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Love Curriculum: Weaving Harmony in Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the Love Curriculum as a paradigm of Islamic education that positions rahmah, empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility as the core of the learning process. This discussion is relevant because contemporary Islamic education frequently encounters tension between cognitive achievement, administrative expectations, and the need to cultivate humane moral character. The study applies a qualitative approach through library research. The data were drawn from scholarly articles, books, and related documents concerning the Love Curriculum, humanistic Islamic education, pedagogical love, hidden curriculum, and two supplementary Google Books sources. The data were examined using thematic content analysis involving data reduction, thematic coding, conceptual synthesis, and the formulation of educational implications. The study highlights three principal findings. First, the Love Curriculum should not be reduced to a romanticized policy phrase, since it represents a theo-humanistic framework that integrates reason, conscience, and spirituality. Second, the value of love can be translated into educational practice through Panca Cinta, empathy, compassion, tolerance, justice, respect, cooperation, responsibility, and creativity. Third, harmony in Islamic education cannot rely solely on formal curriculum documents but must also be supported by the hidden curriculum through teacher exemplarity, a safe school or madrasah culture, dialogical learning, and measurable affective assessment. This article concludes that the Love Curriculum may become a transformative strategy for Islamic education when it is consistently reflected in learning objectives, content, methods, institutional culture, and assessment.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji Kurikulum Cinta sebagai paradigma pendidikan Islam yang menempatkan rahmah, empati, toleransi, dan tanggung jawab sosial sebagai pusat proses pembelajaran. Kajian ini penting karena pendidikan Islam masa kini kerap berada dalam tarik-menarik antara pencapaian kognitif, tuntutan administratif, dan kebutuhan membentuk akhlak yang humanis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan. Data diperoleh dari artikel ilmiah, buku, serta dokumen yang relevan mengenai Kurikulum Cinta, pendidikan Islam humanistik, *pedagogical love*, *hidden curriculum*, dan dua sumber daring *Google Books* sebagai rujukan tambahan. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi tematik melalui tahapan reduksi data, pengodean tema, sintesis konseptual, dan perumusan implikasi pendidikan. Hasil kajian memperlihatkan tiga temuan utama. Pertama, Kurikulum Cinta tidak dapat dipahami sebagai romantisasi kebijakan, melainkan sebagai kerangka teo-humanistik yang menyatukan nalar, nurani, dan spiritualitas. Kedua, nilai cinta dapat diwujudkan dalam praktik pendidikan melalui Panca Cinta, empati, kasih sayang, toleransi, keadilan, penghargaan, kerja sama, tanggung jawab, dan kreativitas. Ketiga, harmoni dalam pendidikan Islam tidak cukup dibangun melalui dokumen kurikulum formal, tetapi perlu diperkuat melalui hidden curriculum berupa keteladanan guru, budaya sekolah atau madrasah yang aman, pembelajaran dialogis, dan evaluasi afektif yang terukur. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa Kurikulum Cinta dapat menjadi strategi transformasi pendidikan Islam apabila diterjemahkan secara konsisten ke dalam tujuan, isi, metode, kultur, dan asesmen pembelajaran.

PRELIMINARY

Islamic education is essentially directed toward forming individuals who are knowledgeable, faithful, morally grounded, and able to bring benefit to social life. However, modern educational practice often reflects a technocratic tendency. Educational success is more easily measured through numbers, examination scores, accreditation results, and administrative completion than through moral quality, depth of empathy, or learners' capacity to live peacefully amid diversity. This situation raises academic concern because education may lose its humanistic dimension. Various studies on curricular violence, dehumanization, and moral crisis in education show that learning systems that are overly oriented toward cognitive competence may neglect the affective and spiritual dimensions of learners (Razack et al., 2025).

In the context of Islamic education, this issue becomes increasingly urgent because religious education should not be narrowed to the transmission of normative knowledge alone. Religious learning that stops at memorization, symbols, and indoctrination may distance learners from the essence of *rahmah*. Naimah & Hidayah (2017) emphasize that Islamic education needs to be reoriented so that it can respond to social disharmony through the strengthening of tolerance, social harmony, and the internalization of religious values. This view is consistent with critiques of educational models that overemphasize the cognitive domain while giving insufficient space to affective formation, dialogue, and students' spiritual experience (Abidin, 2021).

The Love Curriculum emerges as one paradigmatic proposal to respond to this crisis. In recent literature, the Love Curriculum is understood as an educational approach that makes compassion, empathy, care, respect, and social responsibility the foundation of learning (Ifendi, 2025). Love in this context is not romantic love, but pedagogical love: an ethical commitment of educators to humanize learners, create safe learning spaces, and accompany their intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development. In the Islamic tradition, love is closely related to *rahmah*, *mahabbah*, *adab*, and *maqasid al-syari'ah*; meanwhile, in modern pedagogical discourse, love intersects with caring, humanistic education, and pedagogical love (Andriani et al., 2022; Noddings, 2021; Zembylas, 2022).

