

**STUDENTS' FIQH LEARNING OUTCOMES DURING CURRICULUM
TRANSITION: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY**

JURNAL



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**PROGRAM STUDI PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM
FAKULTAS STUDI ISLAM DAN PERADABAN
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURABAYA
2025/2026**

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**Diajukan Kepada Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya
Untuk Memenuhi Salah Satu Persyaratan Dalam Memperoleh Gelar
Sarjana Pendidikan Agama Islam (S.Pd) Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam**



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UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURABAYA**

2026

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Nama : Khusnul Ma'arif
NIM : 20221550005
Program Studi : Pendidikan Agama Islam
Judul Jurnal : Students' Fiqh Learning Outcomes During Curriculum Transition: A Longitudinal Study

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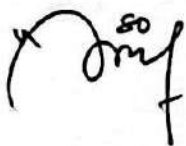
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Nama : Khusrul Ma'arif
NIM : 20221550005
Judul : Students' Fiqh Learning Outcomes During Curriculum Transition: A Longitudinal Study

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Artikel jurnal yang disusun oleh:

Nama : Khusnul Ma'arif
NIM : 20221550005
Judul : Students' Fiqh Learning Outcomes During Curriculum Transition: A Longitudinal Study

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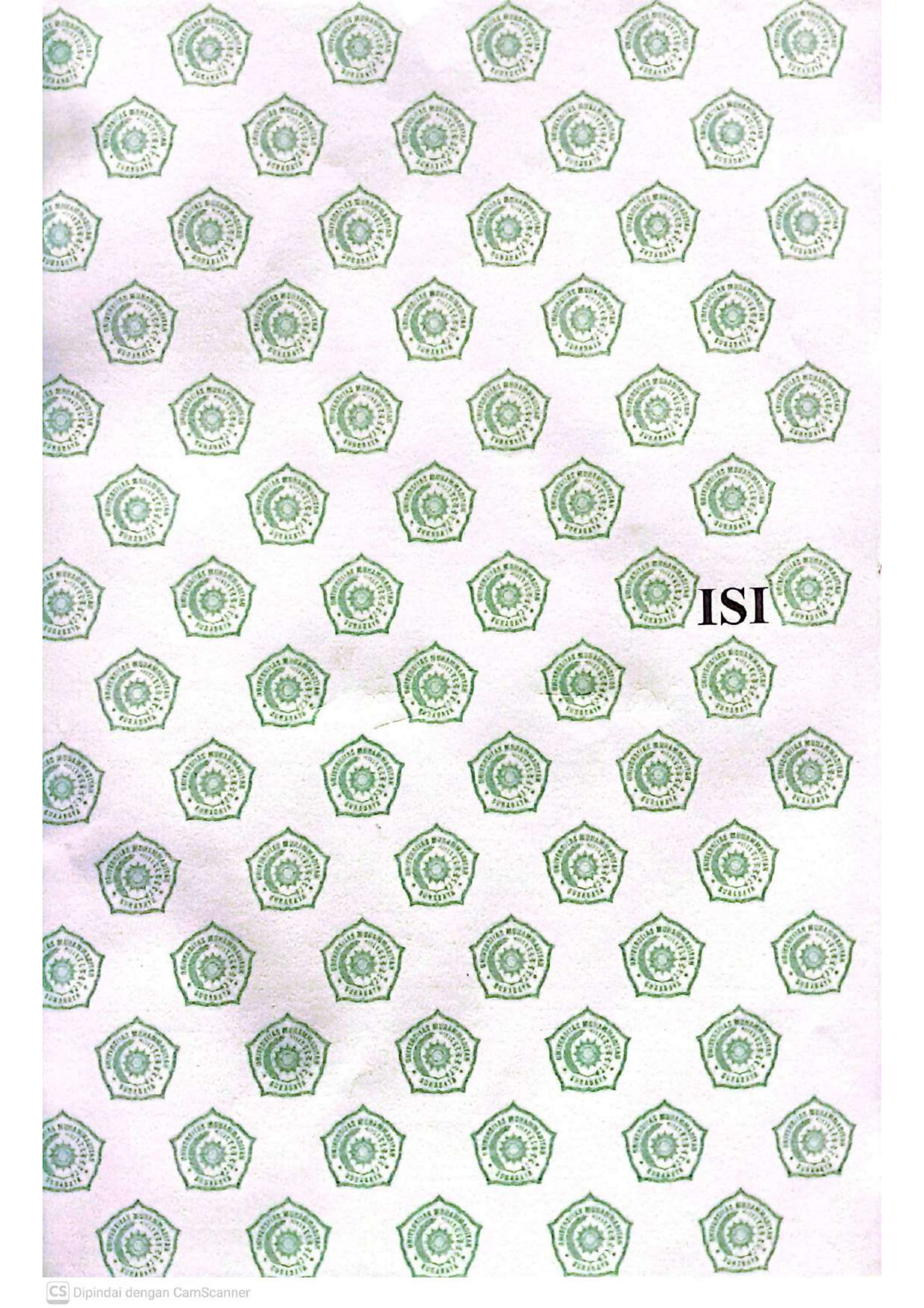
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Students' Fiqh Learning Outcomes During Curriculum Transition: A Longitudinal Study

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum transition represents a dynamic aspect of educational policy that can influence classroom practices and students' learning outcomes. This study examines changes in students' fiqh learning outcomes during the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung. A quantitative longitudinal before-after design was employed, involving the same cohort of students ($N = 21$). Data were obtained from fiqh report grades in the even semester of Grade 3 under the 2013 Curriculum (2024/2025) and the even semester of Grade 4 under the Merdeka Curriculum (2025/2026). Descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test were applied for analysis. The results show an increase in the mean fiqh score from 77.71 to 81.81, with a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$) and a large effect size ($r = 0.72$). These findings indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum, supported by teaching modules, may be associated with improved fiqh learning outcomes, while acknowledging the influence of assessment practices and contextual factors.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 13 Mar 2025

Revised: 6 Jul 2025

Accepted: 13 Jul 2025

Available online: 1 Aug 2025

Publish: 29 Dec 2025

Keywords:

2013 Curriculum; Fiqh;
Learning outcomes;
Longitudinal; Merdeka
Curriculum

Open access

Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development is a peer-reviewed open-access journal

ABSTRAK

Transisi kurikulum merupakan bagian dari dinamika kebijakan pendidikan yang dapat memengaruhi praktik pembelajaran di kelas dan hasil belajar siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji perubahan hasil belajar fiqh siswa selama transisi dari Kurikulum 2013 ke Kurikulum Merdeka di MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain longitudinal sebelum-sesudah yang melibatkan kelompok siswa yang sama ($N = 21$). Data diperoleh dari nilai rapor mata pelajaran Fiqh pada semester genap kelas III yang menggunakan Kurikulum 2013 (tahun ajaran 2024/2025) dan semester genap kelas IV yang menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka (tahun ajaran 2025/2026). Analisis data meliputi statistik deskriptif, uji normalitas Shapiro-Wilk, dan uji Wilcoxon signed-rank. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan nilai rata-rata fiqh dari 77,71 menjadi 81,81, dengan perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik ($p = 0,001$) serta ukuran efek yang besar ($r = 0,72$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka, yang didukung oleh penggunaan modul ajar, berpotensi terkait dengan peningkatan hasil belajar fiqh, dengan tetap mempertimbangkan praktik penilaian dan faktor kontekstual.

