

Reorientation of the Islamic Education Curriculum in Madrasahs through a Love-Based Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the reorientation of the Islamic education curriculum in madrasah through a love-based approach as a pedagogical, ethical, and spiritual foundation. The study focuses on how love can be positioned as a curriculum principle that integrates knowledge, morality, spirituality, empathy, and social responsibility in Islamic education. This research employed a qualitative approach using library research. Data were collected from books, journal articles, and relevant academic sources related to curriculum theory, humanistic pedagogy, ethics of care, dialogical education, and Islamic educational thought. The data were analyzed through content analysis by identifying, categorizing, interpreting, and synthesizing key theoretical concepts. The findings indicate that a love-based approach requires curriculum reorientation in three main aspects: the reformulation of educational objectives, the transformation of teacher-student relationships, and the strengthening of madrasah culture. This approach contributes to forming students who are religious, civilized, empathetic, and socially responsible.

Keywords: *Curriculum Reorientation, Islamic Education, Madrasah, Love-Based Approach*

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2nd International Conference on Islamic Community Studies (ICICS)

Theme: History of Malay Civilisation and Islamic Human Capacity and Halal Hub in the Globalization Era
<https://proceeding.pancabudi.ac.id/index.php/ICIE/index>

Introduction

Islamic education in madrasahs faces new demands not only to produce students who master religious knowledge, but also to cultivate moral sensitivity, social empathy, mature spirituality, and the capacity to live peacefully within a plural society. In this context, the madrasah curriculum cannot merely be understood as an administrative framework that regulates learning outcomes, materials, and assessment. Rather, it must be viewed as an instrument for the holistic formation of human beings. The Love-Based Curriculum policy introduced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasizes that madrasah education needs to move beyond the transfer of knowledge toward the internalization of love, togetherness, and ecological responsibility. This orientation is relevant because Islamic education normatively contains the dimensions of *rahmah*, *adab*, compassion, and public benefit. However, in learning practice, these values have not always been systematically integrated into curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, madrasah culture, and affective assessment (Transinata, 2017).

The need for curriculum reorientation has become increasingly important because contemporary education is still often criticized for placing excessive emphasis on cognitive aspects, while emotional, spiritual, and character dimensions have not yet received a balanced evaluative space. Studies on the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum from the perspective of Islamic education indicate that this approach is directed toward presenting learning that is more humanistic, spiritual, and character-oriented by integrating intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions through the principles of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, compassion, *adab*, and *ukhuwah*. However, such transformation does not occur automatically merely through a change in curriculum terminology. Reconstruction is required at the level of educational objectives, teacher–student relations, dialogical learning methods, and an evaluation system capable of more authentically capturing the development of morality, empathy, and spirituality (Agama, 2025).

The theoretical gap in this study lies in the limited availability of conceptual models that connect Islamic education, the pedagogy of love, humanistic curriculum theory, and madrasah character formation within a single operational analytical framework. Some studies remain limited to normative explanations that love, compassion, and *adab* constitute core values of Islamic education, yet they have not sufficiently explained how these values are translated into curriculum structures, learning experiences, assessment practices, and institutional culture. The empirical gap is also evident in research findings from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which show that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum still faces uneven teacher understanding, limited systematic training, and inconsistencies in applying the value of love in classroom practice (Afriansyah & Sirozi, 2025).

curriculum in madrasahs through a love-based approach is important for formulating a more integrative conceptual and practical foundation for learning. This study is expected to strengthen the direction of madrasah curriculum development, not only in meeting academic standards but also in shaping students who are religious, empathetic, tolerant, well-mannered, and responsible toward others and the environment.

Literature Review

A. Curriculum as a Construction of Values and Educational Experiences

Theoretically, curriculum is understood not merely as a list of subjects, but as a systematic design of educational objectives, learning experiences, learning organization, and educational evaluation. Tyler conceptualizes curriculum as a rational process that begins with the formulation of educational objectives, the selection of learning experiences, the organization of those experiences, and the assessment of the extent to which the objectives have been achieved. This framework is important because the reorientation of the Islamic education curriculum in madrasahs must begin with a fundamental question concerning the kind of human being that education seeks to form. In the context of madrasahs, educational objectives should not be directed solely toward cognitive religious achievement, but also

toward the formation of noble character, spiritual awareness, social sensitivity, and humanitarian responsibility. Thus, a love-based approach can be positioned as the axiological foundation of the curriculum, namely as the fundamental value that directs the objectives, content, process, and evaluation of education (Subiyono et al., 2021).

