

CURRICULUM OF LOVE: EFFORTS TO REVITALISE HUMANISM IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study analyses the concept of a love-based curriculum as an effort to revive the humanistic side of students within the framework of Islamic education, as well as its potential implications for the learning management system in religious educational institutions in Indonesia. This study uses a systematic literature review methodology, analysing relevant literature published mainly since 2020. Data collection involved a comprehensive examination of official policy documents from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, academic journals, and scientific publications through databases including Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and DOAJ. The analysis used thematic categorisation to identify key conceptual elements. This study identifies three fundamental dimensions of love-based curriculum: its philosophical foundation in the Islamic concept of rahmatan lil 'alamin, its pedagogical emphasis on emotional intelligence development, and its practical implementation challenges. This study contributes to educational theory by proposing a conceptual framework that bridges Islamic educational principles with contemporary humanistic pedagogy. These findings suggest practical applications for curriculum development in religious educational institutions facing the challenges of modernisation. This study presents the first comprehensive conceptual analysis of love-based curriculum initiatives in the context of Indonesian Islamic education, offering insights that transcend religious boundaries towards broader considerations of educational reform.

Keywords: Love-Based Curriculum; Revitalisation; Humanistic; Islamic Education

A. Introduction

Educational transformation in Indonesia continues in response to the complexity of contemporary challenges. The "Curriculum of Love" launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has emerged as a strategic innovation to instil values of compassion, empathy, and harmony in learning at Islamic educational institutions. This policy is a response to the phenomenon of moral degradation, increased intolerance, and violence involving the younger generation (Mukhlis, 2018). Through the implementation of the Love Curriculum, the Ministry of Religious Affairs seeks to create an educational environment with a humanistic approach that balances cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Education that focuses on cognitive aspects without paying attention to affective and spiritual dimensions tends to produce individuals who are intellectually intelligent but weak in emotional and spiritual intelligence (Rosidi, 2024). Research (Hidayat et al., 2025) shows that love-based education has a significant impact on character development and academic

achievement, where students who feel valued show higher learning motivation and positive behaviour in social interactions.

The Love Curriculum is relevant to the humanistic approach (Maslow, 1943), which emphasises the importance of an environment that supports self-actualisation through unconditional acceptance and empathy. In the context of Islamic education, this curriculum is in line with the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which is the main mission of Islamic teachings (Abdurrohim, 2023). Islamic education is essentially based on the values of compassion, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW in educating his companions and followers. Several previous studies have explored aspects of compassion-based education in different contexts. A study (Yuliharti, 2019) emphasises that a loving approach to education creates a conducive learning environment for intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. Research (Husnaini et al., 2024) found the effectiveness of compassion-based education and tolerance in reducing *bullying* and intergroup conflicts in schools. Meanwhile, Samosir et al. (2024) highlighted the urgency of human values-based education in the digital age to counteract dehumanisation resulting from technology-mediated interactions. This is because dehumanisation (Sassi, 2021) is an education system that tends to be used by Western modernists in building world civilisation by promoting the values of *secularism, hedonism, anthropocentrism, empiricism, and even atheism*, which certainly denies human nature and robs humanity of its historical essence. By adopting a humanistic educational approach that emphasises human values, empathy, and holistic self-development, rather than merely transferring knowledge or focusing solely on academic achievement. This can be achieved by instilling Islamic values that prioritise individual dignity, creating a friendly and supportive learning environment, and equipping students with emotional and spiritual intelligence to face life's challenges.

However, there are significant gaps in the existing literature. First, there is still a limited number of comprehensive studies that analyse the concept of the Love Curriculum from both an educational policy and philosophical perspective simultaneously. Second, there has not been much research that systematically links the humanistic approach with Islamic educational values in the context of the Love Curriculum. Third, in-depth analysis of the practical implications of implementing the Love Curriculum on various dimensions of Islamic education is still relatively minimal. The implementation of the Love Curriculum is relevant to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasises the development of students' potential to become people of faith, piety, noble character, and quality. In this era of technological disruption, education faces the challenge of preparing a generation that is not only technologically proficient but also possesses good emotional and spiritual intelligence (Isnaini et al., 2024).