The development of studies on the Love Curriculum reveals several major tendencies. Ifendi (2025) views the Love Curriculum as a compassion-based educational paradigm in madrasahs that contains values such as empathy, tolerance, justice, respect, cooperation, responsibility, and creativity. (Nisa' et al., 2026) interprets the Love-Based Curriculum as a dialectic between Islamic education and Western pedagogy that gives rise to a theo-humanistic paradigm. The book *Kurikulum Cinta: Menanamkan Nilai Kasih, Toleransi, dan Harmoni dalam Pendidikan Sejak Dini* emphasizes the importance of love-based education in character formation from early childhood by involving teachers, parents, communities, and government (Inayah et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the book *Kurikulum Cinta: Menyulam Harmoni di Kampus Akulturasi* expands the idea of love into campus life, local culture, *Panca Cinta*, and the formation of human beings who are not only intellectually intelligent but also sensitive in conscience (Hannani et al., 2025).

Although these studies have explained the concept and urgency of the Love Curriculum, several aspects still require further development. First, some discussions remain at the normative level and have not sufficiently presented an operational synthesis that can be applied in Islamic education. Second, studies on the Love Curriculum need to distinguish more clearly between love as a romantic slogan and love as a pedagogical instrument that can be realized in objectives, content, methods, culture, and assessment. Third, the relationship between the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum in building harmony has not yet been comprehensively elaborated. Based on these gaps, this article aims to analyze the Love Curriculum as a framework for weaving harmony in Islamic education while formulating its implementation implications at the levels of learning, institutional culture, and educational evaluation.

METHOD

Qualitative approach with a library research method. This design was selected because the object of study consists of concepts, values, and implementation models of the Love Curriculum that are distributed across scholarly articles, books, conceptual documents, and online sources. Through library research, the researcher can examine texts in depth, compare different perspectives, and construct a systematic conceptual synthesis (Biesta, 2021).

The main data sources in this study consist of six attached documents: an article on the basic concepts and objectives of the Love-Based Curriculum from Islamic and Western educational perspectives (Nisa' et al., 2026); an article on the Love Curriculum as a compassion-based educational paradigm in madrasahs (Ifendi, 2025); an article on the reorientation of Islamic education for social harmony through the hidden curriculum (Naimah & Hidayah, 2017) the book *Kurikulum Cinta: Menyulam Harmoni di Kampus Akulturasi* (Hannani et al., 2025); the book *Kurikulum Cinta: Menanamkan Nilai Kasih, Toleransi, dan Harmoni dalam Pendidikan Sejak Dini* (Inayah et al., 2025); and other supporting documents discussing empathy, compassion, tolerance, and harmony. Two Google Books links provided by the user were also used as supplementary online sources in the reference list.

Data collection was carried out through a critical reading of the title, abstract, introduction, discussion, and bibliography of each source. Relevant data were then classified into four focuses: (1) the theological-philosophical foundation of the Love Curriculum; (2) core values and implementation indicators; (3) the relationship between the Love Curriculum and social harmony; and (4) operational strategies in Islamic education. The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The first stage was data reduction to select ideas that matched the focus of the study. The second stage was open coding to identify themes such as rahmah, pedagogical love, Panca Cinta, hidden curriculum, humanization, and tolerance. The third stage was conceptual synthesis to integrate the findings into an implementation model. The fourth stage was drawing implications for Islamic education. The validity of the study was maintained through source triangulation by comparing ideas from scholarly articles, books, and online sources with related themes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the thematic content analysis show that the Love Curriculum in Islamic education can be understood through five main themes. These themes do not stand separately; rather, they are interconnected in shaping an educational model that humanizes, harmonizes, and strengthens learners' moral character.

The Love Curriculum as a Theo-Humanistic Paradigm

The literature synthesis indicates that the Love Curriculum has a theo-humanistic foundation. The term theo-humanistic is used because the value of love originates from divine consciousness while being directed toward honoring human dignity. In Islam, love is associated with rahmah, mahabbah, and adab. Love for Allah does not stop at individual spirituality, but gives rise to love for knowledge, fellow human beings, the environment, and the nation. Within this framework, learning is not merely a process of transferring information, but a process of forming the whole human person. This view aligns with Nisa' et al., (2026), who positions love as a connector between rationality and spirituality, as well as with Islamic educational thought that regards rahmah as an ethical foundation in pedagogy (Azra, 2022; Meer & Breen, 2017, Zuhdi, 2024).

