

Student Perceptions of the Implementation of MBKM (Independent Learning–Independent Campus): A Cross-Sectional Study at UIN Raden Fatah

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Abstract: This study aims to assess MBKM implementation from a student perspective. The method used in this study is a descriptive, quantitative, cross-sectional design. The data collection technique is a survey. The results of this study indicate that students of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Raden Fatah agree and strongly agree with the MBKM curriculum; independent learning activities as much as 87.70%, entrepreneurial activities as much as 85.90%, research activities as much as 91%, student exchange activities as much as 95.09%, practical work/internship activities as much as 92.60%, teaching assistance activities as much as 95%, humanitarian project activities as much as 85.90%, and thematic real work lecture activities as much as 86.60%. In general, the implementation of the new curriculum at UIN Raden Fatah received a positive response from students. Theoretically, this research helps inform the implementation of campus curriculum policies. From a practical perspective, this research can be used as a reference for evaluating the implementation of the MBKM curriculum in higher education.

Keywords: Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM), Learning Activities, Students' Perception

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai pelaksanaan MBKM dari perspektif mahasiswa. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kuantitatif dengan cross-sectional desain. Teknik yang digunakan untuk pengumpulan data adalah dengan menggunakan survei. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Raden Fatah setuju dan sangat setuju dengan kurikulum MBKM; kegiatan belajar mandiri sebanyak 87,70%, kegiatan kewirausahaan sebanyak 85,90%, kegiatan penelitian sebanyak 91%, kegiatan pertukaran pelajar sebanyak 95,09%, kegiatan kerja praktek/magang sebanyak 92,60%, kegiatan asistensi mengajar sebanyak 95%, kegiatan proyek

kemanusiaan sebanyak 85,90%, dan kegiatan kuliah kerja nyata tematik sebanyak 86,60%. Secara umum penerapan kurikulum baru di UIN Raden Fatah mendapat respon positif dari kalangan mahasiswa. Secara teoritik penelitian ini membantu mengembangkan penerapan kebijakan kurikulum di lingkungan kampus. Dari sisi praktis riset ini dapat dijadikan acuan evaluasi implementasi kurikulum MBKM di perguruan tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), *Aktifitas Pembelajaran, Persepsi Mahasiswa*

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum changes are inevitable due to the demands of changing times and the challenging educational context. The most recent change in higher education in Indonesia is the implementation of the Independent Learning Campus (MBKM) curriculum. The MBKM curriculum concept offers clear, focused, and planned educational outcomes. In its implementation, the MBKM curriculum is supported by an outcome-based curriculum model. This curriculum implementation allows study programs in each faculty to collaborate with other institutions, especially business institutions, to strengthen students' employability skills. Philosophically, the MBKM curriculum is supported by a range of educational philosophies, particularly progressivism, pragmatism, and humanism. These philosophical perspectives, which underpin this curriculum, enable students to gain the learning experiences they need.¹

Educational problems often lie in the implementation of the curriculum. A good curriculum, in terms of documentation, will not yield quality educational outcomes unless it is balanced with exemplary curriculum implementation. Therefore, enthusiasm for implementing the MBKM curriculum must be demonstrated through relevant educational program innovations. Strong teaching staff, learning facilities, and management support are crucial. Study program management must collaborate with various parties through various joint programs to provide students with learning experiences beyond the classroom. Furthermore, campus management is expected to effectively leverage advances in information and communication technology to address weaknesses in educational management in a planned manner.²

As a university offering a teacher education program, Raden Fatah State Islamic University (UIN) Palembang has an academic and vocational interest in strengthening the learning process for prospective teacher students. For

¹ O Er and Ö Demir, "The Mediating Role of Critical Reading Self-Efficacy Perception in the Effect of Philosophy of Education Dispositions on Curriculum Literacy," *Sage Open* 15, no. 3 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251357673>.

² Ria Tristya Amalia and Harald F. O. von Korflesch, "Entrepreneurship Education in Indonesian Higher Education: Mapping Literature from the Country's Perspective," *Entrepreneurship Education* 4, no. 3 (September 2021): 291–333, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41959-021-00053-9>.

prospective teachers, mastery of educational and teaching skills is crucial to their success. The Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, as one of the university's flagship programs, has implemented three of the eight educational programs in the MBKM curriculum, including student exchanges, internships/work experience, and teaching mentoring at academic institutions.

