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Reconstructing islamic religious education through a love-based curriculum: Toward the humanization of learning in elementary schools

Shofiyah Afihilmi[1]*, Adinda Huril Jannah[2], M. Ilmil Zawawi[3]
[1,2,3] Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, Indonesia
*Correspondence: afiihilmii@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to analyze the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education through the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC) in elementary schools, particularly in transforming learning practices toward more humanistic, participatory, and value-oriented education. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design conducted at MIN 2 Bondowoso, Indonesia. Participants consisted of the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and parents selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the implementation of the curriculum. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that the Love-Based Curriculum transformed Islamic Religious Education from a teacher-centered and doctrinal approach into a more dialogic, reflective, and student-centered learning process. The integration of the Five Dimensions of Love love of God, humanity, knowledge, the environment, and the nation encouraged meaningful learning experiences and strengthened students' religious character through empathy, tolerance, social awareness, responsibility, and worship consciousness. The study demonstrates that love-based pedagogy contributes not only to cognitive understanding but also to students' emotional, social, and spiritual development. The novelty of this study lies in positioning the Love-Based Curriculum as a pedagogical framework for the humanization of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. This study contributes theoretically to contemporary discussions on humanistic religious education and practically to the development of compassionate and transformative learning models in Islamic education.

KEYWORDS
Elementary School, Humanistic Learning, Islamic Religious Education, Love-Based Curriculum, Religious Character

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INTRODUCTION

Religious education has increasingly become a central concern in contemporary educational discourse due to its strategic role in shaping students' moral consciousness, ethical orientation, and social responsibility amid rapid global transformation. In the twenty-first century, educational institutions are expected not

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only to develop students' cognitive competence but also to cultivate empathy, compassion, critical awareness, and the capacity to coexist within increasingly pluralistic societies (Choo, 2020; Sabrina et al., 2025). Emphasizes that future-oriented education must prioritize human dignity, solidarity, and social justice in response to widening social fragmentation, moral crises, and dehumanizing educational practices. Within this context, religious education occupies a particularly important position because it directly addresses questions of meaning, morality, spirituality, and human relationships(Jakubik, 2023; Marshall, 2025). However, despite its normative ideals, religious education in many contexts continues to face criticism for remaining overly doctrinal, cognitively oriented, and disconnected from students lived realities.

These challenges are especially relevant in the context of Islamic Religious Education . Ideally, Islamic education aims to develop holistic human beings who integrate intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and moral dimensions in balanced ways (Eaude, 2026; Maduerawae et al., 2025). Islamic educational philosophy conceptualizes education not merely as knowledge transmission but as a process of forming insan kamil, or complete human beings, characterized by ethical conduct, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility. Nevertheless, contemporary practices of Islamic Religious Education frequently remain dominated by teacher-centered instruction, memorization, and doctrinal transmission, with limited opportunities for students to engage critically, reflectively, and experientially with religious values (Nafisah et al., 2026; Zul et al., 2026). Consequently, students may acquire substantial religious knowledge while struggling to internalize religious values in meaningful ways within their daily lives.

The persistence of such pedagogical limitations becomes increasingly problematic in the midst of contemporary social transformations. The rapid expansion of digital technology, globalization, and social media has significantly altered students' patterns of interaction, identity formation, and moral engagement (Khanal, 2025; Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2025). Young learners are continuously exposed to diverse forms of information, ideologies, and social influences that may simultaneously enrich and challenge their moral development. As a result, educational institutions face growing demands to prepare students not only for academic achievement but also for ethical decision-making, emotional resilience, and responsible citizenship in complex social environments (Azevedo et al., 2026; El Tarhouny et al., 2026). In this situation, religious education can no longer rely solely on traditional instructional models that prioritize obedience and rote learning without fostering emotional engagement and contextual understanding.

Recent empirical evidence demonstrates that educational institutions continue to experience serious challenges related to character formation and social relationships among students. Reports from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) documented 241 complaints within the education sector during 2024, including cases of bullying, discrimination, violence, and harmful school policies (Hsieh et al., 2026; Soumyaja et al., 2026). Similarly, the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (JPPI) reported at least 573 incidents of violence in schools, madrasahs, and Islamic boarding schools throughout the same year, with bullying accounting for approximately 31% of

reported cases. These findings indicate that many educational institutions still struggle to cultivate empathy, tolerance, mutual respect, and social awareness among students. Such conditions are deeply concerning because schools should function not merely as spaces for academic instruction but also as environments that nurture humanity, compassion, ethical sensitivity, and peaceful coexistence (Avelino Gomez et al., 1 C.E.; Moore et al., 2026).