The Love Curriculum also intersects with the discourse of pedagogical love in modern education. Ghiasvand & Sharifpour (2024) show that education not built on pedagogical love loses its humanistic power because the relationship between teacher and learner becomes rigid and impersonal. Noddings (2021) places caring as a relational approach in moral education, Wheelen (2018) affirm that liberating education must rest on dialogue and a commitment to human dignity. Therefore, love in the Love Curriculum cannot be understood as directionless gentleness. Rather, love is a professional ethic that requires educators to be fair, patient, dialogical, and responsible in accompanying learners.

In Islamic education, the Love Curriculum functions as a corrective to two extreme tendencies. On one side, overly formalistic education may produce learners who master religious symbols but lack sensitivity toward human values. On the other side, education that is too free and lacks a moral framework may lose the boundaries of adab and responsibility. The Love Curriculum offers a middle position: education that is gentle but principled, humanistic yet rooted in divine values, and open to diversity without losing Islamic identity.

Core Values of the Love Curriculum and the Meaning of Harmony

The second theme emerging from the literature is the importance of translating love into operational values. Ifendi (2025) formulates the basic values of the Love Curriculum in madrasahs,

including empathy, compassion, tolerance, justice and equality, respect and humility, humanity, cooperation and collaboration, responsibility, self-confidence, and creativity. Inayah (2025) emphasizes love, tolerance, and harmony from early childhood as the foundation for forming an integrated personality. Hannani et al. (2025) positions Panca Cinta as an ethical framework that includes love of knowledge, love of brotherhood, love of the environment, love of the homeland, and love of humanity. In the news report on the launch of the Love-Based Curriculum, the Ministry of Religious Affairs also emphasizes five main values: love for God Almighty, love for oneself and others, love for knowledge, love for the environment, and love for the nation and country (UIN syarif Jakarta, 2025).

Harmony in this article is not understood as uniformity. Harmony is more appropriately understood as the capacity to live together with dignity amid differences. From the perspective of Islamic education, harmony is connected to *ukhuwah*, *tawazun*, *tasamuh*, *ta'awun*, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Therefore, the Love Curriculum is relevant because Islamic education is not only tasked with forming learners who understand religious teachings, but also individuals who are able to make religion a source of peace. This is increasingly important amid problems of bullying, verbal violence, intolerance, digital polarization, and the weakening of social empathy (Padil et al., 2025., Zembylas, 2022).

The values of the Love Curriculum can be understood in three layers. The first layer is spiritual value, namely love for Allah, the Prophet, knowledge, and truth. The second layer is social value, namely empathy, tolerance, brotherhood, justice, and cooperation. The third layer is ecological-national value, namely love for the environment, love for the homeland, and universal humanitarian love. These three layers support one another. Without a spiritual foundation, love can easily become an emotional slogan. Without social values, spirituality may stop at individual piety with limited social impact. Without ecological and national values, education will struggle to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Hidden Curriculum as a Space for Weaving Harmony

The next finding shows that the Love Curriculum cannot be realized only through formal documents. Naimah & Hidayah (2017) emphasize the importance of the hidden curriculum in social harmony because the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence are often shaped more effectively through school culture, teacher exemplarity, and everyday experience than through written materials. The hidden curriculum includes the way teachers greet students, the mechanisms schools use to address conflict, disciplinary patterns, queuing culture, collective worship activities, dialogue across differences, and the habit of respecting opinions.

In the Love Curriculum, the hidden curriculum becomes a meeting space between values and practice. Learners will find it difficult to understand compassion if the classroom is filled with humiliation, fear, or discrimination. They will also find it difficult to learn tolerance if differences are continually positioned as threats. For this reason, teachers hold a central role. Teachers are not merely transmitters of material, but models of *adab*. The language teachers use, their facial expressions, fairness in giving attention, willingness to listen, and ways of providing correction all become a hidden curriculum that learners read every day.

The Love Curriculum also requires a shift in how discipline is understood. Discipline is not identical with violence, shouting, or degrading punishment. Within the framework of love, discipline is the habituation of responsibility carried out firmly while still respecting learners' dignity. Through this approach, Islamic education can avoid two risks at once: permissivism that allows violations without guidance and authoritarianism that instills obedience through fear.