Kata Kunci: kurikulum 2013; fiqh; hasil belajar; longitudinal; kurikulum merdeka

How to cite (APA 7)

Ma'arif, K., Asrori, & Puspitasari, I. (2026). Students' fiqh learning outcomes during curriculum transition: A longitudinal study. *Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development*, 1(2), xx-xx

Peer review

This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum change is part of the dynamic nature of educational policy, aimed at responding to the demands of 21st-century competencies while addressing barriers encountered in the implementation of previous curricula. In the Indonesian context, the transition from the 2013 curriculum (K13) to the Merdeka Curriculum has been framed as an effort to increase learning flexibility, strengthen student-centred pedagogy, and promote more adaptive learning strategies that respond to diverse learner needs (Febrianto et al., 2025; Yafie et al., 2024). Nevertheless, curriculum implementation at the school level remains constrained by multiple challenges, ranging from institutional readiness and stakeholder acceptance to classroom teaching and assessment practices (Warman., Suryaningsi., & Mulawarman, 2021). In addition, school leaders' experiences in implementing policy changes indicate that educational reforms are complex processes requiring organisational preparedness and continuous adaptation (Tshabalala & Nthontho, 2024).

Given the complexity of educational policy change, curriculum implementation should be supported by evidence-based evaluation mechanisms so that decisions are not solely grounded in intuition but informed by empirical learning achievement data. Evidence-based decision-making highlights the importance of reliable data as the foundation for policy formulation and the strengthening of instructional practices (Kurien et al., 2022; Owen et al., 2022). Indeed, the development of a culture of evidence-based educational evaluation is increasingly recognised as essential to ensure that policy shifts lead to measurable improvements in student learning outcomes (Sánchez Mendiola, 2025).

Beyond evidence-based evaluation, curriculum reform is also closely tied to the growing demand for adaptive learning that accommodates learner diversity. Adaptive learning may be understood as a pedagogical strategy that adjusts learning processes, materials, and support based on students' needs and characteristics, including efforts to reduce achievement gaps (Gebhardt & Blake, 2024). Moreover, adaptive learning aligns with inclusive education agendas, particularly in responding to variations in students' abilities and backgrounds across diverse educational settings (Barbu et al., 2025; Siswandari et al., 2025). Thus, curriculum transition is not merely about revising policy documents but also about school readiness to implement adaptive learning practices that meaningfully address students' needs.

Empirical studies on K13 suggest that curriculum implementation may encounter obstacles in both policy enactment and classroom practice (Warman et al., 2021). Several studies also highlight the need for systematic evaluation of curriculum policies and learning achievements to ensure coherence between intended learning objectives and actual implementation in schools (Darwis et al., 2022; Gupta & Dutta, 2020). Meanwhile, research on the Merdeka Curriculum has expanded rapidly; however, much of the existing literature continues to focus on implementation issues, stakeholder acceptance, and institutional readiness—for example, implementation strategies and challenges in elementary schools (Febrianto et al., 2025), curriculum acceptance in specific regions, and analyses of perceptions and readiness across institutional contexts (Maylawati et al., 2025; Setyaningsih et al., 2024). Studies linking curriculum transition

to student learning outcomes are also emerging, yet most have been conducted in broader contexts and have not specifically examined religious subjects in madrasah settings (Rahmah et al., 2024).

Within the learning outcomes literature, student achievement is widely recognised as a key indicator in policy documents and educational reforms, serving as a basis for evaluating the attainment of learning objectives in curriculum change contexts (Prøitz, T. S., & Nordin, 2020). Learning outcomes evaluation enables more measurable assessments of educational attainment, including analyses across various instructional designs (Kermek & Kaniški, 2022). Furthermore, outcome-based assessment can be developed with greater precision to examine the implementation of outcome-oriented curricula, thereby supporting data-driven decision-making at the school level (Roza et al., 2025). The relationship between assessment, feedback, and student achievement is also considered essential in ensuring that curriculum reforms contribute to more meaningful learning experiences (Lee & Chiu, 2022). Therefore, examining changes in learning outcomes during curriculum transition is relevant to understand the extent to which curriculum policy changes are aligned with students' learning achievements.

In the context of Islamic education, *fiqh* is a core subject that plays a central role in shaping students' understanding of Islamic legal principles and guiding their daily religious practices. *Fiqh* learning is not merely concerned with the acquisition of conceptual knowledge but also with the development of practical and contextual understanding of Islamic law in everyday life. Previous studies have highlighted that *fiqh* instruction can be enhanced through various pedagogical approaches, including the use of digital media to increase student engagement (Oktaviani, 2023) and the integration of critical and contextual learning strategies to strengthen students' reasoning and application skills (Sapiudin et al., 2026). In addition, *fiqh* education is closely related to broader social and ethical dimensions, as it contributes to the development of moderate, inclusive, and context-sensitive Islamic perspectives (Hasbiyallah & Busra Nur Duran, 2024). Therefore, examining *fiqh* learning outcomes within the context of curriculum transition is particularly relevant, as changes in curriculum policy may influence not only students' academic achievement but also their practical understanding of religious values.

Based on the state of the art, it can be inferred that studies on curriculum transition in Indonesia remain dominated by research focusing on implementation, perceptions, and readiness. In contrast, studies that examine changes in learning outcomes using a longitudinal approach on the same students, particularly within madrasah settings and specifically in the *fiqh* subject, remain relatively limited. The scientific novelty of this article lies in (1) its focus on *fiqh* learning outcomes in an Islamic elementary school context, which remains underexplored within the K13–Merdeka Curriculum transition discourse, and (2) its use of a longitudinal before–after design involving the same student cohort to examine learning outcome changes during curriculum transition.

Based on this novelty, the central research problem addressed in this study is whether there is a change in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes during the transition from K13 to the Merdeka Curriculum. Operationally, the research questions are formulated as

follows: (1) What is the profile of students' *fiqh* learning outcomes in the even semester of Grade 3 (K13) and the even semester of Grade 4 (Merdeka Curriculum)? and (2) Is there a statistically significant difference in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes between the two periods?

This study aims to analyse changes in the *fiqh* learning outcomes of students at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung in the even semester before and after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and to provide empirical reflections for educational institutions in optimising curriculum transition processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum Transition and Implementation Challenges at the School Level

Curriculum change is essentially a policy strategy aimed at aligning education with evolving competency demands; however, its implementation frequently encounters challenges at the school level. In the context of the 2013 curriculum (K13), implementation barriers may arise from policy design, classroom enactment, and the readiness of teachers and schools to translate curriculum documents into instructional practice (Warman et al., 2021). At the level of instructional planning, curriculum policy change also requires coherence among learning objectives, outcomes, and measurable performance indicators to ensure that implementation does not remain limited to documentation alone (Gupta & Dutta, 2020). Moreover, school leaders' experiences in responding to educational policy change demonstrate that implementation processes are complex and require organisational readiness as well as continuous adaptation (Tshabalala & Nthontho, 2024).

As educational policy has shifted toward the Merdeka Curriculum, studies increasingly highlight that its implementation demands varying degrees of readiness across educational institutions. Research in primary education indicates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum involves specific strategies, challenges, and impacts that require systemic support and school-level adaptation (Febrianto et al., 2025). In terms of policy acceptance, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is also linked to regional stakeholder readiness and acceptance, which may influence the consistency of classroom enactment (Asrori, A., & Saputro, 2025; Setyaningsih et al., 2024). In addition, research on curriculum governance suggests that implementation quality is shaped by curriculum management at the school level, including the ability to design instruction, manage resources, and conduct continuous evaluation (Maisyaroh et al., 2024). In Islamic educational contexts, the readiness of Islamic schools to adopt the Merdeka Curriculum has also gained attention, as it requires adaptation in instructional tools, teacher capacity, and curriculum management (Hendawi et al., 2024; Maylawati et al., 2025).

