

Integrating Pedagogical Competence and Intrinsic Motivation in Building Inclusive Teaching Readiness among Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Teachers

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Abstract

This study analyzes the influence of pedagogical competence on the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) teachers to implement inclusive education, with intrinsic motivation serving as a mediating variable. Data were collected from 195 MI teachers through multistage sampling and analyzed using path analysis and the Sobel test. The research instruments were validated for reliability and construct validity through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results indicate that pedagogical competence significantly affects teacher readiness ($\beta = 0.324$; $p < 0.001$) as well as intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.579$; $p < 0.001$), while intrinsic motivation also significantly influences teacher readiness ($\beta = 0.351$; $p < 0.001$) and is confirmed to mediate this relationship with a coefficient of 0.262 ($p < 0.05$). Collectively, pedagogical competence and intrinsic motivation explain 91% of the variance in teacher readiness ($R^2 = 0.91$). The novelty of this study lies in examining a competence motivation model within the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, an Islamic educational setting characterized by dual curricula and religious values distinct from prior studies that predominantly focused on general public schools. Theoretically, this study strengthens the explanatory power of Self-Determination Theory by demonstrating the psychological mechanism linking competence to readiness. Practically, the findings highlight the urgency of developing professional training for madrasah teachers that integrates the enhancement of inclusive pedagogical competence with the cultivation of intrinsic motivation.

Keyword: pedagogical competence, intrinsic motivation, teacher readiness, inclusive education, madrasah

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is widely understood as a transformative agenda aimed at advancing equity, participation, and the capacity of education systems to address learner diversity in a coherent and sustainable manner (UNESCO, 2020). In Indonesia, its development began in the 1960s and expanded through national pilot projects in 2002 (Mariyam, 2016). Within Islamic educational institutions, inclusive policies were formally adopted through the Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 90/2013, which aligns inclusive practices with Islamic values of justice, social responsibility, and non-discrimination (Sholikhah, 2016; Mukaffa, 2017). Although this regulatory foundation appears progressive, empirical data indicates a significant gap between policy and actual implementation at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) level. Recent studies highlight that many inclusive madrasahs operate with a severe shortage of certified Special Educational Needs teachers (*Guru Pembimbing Khusus*) and lack standard accessible infrastructure (Huda & Hafni, 2024; Syaifudin,

2021). Furthermore, institutions often struggle to modify curricula and adapt learning evaluation methods to properly accommodate students with disabilities (Hasanah et al., 2024). These empirical constraints confirm that the practical application of inclusive education has not yet progressed at a pace consistent with initial policy intentions.

MI represents a distinct pedagogical ecology. The coexistence of religious and general subjects increases the complexity of teaching and requires teachers to adapt inclusive strategies across various learning areas. This structure creates a unique set of expectations, combining academic proficiency with moral and spiritual formation. However, empirical work has not fully articulated how this specific environment influences psychological and pedagogical readiness for inclusive classrooms. Evidence indicates that teachers often experience significant cognitive and emotional strain when attempting to integrate inclusive practices within this demanding curriculum framework (Ulfa dan Wardany, 2022; Mujiati & Yoenanto, 2023). Furthermore, adapting learning materials for diverse students across both religious and general subjects intensifies the pedagogical difficulty (Syaifudin, 2021). These conditions suggest that readiness in MI settings is a highly complex psychological construct that cannot be reduced to basic knowledge acquisition or positive attitudes alone.

Academic literature on inclusive education in madrasahs has predominantly adopted descriptive approaches. A recent literature synthesis confirms this pattern; for example, out of 15 studies on madrasah inclusion published in the last five years, the vast majority utilized descriptive methods to map regulations, document program implementation, or assess variations in teacher competence (Azzubair et al., 2025; Mujiati & Yoenanto, 2023; Suriaman, 2023; Rahman et al., 2026). These studies rarely offer a robust theoretical explanation of the psychological processes shaping teacher readiness. This creates an epistemic gap: pedagogical competence is often presumed to exert a direct influence on readiness, while motivational processes remain marginal in conceptual discussions. Such a tendency overlooks the possibility that competence does not automatically translate into practice unless supported by deeper psychological drivers.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a critical lens for addressing this gap. SDT posits that perceptions of competence inform professional action through autonomous motivational processes (R. M. R. and E. L. Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, pedagogical competence alone is not sufficient to produce actual readiness for inclusive teaching. A teacher may possess extensive instructional knowledge; however, the absence of intrinsic motivation can weaken the translation of this knowledge into effective classroom practice. Intrinsic motivation, therefore, functions as a central psychological mechanism that shapes how competence is enacted in complex learning environments.

While Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains the psychological and motivational drivers of teacher behavior, pedagogical readiness also necessitates a specific set of technical skills. To bridge this gap, specific models such as the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* framework developed by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE, 2012) complement SDT by outlining the concrete technical dimensions required for inclusive pedagogy. This framework specifies essential skills, such as differentiated instruction, authentic assessment, behavioral management, and collaborative work (Vantieghem et al., 2023; Pershina et al., 2018). Nevertheless, this framework alone does not explain variations in readiness among teachers with comparable competence profiles. An integrated conceptual model is therefore required, specifically one that positions competence as a structural antecedent and intrinsic motivation as the psychological force that activates and sustains pedagogical readiness.

This integrated approach becomes particularly relevant in MI settings, where teachers navigate intersecting demands: academic performance standards, religious commitments, and resource constraints. Within such a context, intrinsic motivation play a heightened role in sustaining pedagogical initiative,

psychological resilience, and long-term engagement with inclusive practices. Despite its conceptual significance, intrinsic motivation has not been examined empirically as a mediating mechanism within MI. This constitutes both a theoretical and methodological gap, given that MI possesses cultural and organizational characteristics that differ fundamentally from other primary education environments.

Research in inclusive pedagogy has established that motivational dynamics relate to educators' engagement with adaptive instructional practice (Ahn, Chiu & Patrick, 2021; Kebede & Phasha, 2024; Wang et al., 2022; Bhroin & King, 2020). Globally, the mediating pathway from technical competence through intrinsic motivation to inclusive behavior has been extensively researched in mainstream public schools. However, existing literature has not analyzed this structured competence-motivation-readiness model specifically within Islamic primary education. This omission creates a critical gap, as the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah environment introduces a dual curriculum that significantly alters pedagogical demands. Consequently, the field lacks a conceptual and empirical account of how technical competence interacts with motivational processes to shape readiness in settings where ethical, spiritual, and academic responsibilities intersect. The true novelty of this research lies not in testing motivation as a mediator, but in contextualizing a well-documented psychological mechanism within the distinct pedagogical ecology of Islamic educational institutions.

Grounded in this context, the present study advances a conceptual model that positions pedagogical competence as the structural driver of readiness and intrinsic motivation as the psychological mechanism through which competence informs inclusive instructional behavior. This model seeks to move beyond descriptive interpretations of teacher readiness by situating readiness within a theoretically anchored account of competence motivation interaction. In doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of inclusive pedagogy in MI and offers a refined basis for designing professional development policies that address both technical and motivational dimensions of teacher preparedness.

Therefore, this study advances a conceptually integrated model in which pedagogical competence functions as the structural antecedent of readiness, while intrinsic motivation operates as the psychological mechanism that activates and sustains inclusive instructional practices. By empirically testing this mediation model through path analysis, the study contributes to theorizing teacher readiness beyond descriptive explanations and provides a more nuanced understanding of motivational dynamics within Islamic educational contexts. Grounded in this framework, the research focuses on examining how intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between pedagogical competence and the readiness of MI teachers to implement inclusive education.

METHOD

Research Method

This study employed an explanatory correlational design with a causal-inferential orientation to examine the structural model linking pedagogical competence, intrinsic motivation, and the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) teachers for inclusive education. Although no experimental manipulation was involved, the study relied on *theory-driven inference* using regression-based path analysis to assess both direct and indirect relationships among the variables.

The explanatory correlational design was selected to align with the analytical objective of testing a theoretically grounded model derived from the Teacher Competence Framework and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The conceptual model was specified *a priori*, prior to data collection, to ensure coherence between the theoretical foundation and the methodological approach.

Participants

This study involved 195 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) teachers across several regions in Indonesia. The sample size was determined using the Isaac and Michael sampling table, and respondents were selected through a multistage sampling procedure at the regional level combined with simple random sampling at the school level. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and this aspect is acknowledged as a potential source of selection bias, consistent with the methodological considerations noted by Elfil & Negida (2019).

Although the study did not obtain formal ethical clearance from an institutional review board, all participants received written information regarding the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their data, and their right to decline or withdraw from participation at any time. Prior to completing the questionnaire, each teacher was explicitly asked to indicate their willingness or unwillingness to participate, ensuring that the principles of informed consent were upheld and that participant autonomy was respected. Therefore, the assertion that the study lacked ethical consideration is not entirely accurate, as informed consent procedures were implemented in accordance with ethical standards for non-interventional survey research.

