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Implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Learning Activities: A Case Study at RA Miftahul Ulum

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in learning activities at RA Miftahul Ulum. It examines educators' understanding of the curriculum, its implementation in planning, teaching, and assessment, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its implementation. This study employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving the *Raudhatul Athfal* supervisor, teachers, the school committee chairperson, and the principal's colleague. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, while trustworthiness was ensured through source, technique, and time triangulation. The findings indicate that the successful implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum at RA Miftahul Ulum is closely related to teachers' understanding of its philosophical foundations and their ability to integrate the five Pillars of Love into instructional planning, classroom practices, and authentic assessment. This study contributes empirical evidence on how the Love-Based Curriculum can be operationalized in an Islamic early childhood education setting and provides practical insights for strengthening compassion-based educational practices and character-oriented early childhood.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has become an important concern in early childhood education because the early years are a critical period for children's cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual development. However, early childhood education practices may still place greater emphasis on academic readiness, while the development of children's character, empathy, care, and positive social relationships requires greater attention. This situation highlights the need for educational approaches that not only support children's academic development but also foster values of compassion, respect, responsibility, and mutual care. In the context of Islamic early childhood education in Indonesia, these needs have encouraged the development of educational policies that integrate character formation and values of love into learning. One of these initiatives is the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC), introduced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia through Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs No. 1503 of 2025. The curriculum aims to strengthen character education by integrating values of love into educational activities while supporting children's academic, social, emotional, and spiritual development (Nijma & Asnatasia, 2025).

The Love-Based Curriculum positions love and compassion as fundamental principles that guide educational practice and children's character development. These principles are consistent with humanistic approaches that emphasize children's individual needs, emotional well-being, meaningful learning experiences, and supportive interactions in educational settings (Dewi *et al.*, 2025). In the Indonesian educational context, the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara similarly emphasizes recognizing children as unique individuals whose potential should be nurtured through appropriate guidance according to their developmental characteristics (Hani & Putro, 2022). From the perspective of Islamic education, these principles are reflected in the concept of *rahmah* (compassion), which encourages kindness, empathy, respect, care, and exemplary conduct in educational interactions (Dinata *et al.*, 2025). However, translating these values into consistent learning practices requires educators to integrate them not only into classroom interactions but also into learning planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The implementation of character-oriented and humanistic learning requires educational practices that recognize children's diverse potentials and provide meaningful experiences that accommodate individual differences. Recent research on early childhood education highlights the importance of recognizing children's diverse intelligences and providing learning experiences that support their individual potentials (Wijaya, 2025). These principles are relevant to the Love-Based Curriculum because its values are intended to be integrated into children's daily learning experiences rather than treated as separate instructional content. However, although humanistic, character-oriented, and compassion-based educational principles have been widely discussed, empirical evidence concerning how the Love-Based Curriculum is implemented specifically in *Raudhatul Athfal* remains limited. Existing discussions tend to emphasize the conceptual and policy dimensions of the curriculum, while its practical implementation through learning planning, classroom activities, assessment, and school culture requires further empirical examination.

Although previous studies have examined the Love-Based Curriculum conceptually Dinata *et al.* (2025) and the management of *Panca Cinta*-based character education in early childhood education Shabrina *et al.* (2025), the practical implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in daily learning activities remains insufficiently explored. Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum at RA Miftahul Ulum, focusing on educators' understanding, learning planning, implementation, evaluation, and

supporting and inhibiting factors. This study contributes empirical evidence on how the Five Pillars of Love (*Panca Cinta*) can be operationalized in an Islamic early childhood education setting. The findings also provide practical insights for strengthening compassion-based and character-oriented learning in *Raudhatul Athfal*.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study to investigate the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC) in learning activities at RA Miftahul Ulum, focusing on educators' understanding, learning planning, implementation, evaluation, and supporting and inhibiting factors. The participants consisted of five informants selected purposively based on their direct involvement and knowledge of LBC implementation, namely a Raudhatul Athfal supervisor, a colleague of the RA principal, a Group A teacher, a Group B teacher, and the school committee chairperson. Data were collected through three observation sessions in Groups A and B, in-depth interviews with the five informants, and document analysis of learning plans, children's developmental records, photographs, schedules, and other relevant school documents. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification Mujamill (2025), while data trustworthiness was established through source, technique, and time triangulation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are presented according to the research objectives, including teachers' understanding of the Love-Based Curriculum, its implementation in learning activities, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing its implementation. Each finding is interpreted by relating it to relevant theories and previous studies.

3.1. Teachers' Understanding of the Love-Based Curriculum

The study found that teachers at RA Miftahul Ulum possess a sound understanding of the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC). This understanding has been developed through professional development activities, including workshops organized by the Raudhatul Athfal Teachers' Working Group (KKG) of Cianjur Regency, supervisory guidance, and continuous reflective discussions within the school. These initiatives have strengthened teachers' understanding of the curriculum's philosophy, objectives, and implementation.

The participants did not perceive the LBC as a replacement for the existing curriculum. Instead, they regarded it as a pedagogical framework that integrates compassion into every aspect of the teaching and learning process. This understanding is reflected in their ability to incorporate the Five Pillars of Love (*Panca Cinta*) into classroom practices through positive habituation, teacher modelling, and respectful interactions with children.

