

A Love Based Curriculum Model for Character Formation: A Development Study in a Pesantren Based Madrasah

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Abstract

This study develops a conceptual model of a love-based curriculum for character formation in a pesantren-based madrasah. Using a qualitative case study at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, data were gathered through observations, interviews, and document analysis to examine the roles of institutional policy, pedagogy, and school culture. The findings identify three key results. First, the Love-Based Curriculum Model comprises three dimensions: value foundation, pedagogical approach, and school culture. Core values include inclusive spirituality, intellectual curiosity as devotion, ecological awareness, empathy, social tolerance, and civic responsibility. Pedagogy is expressed through caring communication, dialogic learning, and experiential activities. School culture reinforces values through daily practices such as congregational prayer, respectful interaction, environmental care, and anti-bullying norms. Second, the curriculum shapes graduate profiles marked by spiritual integrity, humanism, ecological awareness, intellectual curiosity, and civic responsibility. Third, a love-based educational ecosystem emerges from the integration of values, pedagogy, and culture, offering a holistic framework for character education.

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INTRODUCTION

Character formation has become a central concern in contemporary educational discourse as societies face rapid social change, cultural fragmentation, and moral uncertainty (Arthur, 2019; Shilling & Mellor, 2021). Educational institutions are increasingly expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to cultivate ethical awareness, empathy, and social responsibility among students (Balontia, 2024; Hamsiah, 2025). The emphasis on character education emerges from the recognition that intellectual competence alone is insufficient to address complex social challenges such as intolerance, environmental degradation, and declining civic engagement (Agus et al., 2025; Utamirohmahsari, 2024b). Scholars argue that education must integrate cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions in order to nurture well-rounded individuals capable of contributing positively to society (Ghosh, 2025; Utamirohmahsari, 2024a). Empirical evidence from various educational contexts indicates that students who experience value oriented learning environments tend to demonstrate stronger interpersonal skills, ethical decision-making, and community engagement (Bharti & Singh, 2026; Hikmah & Umaroh, Siti, 2026; Maryprema & Rajeswari, 2023). Consequently, educational

systems around the world have begun exploring holistic curriculum models that integrate moral values with academic learning. In this context, the concept of a love based curriculum becomes relevant as it emphasizes compassion, empathy, and relational learning as foundational elements of education (Ishmah Syafulloh, Aisyah Nindi Antika, 2026; Rahmania et al., 2026; Subairi, Muhammad Husni, 2025). Such an approach highlights the potential of educational institutions to cultivate humane and socially responsible citizens.

Despite the growing emphasis on character education, many educational systems continue to struggle with translating moral ideals into effective curricular practices. In many contexts, character education is often presented as a theoretical concept rather than an integrated component of daily teaching and learning processes (Dewi & Alam, 2020; Watts et al., 2021). Schools frequently incorporate moral instruction through isolated subjects or extracurricular activities without embedding ethical values within the broader pedagogical framework (Bisri et al., 2026; Chowdhury, 2018; Halstead & Pike, 2006; Zuyyina Linda Sari, Kudsiyeh, Sholi Asrori, 2026). As a result, character development tends to remain superficial and disconnected from students' lived experiences. Furthermore, contemporary educational environments are often influenced by competitive academic cultures that prioritize measurable cognitive achievement over emotional and moral development (ADEOWU, n.d.; Bisri et al., 2026; Lailatur Rohanita, Husnul Hilmam, 2026; Rahmania et al., 2026). This imbalance may limit opportunities for students to develop empathy, social awareness, and reflective thinking. Consequently, educators face the challenge of designing curriculum models that effectively integrate academic learning with value based formation. Addressing this issue requires innovative educational approaches capable of bridging the gap between moral ideals and pedagogical practices. Therefore, exploring alternative curriculum frameworks that emphasize relational learning, compassion, and experiential engagement becomes increasingly important for strengthening character education in modern educational institutions.