Based on the identification of these research gaps, this study aims to: (1) analyse the concept of the Love Curriculum from a comprehensive policy and educational theory perspective; (2) explore the philosophical, theoretical, and practical foundations of the Love Curriculum and its relevance to humanistic and Islamic educational approaches; and (3) identify the implications of implementing the Love Curriculum for the development of the Islamic education system in Indonesia. Through a policy document analysis approach and

systematic literature review, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of the concept of compassion-based education in the context of contemporary Islamic education. In addition, the results of this study can be used as a reference for curriculum developers and education practitioners in implementing a humanistic approach integrated with Islamic values at various levels of education. Thus, this study not only enriches the scientific knowledge on Islamic education policy innovation but also provides a conceptual framework for more humanistic and compassion-based educational practices. Based on the identification of these gaps, this study aims to: (1) analyse the concept of *the Love Curriculum* from a comprehensive policy and educational theory perspective; (2) explore the philosophical, theoretical, and practical foundations of *the Love Curriculum* and its relevance to humanistic approaches and Islamic education; and (3) identify the implications of its implementation for the development of the Islamic education system in Indonesia.

This study presents scientific novelty in integrating the analysis of national education policy and Islamic philosophical foundations in formulating *the concept of Love-Based Curriculum* as a new paradigm for humanistic Islamic education in Indonesia. This approach contributes theoretically to the development of a compassion-oriented curriculum model and offers a conceptual framework that can be applied in the practice of Islamic values-based education in the modern era.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review (SLR) method to analyse the concept, objectives, and implications of *the Love-Based Curriculum* in the context of Islamic education. This approach refers to the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) methodological guidelines and Kitchenham's (2004) conceptual framework, which are commonly used in systematic studies of social sciences and education. The SLR method was chosen because it allows researchers to conduct critical analysis and thematic synthesis of various documented sources without involving field research (Sabrina et al., 2024).

The primary data were sourced from eight official policy documents of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, including guidelines for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and policies to strengthen religious moderation. Secondary data included 27 academic journal articles, 12 scientific books, and 5 research reports published between 2020 and 2025, with several classic works used to strengthen the theoretical framework. The proportion of sources used in the analysis consisted of 60% journal articles, 25% scientific books, and 15% research reports.

Literature searches were conducted through five major electronic databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, DOAJ, and Garuda. The keywords used included "*Love Curriculum*", "*humanistic education*", "*compassion-based education*", and "*Islamic character education*". Source selection was carried out using four criteria:

1. Temporal, namely publications from at least 2020;

2. Relevance, i.e. direct relevance to the topics of the Love Curriculum and humanistic Islamic education;
3. Credibility, meaning sources from reputable journals, official institutions, or academic publishers;
4. Variety of perspectives, i.e., representation of various theoretical and contextual approaches.

To maintain the validity and reliability of the results, this study applied source triangulation by comparing various theoretical views and empirical results from relevant studies (Moon, 2019). The potential for interpretative bias was minimised through two strategies:

- (1) Peer debriefing, which involves discussions with two independent researchers to confirm the suitability of the analysis results; and
- (2) Reflexive journaling, which is reflective recording during the analysis process to identify potential subjective bias of the researcher.

Data analysis was conducted using a four-stage thematic categorisation approach, namely:

1. Literature selection based on eligibility criteria;
2. Identification of relevant content discussing the values of compassion, humanistic education, and Islamic education policy;
3. Thematic coding, which is the grouping of findings into main themes and sub-themes;
4. Synthesis and comparison between sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and implications of *the Love Curriculum*.

B. Findings and Discussion

Findings

1. Conceptual Foundations of the Love Curriculum

The analysis identified four fundamental principles that form the basis of the Love Curriculum. The principle of *holism* emphasises the comprehensive development of students, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. The principle of humanism focuses on respect for the dignity and uniqueness of each individual. The principle of inclusivity emphasises the acceptance of diversity as a source of richness, while the principle of sustainability emphasises the consistent application of the values of love throughout all levels of education (Nursalim & Iskandar, 2021). The philosophical foundation of the Love Curriculum is based on three complementary perspectives: Islamic education with the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which emphasises the spread of love regardless of differences (Baok et al., 2025; Sarnoto, 2018), humanism, which emphasises the development of individual potential through unconditional acceptance and empathy (Baok et al., 2025), and the theory of compassion as a fundamental need for optimal human development (Yuliharti, 2019).