This research aims to analyze students' perceptions at the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, UIN Raden Fatah, regarding three ongoing Independent Learning-Independent Campus programs and five MBKM programs that have not yet been implemented. In line with the university's vision, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang supports the government's program to develop outstanding human resources. With the Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) curriculum policy in place, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang provides full support to all study programs within its environment to implement the curriculum. The Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, as one of the university's flagship programs, has already implemented three of the eight aspects of the MBKM curriculum, including student exchange, internships/work experience, and teaching assistance at educational institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum of MBKM

The MBKM curriculum is a concept and policy that gives educational institutions greater freedom to develop curricula tailored to student needs. This curriculum explicitly allows students to participate in learning activities both within and outside their formal study programs. This new policy will enable students to study for three semesters outside their regular program and significantly changes the Semester Credit Unit (SKS) system. Each credit is specifically defined as "activity hours" rather than "study hours." Learning activities in the MBKM program include student exchanges, teaching assistantships, internships, independent study, research projects, entrepreneurship activities, humanitarian projects, and thematic fieldwork.³

The primary goal of the MBKM program is to improve graduates' competence, including both soft and hard skills, to prepare them better and align their skills with current demands. The goal of this initiative is to prepare graduates to be future national leaders who excel in their fields and have strong

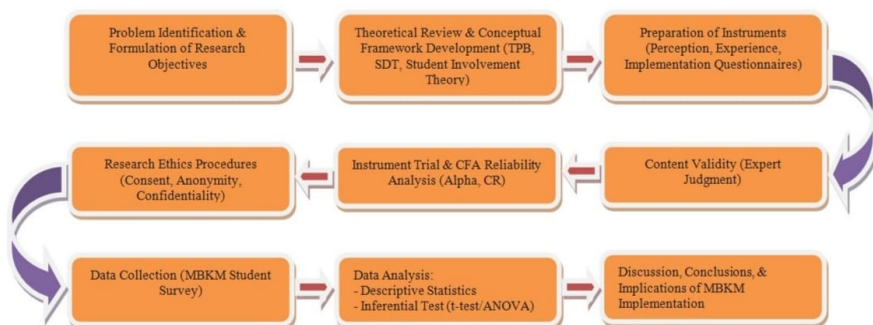
³ Tri Wintolo Apoko et al., "The Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Policy: Students' Awareness, Participation, and Its Impact," *Journal of Education Research and Evaluation* 6, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.23887/jere.v6i4.48040>.

personalities.⁴ The goal of promoting learning freedom is to enable students to develop self-determination, take proactive initiatives, accept responsibility for their actions, demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in the face of new challenges, make creative use of their experiences, and collaborate effectively with others across a variety of activities.⁵

Perception

Perception is defined in philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science as the process of becoming aware of or comprehending sensory information. The term “perception” is derived from the Latin words *perceptio* and *percipio*, and it means “receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, and apprehension with the mind or senses”.⁶

To make it more straightforward, the following is a conceptual scheme:



The above scheme explains the cyclical relationship Implementation of MBKM → strengthening → Student Perception.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses quantitative research with a cross-sectional study design. In this type of research study, either the entire population or a subset is selected, and data are collected from these individuals to help answer research questions of interest. It is called cross-sectional because the information about X and Y

⁴ Dirjen Dikti Kemendikbud, *Buku Panduan Pelayanan Merdeka Belajar Dan Kampus Merdeka, Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka*, 2020; Anthony M. Baird and Satyanarayana Parayitam, “Employers’ Ratings of Importance of Skills and Competencies College Graduates Need to Get Hired,” *Education + Training* 61, no. 5 (June 2019): 622–34, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-12-2018-0250>.