Implementation Model in Islamic Education

Based on the literature synthesis, the implementation of the Love Curriculum in Islamic education can be formulated through five components: objectives, content, methods, culture, and assessment. In terms of objectives, the Love Curriculum is directed toward forming learners who are faithful, knowledgeable, moral, caring, tolerant, and able to live harmoniously. In terms of content, the value of love needs to be integrated into Islamic Religious Education, Islamic cultural history, Arabic, civics, science, and co-curricular activities. In terms of methods, learning should prioritize dialogue, reflection, exemplary stories, social problem-based learning, service learning, and collaborative projects. In terms of

culture, schools or madrasahs need to build an atmosphere that is safe, inclusive, and respectful of diversity. In terms of assessment, evaluation should not only measure memorization, but also empathy, responsibility, cooperation, and the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully (Ifendi, 2025, Inayah et al., 2025 ; Rohmah & Hidayat, 2022).

Table 1 presents the operational synthesis of the Love Curriculum in Islamic education. The table confirms that love needs to be translated into concrete indicators so that it does not remain a slogan. Each value must have observable forms of behavior, learning strategies, and evaluation indicators.

Table 1. Operational Synthesis of the Love Curriculum in Islamic Education

Component	Focus of Love	Implementation Strategy	Success Indicator
Objectives	Love for Allah, knowledge, and moral character	Formulating learning outcomes that integrate faith, knowledge, adab, and social care	Learners demonstrate value understanding, responsibility, and respectful behavior
Content	Love for others, the environment, the nation, and humanity	Integrating themes of empathy, tolerance, justice, and ecology into subjects and co-curricular projects	Teaching materials include real examples, social issues, and value practices in everyday life
Methods	Love as dialogue and accompaniment	Using reflective discussions, exemplary stories, service learning, collaborative learning, and peaceful conflict resolution	The classroom becomes participatory, safe, and encourages the courage to express opinions
Culture	Love as hidden curriculum	Building a culture of greetings, warm communication, anti-bullying, teacher exemplarity, calming worship practices, and respect for differences	A friendly, inclusive, and low-violence madrasah climate is formed
Assessment	Love as moral accountability	Using attitude observation, reflective journals, social project portfolios, and peer feedback	Assessment includes empathy, cooperation, responsibility, and tolerance

Table 1 shows that the Love Curriculum needs to move from concept to implementation tools. If the value of love is only written in an institution's vision, its influence will be limited. However, when this value is translated into objectives, materials, methods, culture, and assessment, the Love Curriculum can become an educational system that is more concrete, directed, and evaluable.

Critical note: transformation or policy romanticization?

A critical question that needs to be raised is whether the Love Curriculum truly becomes a strategy for educational transformation or merely stops as policy romanticization. The answer depends greatly on how it is implemented. The Love Curriculum will become romanticized if it appears only in speeches, posters, slogans, or documents without concrete changes in learning culture. The term love also risks becoming vague if it is not given clear pedagogical boundaries and assessment indicators. Conversely, the Love Curriculum can become a transformative strategy when it is translated into teacher training, learning design, anti-violence policies, strengthened counseling services, a culture of dialogue, and accountable character evaluation.

To avoid falling into romanticization, four important requirements must be met. First, love must be defined as an ethical commitment, not merely an emotional sentiment. Second, teachers need to be equipped with socio-emotional and spiritual competencies so that they can manage classrooms

empathically. Third, educational institutions need to develop indicators of a school culture that is safe, inclusive, and free from violence. Fourth, the evaluation of the Love Curriculum should combine behavioral observation, learner reflection, social project portfolios, and peer feedback. In this way, love becomes an educational praxis that can be felt, observed, and evaluated.

The implication of this study for the development of Islamic education scholarship is the need to broaden the understanding of curriculum from a mere list of subjects into an ecosystem of values. The Love Curriculum shows that meaningful Islamic education must touch reason, heart, and action. It does not reject academic achievement, but places it within the framework of adab and public benefit. Therefore, the Love Curriculum can serve as a bridge between character education, religious moderation, humanistic pedagogy, and the Islamic mission of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

CONCLUSION

The Love Curriculum in Islamic education can be understood as a theo-humanistic paradigm that places rahmah, empathy, tolerance, adab, and social responsibility at the core of learning. This study affirms that the Love Curriculum is not a romanticized policy discourse, but a transformative educational strategy that seeks to bring together reason, conscience, and spirituality (Zuhdi, 2024). The value of love can be operationalized through Panca Cinta, empathy, compassion, tolerance, justice, respect, cooperation, responsibility, and creativity. Harmony in Islamic education needs to be built through the integration of the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum, especially through teacher exemplarity, a safe madrasah culture, dialogical learning, and measurable affective evaluation. The limitation of this study lies in its library research approach, meaning that it has not yet tested the effectiveness of the Love Curriculum in a particular classroom practice. Future research may develop affective assessment instruments, teacher training models, and field studies on the implementation of the Love Curriculum in madrasahs, pesantren, and Islamic higher education institutions.

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