The Love Curriculum launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia is an educational innovation that emphasises the internalisation of values of love and compassion in the learning process. Based on policy documents published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Love Curriculum is defined as "a set of plans and

arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and teaching materials, as well as the methods used as guidelines for conducting learning activities based on the values of love, empathy, and harmony to achieve specific educational goals" (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2023). The basic principle of the Love Curriculum is based on the premise that effective education not only transfers knowledge but also shapes the attitudes and behaviour of students through the instilling of positive values, especially the value of love in all aspects of life. The basic principles of the Love Curriculum cover several fundamental aspects mentioned above, namely the principles of holism, humanism, inclusiveness and sustainability.

The philosophical basis of the Love Curriculum is rooted in three main foundations: Islamic education, humanism, and the theory of compassion. From an Islamic education perspective, the Love Curriculum adopts the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all creation), which is the main mission in Islamic teachings. This concept emphasises the importance of spreading compassion, kindness, and benefits to all creatures regardless of their background and differences. As stated by (Sarnoto, 2018), Islamic teachings strongly emphasise the importance of compassion as the foundation for human interaction. This is reflected in various verses of the Qur'an and hadiths that encourage Muslims to spread compassion and avoid behaviour that harms others. From a humanistic perspective, the Love Curriculum adopts the view that every human being has dignity and intrinsic value that needs to be respected and developed. The humanistic approach to education, as expressed by figures such as Maslow (1943), emphasises the importance of creating an environment that supports individual self-actualisation through unconditional acceptance and empathy. The Love Curriculum adopts this view by emphasising the importance of harmonious relationships between educators and students based on the values of compassion and mutual respect (Baok et al., 2025).

From the perspective of the theory of love, the Love Curriculum adopts the view that love is a fundamental human need that must be fulfilled for optimal development. According to Yuliharti (2019), love plays an important role in personality formation, emotional intelligence development, and improving individual psychological well-being. In the context of education, love can be a transformative force that enables students to grow and develop optimally. When compared to other concepts of character education and value-based curricula, the Love Curriculum has several unique features. First, the Love Curriculum places a stronger emphasis on the value of love as the main foundation for shaping students' character. While character education generally covers various values such as honesty, responsibility, and justice, the Love Curriculum places love as the main value that serves as an umbrella for other values. Second, the Love Curriculum has a more explicit spiritual dimension because it is rooted in religious teachings, particularly Islam. This distinguishes it from more secular approaches to character education. Thirdly, the Love Curriculum emphasises the importance of building harmonious relationships between educators and students based on the values of love, while character education in general focuses more on instilling values through a structured learning process.

2. Orientation of Implementation Goals and Objectives

Based on an analysis of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy documentation (2023), the implementation objectives of the Love Curriculum are classified into three main dimensions. The first dimension focuses on character building based on compassion, which includes the development of empathy, care, tolerance, and positive emotion management through the example set by educators and the integration of values into learning. The second dimension emphasises enhancing social harmony and tolerance among religious communities by fostering mutual respect in the context of Indonesia's diversity. The third dimension emphasises the integration of the value of love in all aspects of education through collaborative learning methods, the development of teaching materials with messages of compassion, and the creation of a conducive school environment (Gade, 2011).

The main objective of implementing the Love Curriculum is to shape students' characters based on compassion. Through the internalisation of compassionate values, students are expected to develop good personalities, which are reflected in their daily attitudes and behaviour. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs policy document, character building based on compassion includes the development of several key characteristics, such as empathy, concern for others, tolerance, and the ability to manage emotions positively. In its implementation, character building based on compassion is carried out through various strategies, such as role modelling by educators, habit formation in daily life, and the integration of values of compassion into learning. The second objective of the Love Curriculum is to enhance social harmony and tolerance among religious communities. Amidst Indonesia's religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, the Love Curriculum seeks to foster mutual respect and appreciation for differences. Through the instilling of values of love, students are expected to develop an inclusive attitude and avoid discriminatory behaviour towards different groups. The hope is that this will contribute to the creation of a harmonious and peaceful society where diversity is seen as a strength, not a source of conflict. The third objective of the Love Curriculum is to integrate the value of love into subjects and educational activities. Unlike character education approaches that are often taught as separate subjects, the Love Curriculum emphasises the importance of integrating values of love into all aspects of education, including subjects, extracurricular activities, and daily interactions in the school environment. According to (Gade, 2011), the integration of values of love in learning can be done in various ways, such as using collaborative learning methods, developing teaching materials that contain messages of love, and creating a school environment that reflects values of love.