Therefore, the curriculum transition from K13 to the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic elementary schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*) may produce different patterns of learning

achievement, not solely because of the curriculum itself but also due to implementation readiness, classroom practices, and school governance.

Learning Outcomes as an Indicator in Curriculum Policy Change

Learning outcomes are a key concept used to assess the attainment of learning objectives in educational evaluation contexts. In curriculum and policy research, learning outcomes are understood as an essential element that connects the formulation of learning goals with assessment strategies and evidence of student achievement (Prøitz, T. S., & Nordin, 2020). Learning outcomes assessment is increasingly emphasised across outcome-based curriculum models, as it provides a foundation for data-driven decision-making and continuous instructional improvement (Roza et al., 2025). Accordingly, examining learning outcomes during curriculum transition is important to determine whether policy change is accompanied by meaningful changes in student achievement.

The literature also underscores the need for learning outcomes to be clearly defined, measurable, and consistently aligned with assessment and feedback processes. Analyses of learning outcomes across various instructional designs suggest that outcomes should be formulated with specificity and assessed through relevant measures in order to ensure reliable interpretations of student achievement (Kermek & Kaniški, 2022; Zakiuddin et al., 2025). In addition, learning outcomes evaluation is associated with learning engagement and students' psychological factors, which may influence the consistency of achievement results; thus, the interpretation of learning outcomes should be approached contextually (Peng et al., 2024; Rattanayium et al., 2023).

In this study, student learning outcomes (measured using report card scores) may be positioned as an empirical indicator for examining changes in achievement during curriculum transition. However, interpretation should be made with caution, as learning outcomes are influenced by curriculum policy, instructional practice, and assessment processes.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Their Relationship with Learning Outcomes

Several studies have attempted to connect curriculum policy and learning achievement, although the contexts and research designs vary. In the Indonesian curriculum transition discourse, evidence suggests that both the 2013 curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum influence teachers' practices and student learning outcomes; however, these impacts should be interpreted in relation to implementation readiness, systemic factors, and broader school contexts (Rahmah et al., 2024). Curriculum evaluation research also indicates that subject-specific implementation may be assessed using approaches that consider regional variation and local context (Darwis et al., 2022). Similarly, studies on Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules demonstrate that instructional resources developed in alignment with contextual needs can contribute to improved learning outcomes, reinforcing the mediating role of instructional design in linking curriculum policy and student achievement (Salmia et al., 2024).

Furthermore, research on differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum highlights adaptive instructional strategies as a key implementation focus for responding to diverse student needs (Hati et al., 2025). Hence, the influence of curriculum reform on learning outcomes should not be viewed as a direct relationship but rather as one mediated by instructional design quality, teaching resources, and classroom practices (Febrianto et al., 2025).

Within learning outcomes research, the relationship between curriculum and achievement is also shaped by assessment practices. Effective learning outcomes assessment requires structured and consistent systems that are integrated with learning objectives, allowing achievement to be captured more validly and reliably (Alyasin et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2022). Moreover, outcomes assessment is not merely a technical process of assigning grades but an evaluation system that involves various stakeholders and has consequences for educational quality (Albeladi, 2022). Therefore, the use of report card scores in research should be regarded as a practical and authentic indicator of learning outcomes, while acknowledging limitations due to potential variation in teachers' grading standards and classroom assessment dynamics (Owan et al., 2023).

In addition to assessment, learning outcomes are influenced by student engagement and the interaction between learning behaviour and learning environments. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that learning behaviour and learning environments dynamically interact in shaping engagement and achievement, suggesting that effective instruction requires sustained strategies to enhance student engagement (Li & Xue, 2023). In this regard, systematically designed engagement practices may serve as a driver for skill enhancement and learning achievement (Sharma et al., 2025). Evidence also shows that discovery-based learning, cooperative learning, and problem-based learning approaches enhance communication and collaboration skills as well as learning outcomes, underscoring instructional design as a key mediator between curriculum policy and student achievement (Ningsih et al., 2025).

Consequently, learning outcome changes during curriculum transition are more appropriately understood as the result of a complex interaction among policy reform, implementation processes, instructional practices, and assessment systems, rather than a simplistic claim that "curriculum A is better than curriculum B."

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a longitudinal before–after design (within-subject design). A longitudinal design was selected because it enables the researcher to observe changes in learning outcomes within the same participants across two different time periods, thereby controlling inter-individual variation more effectively than between-group designs. This approach is considered appropriate for examining shifts in students' learning outcomes during curriculum transition without implementing direct experimental intervention.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung, Kepohbaru District, Bojonegoro Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The participants consisted

of the entire 2022 student cohort, comprising 21 students. In the even semester of Grade 3, the students followed instruction under the 2013 curriculum (K13), whereas in the even semester of Grade 4 they were taught using the Merdeka Curriculum. Accordingly, all participants experienced curriculum transition directly within the same educational setting and in a continuous learning context.

The research data were secondary data in the form of report card scores for the *fiqh* subject in the even semester of Grade 3 and the even semester of Grade 4. Report card scores were used as an indicator of learning outcomes because they represent students' achievement derived from teachers' continuous assessment processes throughout a semester. The use of report card data also enables an authentic analysis of learning outcome changes within a natural classroom context.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to provide an overall profile of students' learning outcomes in both periods. Second, a normality test was conducted on the difference scores using the Shapiro–Wilk test, which is recommended for small sample sizes ($n < 50$) due to its sensitivity in detecting deviations from normal distribution (Hanusz & Tarasińska, 2015; Prabhaker et al., 2017). Third, if the difference scores were normally distributed, the analysis proceeded with a paired-samples t-test. Conversely, if the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied as a non-parametric alternative suitable for within-subject designs with limited sample sizes.

The findings were interpreted cautiously by considering the curriculum transition context and institutional characteristics. This study was not intended to establish causal superiority between curricula; rather, it aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding changes in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes during the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results demonstrate a clear improvement in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes following the transition from the 2013 curriculum (K13) to the Merdeka Curriculum. As presented in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Mean Difference of Students' *Fiqh* Scores

Curriculum	Grade	Semester	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
2013 Curriculum (K13)	Grade 3	Even Semester	N	77.71	6.14	Ø
Merdeka Curriculum	Grade 4	Even Semester	N	81.81	2.89	4.10

Descriptive statistics indicate that during the even semester of Grade 3 under the K13 framework, students achieved a mean score of 77.71 with a standard deviation of 6.14. This level of dispersion suggests variability in students' mastery of *fiqh* competencies. In contrast, in the even semester of Grade 4 under the Merdeka Curriculum, the mean score

increased to 81.81, while the standard deviation decreased to 2.89, indicating not only higher achievement but also more consistent learning outcomes across students. The calculated mean difference of 4.10 points reflects a substantive improvement during the curriculum transition period. Prior to inferential analysis, the normality of the difference scores was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. As shown in table 2.

