

Insertion of a Love-Based Curriculum in Multicultural Islamic Religious Education

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Article Info

Article history:

Received June 01, 2025

Revised August 22, 2025

Accepted September 01, 2025

Keywords:

Islamic Religious Education;

Love-Based Curriculum;

Multiculturalism;

Social Harmony;

Tolerance.

ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education in the contemporary era faces challenges in developing the character of students capable of living harmoniously in a multicultural society. This study examines the insertion of a love-based curriculum as an innovative solution in multicultural Islamic religious education. A love-based curriculum is an educational approach that integrates the values of compassion, tolerance, and empathy as the foundation of Islamic religious learning in the context of diversity. Through literature analysis and conceptual studies, this study explores the theoretical foundations, practical implementation, and potential impacts of a love-based curriculum. The results of the study indicate that a love-based curriculum can be a bridge connecting a profound understanding of religion with a tolerant attitude towards diversity. Its implementation requires transformations in learning approaches, teacher competencies, and a holistic evaluation system. This curriculum has the potential to produce a generation of Muslims with balanced spiritual, emotional, and social intelligence, capable of becoming agents of peace in a multicultural society. Implementation challenges include community resistance, limited resources, and the complexity of material development. However, great opportunities are open with the support of religious moderation policies and Indonesia's diversity as a natural laboratory. In conclusion, the insertion of a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic education is an urgent need to build a more peaceful and harmonious civilisation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasingly complex social dynamics of Indonesian society demand an education that can prepare future generations to live in diversity (Malihah, 2015; Samala et al., 2024). As a highly diverse country, Indonesia has more than 300 ethnic groups, 700 regional languages, and various religions and beliefs coexisting. This reality creates both challenges and opportunities for the education system, particularly Islamic Religious Education, a compulsory subject at all levels of education (Sahin, 2018; Akrim, 2022).

Traditional Islamic religious education often falls into an approach that emphasizes ritual and doctrinal aspects, while inadequate attention is paid to the social and humanistic dimensions of Islam (Sahin, 2018; Saada & Magadlah, 2021). As a result, many religious education graduates possess sound cognitive religious knowledge but are unable to apply Islamic values in a multicultural context (Raihani, 2018; Demirel Ucan & Wright, 2019). The phenomena of intolerance, radicalism, and intergroup conflict that persist in various regions indicate that religious education is not optimal in developing tolerant and inclusive character (Suryani & Muslim, 2024; Anas et al., 2025).

On the other hand, Islam, as the religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad, is deeply humanistic and universal (Rumina, 2017; Piraino, 2023; Alak, 2023). The concept of rahmatan lil alamin, Islam's primary mission, embodies universal values of love. The Quran and Hadith are replete with teachings on the importance of compassion, empathy, and tolerance in human relationships. However, these values are often not optimally integrated into existing Islamic Religious Education curricula.

A love-based curriculum emerged in response to the need for a more humanistic and contextual religious education (Kaur et al., 2023; Aslinda & Amrizon, 2025; Basori et al., 2025; Ifendi, 2025). This concept does not diminish the substance of Islamic teachings but rather enriches the learning approach by positioning love as a fundamental value that underpins all aspects of religious life (Muhsyanur, 2024). Love in this context is not only love for God but also love for fellow human beings, nature, and all of God's creations, regardless of background.

Amidst growing social polarization, educators increasingly feel the urgency to develop a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic religious education. Social media and advances in information technology have accelerated the spread of narratives that can incite division (Walsh, 2020; Nasidi et al., 2025). The younger generation, as digital natives, is highly vulnerable to the influence of provocative and discriminatory content (Kozyreva et al., 2020; Chang & Chang, 2023; Kirschner, 2024). In this context, Islamic religious education plays a strategic role in creating a defensive barrier by promoting strong character education. Therefore, a love-based curriculum can effectively bridge the divide in multicultural Islamic religious education.