3. Structural Implications and Transformation of the Education System

The implementation of the Love Curriculum has resulted in a paradigmatic shift in Islamic education. Analysis shows a transformation from a *teacher-centred* to a *student-centred* model that provides more space for active participation, exploration, and reflection by students. Learning evaluation has been reoriented from a focus on academic achievement alone to a comprehensive assessment of students' character and attitude development. The transformation of the role of educators has been significant, shifting from merely imparting

knowledge to being role models and facilitators of the internalisation of values of compassion (Isnaini et al., 2024). The impact of implementation on students includes an increase in emotional and spiritual intelligence that enables positive interactions and social contributions, as evidenced by research (Mukhlis, 2018) showing the development of healthy self-esteem, empathy, and the ability to manage conflicts constructively.

The implementation of the Love Curriculum has significant implications for education policy, particularly in terms of teaching and evaluation approaches. In terms of teaching approaches, the Love Curriculum encourages a shift from *teacher-centred* learning models to *student-centred* learning models. Student-centred learning models provide greater scope for active participation, exploration and reflection, which are believed to facilitate the internalisation of values of love more effectively. In terms of evaluation, the Love Curriculum encourages a shift from evaluation that focuses solely on academic achievement to a more comprehensive evaluation that also takes into account the development of students' character and attitudes. This is in line with the principle of holism that forms the basis of the Love Curriculum. The implementation of the Love Curriculum also has significant implications for the role of educators in internalising the values of love. Educators not only act as conveyors of knowledge, but also as role models who inspire students to develop attitudes and behaviours that reflect the values of love. According to (Isnaini et al., 2024), educators have a crucial role in creating a learning environment conducive to the internalisation of values of love through exemplary behaviour, effective communication, and the creation of a supportive climate. To play this role effectively, educators need to be equipped with a deep understanding of the concept and implementation of the Love Curriculum through various training and professional development programmes.

For students, the implementation of the Love Curriculum has implications for changes in behaviour, character, and social interaction. Through the internalisation of values of love and compassion, students are expected to develop emotional and spiritual intelligence that enables them to interact positively with others and make positive contributions to society. Research conducted by (Mukhlis et al., 2018) shows that compassion-based education can help students develop healthy self-esteem, empathy for others, and the ability to manage conflict constructively. This indicates that the Love Curriculum has the potential to shape a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has good character and high social awareness. Despite its great potential, the implementation of the Love Curriculum also faces various challenges and criticisms, both structurally and culturally. Structurally, the main challenge in implementing the Love Curriculum is limited resources, both human and material. Many schools, especially in remote areas, face limitations in terms of infrastructure, teaching materials, and qualified educators, which can hinder the effective implementation of the Love Curriculum. Culturally, the main challenge is resistance to change from those who are accustomed to conventional approaches to education. Because the Love Curriculum proposes a paradigm shift in education, serious efforts are needed to change *the mindset* and practices that are deeply rooted in the education system.

Table 1. Comparison Matrix of Elements of the Love Curriculum with Other Character

Education Models

Aspect	Love Curriculum	Character Education Conventional	Secular Humanistic Education
Fundamental Values	Love as the primary value that serves as an umbrella for other values	Various values such as honesty, responsibility, and justice	Autonomy, freedom, and personal growth
Spiritual dimension	Explicitly rooted in religious teachings (Islam)	Generally implicit or minimal	Focus on human potential development without a transcendental dimension
Relationship Teacher-Student	Based on love and empathy	Authority-based and discipline	Facilitation-based and equality
Evaluation Approach	Holistic assessment including spiritual dimensions	Focus on observable behavioural change observed	Focus on self-actualisation and personal growth
Implementation Context	Adapting to the specific context Indonesia	Universal standards with adaptation Minimal	Universal with an emphasis on individuality
Key Challenges	The gap between idealism and practice and religious exclusivity	Inconsistency in implementation and formalisation of values	Moral relativism and rejection of authority

