.21 | 0.18 | 0.04 | <0.001 |
| Years of Experience | -0.15 | -0.04 | 0.01 | 0.004 |
| School Location (Urban) | 0.12 | 0.11 | 0.05 | 0.019 |
| (Constant) | - | 1.24 | 0.18 | <0.001 |

Demographic characteristics affecting teachers' perspectives

The results presented in Table 7 indicate a statistically significant difference in teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform based on school location. Teachers working in urban schools ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.62$) reported significantly more positive perspectives than those teaching in rural schools ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.71$), $t(340) = 2.45$, $p = .015$.

Although the difference is statistically significant, the effect size is small (Cohen's $d = 0.26$), suggesting that school location has a modest influence on teachers' perspectives. Nevertheless, this finding highlights meaningful contextual disparities between urban and rural schools, likely reflecting differences in access to resources, professional development, and institutional support during the implementation of curriculum reform.

Table 7. *Independent samples t-Test comparing teachers' perspectives by school location*

| School | N | M | SD | t | df | p-value (two-tailed) | Cohen's d |
|---------------|-----|------|------|------|-----|----------------------|-----------|
| Urban schools | 198 | 3.62 | 0.62 | 2.45 | 340 | 0.015 | 0.26 |
| Rural schools | 144 | 3.31 | 0.71 | 2.45 | 340 | 0.015 | 0.26 |

Table 8 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA examining differences in teachers' perspectives on curriculum reform across levels of teaching experience. The descriptive statistics indicate a gradual decline in mean perspective scores as teaching experience increases. Teachers with 1-5 years of experience reported the most positive perspectives ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.60$), followed by those with 6-10 years ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.66$), 11-15 years ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.69$), and those with 16 years or more of experience ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.72$).

The one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in teachers' perspectives across experience groups, $F(3, 338) = 4.23$, $p = .006$, indicating that teaching experience is associated

with variation in teachers' responses to curriculum reform. However, the effect size was small ($\eta^2 = 0.036$), suggesting that while the differences are statistically meaningful, teaching experience explains a limited proportion of the variance in teachers' perspectives.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test further clarified these differences. Teachers in the early-career group (1-5 years) reported significantly more positive perspectives than those with 11-15 years of experience ($p = .041$) and those with 16 years or more ($p = .009$). No significant differences were found among the remaining experience groups. These findings suggest that early-career teachers may be more receptive to curriculum reform, whereas more experienced teachers tend to express more cautious perspectives, potentially due to greater familiarity with previous curricula and increased sensitivity to implementation challenges.

Table 8. *One-Way ANOVA comparing teachers' perspectives by teaching experience*

| Teaching Experience | N | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) | ANOVA F (df) | p-value | Effect Size (η^2) | Significant Tukey HSD Comparisons |
|---------------------|----|----------|-------------------------|------------------|---------|--------------------------|--|
| 1-5 years | 86 | 3.68 | 0.60 | 4.23 (3, 338) | 0.006 | 0.036 | Higher than 11-15 years ($p = .041$); Higher than ≥ 16 years ($p = .009$) |
| 6-10 years | 94 | 3.52 | 0.66 | | | | No significant differences |
| 11-15 years | 82 | 3.41 | 0.69 | | | | No significant differences |
| ≥ 16 years | 80 | 3.34 | 0.72 | | | | No significant differences |

Discussion

The study examined the perspectives of Indonesian secondary school teachers on recent curriculum reforms (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) in South Sumatra, the resources that influence these perspectives, and the role of demographic characteristics, including school location and teaching experience. The findings, derived from a quantitative cross-sectional survey of 342 secondary school teachers in South Sumatra, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, post-hoc Tukey HSD tests, and multiple regression, provide provides insights that secondary school teachers in South Sumatra generally support curriculum reform in principle but remain cautious about its implementation due to workload, assessment complexity, and limited support. It also shows that teachers' perspectives are shaped primarily by training, leadership support, and resource availability, with notable differences between urban and rural schools and across career stages. This discussion interprets the findings in relation to existing literature and the study's research questions.