Multicultural Islamic education is an approach to Islamic education that emphasizes acceptance and respect for diversity (cultural, ethnic, religious, etc.) as a fundamental value, in line with the Islamic teachings of rahmatan lil 'alamin (blessing for all nature) (Hosnan, 2022; Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2023). The goal is to develop tolerant, inclusive students who can live harmoniously in a diverse society through fair and egalitarian learning, while adhering to the spiritual values of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

This research is intended to investigate the concept of inserting a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic religious education as an alternative, more holistic, and transformative educational approach. This study will analyze the theoretical foundations, implementation strategies, challenges faced, and potential impact of a love-based curriculum on the character formation of students in a multicultural society.

2. METHOD

The research method is used to collect data on the Love-Based Curriculum in Multicultural Islamic Religious Education. The type of research employed in this study is library research, which involves data collection by understanding and studying theories and various literature related to the research. This type of research primarily utilizes books or various library sources. The following is a library research flowchart in Figure 1.

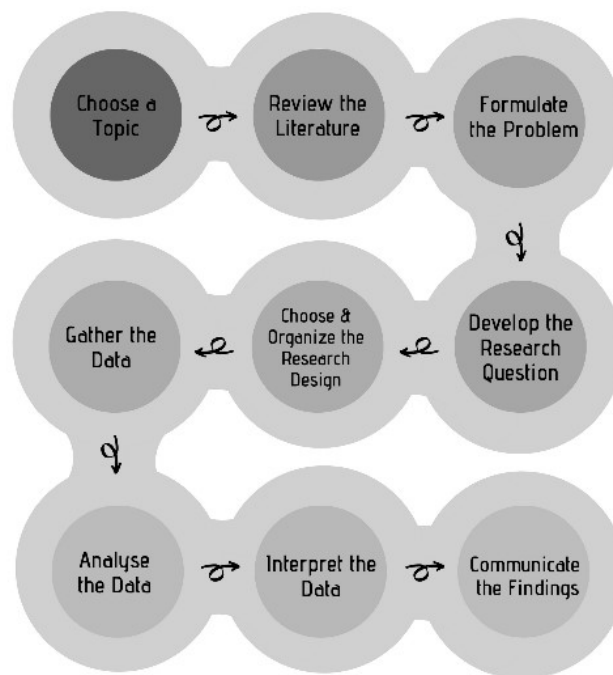


Figure 1. Library Research Flowchart

The process of conducting a literature review involves identifying the topic and research questions, performing an extensive literature search across multiple scientific databases, selecting and assessing pertinent and credible sources, analyzing and synthesizing the findings, and organizing them systematically with a coherent structure and appropriate citations.

Literature research has four main characteristics that authors need to consider: the author deals directly with data, not directly from the field; the literature study is ready-to-use, meaning the author does not go directly to the field but rather deals directly with sources found in various literature; the literature study is sourced from secondary sources, meaning the researcher obtains data indirectly from the field; and the literature study is not limited by space and time, meaning the researcher deals with data that is permanent and unchanging because it has been stored. Data collection was obtained through library research of books, articles, and previous research results related to the Love-Based Curriculum in Multicultural Islamic Religious Education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations of Love-Based Curriculum

The love-based curriculum in Islamic Religious Education has deep philosophical roots in Islamic teachings. The concept of love in Islam is inseparable from the concept of monotheism, where love for God is the primary foundation that then radiates to all of His creation. The Quran mentions in numerous verses the importance of compassion as a must-have characteristic for a Muslim (Mardiah & Napratilora, 2021; Rohaeni, 2024). In Surah Al-Anbiya, verse 107, God states that the Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to all creation, demonstrating that Islam is a religion filled with universal compassion.

From an educational psychology perspective, a love-based curriculum aligns with the humanistic learning theory developed by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow (Kumari, 2024; Feigenbaum, 2024). This theory emphasizes the importance of a conducive learning environment where students feel safe, accepted, and valued. When the basic needs for love and acceptance are met, students are more likely to fully actualize their potential (Putri et al., 2024).

The transformative learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow also provides a strong foundation for a love-based curriculum (Mezirow, 2018). Transformative learning not only transforms students' knowledge but also their perspective and outlook on the world (Southworth, 2022). In the context of multicultural Islamic religious education, this transformation is crucial to helping students develop an inclusive and tolerant worldview.

Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences supports a love-based curriculum approach (Syarifah, 2019). Gardner identified interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence as two of the eight multiple intelligences possessed by humans (Cavas & Cavas, 2020). A love-based curriculum specifically develops these two types of intelligence through learning that emphasizes empathy, effective communication, and self-awareness.

In a multicultural context, a love-based curriculum adopts the principles of multicultural education developed by James Banks (Banks, 2021). Banks emphasized the importance of equity pedagogy, a learning approach that provides equal opportunities for all students to learn and develop, regardless of their background (Khalim & Parut, 2025). A love-based curriculum embodies equity pedagogy by creating an inclusive and compassionate learning environment.

The Concept of Love from an Islamic Perspective

Islam has a very comprehensive and multidimensional concept of love. Love in Islam is not only an emotion but also a concrete action reflected in everyday behavior (Karimullah, 2023). The Quran uses various terms to describe the concept of love, such as *hubb* (love), *mawaddah* (love), *rahmah* (mercy), and *mahabbah* (love). Each of these terms has different nuances and depths of meaning, but they all refer to sincere and profound affection.

Love for God is the pinnacle of all forms of love in Islam. This love is not merely a feeling but also a commitment to obey all His commands and avoid His prohibitions (Sulhadi & Firdaus, 2020). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that the sign of someone's love for God is when they love what God loves and hate what God hates. This love for Allah then becomes the source of inspiration for loving all of His creation. Love for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the second, crucial dimension of the Islamic concept of love. The Prophet Muhammad is loved not only as a messenger of Allah but also as a human being with noble morals. The Prophet's exemplary behavior in showing compassion to all people, including those of different religions, serves as a model for Muslims to follow (Erdiansyah et al., 2024).

Love for fellow human beings is a practical manifestation of love for Allah and His Messenger (Labibuddin, 2022). Islam teaches that all humans are brothers in humanity, despite differences in belief. The concept of *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human brotherhood) serves as the foundation for building harmonious relationships with all people, regardless of their background (Shohib et al., 2024). Love for nature and the environment is also an integral part of the concept of love in Islam. As caliphs on earth, humans have a responsibility to protect and care for nature with compassion. The concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God) teaches that all of God's creation is interconnected and must be treated with respect and compassion (Mahadjani et al., 2025).

Implementation of a Love-Based Curriculum in Multicultural Islamic Religious Education

Implementing a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic religious education requires a systematic and comprehensive approach. This implementation process must begin with the reformulation of learning objectives that focus not only on cognitive aspects but also on the affective and psychomotor development of students. Learning objectives must be directed towards developing a Muslim character that is *rahmatan lil alamin* (a blessing for the universe), meaning a Muslim who is a blessing to all of nature.

Developing learning materials is a crucial aspect in implementing a love-based curriculum (Musyawir et al., 2024). The materials should not only be drawn from classical Islamic sources but also be contextualized to Indonesia's multicultural reality. Stories from the Quran and Hadith that demonstrate compassion and tolerance should be central to the learning materials. For example, one story is about the Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) forgiving his brothers, while another story illustrates the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) showing kindness to his non-Muslim neighbors. Furthermore, learning materials should also include contemporary examples of how Indonesian Muslims apply the values of love in a multicultural society (Nugroho, 2019). Inspiring stories of Muslim figures who demonstrate tolerance and compassion toward followers of other faiths can be highly effective in inspiring students.

Learning methods in a love-based curriculum must be interactive and participatory. Traditional lecture methods need to be reduced and replaced with approaches that engage students more actively (Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023). Group discussions, role-

playing, simulations, and project-based learning can be effective methods. Storytelling is also crucial, as stories have the power to touch hearts and change perspectives. Cooperative learning is a key strategy in implementing a love-based curriculum (Basori et al., 2025). Students from diverse backgrounds are grouped heterogeneously to collaborate on learning tasks. Through this collaboration, they learn to respect each other, understand differences, and develop empathy for others.

The use of information and communication technology can also support the implementation of a love-based curriculum. Digital platforms can be used to facilitate intercultural dialogue, share experiences, and access diverse learning resources (Machwate et al., 2021). Social media can be utilized as a tool to spread messages of love and peace.