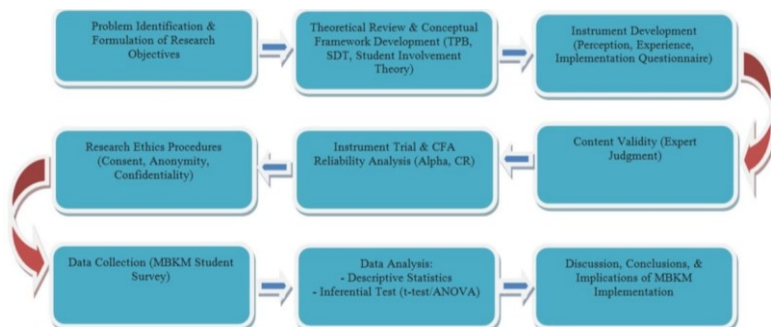
⁵ Stephen Joseph, David Murphy, and John Holford, “Positive Education: A New Look at Freedom to Learn,” *Oxford Review of Education* 46, no. 5 (September 2020): 549–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1726310>.

⁶ Qiong, “A Brief Introduction to Perception.”

gathered represents what is happening at only one point in time.⁷ The subjects in the study were Faculty of Education and Teacher Training students at UIN Raden Fatah, Palembang, totaling 163 students from eight study programs: Islamic education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Teacher education, Early Childhood education, English education, Mathematics education, Physics education, Biology education, and Chemistry education.

The data collection technique used a questionnaire distributed online via the Google Forms application due to the pandemic. Research data shows that most students feel more enthusiastic about answering questions via online questionnaires for ease of access and time efficiency.⁸ The instrument used is survey data. This type of survey uses a 1-5 Likert scale for positive statement items, with the options “strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree,” and vice versa for negative statement items. A quantitative descriptive method, using SPSS and Microsoft Excel, was used to analyze data collected from the questionnaire.

The flow of thought in this research can be seen more clearly in the following diagram:



⁷ Xiaofeng Wang and Zhenshun Cheng, “Cross-Sectional Studies: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Recommendations,” *Chest* 158, no. 1 (2020): S65–71, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chest.2020.03.012>; Roger Harrison et al., “A Cross-Sectional Study to Describe Academics’ Confidence, Attitudes, and Experience of Online Distance Learning in Higher Education,” *Journal of Educators Online* 14, no. 2 (July 2017), <https://doi.org/10.9743/jeo.2017.14.2.3>; Matthew J. Lebo and Christopher Weber, “An Effective Approach to the Repeated Cross-Sectional Design,” *American Journal of Political Science* 59, no. 1 (2015): 242–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12095>.

⁸ Dwi Parinata and Nicky Dwi Puspaningtyas, “Optimalisasi Penggunaan Google Form Terhadap Pembelajaran Matematika,” *MATHEMA: JURNAL PENDIDIKAN MATEMATIKA* 3, no. 1 (January 2021): 56, <https://doi.org/10.33365/jm.v3i1.1008>; Habibullah, “Penelitian Secara Daring: Metode Dan Praktek,” *QUANTUM: Jurnal Ilmiah Kesejahteraan Sosial* XVI, no. 200 (2020): 39–47; Eni, “Analisis Penggunaan Google Form Sebagai Media Evaluasi Pembelajaran PAI SMPIT Insan Harapan Batam”; Nawir et al., “Pengaruh Penggunaan Google Form Terhadap Efektivitas Pelaksanaan Evaluasi Di Sekolah Dasar.”

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

A descriptive analysis of the research respondents is presented first, followed by an analysis of the collected data. Figure 1 shows that 163 respondents participated in this study, including 17 male students (10.43%) and 146 female students (89.57%) from eight study programs at the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang.

