



## Implementation of Love-Based Curriculum: An Islamic Education Perspective

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### Abstract

The phenomenon of moral degradation, empathy crisis, and educational orientation that overemphasizes cognitive aspects gives rise to the need for a new approach in curriculum development. This study aims to explore the implementation of a love-based curriculum from an Islamic educational perspective as an effort to present a humanistic, spiritual, and character-oriented learning process. The research method employed is library research, which involves examining the literature related to the Qur'an, Hadith, the thoughts of classical and contemporary Islamic educational figures, and modern academic theories. The results of the study indicate that a love-based curriculum integrates intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, with the main principles of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (blessing for all the universe), compassion, etiquette, and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) as its core. Its implementation can be seen in the planning of curriculum objectives, dialogic learning strategies, and evaluations that emphasize the affective and spiritual aspects. This research is significant because it offers an alternative paradigm for developing an Islamic education curriculum that is relevant to contemporary needs and grounded in divine values.

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## Introduction

Education is essentially a planned and systematic effort to develop human potential holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Noddings, 2013). However, in contemporary reality, educational practices tend to place greater emphasis on academic achievement and intellectual skills alone, while the emotional and spiritual dimensions are often neglected. This has implications for the emergence of various problems, such as moral degradation, low social empathy, and weak commitment to human values among students. Within this framework, the idea of a love-based curriculum emerged as an alternative paradigm that seeks to balance intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects (Zainal Badri, 2021). Love, from an Islamic perspective, is not merely an emotion, but rather the ethical and spiritual foundation that underpins all educational activities (Malik et al., 2025). The Qur'an states that the prophetic message was sent as *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (*rahmatan lil-'alamin*) (QS. Al-Anbiya: 107) (Massofia & Rahmawati, 2023), meaning that education should be oriented towards universal compassion. Al-Ghazali's (Kholik, 2021) thoughts on moral education also emphasize that the ultimate goal of education is to bring humans closer to God through cultivating sincere love for Him and for all creatures. Thus, the development of a love-based curriculum has a strong normative, philosophical, and pedagogical foundation for application in the context of Islamic education, whether in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), *madrasahs* (Islamic schools), or formal schools (Sari, 2025).

The implementation of a love-based curriculum can also be explained through modern educational theories. Paulo Freire (Freire, t.t.), in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, emphasizes the importance of dialogical education based on love and humanization, rather than simply the rigid transfer of knowledge (Muis, 2025). This aligns with the principles of Islamic education, which prioritize compassion and respect for human nature at its core. According to Abraham Maslow's humanistic educational theory, love and belonging are basic human needs that must be met to achieve self-actualization (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). In the context of the curriculum, this means that learning must be designed in a way that enables students to feel loved, valued, and supported in their development. Furthermore, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences also emphasizes the importance of accommodating interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, which are closely related to the ability to love, empathize, and build healthy relationships (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). This

demonstrates that the concept of a love-based curriculum is not only relevant to Islamic teachings but also draws support from contemporary Western educational theories, making it an integrative paradigm capable of bridging spiritual needs and the demands of modernity (Lin et al., 2015).

Based on this background, the research problem can be formulated into three main questions: first, what is the concept of a love-based curriculum from an Islamic educational perspective? Second, how are the values of love implemented in academic planning, learning processes, and evaluation? Third, what are the challenges and opportunities for implementing a love-based curriculum in Islamic educational institutions in the modern era? This research aims to describe the concept of a love-based curriculum from an Islamic perspective, analyze its practical implementation in the educational process, and identify potential opportunities and obstacles in its implementation. Therefore, this paper is expected to provide both theoretical and valuable contributions to the development of a more humanistic, holistic, and spiritually oriented Islamic education curriculum. Furthermore, this research is also expected to inspire educators and policymakers to design a curriculum that not only produces intellectually intelligent individuals but also individuals with character, compassion, and a strong sense of transcendental awareness.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research design to analyze the concept of implementing a love-based curriculum from an Islamic education perspective (Sugiono, 2020). The research population includes classical, contemporary, and modern Islamic literature. At the same time, the sample was purposively selected from the Qur'an, Hadith, works of Islamic educational figures, humanistic educational theory, and relevant research findings. The research instrument was a document analysis sheet that categorized the main aspects of love values, implementation principles, learning strategies, and implementation challenges (Herdiansyah, 2010). Data validity and reliability were guaranteed through triangulation of sources and theories. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques through a systematic process of reduction, presentation, and conclusion (Mukhtar, 2013).

## Results and Discussion

### *Philosophical and Theological Foundations of Love-Based Curriculum*

The research results indicate that the implementation of a love-based curriculum from an Islamic educational perspective is not only perceived as an emotional approach to the learning process, but also as a philosophical and spiritual foundation that underpins all educational practices. In classical Islamic literature, love (mahabbah) is positioned as the pivot of human life. Al-Ghazali (Kholik, 2021), in (*Ihya' Ulumuddin*), explains that love for God is the culmination of the spiritual journey that gives birth to noble morals, while Ibn Miskawaih (Harahap, 2018) emphasizes that education truly functions to cultivate virtues that stem from compassion. Rumi's (Dudley, 2016) perspective also emphasizes that love is a transformative energy capable of revitalizing the human soul; therefore, education should not be solely cognitive but must also address the affective and spiritual dimensions. Thus, a love-based curriculum in Islam is rooted in the view that education is a path to bring humans closer to God while simultaneously fostering social empathy (Keir, 2018).