Demographic characteristics collected from participants included gender, years of teaching experience, educational background, prior coursework in educational psychology or inclusive education, and experience teaching students with special needs:

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Research Subjects

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	146	74,9 %
	Male	49	25,1 %
Years of Teaching Experience	1 – 2 years	50	25,6 %
	3 – 4 years	37	18,9 %
	> 5 years	35	17,9 %
	> 10 years	73	37,4 %
Studied Educational Psychology / Inclusive Education	Yes	152	76,4 %
	No	47	23,6 %
Experience Teaching Students with Special Needs	Yes	118	76,1 %
	No	37	23,9 %
Educational Background (Study Program)	PGMI (Islamic Elementary Teacher Education)	102	52,3%
	Education (non-PGMI)	40	20,5%
	Non-Education	53	27,2%

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model consists of three main paths:

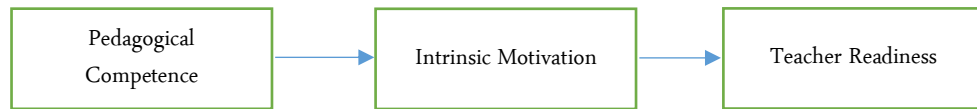
- Pedagogical Competence → Teacher Readiness
- Pedagogical Competence → Intrinsic Motivation
- Intrinsic Motivation → Teacher Readiness

Indirect (mediated) path:

Pedagogical Competence → Intrinsic Motivation → Teacher Readiness

A more detailed illustration of the model is presented in the figure below:

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Data collection procedures

The research instruments were adapted following the cross-cultural translation guidelines by Beaton (2000), encompassing forward translation, synthesis, back translation, expert evaluation by an educational psychologist, and a pilot test to ensure contextual relevance. Construct validity and reliability for all scales were established via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using SmartPLS. Teacher readiness for inclusive education was measured using an 18-item scale adapted from Porakari *et al.*, (2015), covering knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which demonstrated factor loadings ranging from 0.57 to 0.92 and a reliability coefficient of 0.924. Pedagogical competence was assessed using the 15-item Perceived Competencies for Inclusive Teaching Scale (PCITS) developed by Kuyini *et al.*, (2016). This specific scale encompasses five dimensions, including adaptive pedagogy and behavior management, yielding factor loadings between 0.58 and 1.00 with a reliability of 0.931. Finally, intrinsic motivation was evaluated using an 11-item scale adapted from Bukhari *et al.*, (2023) focusing strictly on internal drives such as enjoyment and career development. The CFA results for this scale indicated factor loadings from 0.69 to 0.92 and a reliability coefficient of 0.860.

Data analysis procedures

To examine the role of intrinsic motivation as a mediating variable in the relationship between pedagogical competence and MI teachers' readiness to implement inclusive education, path analysis based on regression was conducted using SmartPLS 3.5.2. In addition, to evaluate the effectiveness of the mediation effect, a supplementary Sobel test was performed. Intrinsic motivation was considered to function as a mediator if the indirect path from pedagogical competence to teacher readiness in inclusive classrooms showed statistical significance with a p-value ≤ 0.05 . Furthermore, the mediation effect was deemed significant in the Sobel test if the obtained p-value was less than or equal to the critical ratio (Cr) specified in the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Normality Test and Homogeneity Test

The data used in this study met the assumption of normality, as evidenced by the results of the normality test presented in Table 2.

Table 2. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

N		195
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	6.30598394
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.117
	Positive	.086
	Negative	-.117
Test Statistic		10.117
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.210 ^c

- a. Test distribution is Normal.
- b. Calculated from data.

The results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method showed a significance value of 0.210. Since this value exceeds 0.05, it can be concluded that the research data meet the assumption of normal distribution. Accordingly, both research variables demonstrated normally distributed data. Furthermore, the data were also found to be homogeneous, indicating that the variations originated from populations with equal variances, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
15.270	2	582	.231
14.262	2	582	.243
14.262	2	518.071	.360
14.682	2	582	.252

The results of the homogeneity test using Levene's Statistic showed significance values of 0.231, 0.243, 0.360, and 0.252. Since all of these values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the research data satisfy the assumption of homogeneity.