Table 2. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test of Difference Scores

Variable	Test	W	Df	P value	Conclusion
Difference in <i>Fiqh</i> Scores	Shapiro Wilk	0.821	N	0.001	Not normal

The test results indicated that the data were not normally distributed ($W = 0.821$, $p = 0.001$). Given this violation of the normality assumption, a non-parametric statistical test was selected for further analysis. Consequently, differences in students' learning outcomes between the two instructional periods were examined using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The results, summarised in table 3.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Test	N (Pairs)	Test Statistic (W)	P value	Decision
Wilcoxon Signed Rank	N	18.00	0.001	Significant

Revealed a statistically significant difference in *fiqh* achievement between the K13 and Merdeka Curriculum periods ($W = 18.00$, $p = 0.001$). These findings confirm that the observed improvement in students' scores was statistically meaningful. To evaluate the magnitude of the observed difference, an effect size analysis was conducted. As reported in table 4.

Table 4. Effect Size Calculation and Interpretation

Statistic	Value
Effect Size (r)	0.72
Magnitude	Large
Interpretation	Substantial educational impact

The effect size was large ($r = 0.72$), indicating that the improvement in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes was not only statistically significant but also educationally substantial. This large effect size suggests that the Merdeka Curriculum exerted a strong positive influence on students' learning, potentially attributable to its learner-centered approach, flexibility in instructional design, and emphasis on contextual understanding. Taken together, the descriptive, inferential, and effect size analyses provide robust empirical evidence that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum led to a significant and meaningful enhancement of *fiqh* learning outcomes at the elementary school level.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate an improvement in the *fiqh* learning outcomes of the 2022 student cohort following the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum. The increase in mean scores from 77.71 in Grade 3 to 81.81 in Grade 4,

accompanied by a statistically significant Wilcoxon test result ($p = 0.001$) and a large effect size ($r = 0.72$), indicates that curriculum transition at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung was associated with a meaningful enhancement in student achievement, both statistically and practically.

This improvement may be interpreted from the perspective that the Merdeka Curriculum promotes more flexible and adaptive learning approaches, providing greater opportunities for differentiated instruction aligned with students' diverse needs. Previous studies have reported that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary education—particularly through strengthened differentiation and flexible instructional design—can support improved learning processes and student outcomes (Febrianto et al., 2025; Hati et al., 2025). Accordingly, the observed increase in learning outcomes may reflect the benefits of more responsive instructional strategies that better accommodate learner diversity within the classroom context.

In the specific context of *fiqh* learning, the observed improvement may also be associated with the distinctive characteristics of *fiqh* as a subject that integrates conceptual understanding with practical application in students' daily lives. *Fiqh* instruction has increasingly been oriented toward contextual and student-centred approaches, including the use of interactive media and real-life problem-solving to enhance engagement and comprehension (Oktaviani, 2023; Sapiudin et al., 2026). In addition, contemporary developments in *fiqh* education emphasise the importance of substantive understanding, critical reasoning, and contextual interpretation of Islamic law, rather than rote memorisation (Anshori, 2025; Firdaus, 2020). Such characteristics are highly compatible with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritises flexibility, contextual learning, and student autonomy. Furthermore, *fiqh* learning is closely related to the formation of moderate and inclusive religious perspectives, which are increasingly emphasised in Islamic education (Hasbiyallah & Busra Nur Duran, 2024). Therefore, the improvement in *fiqh* learning outcomes identified in this study may not only reflect general instructional changes but also indicate that *fiqh* as a subject is particularly responsive to more adaptive and contextualised learning approaches promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum.

At the same time, these findings should be understood within the broader framework that curriculum change extends beyond policy documents to include curriculum management, teacher readiness, and school governance in instructional and assessment practices. Prior research has emphasised that curriculum implementation quality is strongly influenced by school-level curriculum management, including the capacity to design instructional resources, manage educational inputs, and conduct continuous evaluation (Maisyaroh et al., 2024). In addition, regional acceptance of curriculum policy has been shown to affect the consistency of classroom implementation (Setyaningsih et al., 2024). Thus, the improvement in *fiqh* learning outcomes observed in this study may also indicate adequate organisational readiness and policy acceptance at the school level during the curriculum transition.

From a curriculum evaluation perspective, learning outcomes serve as a key empirical indicator for assessing the attainment of instructional objectives within policy reform

contexts. Learning outcomes function as a critical link between curriculum policy and the evaluation of student achievement (Prøitz, T. S., & Nordin, 2020). Other studies further argue that learning outcomes assessment should be increasingly precise in order to capture the quality of outcome-based curriculum implementation (Roza et al., 2025). In this study, the use of report card scores as an indicator of learning outcomes provides an authentic representation of students' semester-long achievement, allowing score changes to be interpreted as reflections of instructional processes, assessment practices, and feedback mechanisms implemented by teachers.

The present findings are consistent with previous research indicating that curriculum policy changes in Indonesia may influence both teachers' practices and students' learning outcomes, although such effects are highly contextual and dependent on implementation quality and school readiness (Rahmah et al., 2024). Moreover, studies on instructional resources within the Merdeka Curriculum suggest that contextually appropriate teaching modules have the potential to enhance learning outcomes (Salmia et al., 2024). In this sense, the improvement in *fiqh* learning outcomes identified in this study may be related to adjustments in instructional materials and learning strategies that were more relevant and meaningful for students.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. First, the study relied on report card scores as indicators of learning outcomes, which are inherently influenced by teachers' grading standards and classroom assessment dynamics. Second, the study was conducted in a single institution and involved only one student cohort, limiting the generalisability of the results. Third, improvements in learning outcomes may also be influenced by students' developmental progression from Grade 3 to Grade 4, prior learning experiences, and adaptation to higher grade levels. However, the longitudinal design involving the same participants strengthens the findings by controlling inter-individual variability, making the observed score changes a more reliable reflection of learning outcome dynamics during curriculum transition.

Overall, the findings support the argument that the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum represents more than an administrative change. When supported by adequate implementation readiness, effective curriculum management, and consistent instructional and assessment practices, curriculum transition may be associated with positive changes in student learning outcomes.

In the context of MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum was accompanied by the use of teaching modules as instructional tools. These modules may have contributed to improved learning outcomes by providing more operational and flexible instructional structures compared to traditional teaching resources. Teaching modules can assist teachers in aligning learning objectives, activities, and assessments more systematically, thereby promoting greater instructional consistency and measurability. This interpretation aligns with previous findings indicating that the effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum implementation in elementary education is strongly influenced by instructional resources and the quality of teachers' instructional planning (Febrianto et al., 2025). Furthermore, research on the effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules suggests that contextually designed instructional materials can