In the context of Islamic education, pesantren based madrasahs represent unique learning environments where academic instruction is often integrated with religious and moral cultivation. These institutions traditionally emphasize discipline, spirituality, and communal life as essential elements of student development. At MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, for example, educational practices demonstrate a distinctive integration between formal madrasah curriculum and pesantren traditions. Character formation is supported not only through formal classroom instruction but also through daily institutional practices and school culture. Students participate in regular congregational prayers, respectful greeting traditions, environmental care activities, and communal interactions that encourage mutual respect and responsibility. Teachers also employ pedagogical approaches characterized by empathetic communication, participatory dialogue, and experiential learning activities. These practices reflect an educational philosophy that emphasizes compassion, relational understanding, and moral responsibility. Although such practices appear to contribute positively to student character development, the underlying curricular structure and conceptual framework supporting these practices have not been systematically analyzed. Understanding how these practices form a

coherent educational model is therefore important for identifying the principles that guide character formation within pesantren based educational institutions.

Previous studies on character education have explored various approaches to integrating moral values into educational systems (Lailatul Mufarrohah, 2026). Many scholars emphasize the role of value based curricula in promoting ethical awareness and social responsibility among students (Hikmah & Umaroh, Siti, 2026; Maryprema & Rajeswari, 2023; Zuyyina Linda Sari, Kudsiyeh, Sholi Asrori, 2026). Research in moral education highlights the importance of experiential learning, reflective dialogue, and community engagement in fostering character development (Alabi, 2024; Culhane et al., 2018). Studies on humanistic pedagogy also underline the significance of empathetic teacher student relationships and supportive learning environments in cultivating students' emotional and moral capacities (Bisri et al., 2026; Rahmania et al., 2026; Romanovska, Lyudmyla Novak, 2024). In the context of Islamic education, several researchers have examined how pesantren traditions contribute to character formation through religious practices, discipline, and communal learning structures (Muqoffi, Ainun Nafila, 2026; Muzedi, Hesim, 2026). These studies demonstrate that pesantren environments often provide strong moral frameworks that shape students' spiritual and social attitudes (Maqfiroh et al., 2025; Sarwadi & Raihan, 2025). However, most existing research tends to focus either on philosophical perspectives of character education or on descriptive analyses of institutional practices. Consequently, there remains limited research that systematically conceptualizes how these values, pedagogical strategies, and institutional cultures can be integrated into a coherent curriculum model that explains the process of character formation.

Although previous studies have contributed valuable insights into character education and Islamic schooling, several limitations remain. First, many studies treat character formation as an outcome of moral instruction rather than examining how curriculum design can intentionally structure character development processes (Lapsley & Woodbury, 2016). Second, research on pesantren based education often emphasizes traditional values and religious practices without articulating how these elements interact with modern pedagogical approaches (Pohl, 2006; Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2024). Third, few studies provide integrative frameworks that connect curriculum orientation, teaching methods, and institutional culture within a single conceptual model. As a result, the relationship between value systems, pedagogical strategies, and school culture remains underexplored in existing literature. This gap becomes particularly significant in the context of contemporary Islamic education, where institutions must balance religious traditions with modern educational expectations. Addressing this gap requires research that moves beyond descriptive accounts toward the development of conceptual models that explain how character-oriented curricula function within specific institutional contexts. Such research can contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical guidance for educators seeking to implement holistic character education.

This study seeks to address the identified gap by developing a conceptual model of a love based curriculum within a pesantren based madrasah. The concept of a love based

curriculum emphasizes compassion, empathy, respect, and relational learning as foundational principles guiding educational practice. Rather than treating character education as an additional component of the curriculum, this approach integrates value orientation, pedagogical interaction, and institutional culture into a unified educational framework. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to conceptualize how these three elements operate synergistically within a pesantren based educational environment. By examining the educational practices of MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, the study aims to identify structural dimensions that explain how character formation is cultivated through daily learning experiences. This integrative perspective contributes to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of character education within Islamic schooling contexts. Furthermore, the proposed model offers a conceptual framework that may inform the design of holistic curricula capable of fostering both intellectual development and ethical responsibility among students.