### *The Relevance of Modern Educational Theory to the Value of Love in Islam*

From a modern theoretical perspective, a love-based curriculum is closely linked to humanistic education. Carl Rogers (Joseph, 2025) emphasized the importance of empathetic relationships and unconditional acceptance as prerequisites for optimal growth of students' potential. Meanwhile, Nel Noddings (Chen & Shih, 2025), through the concept of the pedagogy of care (also known as the ethics of care), asserted that meaningful education can only be realized if it is based on relationships of love, attention, and care between individuals. The relevance to Islam is clear, as the Quran and Hadith also emphasize the importance of rahmah (compassion) as a fundamental principle of human relationships. Therefore, a love-based curriculum in the context of Islamic education can be viewed as an integration of religious values, a humanistic approach, and pedagogical practices that foster a balance between the cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects of students.

### *Love-Based Curriculum Implementation Strategy*

Further discussion identifies strategies for implementing a love-based curriculum in Islamic education. First, integrating the value of love into curriculum planning can be achieved by emphasizing materials that foster compassion,

solidarity, and social awareness. Second, the dialogic learning method, as proposed by Paulo Freire et al. (2025), can serve as a means of fostering equal relationships between teachers and students, thereby making education more than just a transfer of knowledge, but also a process of liberation and awareness formation. Third, the practice of teacher role models is crucial because love is not only transmitted through words but also manifested through attitudes, actions, and genuine interactions. Fourth, creating a school culture that emphasizes mutual respect, appreciation of differences, and building solidarity can serve as a medium for a love-based curriculum at the institutional level.

### *Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing a Love-Based Curriculum*

However, research has also found significant challenges in implementing a love-based curriculum. The pragmatic orientation of modern education, which tends to focus on academic achievement, often overlooks affective and spiritual aspects. Furthermore, the competitive culture and bureaucratization of education also limit the space for empathy- and care-based education (Ibrahim et al.). Another challenge is the dominance of a materialistic paradigm that reduces education to a mere economic instrument, rather than a vehicle for developing whole human beings (Burhanudin et al.). However, opportunities remain for strengthening a love-based curriculum through the integration of Islamic teachings, humanistic theory, and critical pedagogy, which together can address the moral crisis, dehumanization, and disorientation of educational goals in an era of disruption. Thus, a love-based curriculum from an Islamic educational perspective deserves to be viewed as a transformative and relevant alternative paradigm for building a more humanistic and spiritual civilization (Zainal Badri, 2021).

### *Implications of a Love-Based Curriculum for Islamic Education*

Based on research findings, a love-based curriculum from an Islamic educational perspective has multidimensional implications, encompassing philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, socio-cultural, and institutional aspects.

#### 1) Philosophical Implications: Education as a Path to Spirituality

A love-based curriculum emphasizes that education is a means of drawing closer to God, not simply a process of transferring knowledge (Sidik & Sari, 2025). According to Al-Ghazali in (Ihya' Ulumuddin), the concept of mahabbah (community) is the culmination of a spiritual journey that fosters noble morals. Ibn Miskawaih et

al. (2025) also emphasized that education serves to cultivate virtues that stem from compassion. This means that the orientation of Islamic education through a love-based curriculum is transcendent, connecting humans with God and with one another.

## 2) Pedagogical Implications: Shifting Learning Paradigms

Pedagogically, a love-based curriculum necessitates a shift from an instructional model to a dialogical and humanistic model (Zhao & Zhong, 2025). Teachers do not simply teach, but also become compassionate figures and role models. Nel Noddings' concept of the pedagogy of care is relevant to the Islamic principle of mercy, which places attention, empathy, and concern at the core of educational relationships. Carl Rogers (*Unconditional Positive Regard: Why Mental Health Courts Conflict with Carl Rogers' Client-Centered Therapy*, t.t.) also emphasized that learning is optimal when based on unconditional positive regard.

## 3) Psychological Implications: Mental Health and Character Development

A love-based curriculum fosters a learning environment characterized by appreciation and compassion, with positive implications for students' mental health. This aligns with Rumi's (Dudley, 2016) view that love is a transformative energy that enlivens the human soul. Students who grow up in a love-based educational climate will develop empathy, social awareness, and tolerance. This is a response to the moral crisis caused by overly cognitive education (Aslinda & Amrizon, 2025).

## 4) Socio-Cultural Implications: Shaping a Mercy-Based Civilization (Maddox, t.t.)

The implementation of a love-based curriculum in schools or Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) transforms educational institutions into small centers of mercy civilization. This aligns with the Islamic principle of "*rahmatan lil 'alamin*" (Quran, Al-Anbiya: 107) (Rohman & Harhab, 2024). Education that instills the values of solidarity, cooperation, and respect for differences will produce a humanistic, inclusive, and civilized generation (Page, t.t.).