positively impact student learning outcomes (Salmia et al., 2024). Although no P5 project implementation was identified in this study, the observed improvement in learning outcomes may still be attributed to strengthened instructional planning and evaluation based on teaching modules, which facilitated more structured and supportive learning processes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a difference in the *fiqh* learning outcomes of the 2022 student cohort before and after the curriculum transition from the 2013 Curriculum (even semester of Grade 3, 2024/2025) to the Merdeka Curriculum (even semester of Grade 4, 2025/2026) at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$) with a large effect size ($r = 0.72$), suggesting that the curriculum transition was associated with a meaningful improvement in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes. The findings imply that strengthening instructional planning and optimising the use of teaching modules should remain key strategies in supporting curriculum transition at madrasah settings. Future studies are recommended to expand research contexts and incorporate broader evaluation indicators (e.g., standardised assessments or classroom process data) in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of curriculum transition on student achievement.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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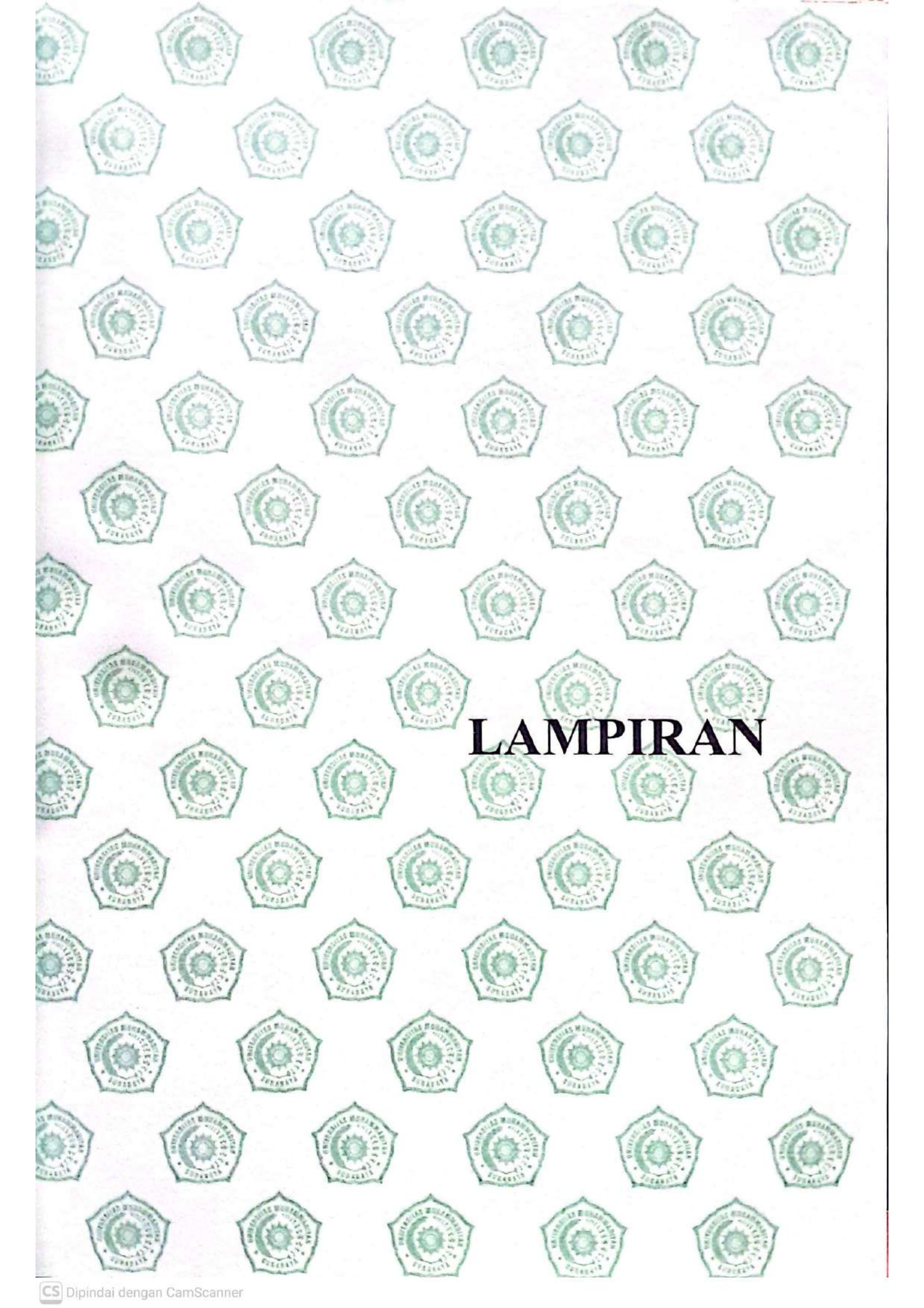
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has been endorsed by Language Center of Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya for further approval by the examining committee of the faculty.

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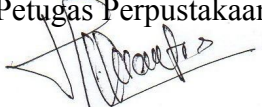
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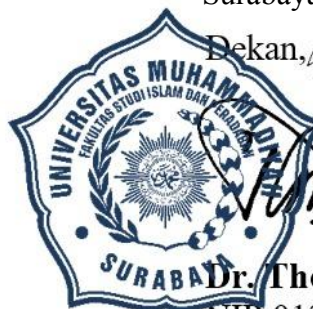
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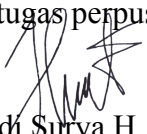
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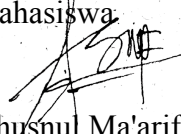
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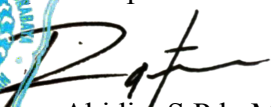
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Word count: 6647

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Students' Fiqh Learning Outcomes During Curriculum Transition: A Longitudinal Study

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum transition represents a dynamic aspect of educational policy that can influence classroom practices and students' learning outcomes. This study examines changes in students' fiqh learning outcomes during the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung. A quantitative longitudinal before-after design was employed, involving the same cohort of students (N = 21). Data were obtained from fiqh report grades in the even semester of Grade 3 under the 2013 Curriculum (2024/2025) and the even semester of Grade 4 under the Merdeka Curriculum (2025/2026). Descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test were applied for analysis. The results show an increase in the mean fiqh score from 77.71 to 81.81, with a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$) and a large effect size ($r = 0.72$). These findings indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum, supported by teaching modules, may be associated with improved fiqh learning outcomes, while acknowledging the influence of assessment practices and contextual factors.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 13 Mar 2025

Revised: 6 Jul 2025

Accepted: 13 Jul 2025

Available online: 1 Aug 2025

Publish: 29 Dec 2025

Keywords:

2013 Curriculum; Fiqh; Learning outcomes; Longitudinal; Merdeka Curriculum

Open access

Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development is a peer-reviewed open-access journal

ABSTRAK

Transisi kurikulum merupakan bagian dari dinamika kebijakan pendidikan yang dapat memengaruhi praktik pembelajaran di kelas dan hasil belajar siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji perubahan hasil belajar fiqh siswa selama transisi dari Kurikulum 2013 ke Kurikulum Merdeka di MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain longitudinal sebelum-sesudah yang melibatkan kelompok siswa yang sama (N = 21). Data diperoleh dari nilai rapor mata pelajaran Fiqh pada semester genap kelas III yang menggunakan Kurikulum 2013 (tahun ajaran 2024/2025) dan semester genap kelas IV yang menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka (tahun ajaran 2025/2026). Analisis data meliputi statistik deskriptif, uji normalitas Shapiro-Wilk, dan uji Wilcoxon signed-rank. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan nilai rata-rata fiqh dari 77,71 menjadi 81,81, dengan perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik ($p = 0,001$) serta ukuran efek yang besar ($r = 0,72$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka, yang didukung oleh penggunaan modul ajar, berpotensi terkait dengan peningkatan hasil belajar fiqh, dengan tetap mempertimbangkan praktik penilaian dan faktor kontekstual.