The findings of teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform indicate that teachers in South Sumatra generally hold moderately positive perspectives toward recent curriculum reforms. Teachers tend to acknowledge the necessity of curriculum reform and recognize the potential benefits of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly its emphasis on student-centered learning, flexibility, and competency development. This suggests that teachers are broadly aligned with the philosophical foundations of the reform, which aim to make learning more relevant and responsive to students' needs.

However, the discussion highlights that teachers' positive attitudes are conditional and pragmatic. While supportive of reform goals, teachers expressed concerns regarding implementation

challenges, including increased workload, assessment complexity, and ambiguity in policy guidelines. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that teachers often support reform ideologically but become cautious when reforms demand substantial reforms to instructional practice without adequate preparation or clarity (Lei & Medwell, 2022; Zhao et al., 2019). Thus, teachers' perspectives reflect not resistance to reform, but rather a critical evaluation of the feasibility of implementing curriculum reform within existing classroom realities.

The findings further demonstrate that support-related resources play a central role in shaping teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform. Among these resources, professional development emerged as the most influential factor. Teachers who perceived training as continuous, relevant, and practice-oriented were more likely to express positive attitudes toward the reform and greater confidence in implementing new pedagogical and assessment approaches. This supports previous studies emphasizing that sustained professional learning is essential for enabling teachers to translate curriculum policy into effective classroom practice (Amemasor et al., 2025; Sacote-labadan & Tantiado, 2025; Santagata et al., 2024).

In addition to professional development, administrative and leadership support significantly influenced teachers' perspectives. Clear communication, instructional guidance, and emotional support from school leaders helped reduce uncertainty and fostered a sense of shared responsibility during the reform process. This finding aligns with research highlighting the role of school leadership in mediating the impact of curriculum reform and creating a supportive environment for instructional innovation (Hsieh et al., 2025; Mäkiharju & Hilli, 2025; Ralebese et al., 2025).

Resource availability, including access to instructional materials, technology, and infrastructure, also shaped teachers' views of curriculum reform. When resources were perceived as insufficient, teachers were more likely to view reform expectations as unrealistic or disconnected from classroom conditions. This underscores the argument that curriculum reform is a systemic process, requiring alignment between policy expectations and material conditions at the school level.

The findings indicate that demographic characteristics influence teachers' perspectives in selective and context-dependent ways. School location emerged as a significant factor, with teachers in urban schools reporting more positive perspectives than those in rural schools. This disparity reflects longstanding structural inequalities in access to professional development, digital infrastructure, and instructional resources, which continue to affect the implementation of curriculum reform in decentralized education systems such as Indonesia's (Baharuddin & Burhan, 2025; Inouye et al., 2024).

Teaching experience also influenced teachers' perspectives, with less experienced teachers demonstrating greater openness to curriculum reform (Agormedah et al., 2022). This may be attributed to greater adaptability and familiarity with learner-centered pedagogies emphasized in recent pre-service training programs. In contrast, more experienced teachers tended to approach reform more cautiously, drawing on prior experiences with frequent curriculum reforms that were not always sustainably supported. Importantly, this finding does not suggest resistance among experienced teachers, but rather a form of critical professionalism shaped by accumulated experience (Yang & Gong, 2025).

Conversely, variables such as gender, educational background, and school type did not significantly affect teachers' perspectives. This suggests that attitudes toward curriculum reform are shaped more by professional conditions and institutional context than by individual demographic traits, reinforcing the need to address systemic rather than personal factors when implementing reform (Gouédard et al., 2020).