The results show a shift from an achievement-oriented approach toward a more balanced educational model that places equal emphasis on character development. Teachers seek to create learning environments that respect children's individuality, encourage active participation, and promote compassionate communication, reflecting the principles of child-centred education.

These findings are consistent with a humanistic approach to early childhood education, which emphasizes understanding children's characteristics and needs and providing supportive guidance according to their developmental potential (Hani & Putro, 2022). Similarly, humanistic approaches to early childhood education emphasize that children's learning and development should be supported through a safe, supportive, child-centered

environment that recognizes their individual potential and holistic developmental needs (Dewi *et al.*, 2025; Hamidah, 2024).

From the perspective of Islamic education, teachers' understanding of the LBC reflects the implementation of *rahmah* (compassion) as a core educational value. Teachers are expected not only to facilitate learning but also to serve as role models by demonstrating empathy, patience, kindness, and genuine concern for children's development. These findings support those of Raihanah *et al.* (2025) who identified teachers' understanding of the philosophical foundations of the Love-Based Curriculum as a key factor influencing its successful implementation. They also corroborate the findings of Mh *et al.*, (2025) who described the LBC as a character-based educational approach that integrates compassion into everyday learning experiences.

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers' understanding of the curriculum forms the foundation for its effective implementation, influencing instructional planning, classroom interaction, and the development of a more humanistic school culture.

3.2. Implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Learning Activities

The implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum at RA Miftahul Ulum was examined through three interconnected stages: instructional planning, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation.

a. Learning Planning

The findings show that the implementation of the LBC begins with systematic instructional planning. Teachers intentionally integrate the Five Pillars of Love into lesson modules, learning objectives, play-based activities, instructional media, and assessment strategies. Planning focuses not only on achieving developmental outcomes but also on fostering character values such as responsibility, cooperation, discipline, mutual respect, and caring. Teachers also prepare a learning environment that reflects children's developmental characteristics. Classroom organisation, educational play materials, and learning activities are designed to create a safe, engaging, and supportive environment that encourages active participation.

These findings indicate that compassion is intentionally embedded in the planning process rather than emerging solely through spontaneous classroom interaction. This finding is consistent with Noerohmah & Erika (2024), who demonstrate that learning planning involves preparing learning activities and media according to children's learning needs and developmental characteristics. Consequently, effective curriculum implementation depends on the quality of teachers' planning as well as classroom practice.

b. Learning Implementation

Classroom observations and interviews revealed that the values of the LBC have been effectively integrated into child-centred learning practices. Teachers establish warm teacher–child relationships through greetings, smiles, respectful communication, positive reinforcement, and individual guidance tailored to each child's needs. Learning activities are delivered through play, storytelling, singing, discussion, and exploration, enabling children to construct meaningful learning experiences.

The Five Pillars of Love are incorporated into children's daily activities in contextual ways. Love for Allah is nurtured through daily worship and religious practices; love of knowledge through inquiry and exploration; love for the environment through activities such as maintaining classroom cleanliness and caring for plants; love for oneself and others through sharing, cooperation, mutual respect, and anti-bullying practices; and love for the nation

through the introduction of national symbols, Indonesian cultural heritage, and the appropriate use of the Indonesian language.

These findings suggest that character education is most effective when integrated into everyday learning rather than taught as a separate subject. Through consistent habituation and teacher modelling, children internalize positive values naturally within authentic learning experiences. This finding is consistent with Mh *et al.* (2025), who reported that the Love-Based Curriculum contributes significantly to children's identity formation and character development by fostering positive emotional relationships and meaningful learning experiences.

c. Learning Evaluation

Learning evaluation is conducted through authentic assessment, focusing on children's holistic developmental progress rather than academic performance alone. Teachers employ various assessment techniques, including anecdotal records, observation sheets, portfolios, and children's work samples, to monitor development across cognitive, religious and moral, social-emotional, language, physical-motor, and character domains in accordance with the principles of the LBC (Asmara, 2023).

The assessment results are used to identify each child's developmental progress, determine appropriate follow-up learning activities, and provide constructive feedback for both teachers and parents. This continuous evaluation enables teachers to adjust learning strategies according to children's individual needs while strengthening collaboration between the school and families in supporting children's development.

This approach is consistent with recent practices of early childhood assessment, which emphasize observing and documenting children's development through various assessment techniques, including observation, portfolios, and work samples (Rantina *et al.*, 2024). Assessment therefore functions not only as a tool for documenting learning outcomes but also as a basis for identifying children's developmental progress and informing subsequent learning activities.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Love-Based Curriculum has been systematically implemented at RA Miftahul Ulum through instructional planning, child-centered learning practices, and authentic assessment, supported by teachers' understanding of its philosophical foundations. The findings indicate that successful implementation depends not only on the curriculum design but also on teachers' commitment, school leadership, parental collaboration, and a supportive learning environment.

The novelty of this study lies in providing empirical evidence of how the Love-Based Curriculum, through the integration of the Five Pillars of Love (*Panca Cinta*), is translated into daily educational practices within an Islamic early childhood education setting. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on compassion-based education by demonstrating that integrating love as a pedagogical principle can foster a more humanistic, inclusive, and character-oriented learning environment. However, this study is limited to one *Raudhatul Athfal* and involves a limited number of informants, so the findings may not fully represent the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in other Islamic early childhood education settings. Future research is recommended to examine the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in different educational contexts and through longitudinal studies to better understand its long-term impact on children's character development.

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