Kata Kunci: kurikulum 2013; fiqh; hasil belajar; longitudinal; kurikulum merdeka

How to cite (APA 7)

Ma'arif, K., Asrori, & Puspitasari, I. (2026). Students' fiqh learning outcomes during curriculum transition: A longitudinal study. *Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development*, 1(2), xx-xx

Peer review

This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum change is part of the dynamic nature of educational policy, aimed at responding to the demands of 21st-century competencies while addressing barriers encountered in the implementation of previous curricula. In the Indonesian context, the transition from the 2013 curriculum (K13) to the Merdeka Curriculum has been framed as an effort to increase learning flexibility, strengthen student-centred pedagogy, and promote more adaptive learning strategies that respond to diverse learner needs (Febrianto et al., 2025; Yafie et al., 2024). Nevertheless, curriculum implementation at the school level remains constrained by multiple challenges, ranging from institutional readiness and stakeholder acceptance to classroom teaching and assessment practices (Warman., Suryaningsi., & Mulawarman, 2021). In addition, school leaders' experiences in implementing policy changes indicate that educational reforms are complex processes requiring organisational preparedness and continuous adaptation (Tshabalala & Nthontho, 2024).

Given the complexity of educational policy change, curriculum implementation should be supported by evidence-based evaluation mechanisms so that decisions are not solely grounded in intuition but informed by empirical learning achievement data. Evidence-based decision-making highlights the importance of reliable data as the foundation for policy formulation and the strengthening of instructional practices (Kurien et al., 2022; Owen et al., 2022). Indeed, the development of a culture of evidence-based educational evaluation is increasingly recognised as essential to ensure that policy shifts lead to measurable improvements in student learning outcomes (Sánchez Mendiola, 2025).

Beyond evidence-based evaluation, curriculum reform is also closely tied to the growing demand for adaptive learning that accommodates learner diversity. Adaptive learning may be understood as a pedagogical strategy that adjusts learning processes, materials, and support based on students' needs and characteristics, including efforts to reduce achievement gaps (Gebhardt & Blake, 2024). Moreover, adaptive learning aligns with inclusive education agendas, particularly in responding to variations in students' abilities and backgrounds across diverse educational settings (Barbu et al., 2025; Siswandari et al., 2025). Thus, curriculum transition is not merely about revising policy documents but also about school readiness to implement adaptive learning practices that meaningfully address students' needs.

Empirical studies on K13 suggest that curriculum implementation may encounter obstacles in both policy enactment and classroom practice (Warman et al., 2021). Several studies also highlight the need for systematic evaluation of curriculum policies and learning achievements to ensure coherence between intended learning objectives and actual implementation in schools (Darwis et al., 2022; Gupta & Dutta, 2020). Meanwhile, research on the Merdeka Curriculum has expanded rapidly; however, much of the existing literature continues to focus on implementation issues, stakeholder acceptance, and institutional readiness—for example, implementation strategies and challenges in elementary schools (Febrianto et al., 2025), curriculum acceptance in specific regions, and analyses of perceptions and readiness across institutional contexts (Maylawati et al., 2025; Setyaningsih et al., 2024). Studies linking curriculum transition

to student learning outcomes are also emerging, yet most have been conducted in broader contexts and have not specifically examined religious subjects in madrasah settings (Rahmah et al., 2024).

Within the learning outcomes literature, student achievement is widely recognised as a key indicator in policy documents and educational reforms, serving as a basis for evaluating the attainment of learning objectives in curriculum change contexts (Prøitz, T. S., & Nordin, 2020). Learning outcomes evaluation enables more measurable assessments of educational attainment, including analyses across various instructional designs (Kermek & Kaniški, 2022). Furthermore, outcome-based assessment can be developed with greater precision to examine the implementation of outcome-oriented curricula, thereby supporting data-driven decision-making at the school level (Roza et al., 2025). The relationship between assessment, feedback, and student achievement is also considered essential in ensuring that curriculum reforms contribute to more meaningful learning experiences (Lee & Chiu, 2022). Therefore, examining changes in learning outcomes during curriculum transition is relevant to understand the extent to which curriculum policy changes are aligned with students' learning achievements.

In the context of Islamic education, fiqh is a core subject that plays a central role in shaping students' understanding of Islamic legal principles and guiding their daily religious practices. Fiqh learning is not merely concerned with the acquisition of conceptual knowledge but also with the development of practical and contextual understanding of Islamic law in everyday life. Previous studies have highlighted that fiqh instruction can be enhanced through various pedagogical approaches, including the use of digital media to increase student engagement (Oktaviani, 2023) and the integration of critical and contextual learning strategies to strengthen students' reasoning and application skills (Sapiudin et al., 2026). In addition, fiqh education is closely related to broader social and ethical dimensions, as it contributes to the development of moderate, inclusive, and context-sensitive Islamic perspectives (Hasbiyallah & Busra Nur Duran, 2024). Therefore, examining fiqh learning outcomes within the context of curriculum transition is particularly relevant, as changes in curriculum policy may influence not only students' academic achievement but also their practical understanding of religious values.

Based on the state of the art, it can be inferred that studies on curriculum transition in Indonesia remain dominated by research focusing on implementation, perceptions, and readiness. In contrast, studies that examine changes in learning outcomes using a longitudinal approach on the same students, particularly within madrasah settings and specifically in the *fiqh* subject, remain relatively limited. The scientific novelty of this article lies in (1) its focus on *fiqh* learning outcomes in an Islamic elementary school context, which remains underexplored within the K13–Merdeka Curriculum transition discourse, and (2) its use of a longitudinal before–after design involving the same student cohort to examine learning outcome changes during curriculum transition.

Based on this novelty, the central research problem addressed in this study is whether there is a change in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes during the transition from K13 to the Merdeka Curriculum. Operationally, the research questions are formulated as

follows: (1) What is the profile of students' *fiqh* learning outcomes in the even semester of Grade 3 (K13) and the even semester of Grade 4 (Merdeka Curriculum)? and (2) Is there a statistically significant difference in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes between the two periods?

This study aims to analyse changes in the *fiqh* learning outcomes of students at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung in the even semester before and after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and to provide empirical reflections for educational institutions in optimising curriculum transition processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum Transition and Implementation Challenges at the School Level

Curriculum change is essentially a policy strategy aimed at aligning education with evolving competency demands; however, its implementation frequently encounters challenges at the school level. In the context of the 2013 curriculum (K13), implementation barriers may arise from policy design, classroom enactment, and the readiness of teachers and schools to translate curriculum documents into instructional practice (Warman et al., 2021). At the level of instructional planning, curriculum policy change also requires coherence among learning objectives, outcomes, and measurable performance indicators to ensure that implementation does not remain limited to documentation alone (Gupta & Dutta, 2020). Moreover, school leaders' experiences in responding to educational policy change demonstrate that implementation processes are complex and require organisational readiness as well as continuous adaptation (Tshabalala & Nthontho, 2024).

As educational policy has shifted toward the Merdeka Curriculum, studies increasingly highlight that its implementation demands varying degrees of readiness across educational institutions. Research in primary education indicates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum involves specific strategies, challenges, and impacts that require systemic support and school-level adaptation (Febrianto et al., 2025). In terms of policy acceptance, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is also linked to regional stakeholder readiness and acceptance, which may influence the consistency of classroom enactment (Asrori, A., & Saputro, 2025; Setyaningsih et al., 2024). In addition, research on curriculum governance suggests that implementation quality is shaped by curriculum management at the school level, including the ability to design instruction, manage resources, and conduct continuous evaluation (Maisyaroh et al., 2024). In Islamic educational contexts, the readiness of Islamic schools to adopt the Merdeka Curriculum has also gained attention, as it requires adaptation in instructional tools, teacher capacity, and curriculum management (Hendawi et al., 2024; Maylawati et al., 2025).