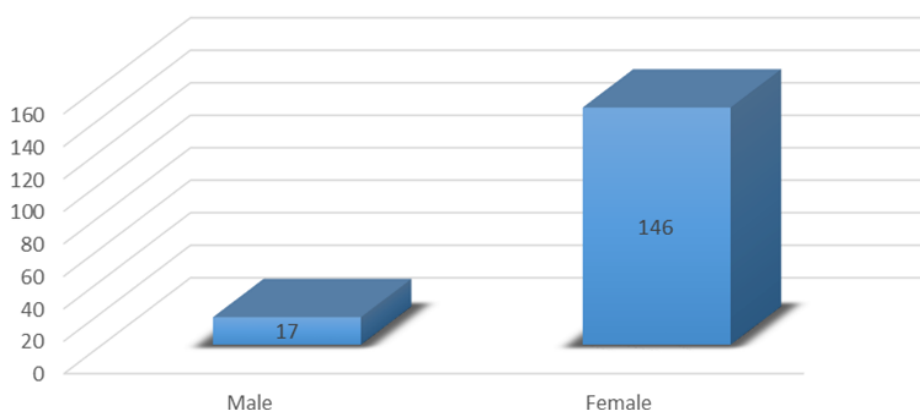


Figure 1. Characteristics of Respondents Based on Gender

Figure 2 shows that the 163 respondents who comprise the sample are students from eight study programs. The number of students from the Chemistry Education Study Program was 21 people or 12.88%, the number of students from the Biology Education Study Program was 11 people or 11.66%, the number of students from the Physics Education Study Program was 17 people or 10.43%, the number of students from the Mathematics Education Study Program was 20 people or 12.27%, the number of students from the English Education Study Program was 23 people or 14.11%, the number of students from the Early Childhood Islamic Education Study Program was 18 people or 11.04%, the number of students from the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program was 20 people or 12.27%, and the number of students from the Islamic Religious Education Study Program was 25 people or 15.34%. From this number, it shows that the Islamic Religious Education Study Program is the majority respondent, while the Physics Education Study Program is the minority respondent.

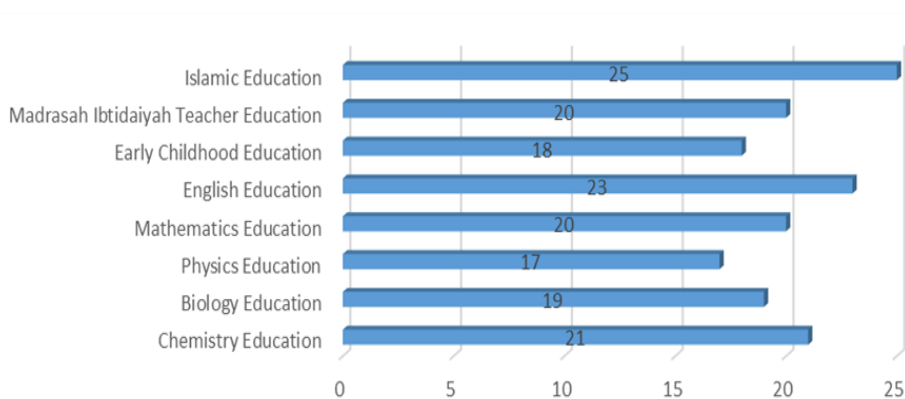


Figure 2. Respondents Based on the Study Program

Figure 3 shows that students' perceptions of the implementation of student exchange activities at UIN Raden Fatah, especially in the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, were strongly agreed by 52.5%, approved by 42.9%, hesitated and disagreed by 1.84%, and strongly disagreed by 1.22%.

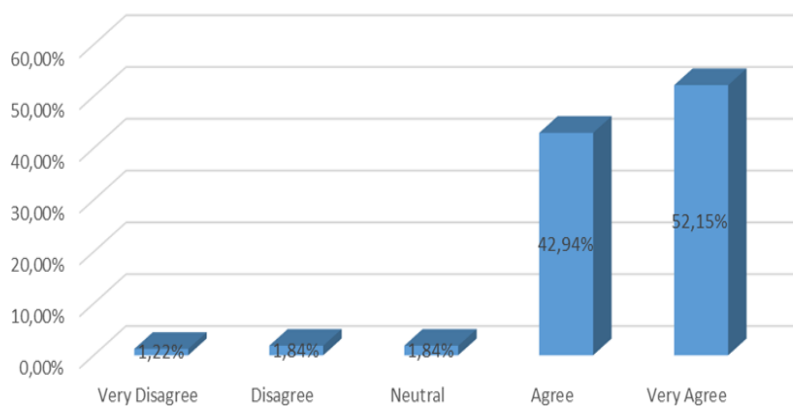


Figure 3. Students' Perceptions of the Implementation of Student Exchange

Figure 4 shows that students' perceptions of the implementation of internship/practical work activities at UIN Raden Fatah, especially the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, stated that they strongly agreed by 41.10%, agreed by 51.50%, hesitated by 3.10%, disagreed by 3.70%, and the remaining 0.60% expressed doubt.