Based on the issues and gaps identified above, this study addresses the central research problem of how a love based curriculum model can support character formation in a pesantren based madrasah. Specifically, the research explores how value orientation, pedagogical practices, and school culture interact to shape students' moral and social development. The study assumes that character formation does not occur solely through formal instruction but emerges through the interaction between curricular values, teacher-student relationships, and institutional environments. Therefore, the research argues that a love based curriculum functions as an integrative educational model that connects value foundations, humanistic pedagogy, and supportive school culture. Through qualitative case study analysis at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, the research seeks to identify the structural dimensions and practical mechanisms that constitute this model. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks for character education as well as provide practical insights for educators seeking to implement holistic educational approaches within Islamic schooling contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study (Gammelgaard, 2017; N. I. Khan, 2019) approach to explore the development of a love based curriculum model for character formation in a pesantren based madrasah. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to understand complex educational processes, values, and social interactions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement. Character formation, pedagogical interaction, and school culture are multidimensional phenomena that require in-depth interpretation of meanings, experiences, and institutional practices. The case study design was chosen because it allows researchers to investigate a specific educational setting in detail while considering the contextual factors that shape educational practices. Through this approach, the study sought to capture the dynamics of curriculum implementation, teacher student interaction, and institutional culture within their natural setting. By focusing on a single institutional case, the research was able to develop a

comprehensive understanding of how the love based curriculum concept operates in practice and how its various components interact to support character formation among students.

The research was conducted at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang, Indonesia, a madrasah that operates within a pesantren based educational environment. This institution was selected because it integrates the national madrasah curriculum with pesantren traditions that emphasize religious values, communal life, and moral development. The school provides a relevant setting for examining how character formation is cultivated through the interaction between formal academic learning and religious cultural practices. Another reason for selecting this site is the presence of educational policies and institutional practices that reflect a value oriented approach to character education. Activities such as congregational prayers, respectful greeting traditions, environmental awareness programs, and collaborative learning practices represent everyday expressions of moral and social values within the school environment. These practices provide rich empirical data for exploring how a love based curriculum can be implemented within a real educational context. Therefore, MTs Al-Khoirot Malang offered an appropriate setting for examining the development and practical manifestation of a love based curriculum model.

Data were collected using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and document analysis (Chand, 2025; N. Khan et al., 2025). Classroom and school observations were conducted to examine daily learning activities, teacher–student interactions, and institutional routines that contribute to character formation. These observations allowed the researcher to understand how educational values are expressed in both formal learning processes and informal school practices. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with school leaders, teachers, and selected students in order to obtain deeper insights into their perspectives on curriculum implementation, teaching strategies, and character education practices. The interview format enabled participants to describe their experiences and interpretations of educational values within the school context. In addition, document analysis was used to review institutional policies, curriculum documents, school regulations, and activity records that reflect the educational philosophy of the institution. The combination of these three techniques enabled the researcher to gather comprehensive data from multiple sources, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of the curriculum model under investigation.

The data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Monaro et al., 2022; Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing the collected information in order to focus on aspects relevant to the research objectives. This stage included coding interview transcripts, observation notes, and institutional documents to identify recurring themes related to curriculum values, pedagogical practices, and school culture. After the condensation process, the data were organized and presented through structured displays, such as thematic categories and conceptual relationships, to facilitate interpretation and comparison. The final stage involved verifying and interpreting the findings to construct a coherent understanding of the love based curriculum model and its contribution

to character formation. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were applied, including data triangulation across sources, prolonged engagement in the research setting, and careful comparison of observational, interview, and documentary evidence to confirm the consistency of interpretations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

A Love Based Curriculum Model for Character Formation

The field findings indicate that a Love based Curriculum Model for Character Formation at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang operates as an integrative educational framework in which moral values, pedagogical interaction, and institutional culture are intentionally interconnected to cultivate students’ character. In practical terms, this model does not treat character education as a separate subject but embeds it within everyday educational experiences. The operational meaning of a love based curriculum in this context refers to an educational orientation that emphasizes compassion, empathy, respect, and moral responsibility as guiding principles in curriculum implementation. These values are expressed through value-oriented policies, humanistic pedagogical approaches, and supportive school culture. Teachers communicate with students using respectful language, encourage participatory dialogue during lessons, and involve students in experiential activities that foster moral reflection. At the same time, institutional routines such as congregational prayers, respectful greetings, and environmental care programs reinforce the values promoted in classroom instruction. Therefore, the love based curriculum functions as a comprehensive educational environment that shapes students’ moral awareness, social responsibility, and intellectual curiosity through interconnected institutional practices.