Therefore, the curriculum transition from K13 to the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic elementary schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*) may produce different patterns of learning

achievement, not solely because of the curriculum itself but also due to implementation readiness, classroom practices, and school governance.

Learning Outcomes as an Indicator in Curriculum Policy Change

Learning outcomes are a key concept used to assess the attainment of learning objectives in educational evaluation contexts. In curriculum and policy research, learning outcomes are understood as an essential element that connects the formulation of learning goals with assessment strategies and evidence of student achievement (Prøitz, T. S., & Nordin, 2020). Learning outcomes assessment is increasingly emphasised across outcome-based curriculum models, as it provides a foundation for data-driven decision-making and continuous instructional improvement (Roza et al., 2025). Accordingly, examining learning outcomes during curriculum transition is important to determine whether policy change is accompanied by meaningful changes in student achievement.

The literature also underscores the need for learning outcomes to be clearly defined, measurable, and consistently aligned with assessment and feedback processes. Analyses of learning outcomes across various instructional designs suggest that outcomes should be formulated with specificity and assessed through relevant measures in order to ensure reliable interpretations of student achievement (Kermek & Kaniški, 2022; Zakiuddin et al., 2025). In addition, learning outcomes evaluation is associated with learning engagement and students' psychological factors, which may influence the consistency of achievement results; thus, the interpretation of learning outcomes should be approached contextually (Peng et al., 2024; Rattanayium et al., 2023).

In this study, student learning outcomes (measured using report card scores) may be positioned as an empirical indicator for examining changes in achievement during curriculum transition. However, interpretation should be made with caution, as learning outcomes are influenced by curriculum policy, instructional practice, and assessment processes.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Their Relationship with Learning Outcomes

Several studies have attempted to connect curriculum policy and learning achievement, although the contexts and research designs vary. In the Indonesian curriculum transition discourse, evidence suggests that both the 2013 curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum influence teachers' practices and student learning outcomes; however, these impacts should be interpreted in relation to implementation readiness, systemic factors, and broader school contexts (Rahmah et al., 2024). Curriculum evaluation research also indicates that subject-specific implementation may be assessed using approaches that consider regional variation and local context (Darwis et al., 2022). Similarly, studies on Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules demonstrate that instructional resources developed in alignment with contextual needs can contribute to improved learning outcomes, reinforcing the mediating role of instructional design in linking curriculum policy and student achievement (Salmia et al., 2024).

Furthermore, research on differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum highlights adaptive instructional strategies as a key implementation focus for responding to diverse student needs (Hati et al., 2025). Hence, the influence of curriculum reform on learning outcomes should not be viewed as a direct relationship but rather as one mediated by instructional design quality, teaching resources, and classroom practices (Febrianto et al., 2025).

Within learning outcomes research, the relationship between curriculum and achievement is also shaped by assessment practices. Effective learning outcomes assessment requires structured and consistent systems that are integrated with learning objectives, allowing achievement to be captured more validly and reliably (Alyasin et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2022). Moreover, outcomes assessment is not merely a technical process of assigning grades but an evaluation system that involves various stakeholders and has consequences for educational quality (Albeladi, 2022). Therefore, the use of report card scores in research should be regarded as a practical and authentic indicator of learning outcomes, while acknowledging limitations due to potential variation in teachers' grading standards and classroom assessment dynamics (Owan et al., 2023).

In addition to assessment, learning outcomes are influenced by student engagement and the interaction between learning behaviour and learning environments. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that learning behaviour and learning environments dynamically interact in shaping engagement and achievement, suggesting that effective instruction requires sustained strategies to enhance student engagement (Li & Xue, 2023). In this regard, systematically designed engagement practices may serve as a driver for skill enhancement and learning achievement (Sharma et al., 2025). Evidence also shows that discovery-based learning, cooperative learning, and problem-based learning approaches enhance communication and collaboration skills as well as learning outcomes, underscoring instructional design as a key mediator between curriculum policy and student achievement (Ningsih et al., 2025).

Consequently, learning outcome changes during curriculum transition are more appropriately understood as the result of a complex interaction among policy reform, implementation processes, instructional practices, and assessment systems, rather than a simplistic claim that "curriculum A is better than curriculum B."

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a longitudinal before-after design (within-subject design). A longitudinal design was selected because it enables the researcher to observe changes in learning outcomes within the same participants across two different time periods, thereby controlling inter-individual variation more effectively than between-group designs. This approach is considered appropriate for examining shifts in students' learning outcomes during curriculum transition without implementing direct experimental intervention.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung, Kepohbaru District, Bojonegoro Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The participants consisted

of the entire 2022 student cohort, comprising 21 students. In the even semester of Grade 3, the students followed instruction under the 2013 curriculum (K13), whereas in the even semester of Grade 4 they were taught using the Merdeka Curriculum. Accordingly, all participants experienced curriculum transition directly within the same educational setting and in a continuous learning context.

The research data were secondary data in the form of report card scores for the *fiqh* subject in the even semester of Grade 3 and the even semester of Grade 4. Report card scores were used as an indicator of learning outcomes because they represent students' achievement derived from teachers' continuous assessment processes throughout a semester. The use of report card data also enables an authentic analysis of learning outcome changes within a natural classroom context.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to provide an overall profile of students' learning outcomes in both periods. Second, a normality test was conducted on the difference scores using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which is recommended for small sample sizes ($n < 50$) due to its sensitivity in detecting deviations from normal distribution (Hanusz & Tarasińska, 2015; Prabhaker et al., 2017). Third, if the difference scores were normally distributed, the analysis proceeded with a paired-samples t-test. Conversely, if the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied as a non-parametric alternative suitable for within-subject designs with limited sample sizes.

The findings were interpreted cautiously by considering the curriculum transition context and institutional characteristics. This study was not intended to establish causal superiority between curricula; rather, it aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding changes in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes during the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results demonstrate a clear improvement in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes following the transition from the 2013 curriculum (K13) to the Merdeka Curriculum. As presented in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Mean Difference of Students' *Fiqh* Scores

Curriculum	Grade	Semester	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
2013 Curriculum (K13)	Grade 3	Even Semester	N	77.71	6.14	Ø
Merdeka Curriculum	Grade 4	Even Semester	N	81.81	2.89	4.10

Descriptive statistics indicate that during the even semester of Grade 3 under the K13 framework, students achieved a mean score of 77.71 with a standard deviation of 6.14. This level of dispersion suggests variability in students' mastery of *fiqh* competencies. In contrast, in the even semester of Grade 4 under the Merdeka Curriculum, the mean score

increased to 81.81, while the standard deviation decreased to 2.89, indicating not only higher achievement but also more consistent learning outcomes across students. The calculated mean difference of 10.10 points reflects a substantive improvement during the curriculum transition period. Prior to inferential analysis, the normality of the difference scores was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. As shown in table 2.

Table 2. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test of Difference Scores

Variable	Test	W	Df	P value	Conclusion
Difference in <i>Fiqh</i> Scores	Shapiro Wilk	0.821	N	0.001	Not normal

The test results indicated that the data were not normally distributed ($W = 0.821$, $p = 0.001$). Given this violation of the normality assumption, a non-parametric statistical test was selected for further analysis. Consequently, differences in students' learning outcomes between the two instructional periods were examined using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The results, summarised in table 3.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Test	N (Pairs)	Test Statistic (W)	P value	Decision
Wilcoxon Signed Rank	N	18.00	0.001	Significant

Revealed a statistically significant difference in *fiqh* achievement between the K13 and Merdeka Curriculum periods ($W = 18.00$, $p = 0.001$). These findings confirm that the observed improvement in students' scores was statistically meaningful. To evaluate the magnitude of the observed difference, an effect size analysis was conducted. As reported in table 4.

