



Love-Based Curriculum Management: Cultivating Humanistic and Religious Characters in Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the management of a love-based curriculum in strengthening students' character through the processes of curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation within an Islamic educational context. A qualitative approach was employed using a field research design with a case study strategy to obtain an in-depth understanding of how compassionate values are integrated into curriculum management practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings reveal that love-based curriculum management is systematically implemented by integrating the principles of *Panca Cinta* into curriculum planning, embedding compassionate values into teaching and learning activities through teacher role modelling, value habituation, and personalized educational services, and conducting holistic evaluations that encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains with the involvement of school leaders, teachers, and parents. These integrated management processes create a humanistic and religious learning environment that strengthens students' empathy, responsibility, integrity, and moral character. The study implies that love-based curriculum management provides a comprehensive framework for integrating compassionate values into educational management and offers a practical reference for Islamic educational institutions seeking to enhance sustainable character education through systematic curriculum governance.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing individuals who possess not only intellectual competence but also ethical awareness and social responsibility. In contemporary society, rapid technological advancement,

globalization, and increasingly complex social interactions require educational institutions to cultivate students who are academically capable while demonstrating empathy, integrity, resilience, and moral responsibility. Consequently, educational quality can no longer be measured solely by cognitive achievement but must also reflect students' character development and emotional maturity. Recent studies have emphasized that educational innovation should prioritize humanistic values alongside academic excellence to ensure sustainable educational outcomes (Afryansyah & Sirozi, 2025; Granville-Chapman et al., 2024). Likewise, educational leadership and curriculum development are increasingly expected to promote students' holistic flourishing through meaningful relationships and compassionate learning environments (Abudu, 2025; Yilmaz, 2026). Therefore, strengthening character through curriculum management has become an essential agenda for educational institutions seeking to prepare learners capable of addressing both present and future societal challenges.

Despite growing attention to character education, many educational institutions continue to encounter difficulties in translating moral values into systematic educational practices (Hussen & Onia, 2024; Tsoka, 2026). Character education is frequently implemented through extracurricular activities or isolated moral lessons without being comprehensively integrated into curriculum management. As a result, inconsistencies often emerge between institutional vision, classroom instruction, and students' daily experiences, reducing the effectiveness of character formation. Previous research has shown that curriculum management significantly influences students' moral development when character values are embedded within planning, implementation, and evaluation rather than delivered as supplementary programs (Faizah, 2023; Mulawarman et al., 2024). Similarly, Islamic educational institutions face the challenge of balancing academic excellence with the cultivation of compassion, empathy, and religious values that reflect the principle of *rahmah* in Islamic education (Warsah et al., 2024; Hamid et al., 2025). These conditions indicate the necessity of developing curriculum management models capable of integrating academic achievement with sustainable character development.

Within the context of Islamic education, madrasahs possess unique opportunities to integrate religious teachings, school culture, and curriculum management into a coherent system for character formation. MAN 2 Probolinggo represents one example of an Islamic senior high school that has adopted the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta) as part of its educational management strategy. Rather than emphasizing academic achievement alone, the school incorporates compassionate educational practices through religious

habituation, differentiated learning services, teacher role modelling, and personalized student guidance. Preliminary observations indicate that values such as love for God, humanity, knowledge, the environment, and national identity are embedded within curriculum planning and everyday educational activities. These practices illustrate that character education extends beyond classroom instruction and becomes part of the school's organizational culture. Such conditions provide an important empirical setting for examining how love-based curriculum management is operationalized to strengthen students' character within contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

The growing body of literature has substantially expanded the discussion on love-based curriculum and character education in Islamic educational institutions. Previous studies have demonstrated that love-oriented curricula contribute to strengthening students' moral values, empathy, religious commitment, and social responsibility through the integration of compassionate educational principles into learning activities (Basori et al., 2025; Musolin & Sudarmaji, 2025). Other scholars have highlighted that curriculum management in madrasahs positively influences character development when supported by effective leadership, systematic planning, and school culture (Mardiana et al., 2025; Syamilah & Arifin, 2026). Furthermore, integrating prophetic values, religious moderation, and Islamic character education into curriculum structures has been shown to foster students' tolerance, ethical awareness, and emotional maturity (Azhar et al., 2025; Aslinda & Amrizon, 2025). Collectively, these studies confirm that curriculum serves not merely as an academic framework but also as a strategic instrument for cultivating students' holistic personal development.