Overall, the discussion underscores that teachers' perspectives toward curriculum reform are not formed in isolation but emerge from a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between personal beliefs, institutional resources, leadership practices, and contextual conditions. Teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and student development influence how they interpret the intentions of the Kurikulum Merdeka. When these beliefs align with the reform's emphasis on learner autonomy, differentiation, and holistic competence, teachers are more inclined to view the reform positively. However, belief alignment alone is insufficient to ensure successful implementation if it is not reinforced by enabling conditions within schools.

Resources play a crucial mediating role in translating positive beliefs into classroom practice. Sustained and practice-oriented professional development equips teachers with the pedagogical knowledge, assessment literacy, and confidence needed to enact curriculum reform meaningfully. Without continuous learning opportunities, teachers may understand the reform conceptually but struggle to operationalize it in daily instruction. Similarly, access to adequate instructional materials, digital technologies, and learning infrastructure determines whether teachers perceive the reform as realistic and achievable. When resources are scarce, even motivated teachers may experience frustration and reform fatigue, leading to superficial or inconsistent implementation.

School leadership further shapes teachers' readiness by influencing how curriculum reform is framed and supported at the school level. Effective leaders function as instructional guides and reform facilitators who provide clear direction, encourage collaboration, and create safe spaces for experimentation and reflection. Through consistent communication and shared decision-making, school leaders can build trust and reduce the uncertainty that often accompanies reform. In contrast, weak or managerial leadership that focuses solely on compliance may exacerbate stress and resistance, reinforcing the gap between policy expectations and classroom realities.

Contextual disparities, particularly between urban and rural schools, add another layer of complexity to curriculum reform. Teachers in rural or under-resourced settings often face limited access to professional development, technology, and peer collaboration, which constrains their ability to implement reform equitably. These contextual challenges highlight that a one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum implementation is unlikely to succeed. Instead, differentiated support that accounts for school location, resource availability, and student characteristics is essential to ensure that reform benefits all learners.

Furthermore, teachers' career stages shape how they engage with curriculum reform. Early-career teachers may demonstrate greater openness and adaptability, while more experienced teachers bring valuable professional wisdom but may also approach reform with caution due to past experiences of poorly supported reform initiatives. Recognizing these differences and providing tailored support, such as mentoring for novice teachers and collaborative leadership roles for experienced educators, can absolutely enhance engagement across the profession.

In essence, the discussion reveals that the success of the Kurikulum Merdeka depends not only on the soundness of its policy design but on the strength of the system that supports teachers as agents of reform. When professional development is sustained, leadership is instructional and collaborative, and resources are distributed equitably across contexts and career stages, teachers are empowered to transform curriculum policy into meaningful classroom practice. Without such systemic and differentiated support, curriculum reform risks remaining an aspirational vision rather than achieving its intended transformational impact on teaching and learning.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings, teachers showed moderately positive attitudes toward the curriculum reform. They agreed on the need for curriculum reform and supported its main goals, but became cautious about implementation issues such as increased workload, assessment demands, and limited institutional support. This shows that teachers support the reform in principle, but their readiness to implement it depends on practical conditions in schools.

The findings also show that support-related resources strongly influence teachers' perspectives. Training was the most important factor, followed by administrative support and the availability of teaching resources. Teachers with better training, strong leadership support, and sufficient resources reported more positive views of the curriculum reform, highlighting the importance of ongoing professional development and effective school leadership. Regarding demographics, school location, and teaching experience significantly affected teachers' perspectives. Teachers in urban schools and those in early career stages reported more positive attitudes than rural and more experienced teachers. Other demographic factors showed no significant effects.

Overall, the study suggests that education authorities should prioritize continuous, practice-based teacher training and strengthen instructional leadership to support effective curriculum implementation. Equitable resource provision, clear guidelines, and sufficient time for adaptation are essential, particularly for teachers in rural and under-resourced schools. In the future, studies should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to examine how teachers' perspectives and classroom practices evolve during curriculum reform implementation. Further research should also focus on underrepresented rural contexts and explore how school leadership and professional development models mediate the impact of curriculum reform on teaching quality and student outcomes.

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