## 5) Institutional Implications: A Love-Based School Culture

At the institutional level (Anzulovic, 2011), a love-based curriculum demands a change in school culture. Islamic education is not sufficient to develop a written curriculum; it must also create a school climate that aligns with the value of love. According to Freire (Freire, t.t.), proper education arises from liberating, dialogical relationships, not mere bureaucratization. Therefore, love-based schools need to

implement participatory management, process-focused evaluation, and policies that respect humanity (Mujahidin et al., 2025).

To clarify the various dimensions of the implications of a love-based curriculum in Islamic education, this study defines five main interrelated aspects: philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, socio-cultural, and institutional. Each element has a primary focus, impact on Islamic education, and practical implementation options for schools and Islamic boarding schools. A summary of these implications is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Implications and Practical Implementation of a Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Education

| No. | Aspects Implications  | Main Focus                                                      | Impact on Islamic Education                                                                          | Examples of Practical Implementation                                                                                                                          |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | <b>Philosophy</b>     | Education as a spiritual path to drawing closer to God          | A more transcendental educational orientation, emphasizing morals and worship                        | Integration of the value of love into the material on faith and morals, fostering prayer before learning, and enhancing the spiritual well-being of students. |
| 2   | <b>Pedagogical</b>    | Learning based on compassion, dialogue, and humanity            | Teacher-student relationships are warmer, more participatory, and more empathetic                    | Dialogic, collaborative, and experience-based learning methods. Student-centered learning approach                                                            |
| 3   | <b>Psychological</b>  | Mental health and character development                         | Students are happier, more empathetic, more tolerant, and more emotionally and spiritually balanced. | Islamic counseling programs, daily self-reflection exercises, and activities promoting emotional and spiritual literacy.                                      |
| 4   | <b>Socio-Cultural</b> | Education as a civilization of mercy, solidarity, and tolerance | Shaping a humanistic, inclusive, and civilized generation                                            | Community service activities, intercultural/religious dialogue, and fostering brotherhood and cooperation in schools/Islamic boarding schools                 |
| 5   | <b>Institutional</b>  | School culture based on compassion                              | Schools/Islamic boarding schools become centers of a culture of love, with inclusive management.     | Implementation of the 5S culture (smile, greet, greet, be polite, and be courteous), participatory policies, portfolio-based evaluation, and reflection.      |

The table above illustrates the five main aspects of the implications of a love-based curriculum in Islamic education: philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, socio-cultural, and institutional. Philosophically, a love-based curriculum positions education as a spiritual path to drawing closer to God. Therefore, the orientation of

education is not solely academic but also transcendental, with an emphasis on morals and worship. Pedagogically, education is directed at building warmer, more empathetic, and participatory teacher-student relationships through dialogic, collaborative, and student-centered learning methods. Psychologically, the implementation of a love-based curriculum has significant implications for the mental health and character development of students, enabling them to grow into happier, more tolerant, empathetic, and emotionally and spiritually balanced individuals.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural aspect emphasizes that education is not solely oriented toward the individual but also fosters a compassionate civilization that upholds solidarity, tolerance, and togetherness. Through activities such as community service, cross-cultural dialogue, and promoting the practice of brotherhood, schools and Islamic boarding schools can cultivate an inclusive and humane generation. Finally, from an institutional perspective, a love-based curriculum fosters a school culture that prioritizes compassion. This can be achieved through the implementation of the 5S (smile, greet, greet, be polite, and be courteous), participatory policies, and reflection-based evaluation. Therefore, the table as a whole demonstrates that a love-based curriculum not only focuses on the spiritual and psychological aspects of students but also emphasizes a shift in learning paradigms, thereby strengthening school culture and making a tangible contribution to building a compassionate culture within society.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that a love-based curriculum is the solution to various issues in contemporary Islamic education, which has often been limited to a purely cognitive orientation. This curriculum presents a new paradigm that is more transcendental, humanistic, and holistic. Philosophically, it reaffirms that education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but rather a spiritual path that draws students closer to God and shapes their noble character. From a pedagogical perspective, a love-based curriculum fosters a compassionate, dialogical, and participatory learning process, thus revitalizing the role of teachers as role models and friends to students. From a psychological perspective, this curriculum addresses the issue of mental degradation and dehumanization by fostering emotional balance, empathy, and tolerance in students. From a socio-cultural perspective, the implementation of a love-based curriculum has implications for the birth of a more inclusive, tolerant, and civilized generation, in accordance with the vision of Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin. Institutionally, this curriculum fosters a school and Islamic

boarding school culture that emphasizes compassion, solidarity, and participatory management. Thus, a love-based curriculum not only addresses the problem of education that is devoid of human values but also offers an alternative paradigm that can foster the development of a complete human being: intellectually intelligent, emotionally mature, and spiritually strong.

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