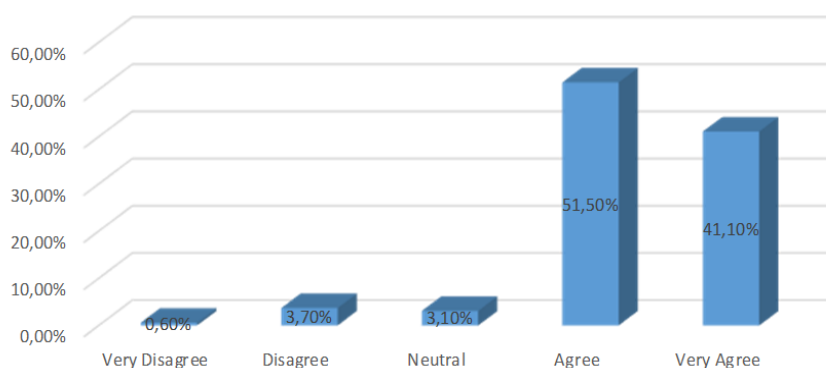


Figure 4. Student Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of Internship/Work Practice Activities

Figure 5 shows that students' perceptions of the implementation of teaching assistance activities in educational units at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, especially the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, stated that they strongly agreed by 21.50%, agreed by 73%, hesitated by 4.30%, disagreed by 0.60%, and strongly disagreed also by 0.60%.

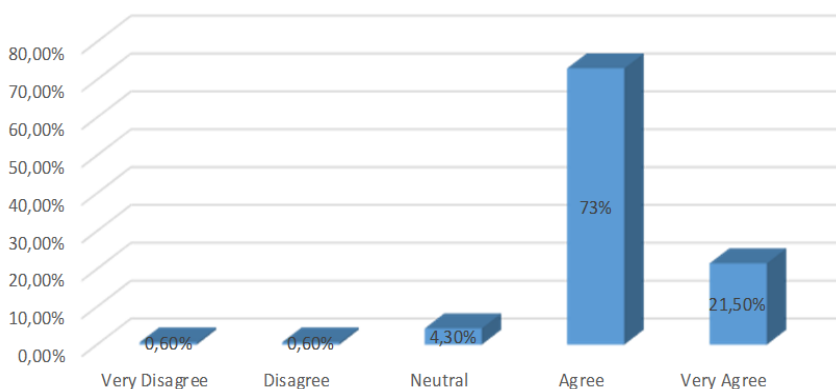


Figure 5. Students' Perception of Teaching Assistance Activities

The data in Figure 5 shows that the majority of students strongly agreed (21.50%) and agreed (73%) with the implementation of teaching guidance activities in the educational unit at the Faculty of Teacher Education and Training, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Qualitatively, this high level of agreement indicates that students consider teaching guidance activities among the most important and relevant learning experiences in preparing themselves to become prospective educators. Students generally feel that teaching guidance provides a real opportunity to develop pedagogical skills, experience classroom

dynamics, apply learning theories, and receive direct feedback from mentor teachers and supervising lecturers.

This high level of approval also indicates that the tutoring program is considered quite effective across planning, mentoring, and field implementation. Students appear to see good coordination between the faculty, partner schools, and educational units, enabling this activity to provide authentic experiences that enrich their understanding of teaching practice. Furthermore, the high level of student support indicates that tutoring is one of the MBKM activities whose benefits are most easily understood and most aligned with the academic identity of students in the faculty of education.

Meanwhile, the small percentages in the undecided (4.30%), disagree (0.60%), and strongly disagree (0.60%) categories indicate that only a small number of students had less-than-optimal experiences with this activity. Qualitatively, these doubts or disagreements could be caused by several factors, such as differences in the quality of mentoring from mentor teachers, limited hours of teaching practice, communication barriers between partner educational institutions and faculty, or mismatches between placements and student interests and competencies. However, because these percentages are so small, these barriers appear to be individual in nature and do not reflect overall structural problems with the program.