Table 4. Effect Size Calculation and Interpretation

Statistic	Value
Effect Size (r)	0.72
Magnitude	Large
Interpretation	Substantial educational impact

The effect size was large ($r = 0.72$), indicating that the improvement in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes was not only statistically significant but also educationally substantial. This large effect size suggests that the Merdeka Curriculum exerted a strong positive influence on students' learning, potentially attributable to its learner-centered approach, flexibility in instructional design, and emphasis on contextual understanding. Taken together, the descriptive, inferential, and effect size analyses provide robust empirical evidence that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum led to a significant and meaningful enhancement of *fiqh* learning outcomes at the elementary school level.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate an improvement in the *fiqh* learning outcomes of the 2022 student cohort following the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum. The increase in mean scores from 77.71 in Grade 3 to 81.81 in Grade 4,

accompanied by a statistically significant Wilcoxon test result ($p = 0.001$) and a large effect size ($r = 0.72$), indicates that curriculum transition at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung was associated with a meaningful enhancement in student achievement, both statistically and practically.

This improvement may be interpreted from the perspective that the Merdeka Curriculum promotes more flexible and adaptive learning approaches, providing greater opportunities for differentiated instruction aligned with students' diverse needs. Previous studies have reported that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary education—particularly through strengthened differentiation and flexible instructional design—can support improved learning processes and student outcomes (Febrianto et al., 2025; Hati et al., 2025). Accordingly, the observed increase in learning outcomes may reflect the benefits of more responsive instructional strategies that better accommodate learner diversity within the classroom context.

In the specific context of fiqh learning, the observed improvement may also be associated with the distinctive characteristics of fiqh as a subject that integrates conceptual understanding with practical application in students' daily lives. Fiqh instruction has increasingly been oriented toward contextual and student-centred approaches, including the use of interactive media and real-life problem-solving to enhance engagement and comprehension (Oktaviani, 2023; Sapiudin et al., 2026). In addition, contemporary developments in fiqh education emphasise the importance of substantive understanding, critical reasoning, and contextual interpretation of Islamic law, rather than rote memorisation (Anshori, 2025; Firdaus, 2020). Such characteristics are highly compatible with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritises flexibility, contextual learning, and student autonomy. Furthermore, fiqh learning is closely related to the formation of moderate and inclusive religious perspectives, which are increasingly emphasised in Islamic education (Hasbiyallah & Busra Nur Duran, 2024). Therefore, the improvement in fiqh learning outcomes identified in this study may not only reflect general instructional changes but also indicate that fiqh as a subject is particularly responsive to more adaptive and contextualised learning approaches promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum.

At the same time, these findings should be understood within the broader framework that curriculum change extends beyond policy documents to include curriculum management, teacher readiness, and school governance in instructional and assessment practices. Prior research has emphasised that curriculum implementation quality is strongly influenced by school-level curriculum management, including the capacity to design instructional resources, manage educational inputs, and conduct continuous evaluation (Maisyaroh et al., 2024). In addition, regional acceptance of curriculum policy has been shown to affect the consistency of classroom implementation (Setyaningsih et al., 2024). Thus, the improvement in fiqh learning outcomes observed in this study may also indicate adequate organisational readiness and policy acceptance at the school level during the curriculum transition.

From a curriculum evaluation perspective, learning outcomes serve as a key empirical indicator for assessing the attainment of instructional objectives within policy reform

contexts. Learning outcomes function as a critical link between curriculum policy and the evaluation of student achievement (Prøitz, T. S., & Nordin, 2020). Other studies further argue that learning outcomes assessment should be increasingly precise in order to capture the quality of outcome-based curriculum implementation (Roza et al., 2025). In this study, the use of report card scores as an indicator of learning outcomes provides an authentic representation of students' semester-long achievement, allowing score changes to be interpreted as reflections of instructional processes, assessment practices, and feedback mechanisms implemented by teachers.

The present findings are consistent with previous research indicating that curriculum policy changes in Indonesia may influence both teachers' practices and students' learning outcomes, although such effects are highly contextual and dependent on implementation quality and school readiness (Rahmah et al., 2024). Moreover, studies on instructional resources within the Merdeka Curriculum suggest that contextually appropriate teaching modules have the potential to enhance learning outcomes (Salmia et al., 2024). In this sense, the improvement in *fiqh* learning outcomes identified in this study may be related to adjustments in instructional materials and learning strategies that were more relevant and meaningful for students.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. First, the study relied on report card scores as indicators of learning outcomes, which are inherently influenced by teachers' grading standards and classroom assessment dynamics. Second, the study was conducted in a single institution and involved only one student cohort, limiting the generalisability of the results. Third, improvements in learning outcomes may also be influenced by students' developmental progression from Grade 3 to Grade 4, prior learning experiences, and adaptation to higher grade levels. However, the longitudinal design involving the same participants strengthens the findings by controlling inter-individual variability, making the observed score changes a more reliable reflection of learning outcome dynamics during curriculum transition.

Overall, the findings support the argument that the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum represents more than an administrative change. When supported by adequate implementation readiness, effective curriculum management, and consistent instructional and assessment practices, curriculum transition may be associated with positive changes in student learning outcomes.

In the context of MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum was accompanied by the use of teaching modules as instructional tools. These modules may have contributed to improved learning outcomes by providing more operational and flexible instructional structures compared to traditional teaching resources. Teaching modules can assist teachers in aligning learning objectives, activities, and assessments more systematically, thereby promoting greater instructional consistency and measurability. This interpretation aligns with previous findings indicating that the effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum implementation in elementary education is strongly influenced by instructional resources and the quality of teachers' instructional planning (Febrianto et al., 2025). Furthermore, research on the effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules suggests that contextually designed instructional materials can

positively impact student learning outcomes (Salmia et al., 2024). Although no P5 project implementation was identified in this study, the observed improvement in learning outcomes may still be attributed to strengthened instructional planning and evaluation based on teaching modules, which facilitated more structured and supportive learning processes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a difference in the *fiqh* learning outcomes of the 2022 student cohort before and after the curriculum transition from the 2013 Curriculum (even semester of Grade 3, 2024/2025) to the Merdeka Curriculum (even semester of Grade 4, 2025/2026) at MI Muhammadiyah 28 Sumberagung. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$) with a large effect size ($r = 0.72$), suggesting that the curriculum transition was associated with a meaningful improvement in students' *fiqh* learning outcomes. The findings imply that strengthening instructional planning and optimising the use of teaching modules should remain key strategies in supporting curriculum transition at madrasah settings. Future studies are recommended to expand research contexts and incorporate broader evaluation indicators (e.g., standardised assessments or classroom process data) in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of curriculum transition on student achievement.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that this publication is free from any form of conflict of interest, including financial support, business relationships, or personal affiliations that could influence the objectivity of the study. All contents of this article are original works developed independently in accordance with academic ethical standards. All references have been appropriately cited following the applicable scholarly conventions. The author confirms that this article is free from plagiarism, duplication, or copyright infringement. This commitment to academic integrity reflects the author's dedication to producing a high-quality scientific contribution that meets international publication standards and is academically accountable.

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