Although previous studies provide valuable insights into curriculum implementation and character education, several important limitations remain. First, most studies examine curriculum implementation, leadership, or character education as separate constructs without explaining how managerial functions interact throughout the curriculum management cycle. Second, empirical investigations predominantly focus on instructional practices or conceptual analyses, offering limited evidence regarding how planning, implementation, and evaluation are integrated into a coherent management system. Third, relatively few studies investigate love-based curriculum management within Islamic senior secondary schools using an in-depth qualitative perspective that captures organizational processes and educational practices simultaneously. Consequently, the existing literature has yet to explain how compassionate educational values are translated into managerial decisions, institutional culture, and sustainable character development. Addressing this gap is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum management that aligns educational quality with students' moral and spiritual formation.

This study addresses these limitations by proposing a comprehensive perspective of love-based curriculum management that connects curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation within a unified managerial framework for strengthening students' character in Islamic education. Rather than treating compassion solely as an instructional value, this research conceptualizes love as the foundational principle guiding educational policies, teacher practices, student services, and institutional culture. Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research question: How is love-based curriculum management designed, implemented, and evaluated to strengthen students' character in an Islamic senior high school? It is argued that integrating compassionate values throughout the curriculum management cycle enables schools to establish a sustainable character education system that simultaneously promotes academic achievement, moral integrity, emotional development, and religious commitment. Therefore, this study contributes a practical and conceptual framework that may inform future curriculum development and educational management practices in Islamic educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore in depth the implementation of love-based curriculum management in strengthening students' character within its natural educational setting (García-Montoya & Mahoney, 2023; Mishra & Dey, 2022). A qualitative design was selected because the phenomenon under investigation emphasizes meanings, values, interactions, and educational practices that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative measurement (Haq & Yasin, 2025; Lim, 2024). The case study enabled an intensive examination of curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation as interconnected processes reflecting the institutional culture and educational philosophy of the school. This approach is consistent with recent studies highlighting that love-based curriculum management and character education should be examined through contextual and value-oriented perspectives to capture their educational significance (Basori et al., 2025; Musolin & Sudarmaji, 2025; Napitupulu et al., 2025; Sari, 2025).

The research was conducted at MAN 2 Probolinggo, Indonesia, which was purposively selected because the madrasah has consistently integrated character education into its curriculum while adopting educational practices that emphasize compassion, respect, and religious values. The institution provides a relevant setting for examining how a love-based curriculum is translated into educational management and daily learning practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews involved the principal, vice principal for

curriculum, Islamic education teachers, homeroom teachers, and selected students to obtain multiple perspectives. Classroom observations were conducted to capture authentic interactions during the learning process, while institutional documents—including curriculum plans, learning modules, school policies, and character education programs—were analyzed to strengthen data triangulation. The use of multiple data sources enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative findings in curriculum and character education research (Mardiana et al., 2025; Syamilah & Arifin, 2026; Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024; Mulawarman et al., 2024).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, coding, and organizing field data according to themes related to curriculum management and character strengthening. Subsequently, the organized data were presented through thematic matrices and descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation of relationships among categories. The final stage involved continuous verification by comparing findings across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence until credible and consistent conclusions were obtained. To ensure research rigor, source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement were employed throughout the study, thereby increasing the credibility and dependability of the findings (Azhar et al., 2025; Widiawati et al., 2026; Granville-Chapman et al., 2024; Yılmaz, 2026).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Planning of Love-Based Curriculum Management for Strengthening Students' Character

The findings revealed that the planning stage of love-based curriculum management at MAN 2 Probolinggo has been systematically integrated into the school's curriculum planning documents. Based on interviews with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, curriculum planning is continuously adjusted to accommodate national curriculum reforms while incorporating the principles of the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC). The integration is not implemented by introducing new learning subjects but by embedding love-oriented values into lesson planning and classroom learning activities.