This perspective can be further deepened through Eisner's curriculum theory, which emphasizes that education should provide space for meaningful experiences, imagination, expression, and the construction of meaning within students. Eisner critiques curriculum models that are overly narrow because they focus only on measurable objectives, whereas valuable educational experiences often emerge through interaction, reflection, and expression that cannot always be reduced to technical indicators.

From this perspective, a love-based curriculum cannot merely be translated into additional materials on compassion. Rather, it must be embodied in the learning atmosphere, pedagogical relationships, experiential design, and madrasah culture. Curriculum reorientation, therefore, means shifting Islamic education from the mere mastery of doctrine toward learning experiences that shape students' feelings, attitudes, *adab*, and moral responsibility (M. Y. Harahap et al., 2025).

B. Pedagogy of Love, Ethics of Care, and Humanistic Education

The theory of the pedagogy of love has conceptual proximity to the *ethics of care* developed by Nel Noddings. In this theory, educational morality rests upon the caring relationship between educators and students. Good education is not determined solely by the appropriateness of materials and methods, but also by the quality of relationships, attentiveness, responsiveness, and recognition of students as whole persons.

Noddings positions care as the ethical foundation of education, so that teachers are not viewed merely as transmitters of knowledge, but as figures who build moral relationships through attentiveness and responsibility. In the context of madrasahs, this theory is relevant because Islamic education places the teacher–student relationship as an important part of *adab* formation, rather than merely as an instructional relationship (Baharun, 2016).

The pedagogy of love can also be linked to the thought of Paulo Freire. For Freire, liberating education must reject the “banking model” that positions students as passive containers and replace it with dialogical education that fosters critical consciousness. Dialogue in Freirean education is built upon love, humility, trust, and belief in human beings' capacity to understand and transform their reality.

Thus, love in education is not a sentimental attitude, but an ethical commitment to humanizing students. In madrasahs, this approach can encourage religious learning that is not indoctrinative, but dialogical, reflective, and contextual. Students are not merely required to memorize Islamic values; rather, they are invited to understand the meaning of those values in social, ecological, and national life (Pujiati et al., 2025).

This foundation is strengthened by humanistic education theory. Maslow positions the needs for love, security, esteem, and self-actualization as essential elements in human development. Rogers also emphasizes learner-centered learning, meaningful experience, and an environment that supports personal growth. Within this framework, madrasah students cannot be viewed merely as objects of curricular discipline, but as persons with emotional, spiritual, social, and intellectual needs. Therefore, a love-based curriculum must ensure that religious learning does not produce fear, alienation, or mechanical obedience, but instead fosters a sense of security, meaningfulness, and moral awareness (Purwanti, 2017).

C. Islamic Education, *Adab*, *Rahmah*, and the Formation of Persons of Character

In the tradition of Islamic education, the idea of love is rooted in the concepts of *rahmah*, *adab*, *tazkiyah*, and *ta'dib*. Al-Ghazali views education as a process of shaping the soul and moral character, not merely as intellectual development. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, the teacher functions not only as an instructor, but also as a moral and spiritual

guide who provides exemplary conduct for students. Therefore, Islamic education requires the unity of knowledge, practice, morality, and exemplary behavior. When this concept is situated within the madrasah curriculum, learning must not stop at the mastery of materials in *fiqh*, *aqidah*, the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic history. Rather, it must lead to the formation of compassionate behavior, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others (Al-Ghazali, 2018).

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' thought on *ta'dib* is also important as a theoretical foundation. Al-Attas positions *ta'dib* as the essence of Islamic education, namely the process of cultivating *adab* that enables human beings to properly position knowledge, the self, others, nature, and God. In this context, a love-based approach should not be understood as a weakening of discipline, but as the formation of *adab* consciousness through educational relationships characterized by wisdom. Love becomes the principle that connects knowledge with moral responsibility. Thus, the reorientation of the Islamic education curriculum in madrasahs through a love-based approach can be positioned as a theoretical effort to integrate cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social dimensions within a humanistic, transformative, and civilized framework of Islamic education (Al-Attas, 1999).