Overall, the high level of student acceptance of the tutoring program indicates that this program is a core element in developing the professional competencies of prospective teachers. These data confirm that tutoring serves not only as a curricular obligation but also as a transformational experience that strengthens students' self-confidence, pedagogical skills, and readiness to enter the workforce as educators. These findings support the need for faculty to continue improving the quality of partnerships with schools, expand practice opportunities, and strengthen evaluation systems to optimize the tutoring program's support for the implementation of the MBKM Curriculum within PTKIN.

Figure 6 shows that based on the survey results, student perceptions of the implementation of research and research activities at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, especially the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, strongly agreed by 33.70% and agreed by 57%, the remaining 3.10% expressed doubt, 1.80% disagreed, and 4.30% strongly disagreed.

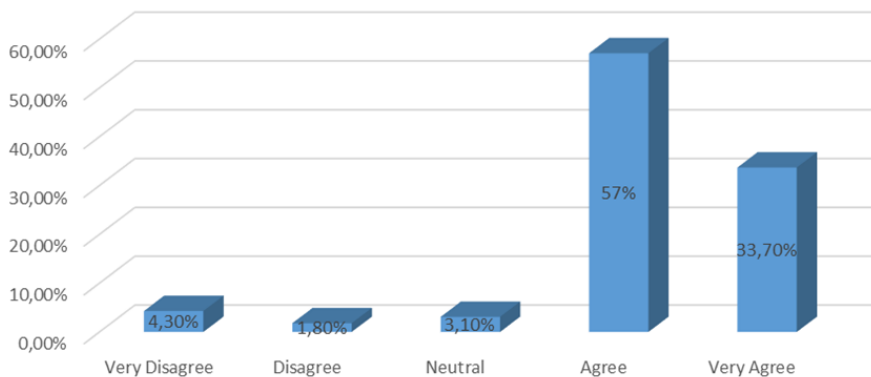


Figure 6. Student Perceptions on Research and Research Activities

However, the relatively small number of students who disagreed suggests that these challenges are individual or contextual rather than structural issues affecting the overall implementation of research programs at the faculty level. Overall, the high level of student agreement indicates that research activities are understood as essential and relevant academic endeavors with a significant impact on students' professional preparedness. This finding underscores the importance of faculties continuing to strengthen the research ecosystem, improve the quality of mentoring, provide research methodology training, and expand student access to literature sources and field data.

Figure 7 shows that based on the survey results, students' perceptions of the implementation of humanitarian project activities at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, especially the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, stated that they strongly agreed by 27%, agreed by 58.90%, hesitated by 6.70%, disagreed by 4.30%, and strongly disagreed by 3.10%.

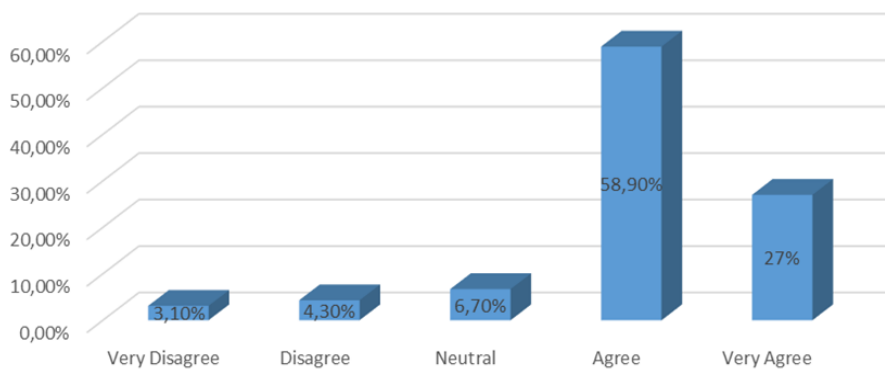


Figure 7. Student Perceptions on Humanitarian Project Activities

Figure 8 shows that based on the survey results, students' perceptions of the implementation of entrepreneurial activities at UIN Raden Fatah, especially the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, stated that they strongly agreed by 35.60%, agreed by 50.30%, hesitated by 6.70%, disagreed by 3.10%, and strongly disagreed by 4.30%.