The interview results indicated that the school has incorporated the concept of Panca Cinta—love for God and the Prophet, love of knowledge, love for others, love for the environment, and love for the nation—into teachers' instructional planning. These values are explicitly included in lesson plans and

serve as pedagogical guidelines for teachers during the learning process. According to the curriculum coordinator, curriculum planning under KBC differs from previous curriculum planning because character values are intentionally integrated into every stage of instructional design rather than being treated as supplementary activities.

Document analysis further confirmed that curriculum planning includes learning objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment indicators that emphasize students' cognitive achievement alongside the development of religious attitudes, empathy, responsibility, and environmental awareness. Classroom learning instruments also demonstrate alignment between academic competencies and character-building objectives, indicating that character education has become an integral component of curriculum management rather than an additional program.

Implementation of Love-Based Curriculum Management for Strengthening Students' Character

The implementation findings demonstrate that the Love-Based Curriculum is carried out through student-centered educational services emphasizing respect for individual differences. Classroom observations showed that teachers consistently integrate compassion, mutual respect, and empathy into classroom interactions without separating these values from academic instruction.

Interview findings revealed that the implementation of KBC prioritizes students' interests, talents, and future aspirations. The school provides differentiated educational pathways, including Tahfidz classes, two-year accelerated classes, and regular excellence classes. Since the first year of enrollment, students are guided to identify their academic interests and future career plans so that educational services can be tailored to their individual needs. In addition, internship opportunities are provided for students intending to enter the workforce immediately after graduation, reflecting the school's commitment to supporting students according to their personal aspirations.

Observation data also indicated that teachers employ daily habituation activities, collaborative learning, and religious practices as vehicles for cultivating responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and empathy among students. These activities create a school environment where character development is embedded within everyday educational experiences rather than delivered through isolated moral instruction.

Evaluation of Love-Based Curriculum Management for Strengthening Students' Character

The evaluation process of the Love-Based Curriculum is conducted comprehensively by assessing not only students' academic performance but also their behavioral and character development. Based on interviews and document analysis, teachers continuously monitor students' attitudes through classroom observation, character journals, project assessments, and reflective learning activities. These assessments provide information regarding students' responsibility, honesty, discipline, cooperation, respect, and emotional maturity.

The findings also indicate that curriculum evaluation involves multiple stakeholders. Teachers evaluate students' daily character development, school leaders supervise curriculum implementation through classroom observations and administrative monitoring, while parents contribute feedback regarding students' behavioral changes in the home environment. This collaborative evaluation system enables the school to obtain comprehensive information regarding the effectiveness of the Love-Based Curriculum and to identify areas requiring continuous improvement.

Overall, the findings suggest that love-based curriculum management at MAN 2 Probolinggo has been implemented through three interconnected managerial stages: curriculum planning that integrates the principles of *Panca Cinta*, implementation that prioritizes personalized educational services and character habituation, and holistic evaluation involving teachers, school leaders, and parents. These three stages collectively contribute to strengthening students' religious character, empathy, responsibility, and social awareness within the school's educational environment.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that love-based curriculum management at MAN 2 Probolinggo is implemented through an integrated management cycle encompassing curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. Unlike conventional character education programs that are often positioned as complementary activities, the Love-Based Curriculum is embedded into the entire curriculum management process, beginning with lesson planning and continuing through instructional practices and holistic evaluation. This finding reinforces previous studies emphasizing that curriculum management becomes more effective when character values are systematically integrated into educational planning rather than delivered through isolated moral education programs (Basori et al., 2025; Napitupulu et al., 2025). Similarly, Musolin and Sudarmaji (2025) and Sari (2025) argue that love-based curriculum management encourages schools to transform compassion, empathy, and respect into guiding principles that influence all educational decisions.