Direct and Indirect Effect Testing

This analysis aimed to examine both the direct and indirect effects of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variable. The test was conducted by referring to the critical ratio (CR) values obtained from the regression weights. A hypothesis was accepted if the p-value was smaller than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$ or 0.01). For clarity, the acronyms of each variable are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Description of Variable Acronyms

Variable	Acronym
Teacher Readiness for Inclusive Education	KG
Pedagogical Competence	KP
Intrinsic Motivation	MI

The results of the hypothesis testing for minor hypotheses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of Regression Analysis for Direct and Indirect Effects

Direct and Indirect Effects				Standardized Regression Weight	C.r	p-value
KP	=>	KG	R ² = 0,91	0,324	3,674	0,000
MI	=>	KG		0,351	3,875	0,000
KP	=>	MI	R ² = 0,89	0,579	10,780	0,000
KP	=>	MI => KG			0,262	0,000

A path coefficient of 0.324 ($p < 0.05$) from pedagogical competence (PC) to teacher readiness (TR) indicates a significant result. This finding demonstrates a positive influence of pedagogical competence on teacher readiness for inclusive education. The higher the level of pedagogical competence possessed by teachers, the greater their readiness to implement inclusive practices. The combined contribution of

pedagogical competence and intrinsic motivation to teacher readiness was 91% ($R^2 = 0.91$), while the remaining variance was explained by other factors outside this study.

A path coefficient of 0.351 ($p < 0.05$) from intrinsic motivation (IM) to teacher readiness (TR) was also significant. This suggests that intrinsic motivation is positively associated with teacher readiness. In other words, the greater the intrinsic motivation teachers possess, the more prepared they are to manage inclusive learning.

Furthermore, a path coefficient of 0.579 ($p < 0.05$) from pedagogical competence (PC) to intrinsic motivation (IM) revealed a significant positive effect. This indicates that pedagogical competence contributes to enhancing teachers' intrinsic motivation. The stronger the pedagogical competence, the greater the intrinsic drive teachers have to perform their duties. Pedagogical competence explained 89% of the variance in intrinsic motivation ($R^2 = 0.89$), with the remainder influenced by factors outside the model.

In addition, there was an indirect effect of pedagogical competence on teacher readiness through intrinsic motivation, with a coefficient of 0.262 ($p < 0.05$). This demonstrates that intrinsic motivation functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between pedagogical competence and teacher readiness. Accordingly, higher levels of pedagogical competence lead to stronger intrinsic motivation, which in turn positively contributes to teacher readiness for inclusive education. For ease of interpretation, these relationships are illustrated in Figure 1.

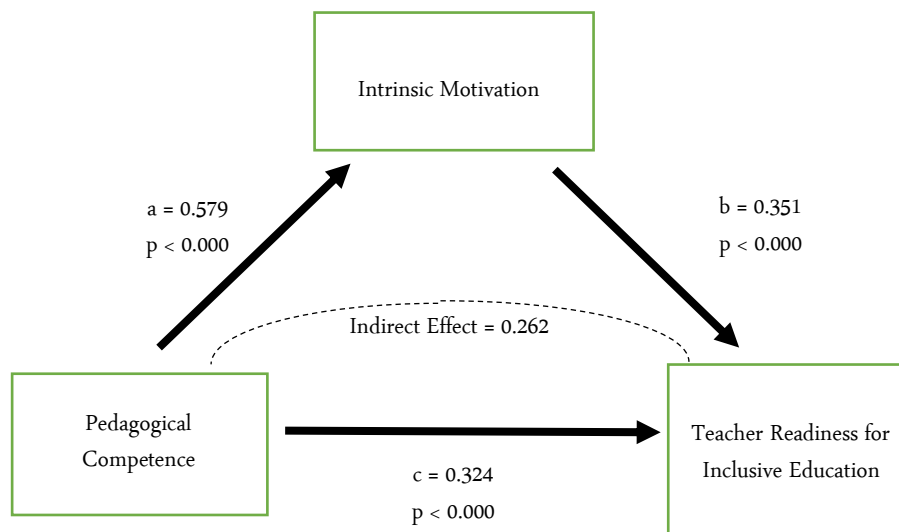


Figure 2. Overall Results of Direct and Indirect Effects

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that pedagogical competence exerts a strong and significant influence on intrinsic motivation, supporting the central propositions of Cognitive Evaluation Theory within the broader Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, entering into a critical dialogue with recent empirical work reveals a distinct contextual divergence. While studies in secular educational settings often isolate perceived competence as a standalone cognitive driver of individual self-efficacy (Ahn et al., 2021), the current analysis indicates that within the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) ecology, competence is inseparable from a spiritual ethos of service. This finding extends SDT by suggesting that the psychological need for competence is amplified when intertwined with the spiritual meaning attributed to the