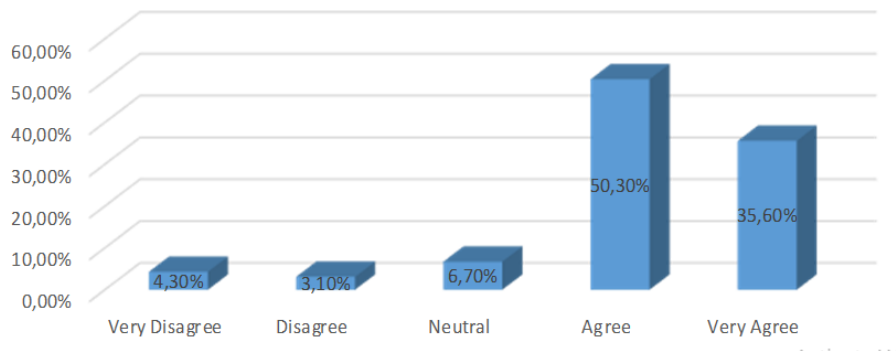


Figure 8. Student Perceptions on Entrepreneurship Activities

Figure 9 shows that based on the survey results, students' perceptions of the implementation of independent study/project activities at UIN Raden Fatah, especially the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, stated that they strongly agreed by 33.10%, agreed by 54.60%, hesitated by 7.40%, disagreed by 3.10%, and strongly disagreed by 1.80%.

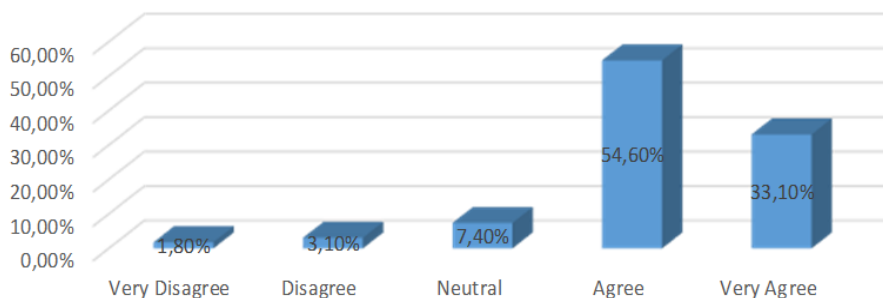


Figure 9. Student Perceptions on Independent Study/Project Activities

Figure 10 shows that based on the survey results, students' perceptions of the Thematic Community Service Learning (KKNT) activities at UIN Raden Fatah, especially the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, stated that they strongly agreed by 40.00%, agreed by 46.60%, hesitated by 4.30%, disagreed by 6.70%, and strongly disagreed by 2.40%.

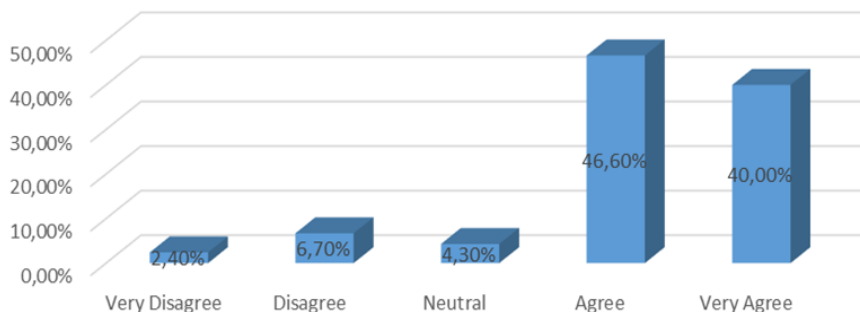


Figure 10. Thematic Community Service Learning (KKNT)

The ANOVA analysis revealed significant differences in students' perceptions of the implementation of the MBKM curriculum across variables such as study program, academic year, and experience with MBKM activities. This finding indicates that not all students have felt the implementation of MBKM equally. Students who have participated in programs such as internships, teaching assistantships, or humanitarian projects generally demonstrated more positive perceptions, particularly regarding the relevance of MBKM activities to professional competency needs and enhancing off-campus learning experiences. This was reflected in a higher average perception score among students who participated in MBKM than among those who did not.