Table 1. Interview Evidence

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
“In our school, learning is not only about academic achievement. Teachers try to guide students with patience and gentle communication so that they feel respected and motivated.”	Language of care in teaching interaction	Teacher
“Students are encouraged to express their ideas during discussions. We want them to learn responsibility and respect for different opinions.”	Dialogic and participatory learning	Curriculum Coordinator
“Every day students greet teachers and friends respectfully, and they participate in communal prayers. These routines teach them discipline and mutual respect.”	School culture reinforcing moral values	Vice Principal
“Environmental activities such as cleaning programs help students understand that caring for nature is part of their moral responsibility.”	Ecological awareness and experiential learning	Student

The interview excerpts illustrate that the love based curriculum at MTs Al-Khoirot is implemented through pedagogical relationships that emphasize empathy, dialogue, and moral engagement. The teacher’s statement highlights the importance of respectful communication

as a pedagogical strategy that nurtures students' emotional well-being and motivation. This practice reflects the concept of the "language of care," in which teachers consciously adopt supportive and affirming communication styles to create a psychologically safe learning environment. Such interactions allow students to feel valued as individuals rather than merely as academic performers. Furthermore, the curriculum coordinator's explanation emphasizes participatory learning processes that encourage students to share opinions and engage in constructive dialogue. This approach demonstrates how the curriculum integrates intellectual development with social learning. By allowing students to discuss ideas openly while respecting different viewpoints, the educational environment fosters both cognitive growth and interpersonal sensitivity. These findings indicate that pedagogical interaction becomes a crucial medium through which the values of compassion, respect, and responsibility are transmitted within the learning process.

The data also reveal that institutional culture plays a significant role in reinforcing the values embedded in the love based curriculum. Statements from school leaders highlight how daily routines such as respectful greetings, communal prayers, and environmental programs function as practical expressions of moral education. These practices illustrate how the school transforms abstract values into lived experiences that shape students' character. The vice principal's statement demonstrates that social rituals within the school environment encourage discipline, humility, and mutual respect among students. At the same time, the student's explanation regarding environmental activities suggests that experiential engagement enables learners to internalize ethical responsibility toward nature. Through these activities, moral education becomes experiential rather than merely theoretical. The integration of such practices suggests that character formation occurs not only through classroom instruction but also through everyday social interactions and institutional traditions. Consequently, the love based curriculum appears to function as a holistic educational system in which values are reinforced through consistent practices across different dimensions of school life.

Observational data further confirm the interview findings by demonstrating how the principles of the love based curriculum are manifested in daily school activities. During classroom observations, teachers were seen encouraging students to share ideas and respond respectfully to their peers' perspectives. The learning atmosphere was characterized by supportive dialogue rather than hierarchical communication, which enabled students to participate actively in discussions. Outside the classroom, the researcher observed routine practices such as students greeting teachers politely, participating in congregational prayers, and collaborating in environmental cleaning activities. These routines created opportunities for students to practice values such as discipline, empathy, and collective responsibility. The researcher interpreted these observations as evidence that the school environment functions as an integrated moral learning space. The consistency between classroom interaction and school routines indicates that the love based curriculum operates through a combination of formal and informal educational experiences. This alignment strengthens the internalization of values among students and reinforces the role of institutional culture in character development.