DISCUSSION

1. Comparison with Value-Based Education Models in Other Countries

The Love Curriculum launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has a number of similarities and differences with value-based education models implemented in various countries. In Finland, the education system applies a *phenomenon-based learning* approach that emphasises understanding real-life phenomena through an interdisciplinary perspective. This model is similar to the Love Curriculum in terms of its emphasis on holistic education and the development of students' social-emotional skills. However, the Finnish approach is more oriented towards the development of critical thinking and innovation, while the Love Curriculum places greater emphasis on spiritual values and compassion (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2015). In Japan, there is the concept of *kokoro education* or heart education, which emphasises the development of moral character through integrated learning. This programme aims to foster traditional Japanese virtues such as kindness, empathy, and social responsibility. According to Hashimoto (2020), this Japanese education model is similar to the Love Curriculum in its emphasis on the values of compassion and empathy, but differs in its philosophical basis. While the Love Curriculum

is rooted in Islamic teachings, kokoro education is more influenced by the values of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism, which are part of Japan's cultural heritage.

New Zealand has developed a curriculum called *Te Whāriki*, specifically for early childhood education, which emphasises the principles of well-being, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. This New Zealand education model pays special attention to children's social and emotional well-being and values cultural diversity, including the values of the Māori indigenous community. The similarity between *Te Whāriki* and the Love Curriculum lies in their emphasis on character building based on compassion and social harmony, although *Te Whāriki* focuses more on early childhood and respects cultural pluralism (Ariandy, 2019). In Canada, particularly in the province of Quebec, there is an *Ethics and Religious Culture* programme that aims to promote understanding of various ethical and religious traditions and to develop dialogue and critical thinking. This programme is similar to the Love Curriculum in its emphasis on moral and spiritual values, but the Canadian approach is more multicultural and not rooted in any particular religion. According to (Gischa, 2021), the fundamental difference between the two models lies in their approach to religious diversity, with the Canadian programme placing greater emphasis on comparative studies of various religious traditions, while the Love Curriculum is more oriented towards the internalisation of values of compassion rooted in Islamic teachings. This comparison shows that although various countries have developed value-based education models with an emphasis on character development and social-emotional skills, the Love Curriculum is unique in its emphasis on the values of compassion rooted in Islamic teachings and the Indonesian sociocultural context. This uniqueness is the strength of the Love Curriculum in the context of education in Indonesia, which has a Muslim majority population, as well as a challenge in accommodating the religious and cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia.

2. Criticism and Challenges in Implementing the Love Curriculum in Indonesia

The implementation of the Love Curriculum in Indonesia faces several criticisms and challenges that need to be considered for further development. The first criticism relates to concerns about religious exclusivity. Some critics argue that the Love Curriculum, which is rooted in Islamic teachings, may not be sufficiently inclusive for students from different religious backgrounds. Although the value of compassion is universal, its interpretation and implementation may be influenced by a particular religious context, thereby potentially creating an impression of exclusivity for non-Muslim groups (Sebrina & Sukirman, 2019). This challenge calls for a more inclusive approach to interpreting and implementing values of compassion that transcend the boundaries of a particular religion. The second challenge relates to the gap between idealism and practical reality in the field. Although the Love Curriculum offers an inspiring vision of compassion-based education, its implementation in the field is often hampered by various practical constraints, such as limited resources, low teacher qualifications, and high administrative burdens. According to a study by Sy (2016), many teachers report difficulties in integrating values of compassion into their teaching due to time constraints, lack of institutional support, and pressure to meet academic targets.

This points to the need for more realistic and sustainable implementation strategies that take into account actual conditions in the field.

The third challenge relates to impact evaluation. To date, there are still limitations in the methodology and instruments used to measure the effectiveness of the Love Curriculum in achieving its objectives. Mustafa (2021) highlights that the majority of character education programme evaluations in Indonesia still focus on cognitive aspects and pay little attention to long-term changes in attitudes and behaviour. Without a comprehensive and sustainable evaluation system, it is difficult to assess the actual impact of the Love Curriculum and identify areas for improvement. The fourth challenge relates to structural and systemic unpreparedness. The implementation of the Love Curriculum requires fundamental changes in various aspects of the education system, including institutional structure, curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation systems. However, the existing education system is often resistant to change due to various factors, including rigid bureaucracy and vested interests. Erdayani et al. (2016) highlight that education reform in Indonesia is often hampered by a lack of synergy between government agencies and weak coordination mechanisms. This points to the need for a more systemic and collaborative approach in implementing the Love Curriculum.