The Role of Teachers in a Love-Based Curriculum

Teachers play a very strategic role in implementing a love-based curriculum (Muhsyanur, 2024). They are not only transmitters of material but also role models and role models in implementing the values of love. Teacher competencies within a love-based curriculum encompass four main dimensions: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies, all of which are grounded in the values of love (Basori et al., 2025). Teacher pedagogical competencies within a love-based curriculum include the ability to design learning that educates the mind and touches the hearts of students. Teachers must be able to create a conducive learning environment where every student feels safe, accepted, and valued (Rusticus et al., 2023). This requires skills in managing diverse classrooms, facilitating constructive discussions, and resolving potential conflicts.

Teacher personality competencies are crucial to the successful implementation of a love-based curriculum. Teachers must possess stable, mature, wise, and authoritative personalities. They must be role models in demonstrating compassion, empathy, and tolerance. Teachers' attitudes toward diversity will significantly influence students' attitudes toward differences (Trolan & Parker III, 2022). Teacher social competence includes the ability to communicate and interact effectively with students, fellow teachers, parents, and the community. In a multicultural context, teachers must possess a high level of cultural sensitivity and the ability to build bridges of communication between diverse groups.

Teacher professional competence includes a broad and in-depth mastery of learning materials and the ability to develop contextual and relevant learning materials (Skantz-Åberg et al., 2022). Teachers must possess a deep understanding of Islam as a religion of mercy for all the worlds, as well as the ability to integrate these values into their learning. Teacher professional development is a crucial aspect in implementing a love-based curriculum. Training programs and workshops on multicultural education, diversity management, and innovative learning techniques need to be conducted on an ongoing basis. Teachers also need to be equipped with the skills to use technology in learning and to address challenges that arise in implementing this curriculum (Kaminskienė et al., 2022).

Holistic Evaluation Strategy

The evaluation system in a love-based curriculum must be holistic and comprehensive, measuring not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects. Traditional evaluations that rely solely on written tests are not in keeping with the characteristics of a love-based curriculum, which emphasizes character and attitude development. Authentic assessment is the primary approach in evaluating a love-based curriculum. This assessment measures students' ability to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in real-life situations. Learning portfolios can be used to continuously document student development, including their reflections on learning experiences and interactions with people from diverse backgrounds ([Musyadad & Sari, 2024](#)).

Behavioral observation is an important instrument in evaluating a love-based curriculum. Teachers can observe how students interact with their peers, how they demonstrate empathy and compassion, and how they resolve conflicts or differences of opinion ([Kanza et al., 2025](#)). These observations can be done in class and during other school activities.

Self-assessment is also a crucial component in evaluating a love-based curriculum. Students are asked to reflect on their own learning, evaluate their character development, and set goals for future self-development. This helps develop students' self-awareness and personal responsibility. Peer assessment can be used to measure students' ability to collaborate and interact with others ([Stančić, 2021](#)). Through this assessment, students learn to provide constructive feedback and accept input from others with open arms. Project-based assessment is well-suited to the characteristics of a love-based curriculum. Students can be given projects that require them to interact with a multicultural community, such as research on diversity in their environment, interfaith community service programs, or peace and tolerance campaigns.

Challenges and Barriers to Implementation

The implementation of a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic religious education faces various challenges and obstacles that need to be anticipated and systematically addressed. The first challenge is resistance from some members of the public who worry that a multicultural approach will obscure Islamic identity or diminish students' faith. This concern often arises from a misconception about the concept of multiculturalism, which is perceived as religious relativism. To address this challenge, intensive public outreach is needed regarding the essence of a love-based curriculum, which strengthens faith through a more profound understanding of Islam as a religion of mercy for all the worlds. Ulama and religious leaders need to be involved in this outreach process to provide religious legitimacy to the multicultural approach.

The second challenge is the limited competence of teachers in implementing a love-based curriculum. Many Islamic religious education teachers are still accustomed to traditional learning approaches and lack adequate skills in managing diversity in the classroom. They may also lack a deep understanding of the principles of multicultural education. The solution to this challenge is the development of a comprehensive and

sustainable teacher training program. This program must encompass not only the technical aspects of learning but also the development of teachers' mindsets and character. Mentoring and coaching systems can also be implemented to provide direct assistance to teachers in curriculum implementation.