Based on the collected data, the implementation of the love based curriculum can be understood as a coordinated process that integrates value orientation, pedagogical interaction, and institutional culture. The interview data demonstrate that teachers intentionally adopt caring communication and dialogic teaching strategies to cultivate empathy and respect among students. At the same time, institutional routines such as communal prayers, greeting traditions, and environmental activities reinforce the values promoted in classroom instruction. These findings indicate that character formation is not achieved through isolated lessons but through continuous interaction between curriculum content, teaching practices, and social experiences within the school environment. In other words, the love based curriculum functions as a holistic educational framework that connects moral values with everyday learning activities. This integrative approach enables students to internalize ethical principles while simultaneously developing intellectual curiosity and social awareness. Consequently, the curriculum contributes to the development of graduates who demonstrate balanced spiritual, social, and intellectual qualities.

Table 2. Ideal Influence in the Implementation of the Love based Curriculum

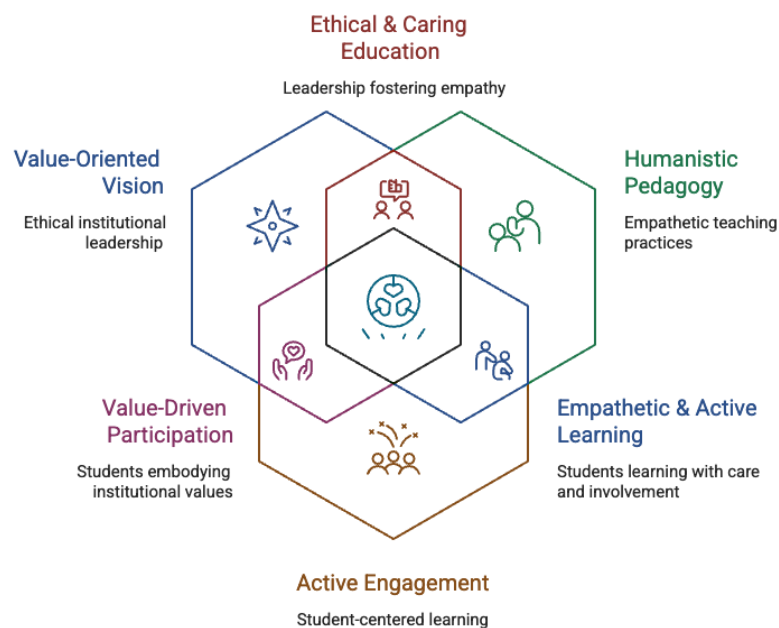
Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
School Principal	"Our vision is to ensure that academic learning always reflects compassion and responsibility toward others."	Institutional value orientation
Curriculum Coordinator	"We design learning activities that allow students to experience values directly, not only to memorize them."	Experiential value based curriculum
Teacher	"I try to guide students with patience and positive language so they feel encouraged to improve."	Humanistic pedagogy
Student	"Teachers listen to our opinions, so we feel confident expressing our ideas."	Participatory learning climate

The table demonstrates that the implementation of the love based curriculum is supported by a hierarchical alignment of institutional actors who contribute to the educational vision. The principal's statement reflects the strategic role of leadership in defining the ethical orientation of the school. By emphasizing compassion and responsibility within the institutional vision, the leadership establishes a normative framework that guides curriculum development and pedagogical practice. The curriculum coordinator's perspective highlights how this vision is translated into concrete instructional strategies that prioritize experiential engagement. Rather than relying solely on theoretical instruction, the curriculum encourages students to encounter values through practical learning experiences. This alignment between leadership vision and curricular design illustrates how institutional commitment strengthens the effectiveness of character education initiatives. The presence of consistent values at the policy and implementation levels suggests that the love based curriculum is not merely an individual teaching approach but an institutional framework supported by collaborative leadership.

The data further indicate that teachers and students play an essential role in sustaining the influence of the love based curriculum within daily learning interactions. The teacher's

statement demonstrates how pedagogical practice becomes a channel for transmitting institutional values to students. Through the use of positive language and patient guidance, teachers cultivate a supportive learning environment that encourages personal growth and moral reflection. Meanwhile, the student's perspective reveals the impact of participatory learning environments on students' confidence and engagement. When students feel that their opinions are valued, they are more likely to participate actively in the learning process and develop a sense of responsibility toward their peers. This interaction between teacher practice and student experience highlights the relational dimension of the curriculum model. The educational influence generated by these interactions contributes to the formation of a learning environment characterized by empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect, which are essential components of holistic character formation.