3. Opportunities for Further Development in the Context of Islamic Education and National Education Policy

Despite facing various challenges, the Love Curriculum also offers significant opportunities for further development in the context of Islamic education and national education policy. First, the Love Curriculum can be a catalyst for Islamic education reform that is more responsive to contemporary challenges. According to Muslim (2017), the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which is the foundation of the Love Curriculum, offers a strong conceptual framework for developing inclusive, tolerant, and peace-oriented Islamic education. Through a progressive reinterpretation of this concept, Islamic education can contribute more effectively to overcoming various global challenges, such as intolerance, extremism, and environmental degradation. Second, the Love Curriculum can serve as a bridge for dialogue between religious education and general education, which are often viewed as two separate entities in the Indonesian education system. Universal values of love can be a common foundation for integrating religious and general education within a more holistic framework (Rizki & Wati, 2024). Through this integrative approach, education is no longer viewed as the mere transfer of knowledge, but as a process of holistic character building that encompasses intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions.

Third, in the context of national education policy, the Love Curriculum can be an alternative to overcome various educational problems in Indonesia, such as bullying, intolerance, and cases of violence in schools. A study conducted by Effendy et al. (2021) shows that schools that implement love-based education programmes have experienced a significant decrease in cases of bullying and intergroup conflict. This demonstrates the potential of the Love Curriculum as a preventive strategy to create a safer and more conducive school environment for student development. Fourth, in the era of digital disruption, the Love Curriculum can be a relevant approach to developing social-emotional skills that will be

increasingly important in the future. According to Yunita & Mandasari (2025), amid massive automation and digitalisation, skills related to empathy, creativity, and collaboration will become increasingly important in the future job market. The Love Curriculum, with its emphasis on developing emotional and spiritual intelligence, can prepare students to face the challenges of an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

4. The Relationship between the Love Curriculum and Modern Educational Theory

The Love Curriculum is closely related to various modern educational theories, including Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Nel Noddings' care theory, and transformative education approaches. Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy emphasises the importance of *liberating education*, which enables learners to become active subjects in the learning process, rather than passive objects who merely receive knowledge transfer. The Love Curriculum resonates with Freire's critical pedagogy in its emphasis on empowering learners and creating a dialogical relationship between educators and learners. However, unlike Freire, who emphasises political awareness, the Love Curriculum focuses more on moral and spiritual transformation. A more explicit relationship can be seen between the Love Curriculum and the *care theory* developed by Nel Noddings. Noddings' care theory emphasises that education must be based on *an ethics of care* that places interpersonal relationships and responsibility towards others as the moral foundation. The Love Curriculum, with its emphasis on the values of compassion and empathy, is in line with the principles of Noddings' care theory. According to Nursalim & Iskandar (2021), both the Love Curriculum and Noddings' care theory recognise the importance of building caring relationships between educators and students as the foundation for meaningful learning. Both approaches also emphasise the importance of appreciating the uniqueness of each student and creating an environment that supports their holistic development.

The Love Curriculum is also related to the transformative education approach developed by Jack Mezirow. Transformative education emphasises the importance of learning that fundamentally changes a person's perspective and frame of mind. According to Nugraheni & Firmansyah (2020), the Love Curriculum can be seen as a form of transformative education that aims to change students' perspectives about themselves, others, and the wider world. Through the internalisation of values of love, students are expected to experience a transformation from an egocentric orientation to a more altruistic orientation focused on the common good. In addition, the Love Curriculum is also related to Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence and Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall's theory of spiritual intelligence. The Love Curriculum, with its emphasis on developing compassion and empathy, is in line with the concept of emotional intelligence, which emphasises the importance of the ability to recognise and manage one's own emotions and understand the emotions of others. Similarly, the Love Curriculum's emphasis on the spiritual dimension is in line with the concept of spiritual intelligence, which relates to the ability to give meaning to life and act based on transcendent values. Hakim (2018) highlights that the integration of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence is one of the significant contributions of the Love Curriculum to modern educational discourse, which

often focuses too much on the development of intellectual intelligence alone.