The third challenge is limited resources, both financially and in terms of infrastructure. Implementing a love-based curriculum requires significant investment in developing learning materials, teacher training, and providing supporting infrastructure. Many schools, especially in remote areas, face limitations here. To overcome this challenge, a strong commitment from the government is needed to allocate an adequate budget for the development of multicultural education. Partnerships with various parties, including civil society organizations, donor agencies, and the private sector, can also be a solution to overcome resource limitations.

The fourth challenge is the complexity of developing learning materials that balance a profound understanding of religion with an open attitude toward diversity. Caution is needed to avoid religious relativism but also to avoid falling into excessive exclusivity. The solution to this challenge is the formation of a curriculum development team consisting of religious experts, education experts, and multicultural education practitioners. This team is tasked with developing high-quality learning materials that align with the principles of the love-based curriculum.

Impact and Benefits of Love-Based Curriculum

The implementation of a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic education is expected to have significant positive impacts in both the short and long term. Observable short-term impacts include changes in the classroom learning climate. Students become more open, tolerant, and able to interact positively with peers from diverse backgrounds. Research shows that a loving and accepting learning environment can increase student motivation (Petrelli, 2018; Trifonova et al., 2023). When students feel safe and accepted, they are more likely to actively participate in learning, ask questions, and express their opinions. This, in turn, improves the overall quality of learning (Wanner & Palmer, 2018; Al-Said, 2023).

In the medium term, a love-based curriculum is expected to shape students' character to be more empathetic and tolerant and capable of becoming agents of peace in society. They will possess strong interpersonal skills, be able to communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds, and be able to resolve conflict constructively. The expected long-term impact is the formation of a generation of Muslims with a comprehensive and contextual understanding of Islam. This generation will not only possess in-depth religious knowledge but also be able to apply Islamic values in modern life, filled with diversity. They will become ambassadors of Islam, demonstrating the face of Islam as a blessing for all the worlds.

A love-based curriculum is also expected to contribute to reducing the potential for radicalism and extremism among the younger generation. With a true understanding of Islam as a religion of love and peace, they will develop strong immunity against radical narratives that contradict true Islamic values. From a broader social perspective,

implementing a love-based curriculum can contribute to building a more harmonious and respectful Indonesian society. Students who are accustomed to the values of love and tolerance will become agents of positive change in their families and communities.

4. CONCLUSION

The inclusion of a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic religious education is an educational innovation relevant to contemporary challenges. This curriculum offers a holistic approach that not only develops students' cognitive aspects but also their affective and psychomotor aspects by reinforcing the values of love, empathy, and tolerance, which are core Islamic teachings. The philosophical and theoretical foundations of the love-based curriculum are strong, both from the perspective of Islamic teachings and modern educational theories. The concept of *rahmatan lil alamin* (blessing for the universe), the primary mission of Islam, provides strong religious legitimacy for a multicultural approach, while humanistic and transformative learning theories provide a solid pedagogical foundation.

Implementing a love-based curriculum requires a comprehensive transformation of the education system, which includes reformulating learning objectives, developing contextual materials, implementing interactive learning methods, and creating a holistic evaluation system. The role of teachers as facilitators and role models is crucial to the successful implementation of this curriculum. Despite facing various challenges such as community resistance, limited teacher competency, and limited resources, the love-based curriculum has enormous potential to have a significant positive impact. With the right policy support, strong commitment from various parties, and systematic implementation, this curriculum can be an effective solution for developing a generation of intelligent, character-driven Muslims capable of living harmoniously within diversity.

The successful implementation of a love-based curriculum will not only benefit the development of individual student character but also contribute to the development of a more peaceful, tolerant, and prosperous Indonesian society. In the long term, this curriculum can contribute to realizing Indonesia's ideals of unity in diversity, where diversity is a strength for building a more advanced civilization. Therefore, the inclusion of a love-based curriculum in multicultural Islamic religious education is not merely an option but a necessity in preparing a future generation capable of facing global challenges while upholding the nation's noble values. Through education grounded in love, it is hoped that a brighter future can be created for the Indonesian nation and the world.

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