The overall pattern emerging from the data suggests a multidimensional model of character formation driven by the synergy between institutional leadership, pedagogical practice, and student participation. Leadership establishes the value-oriented vision that guides the educational direction of the institution. Curriculum planners translate this vision into structured learning activities that integrate ethical reflection with academic learning. Teachers operationalize these principles through humanistic teaching strategies, while students respond through active participation and engagement. This pattern indicates that the love based curriculum functions as a systemic educational model in which each institutional actor contributes to the cultivation of character. The consistent interaction between these elements creates a supportive learning ecosystem where moral values are reinforced through both instructional and social experiences. As a result, character formation becomes an integral part of the educational process rather than a supplementary activity, demonstrating the effectiveness of the love based curriculum as a holistic framework for moral and intellectual development.



Picture 1. Love based character formation

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Love Based Curriculum Model for character formation in a pesantren based madrasah functions as an integrative framework that combines value orientation, pedagogical interaction, and school culture. This result aligns with broader educational theories that emphasize the importance of holistic education in developing students' moral and social capacities (Bulkani et al., 2025; Isroani & Huda, 2022). Previous research on character education suggests that effective moral development occurs when ethical values are embedded within both curriculum structures and daily learning experiences (Ghosh, 2025; OBIZUE et al., 2025). The present findings support this perspective by showing that character formation at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang emerges through the interaction between institutional vision, classroom practice, and communal school routines. However, the study extends existing literature by highlighting the central role of compassion oriented educational values, which frame character education not only as moral instruction but also as relational engagement. The integration of spiritual awareness, empathy, ecological responsibility, and civic commitment reflects a broader interpretation of character formation. Therefore, the model identified in this research contributes to contemporary discussions on value based education by emphasizing the importance of relational and experiential dimensions in curriculum implementation.

The pedagogical dimension identified in the findings also corresponds with existing scholarship on humanistic and dialogic learning approaches. Educational theorists have long argued that teaching practices based on empathy, dialogue, and student participation encourage deeper moral and intellectual engagement (Mayasari, 2025; Mirra, 2018). The evidence from this study indicates that teachers at MTs Al-Khoirot employ communication strategies characterized by patience, respect, and affirmation, which create a supportive learning environment for students. This observation resonates with humanistic education theories that highlight the significance of teacher student relationships in fostering personal growth and ethical awareness (Romanovska & Novak, 2024; Thompson, 2018). At the same time, the emphasis on participatory dialogue reflects principles of dialogic pedagogy that encourage students to articulate their perspectives while respecting the views of others. Compared with previous studies that focus primarily on cognitive outcomes, this research demonstrates how pedagogical interaction itself becomes a medium for character formation. Thus, the findings reinforce the argument that compassionate communication and reflective dialogue play a crucial role in cultivating ethical sensitivity and social responsibility among students (Nolan et al., 2025; Waghid, 2024).

Another significant aspect of the findings concerns the role of school culture in sustaining character formation. Many studies on character education recognize the influence of institutional environment in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors (Cholifah, 2024; Rahayu et al., 2024). The practices observed in this research such as congregational prayers, respectful greeting traditions, and environmental care activities illustrate how moral values are reinforced through daily routines and communal experiences. This pattern is consistent with research on hidden curriculum, which emphasizes that values are often transmitted implicitly