teaching profession (King & Boyatzis, 2015). The fulfillment of basic psychological needs is therefore not solely an individualistic pursuit but a communal and spiritual experience that strengthens intrinsic motivation for inclusive instructional practices. This contextual reinforcement offers a theoretical explanation for the exceptionally high predictive values observed in the model ($R^2 = 0.89$ for intrinsic motivation and 0.91 for teacher readiness). While such coefficients are uncommon in general psychological research and might initially raise methodological concerns (Hair & Anderson, 2018; Kenny, 2016), analyzing these results through a psychosocial lens clarifies the outcome. The MI teacher sample possesses a highly uniform work culture governed by shared religious values and communal organizational structures. Unlike diverse public school samples that typically yield higher inter-individual variance (Smit et al., 2021), the homogenous spiritual and professional ethos in madrasahs acts as a unifying psychological driver, amplifying model predictability. This indicates that theoretical coherence in SDT can manifest with varying intensities depending on the cultural density of the educational environment. Furthermore, the mediating role of intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.262$, $p < 0.05$) elucidates the specific psychological mechanism transforming competence into readiness. Consistent with SDT, perceived competence does not automatically translate into professional readiness; rather, intrinsic motivation acts as the essential psychological bridge. This aligns with Urhahne & Wijnia (2023), who established that intrinsic regulation mediates cognitive skills and adaptive teaching behaviors. However, this study contributes a novel perspective by contextualizing this mediation. In contrast to Western-centric SDT applications that heavily prioritize personal autonomy as the ultimate motivational driver (Guay et al., 2021), the mediation effect in MI schools is driven by deeply internalized values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*) and responsibility (*amanah*). These values intensify the sense of meaning, demonstrating that the competence-motivation-readiness pathway is shaped significantly by religious dynamics, not just universal cognitive processes (Şahin, 2018).

Although the structural relationships are empirically robust, the absence of detailed construct validity tables (such as factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted) in the reporting constitutes a limitation that future studies must address to ensure complete methodological transparency. Despite this reporting limitation, the theoretical implications remain highly actionable. Engaging with recent literature on professional development (Ali et al., 2025), the analysis suggests that technical training alone is insufficient for preparing inclusive educators. Professional development programs must integrate cognitive, pedagogical, and spiritual dimensions. Interventions such as competency-based microteaching and reflective sessions rooted in Islamic values will likely yield more sustainable improvements in instructional quality, positioning the readiness for inclusive education as both a pedagogical skill and a fulfilled spiritual mandate.

Beyond theoretical contributions, the study holds important implications for MI teachers. Religious values, communal organizational structures, and strong relational ties between teachers and school leadership enhance the fulfillment of the need for relatedness, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation in ways that resonate with SDT. Research in Islamic and faith-based educational contexts indicates that internalized spiritual meaning can significantly elevate intrinsic work motivation (King & Boyatzis, 2015; Purnama et al., 2025). Consequently, these contextual characteristics not only contextualize the findings but actively shape the psychological processes examined in this study.

To translate these findings into practice, the study proposes a set of concrete recommendations. Professional development programs should be grounded in SDT principles and designed not only to enhance pedagogical competence but also to strengthen spiritual and psychological motivation. Such programs may incorporate competency-based microteaching, workshops on inclusive lesson design rooted in Islamic values,

reflective sessions that emphasize the spiritual meaning of teaching, and the establishment of supportive professional learning communities within the madrasah. Previous research confirms that integrating cognitive, pedagogical, and spiritual dimensions yields more sustainable improvements in teacher motivation and instructional quality. Therefore, these recommendations position the study's findings as both theoretically significant and practically actionable in supporting MI teachers' readiness for inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that pedagogical competence significantly shapes teacher readiness both directly and indirectly through intrinsic motivation, accounting for 91% of the observed variance within the sampled population. Although the current findings are constrained by a cross sectional design and measurements based on self-reports, the research contributes valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms driving educator preparedness. The results yield critical policy implications for the Ministry of Religious Affairs and teacher training institutions, highlighting the necessity to design professional development programs that integrate modules based on Self Determination Theory with structured microteaching. Furthermore, institutionalizing reflective spiritual and pedagogical practices aligned with Islamic educational values, alongside supportive madrasah leadership, will effectively enhance educator readiness for implementing sustainable inclusive education.

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