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. This approach was selected because the focus of the study is directed toward examining, interpreting, and formulating the concept of reorienting the Islamic education curriculum in madrasahs through a love-based approach, grounded in educational theory, curriculum theory, humanistic pedagogy, the ethics of care, and Islamic education. This type of research is descriptive-analytical in nature, as it systematically describes the key concepts and subsequently analyzes the relationships among those concepts in order to construct a conceptual framework relevant to the development of the madrasah curriculum (Satori, 2009).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data include books, scholarly journal articles, and academic works that discuss curriculum theory, the pedagogy of love, humanistic education, the *ethics of care*, and concepts of Islamic education such as *rahmah*, *adab*, *ta'dib*, and moral formation.

The secondary data include supporting documents, previous research findings, educational regulations, and other academic sources relevant to the research theme. Data collection was carried out through documentation, namely by tracing, reading, recording, classifying, and selecting literature in accordance with the focus of the study (Bungin, 2001).

The data analysis technique employed in this study is *content analysis*. The data were analyzed through several stages, namely data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation of meaning, and the drawing of conceptual conclusions. The analysis was directed toward identifying the interconnections among curriculum theory, the value of love, and Islamic education in madrasahs. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, intensive reading of the literature, comparison across theories, and examination of argumentative consistency, so that the findings of the study possess a strong academic foundation and can be academically justified (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 1994).

Results

The findings of this study indicate that the reorientation of the Islamic education curriculum in madrasah through a love-based approach can be understood as a conceptual effort to shift the orientation of the curriculum from the mere mastery of religious subject matter toward the formation of individuals who are knowledgeable, civilized, empathetic, and socially responsible. Within this framework, love is not interpreted merely as an emotional expression, but as a pedagogical, ethical, and spiritual principle that guides the entire educational process. The Islamic education curriculum in madrasah should therefore be positioned as a space for holistic human formation, namely the formation of individuals who

not only understand Islamic teachings cognitively but are also able to manifest them in behavior, social relations, and everyday attitudes.

The first finding shows that a love-based approach has implications for the reformulation of curriculum objectives. In classical curriculum theory, Tyler argues that curriculum development should begin with clearly formulated educational objectives, which are then translated into learning experiences, the organization of those experiences, and evaluation. When this framework is applied to Islamic education in madrasah, curriculum objectives should not be limited to the achievement of academic competence and mastery of religious content. These objectives need to be expanded to include the development of spiritual awareness, moral gentleness, social sensitivity, and the ability to build peaceful relationships. Thus, the love-based approach may serve as a value foundation that directs curriculum objectives toward a more humanistic and transformative orientation.

This reorientation of objectives is important because Islamic education, in principle, does not separate knowledge from morality. The concepts of *adab*, *rahmah*, and *ta'dib* in the Islamic educational tradition indicate that knowledge should lead learners toward moral order and divine consciousness. Al-Attas places *ta'dib* at the core of Islamic education because education aims to cultivate *adab*, namely the ability to properly position oneself, knowledge, God, other human beings, and nature. Therefore, a love-based curriculum should be directed toward forming students who are not only correct in understanding religious teachings but also wise in practicing them. Religious education that merely emphasizes memorization, formal obedience, and cognitive achievement risks losing its deepest dimension as a process of humanization and spiritual purification (Hendratno & Nuraida, 2023).

The second finding indicates that a love-based approach requires a transformation in the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students. In the theory of *ethics of care*, Noddings emphasizes that meaningful education emerges from relationships of care, attention, responsiveness, and recognition of students as whole persons. Teachers are not merely responsible for delivering subject matter but also serve as moral guides who provide a sense of security, appreciation, and exemplary conduct. In the context of madrasah, this relationship carries significant meaning because religious teachers are often positioned as moral and spiritual figures. The way teachers interact, correct, guide, and provide examples shapes students' religious experiences (A. S. Harahap, 2025).

The love-based approach is also consistent with Freire's concept of dialogical education. Freire rejects education that positions students as passive objects receiving knowledge. He asserts that education must build dialogue, critical consciousness, and respect for students' humanity. In Islamic education within madrasah, this principle can be applied through learning processes that provide space for questions, reflection, lived experiences, and contextual interpretation of religious values. Students are not only required to know religious texts or concepts but are also invited to understand how the values of compassion, justice, trustworthiness, and responsibility are applied in real life (Sanjaya et al., 2025).