An important finding of this study is the incorporation of **Panca Cinta** into curriculum planning documents and teachers' instructional designs. Rather than introducing additional subjects, the school embeds values of love for God, knowledge, humanity, the environment, and the nation within learning objectives, instructional strategies, and classroom activities. This supports previous research demonstrating that effective curriculum management in Islamic educational institutions should integrate character values into the formal curriculum to ensure consistency between educational objectives and learning practices (Mardiana et al., 2025; Syamilah & Arifin, 2026). Likewise, Aslinda and Amrizon (2025) and Azhar et al. (2025) emphasize that integrating religious and humanistic values into curriculum structures enables schools to cultivate tolerant, compassionate, and morally responsible learners without reducing academic quality.

The implementation stage further illustrates that love-based curriculum management extends beyond classroom instruction by prioritizing individualized educational services based on students' interests, talents, and future aspirations. The provision of differentiated learning pathways, Tahfidz classes, accelerated programs, internship opportunities, and continuous career guidance reflects a learner-centered management approach grounded in educational compassion. This finding aligns with studies reporting that educational leadership emphasizing care and human flourishing creates learning environments that support students' holistic development (Granville-Chapman et al., 2024; Yilmaz, 2026). Furthermore, Hsu et al. (2024) and Liu et al. (2024) argue that educational environments promoting empathy, emotional well-being, and meaningful relationships contribute significantly to students' social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Another significant finding concerns the holistic evaluation system adopted by the school. Character development is assessed continuously through classroom observations, reflective journals, project-based assessments, administrative supervision, and parental involvement, indicating that evaluation functions as a mechanism for continuous curriculum improvement rather than merely measuring academic achievement. These findings corroborate previous research suggesting that curriculum evaluation should encompass students' behavioral, emotional, and spiritual development alongside cognitive outcomes (Mulawarman et al., 2024; Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024). Similar conclusions were reported by Hamid et al. (2025) and Warsah et al. (2024), who found that comprehensive character assessment enables schools to monitor students' moral growth more effectively while strengthening collaboration among teachers, school leaders, and families.

The present study offers several theoretical and practical contributions to the literature on Islamic educational management. Theoretically, it extends existing models of love-based curriculum management by demonstrating that compassionate values can function as an organizing principle throughout the entire management cycle rather than serving solely as instructional content. The findings integrate perspectives on curriculum management, Islamic character education, educational leadership, and student-centered learning into a unified conceptual framework that illustrates how compassion-oriented educational management strengthens character formation. Practically, the study provides an operational model that may guide Islamic schools and madrasahs seeking to institutionalize love-based education through curriculum planning, differentiated implementation strategies, and comprehensive character evaluation.

The novelty of this research lies in its examination of love-based curriculum management from a comprehensive management perspective encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation within an Islamic senior secondary school context. Previous studies have generally focused on conceptual discussions of the Love-Based Curriculum (Basori et al., 2025; Musolin & Sudarmaji, 2025), curriculum implementation (Napitupulu et al., 2025), or character education outcomes (Mardiana et al., 2025; Syamilah & Arifin, 2026) separately. In contrast, this study demonstrates how these managerial functions operate as an integrated system that translates compassionate educational values into institutional policies, instructional practices, personalized student services, and holistic evaluation mechanisms. Accordingly, this research contributes a more comprehensive empirical model for implementing love-based curriculum management that may serve as a reference for strengthening character education in Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that love-based curriculum management constitutes a holistic educational management approach that systematically integrates compassionate values into curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation to strengthen students' character. The most significant finding reveals that embedding the principles of *Panca Cinta* throughout the curriculum management cycle fosters not only students' cognitive achievement but also their religious commitment, empathy, responsibility, and social awareness, thereby creating a more humanistic and sustainable learning environment. These findings contribute to the advancement of Islamic educational management by extending the conceptualization of the Love-Based Curriculum beyond instructional

practice into a comprehensive management framework that connects curriculum design, educational leadership, school culture, and character formation. The study also provides a practical model that may guide Islamic educational institutions seeking to institutionalize compassionate education through systematic curriculum management. Nevertheless, this research is limited to a single qualitative case study conducted at one Islamic senior high school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future studies are therefore encouraged to employ comparative multi-site designs, mixed-methods approaches, or longitudinal investigations to examine the effectiveness of love-based curriculum management across diverse educational contexts and to evaluate its long-term impact on students' character development and educational outcomes.

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