through institutional practices rather than through formal instruction alone. Nevertheless, the present study provides a distinctive contribution by demonstrating how such practices are intentionally aligned with curricular values and pedagogical strategies. The integration between formal curriculum and school culture suggests that character formation is more effective when values are consistently reflected across different dimensions of the educational environment. Consequently, the findings support the view that moral education should be approached as a systemic process involving institutional structures, teaching practices, and social interactions (Husaeni, 2023; Obizue, 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the development of a conceptual framework for character education in Islamic schooling contexts. Existing literature on pesantren education often highlights the role of religious discipline and communal life in shaping students' moral identity (Hasanah, 2025; Sarwadi & Raihan, 2025). While these elements remain important, this research introduces the concept of a love based curriculum as a unifying framework that connects traditional religious values with contemporary pedagogical approaches. The model suggests that compassion, empathy, and mutual respect function as foundational principles guiding both curriculum design and teaching practice (Ghosh, 2025; Jia et al., 2025). This perspective broadens the theoretical understanding of character formation by emphasizing relational ethics as a central component of educational processes. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that integrating spiritual values with experiential learning and participatory dialogue can produce a more dynamic and inclusive model of moral education (Baharun, 2025; Bunthawee, 2025). In this sense, the love based curriculum model provides a theoretical bridge between classical Islamic educational values and modern pedagogical paradigms.

The practical implications of this research are equally significant for educators and educational institutions seeking to strengthen character education. The findings indicate that effective character formation requires coordinated efforts across different levels of the educational system (Cholifah, 2024; Durlak, 2018). Institutional leaders play a crucial role in establishing value-oriented visions that guide curriculum development and school culture. Curriculum planners must translate these values into learning activities that encourage ethical reflection and experiential engagement. Teachers, in turn, operationalize these principles through humanistic teaching practices that promote empathy and respectful dialogue. When these elements operate in harmony, they create a supportive educational ecosystem that nurtures both intellectual development and moral responsibility. Therefore, educational institutions interested in implementing character education programs may benefit from adopting integrated curriculum models that combine value orientation, pedagogical interaction, and institutional culture. Such an approach ensures that character formation becomes an organic component of the educational process rather than an isolated instructional objective (Fitria et al., 2019; Zurqoni et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study lies in the identification of a Love Based Curriculum Model that functions as an integrative framework for character formation within a pesantren based madrasah. The research demonstrates that character development becomes more effective when moral values are consistently embedded within curriculum orientation, pedagogical interaction, and school culture. The experience at MTs Al-Khoirot Malang indicates that compassionate communication, participatory learning, and daily communal practices collectively contribute to shaping students' ethical awareness, empathy, and social responsibility. The key lesson derived from this research is that character education cannot rely solely on formal instruction or isolated moral lessons. Instead, it requires a holistic educational ecosystem in which values are continuously practiced in both academic and social contexts. By integrating spiritual awareness, ecological responsibility, and civic commitment within everyday educational activities, the love based curriculum model illustrates how schools can nurture students' intellectual growth while simultaneously cultivating humane and socially responsible individuals.

This study also contributes to academic discourse by offering a conceptual framework that connects value-oriented curriculum design with humanistic pedagogy and supportive school culture. In contrast to many studies that discuss character education in general terms, this research provides a systematic model illustrating how moral values can be translated into concrete educational practices within Islamic schooling contexts. The concept of a love based curriculum extends existing literature by emphasizing compassion, empathy, and relational engagement as central principles guiding teaching and learning processes. The study therefore enriches theoretical discussions on character education by bridging classical Islamic educational values with contemporary pedagogical perspectives. Furthermore, the findings offer practical insights for educators and policymakers seeking to strengthen character education through integrated curriculum models. By demonstrating how institutional vision, pedagogical practice, and student participation interact to support character formation, this research highlights the importance of aligning educational structures with ethical objectives.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research focuses on a single institutional context, which means that the findings may not fully represent the diversity of educational practices found in other madrasahs or pesantren based schools. Cultural, organizational, and pedagogical differences across institutions may influence how a love based curriculum is interpreted and implemented. In addition, the qualitative case study design prioritizes depth of understanding rather than broad generalization. Future research could therefore expand the scope of investigation by conducting comparative studies across multiple educational institutions or regions. Quantitative or mixed-method approaches may also provide additional insights into the measurable impact of love based educational practices on students' academic performance, social attitudes, and long-term character development. Further exploration of this concept in different educational contexts would help refine the theoretical model and strengthen its applicability in broader educational settings.

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