Table 1. orientation of Madrasah Education from Conventional Curriculum Orientation to a Love-Based Educational Paradigm

| Aspect of Reorientation | Conventional Curriculum Orientation | Love-Based Orientation | Implications for Madrasah |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Educational objectives | Emphasizes mastery of subject matter and cognitive achievement | Emphasizes the integration of knowledge, morality, empathy, and spirituality | Learning objectives need to include moral, social, and spiritual dimensions |
| Teacher's position | Main source of knowledge and | Guide, role model, facilitator, and moral | Teachers need to build dialogical, caring, and |

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|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| | classroom controller | caregiver | respectful relationships with students |
| Student's position | Object of learning assessed through academic outcomes | Subject of education with intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs | Learning should provide space for participation, reflection, and meaningful experiences |
| Learning materials | Centered on lesson content and curriculum targets | Directed toward value interpretation and actualization in life | Religious materials need to be connected with social, environmental, and humanitarian issues |
| Evaluation | Dominated by tests and cognitive achievement | Measures knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and character development | Assessment needs to include moral observation, reflection, social projects, and portfolios |

The table shows that curriculum reorientation cannot be achieved merely by adding the term love to curriculum documents. Change must address the dimensions of objectives, teacher roles, student positions, learning content, and evaluation systems. If the love-based approach is understood only as a moral slogan, the resulting change will remain administrative. Conversely, when love is understood as a pedagogical principle, the curriculum can encourage transformation in the way madrasah construct learning experiences. This is where the importance of the love-based approach lies, namely as a framework that connects the normative dimension of Islamic education with more operational curriculum practice (Yunan Harahap et al., 2023).

The third finding shows that a love-based approach needs to be integrated into the culture of madrasah, not only into classroom learning. Curriculum operates not only through written documents but also through school culture, social interaction, daily habits, discipline, religious activities, and institutional leadership models. Eisner argues that education has both explicit and implicit dimensions. What students experience in school life often has a stronger influence than what is written in curriculum documents. Therefore, madrasah need to ensure that the values of love, compassion, *adab*, and care are present throughout the educational environment.

In this context, a love-based madrasah culture can be realized through simple but consistent practices, such as polite teacher communication, educative handling of misconduct, appreciation of students' diverse abilities, strengthening of social activities, and habituation of environmental care. This approach does not mean eliminating discipline. On the contrary, discipline remains necessary, but it should be implemented through the principle of guidance rather than punishment that degrades students' dignity. Love-based discipline positions students as developing individuals, so mistakes are understood as opportunities for education rather than merely as violations that must be punished.

This discussion also indicates that the love-based approach contributes to strengthening students' religious character. In Islamic education, character is not built merely through moral lectures but through role modeling, habituation, experience, and internalization of values. If the madrasah curriculum is able to provide meaningful learning experiences, students will more easily understand religion as a source of compassion, responsibility, and public good. This is important because religious education delivered rigidly may produce formal obedience, but not necessarily deep moral consciousness. In contrast, love-based education can foster the internalization of values because students experience religion as something that guides, comforts, and humanizes (Rahman, 2019).

Thus, the findings of this study affirm that the reorientation of the Islamic education curriculum in madrasah through a love-based approach has three main implications. First, the curriculum needs to be directed toward the integration of knowledge, morality, spirituality,

and social care. Second, the learning process needs to be built through pedagogical relationships that are dialogical, empathetic, and respectful of students' dignity. Third, madrasah need to develop an institutional culture that reflects the values of *rahmah*, *adab*, and humanitarian responsibility. These three implications demonstrate that the love-based approach is not merely a moral concept, but a curriculum framework that can strengthen the relevance of Islamic education in madrasah in responding to contemporary educational challenges (Abdi Syahrial Harahap, 2020).

Conclusion

Based on the discussion, the love-based approach offers a conceptual direction for reorienting the Islamic education curriculum in madrasah. This approach places love as a pedagogical, ethical, and spiritual foundation that can strengthen the role of madrasah in shaping students' knowledge, character, and social awareness.

1. The reorientation of the Islamic education curriculum should integrate knowledge, morality, spirituality, and social responsibility. Love becomes a guiding principle for curriculum objectives, learning content, and educational outcomes.
2. A love-based curriculum requires the transformation of teacher-student relationships. Teachers should function not only as transmitters of knowledge, but also as moral guides, role models, and caring facilitators.
3. The implementation of this approach must be embedded in the broader culture of madrasah. Its values should appear in classroom interaction, discipline, assessment, religious activities, and institutional practices, so that students develop as religious, civilized, empathetic, and socially responsible individuals.

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