5. Critical Analysis of the Love Curriculum Policy

In its implementation, the Love Curriculum faces a number of challenges that need to be critically analysed. First, there are questions about the realism of this policy in the context of Indonesia's socio-cultural diversity. The implementation of religious-based education policies is often hampered by institutional capacity gaps between urban and rural areas (Zahfa et al., 2025). The local context is a crucial consideration given the diversity of socio-cultural conditions in Indonesia. Empirical studies by Ndari & Mahmudah (2023) show significant disparities in the interpretation of the value of "love" based on the local cultural context, which has implications for the variety of implementation methods. This phenomenon supports the argument of Yusuf & Sterkens (2015) that the national curriculum approach requires flexibility in implementation based on local sociocultural characteristics.

The success of the Love Curriculum cannot be measured uniformly but must take into account the learning ecology context in each region (Ndari & Mahmudah, 2023). This adaptive approach is important given that Indonesia is a country with complex socio-cultural diversity. Another critical dimension relates to the risk of politicising religious values in the implementation of the Love Curriculum. Hefner's (2021) research reminds us that religious-based education has the potential to be manipulated for certain political interests if it is not balanced with effective oversight mechanisms. Syafri et al.'s (2022) empirical study found that in some regions, the implementation of religious-based education is influenced by local political interests, which has implications for the bias in the interpretation and application of these values.

6. Comparison with Similar Empirical Studies

Comparison with similar empirical studies, both in Indonesia and other countries, provides a more comprehensive perspective on the Love Curriculum. In Indonesia, research by Nafilah et al. (2023) shows a significant increase in students' *social awareness* and conflict resolution skills after three years of implementation. These results confirm the positive potential of the Love Curriculum when implemented with a systemic and sustainable approach.

Hasanah's study (2020) shows that value education models in Muslim countries identify that models that integrate universal values with local wisdom tend to be more sustainable. In Turkey, the "Values Education" model, which combines Islamic values with secular humanism, has succeeded in reducing levels of intolerance (Yıldırım, 2022). A study by Holter et al. (2007) revealed that "Forgiveness Education" in Northern Ireland, adopted after the conflict, resulted in a significant increase in reconciliation and empathy skills among students. This programme is similar to the Love Curriculum in its emphasis on values of compassion and social harmony, although it originates from Christian traditions. Its successful implementation in post-conflict areas provides valuable *insights* for adapting the Love Curriculum in areas with socio-religious tensions in Indonesia. A study by Praekanata et al. (2024) found that a holistic approach that balances cognitive and affective aspects correlates positively with students' psychological well-being and social adaptation abilities. These

findings reinforce the argument that educational models such as the Love Curriculum, which emphasise the affective dimension, have a positive impact on the psychosocial development of students.

D. Conclusion

The Love Curriculum launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia is an educational innovation that emphasises the internalisation of values of love in the learning process. Based on the three main foundations of Islamic education, namely the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, humanism that respects individual dignity, and the theory of love as a fundamental human need, this curriculum is unique compared to other character education programmes. Its objectives are to shape compassion-based character, enhance social harmony and tolerance among religious communities, and integrate the value of love into all aspects of education. Its implementation implies a shift from *teacher-centred* to *student-centred* learning and more comprehensive evaluation. In this case, educators act as role models of compassion, while students are expected to develop emotional and spiritual intelligence to interact positively in society. However, implementation challenges include limited resources, resistance to change, difficulties in evaluating impact, and the unpreparedness of the education system. Compared to value-based education models in other countries such as Finland, Japan, New Zealand, and Canada, the Love Curriculum stands out in its emphasis on compassion based on Islamic teachings.

Despite facing criticism regarding religious exclusivity and implementation gaps, this curriculum opens up significant opportunities for the renewal of Islamic education, bridging the dialogue between religious and general education, providing solutions to national education issues, and encouraging the development of social-emotional skills in the digital age. This curriculum also resonates with modern educational theories such as Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Nel Noddings' theory of care, Jack Mezirow's transformative education, and the concepts of emotional and spiritual intelligence. To that end, the implementation of the Love Curriculum requires concrete steps from various stakeholders: the Ministry of Religious Affairs needs to develop detailed implementation guidelines along with examples of integrating the value of love in various subjects; educators need continuous professional development programmes on love-based learning methods and character assessment techniques; curriculum developers need to design teaching materials that explicitly integrate the values of love, taking into account the socio-cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia; Islamic educational institutions can serve as models for the comprehensive implementation of the Love Curriculum by involving school communities, families, and society in creating a love-based educational ecosystem; and cross-sectoral collaboration between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education, academics, and education practitioners is needed to ensure policy and practice synergy.

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