Discussion

Thematic Community Service Learning (KKNT) is a form of education that allows students to live within the community outside the Campus. In this approach, students work directly with the community to identify its potential and address its issues, with the expectation that they can help develop the potential of villages/regions and devise solutions to the problems in these communities. KKNT activities are designed to sharpen students' soft skills in partnership, interdisciplinary team collaboration (cross-disciplinary competence), and leadership for managing development programs in rural areas.⁹ Through these activities, students are expected to analyze potential and challenges, create development program plans, and evaluate these programs. Students agree with these activities because they provide an opportunity to interact with and actively participate in the community. Furthermore, students can apply their knowledge collaboratively alongside other parties, such as village governments or other organizations.

⁹ Dinna Handini, Tito Edy Priandono, and Satya Herlina, *Ragam Kegiatan Kampus Merdeka 1*, 2022.

Research findings on student perceptions, lecturer readiness, and the effectiveness of the MBKM program have significant implications for the development and refinement of curriculum policies within State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN). The findings, which demonstrate the need for students to pursue broader learning, the relevance of courses to workplace needs, and improvements in the quality of off-campus learning experiences, underscore the urgency of adaptive, achievement-based (CPL) learning arrangements. PTKIN curricula need to balance Islamic, professional, and social competencies, so that MBKM not only strengthens job skills but also maintains PTKIN's distinctive academic character, which is oriented toward Islamic values and religious moderation.

From an institutional policy perspective, the results of this study imply the need to standardize and strengthen internal regulations regarding the recognition of prior learning (RPL), the conversion of MBKM program credits, and mechanisms for cooperation with external partners in the education sector, industry, socio-religious institutions, and Islamic boarding schools. PTKIN needs to develop MBKM implementation guidelines that are more operational and responsive to the needs of study programs, including SOPs for religious internships, teaching assistantships, collaborative research, and community service based on local Muslim communities. Furthermore, the research findings emphasize the importance of enhancing lecturers' capacity to facilitate project-based and experiential learning, as the success of MBKM depends heavily on the quality of academic mentoring. Thus, the MBKM curriculum development policy at PTKIN must be accompanied by adequate investment in human resources and educational infrastructure.

Furthermore, findings on administrative challenges and cross-unit coordination suggest that PTKIN should strengthen MBKM governance by establishing an integrated service center to manage the full lifecycle of student activities, including registration, monitoring, and evaluation. This is crucial to ensure accountability for program implementation while maintaining the quality of reporting to the Ministries of Religious Affairs and Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Developing an academic information system compatible with the MBKM format is also an urgent need to ensure the smooth running of the credit unit conversion process and the monitoring of student learning outcomes. Overall, the research findings confirm that implementing MBKM at PTKIN is not sufficient to adopt national policies; it requires contextual adaptation that accounts for the characteristics of religious institutions, student needs, and the challenges of the socio-religious environment in which PTKIN operates. Therefore, improvements to the

MBKM curriculum policy at PTKIN must be holistic, participatory, and oriented towards quality and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) curriculum applies to Indonesian universities. Its implementation may differ between universities. The MBKM curriculum has advantages and disadvantages in its implementation. UIN Raden Fatah, one of the state Islamic universities under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has implemented the MBKM curriculum. Research shows that students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of UIN Raden Fatah agree or/or strongly agree with the MBKM curriculum, both from independent learning activities as much as 87.70%, entrepreneurial activities as much as 85.90%, research activities as much as 91%, student exchange activities as much as 95.09%, work practice/internship activities as much as 92.60%, teaching assistance activities as much as 95%, humanitarian project activities as much as 85.90%, and thematic real work activities as much as 86.60%. Thus, among the eight MBKM curriculum learning activities implemented by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN Raden Fatah, the average student agreement with the MBKM curriculum was 89.97%. The results of this study indicate the level of trust in the implementation of the MBKM curriculum from students' perspectives. The implications of this research can strengthen the implementation of the new curriculum with various innovations. The issues in this research remain very limited in scope and methodological aspects. Therefore, in the future, this research can be expanded to examine the effectiveness of MBKM curriculum implementation across various faculties.

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