Within the context of Islamic Religious Education, these social realities reveal a significant discrepancy between the philosophical objectives of religious learning and the realities of classroom practice. Although Islamic education emphasizes moral cultivation, compassion, and the internalization of religious values, learning processes frequently remain focused on cognitive achievement through memorization, conceptual comprehension, and formal assessment (Chang & Aberash, 2026; Hagos, 2026). The affective, emotional, and experiential dimensions of religious learning often receive limited pedagogical attention. As a consequence, religion may be understood primarily as a body of knowledge to be mastered rather than as a transformative ethical framework guiding students' attitudes, behaviors, and relationships with others.

Previous studies have highlighted similar concerns regarding the dominance of instructional approaches that position teachers as the sole authority in religious learning. Teacher-centered pedagogies tend to restrict students' opportunities for dialogue, critical reflection, emotional engagement, and active participation in constructing meaning (Friatin et al., 2026; Machaba & Mangwiro, 2026). Such approaches may hinder students from experiencing religion as a lived ethical practice connected to everyday social realities. In contrast, contemporary educational scholarship increasingly advocates for learning models that humanize students by recognizing their emotional needs, personal experiences, and social contexts. Humanistic education, therefore, has emerged as an influential paradigm that seeks to reposition learners as active subjects rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

The theoretical foundations of humanistic learning can be traced to the works of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, who emphasized self-actualization, meaningful learning, emotional engagement, and personal growth as central dimensions of education. Rogers argued that meaningful learning occurs when students are actively involved in discovering knowledge that is personally relevant to their experiences and aspirations. Similarly, Maslow's theory of human motivation emphasizes that individuals require emotional security, belongingness, and self-worth in order to achieve optimal personal development (Berkovich et al., 2025; Shaked, 2026). Humanistic education therefore conceptualizes learning as a holistic process involving cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. Recent studies have demonstrated the compatibility between humanistic psychology and Islamic educational philosophy, particularly regarding the development of ethical, spiritually conscious, and socially responsible learners (Putri et al., 2025; Shopiah et al., 2025). This theoretical convergence suggests that Islamic Religious Education possesses substantial potential to be reconstructed through humanistic pedagogical approaches that emphasize compassion, dignity, and meaningful engagement.

In contemporary educational discourse, humanistic pedagogy has increasingly been associated with the concept of the humanization of learning. Humanizing pedagogy seeks to create educational environments that affirm students' humanity, voices, emotions, cultural identities, and lived experiences (Cappiali, 2025; del Carmen Salazar & Saldaña-Spiegle, 2026). Freire strongly criticized "banking education," in which learners are treated as passive containers of information rather than active participants in knowledge construction. Instead, Freire proposed dialogical and emancipatory forms of education that encourage critical consciousness and authentic human relationships. Similarly, hooks emphasized that transformative education must be grounded in care, mutual respect, and community-building processes that empower learners emotionally and intellectually (Ibourk & Morrison, 2026; Vanderheiden, 2025). Within this framework, learning is understood not merely as academic achievement but as a relational and ethical process through which individuals develop self-awareness, empathy, and social responsibility.

These developments have contributed to the emergence of love-centered and compassionate pedagogies within educational theory. Love in education is increasingly understood as a pedagogical principle rather than merely a personal emotion. Noddings argues that caring relationships constitute the ethical foundation of meaningful education because students learn most effectively in environments characterized by trust, empathy, and emotional support (Goode et al., 2025; Jia et al., 2026). In Islamic educational thought, the concepts of rahmah (compassion), mahabbah (love), and akhlaq (ethical conduct) similarly emphasize the importance of nurturing humane relationships within educational processes. Consequently, love-based education has begun to attract scholarly attention as an alternative paradigm capable of addressing the dehumanizing tendencies of contemporary schooling. Recent studies indicate that pedagogies grounded in compassion and empathy can strengthen students' social awareness, moral responsibility, and emotional well-being while simultaneously improving learning engagement.

As part of broader efforts to reform religious education in Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs introduced the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) as a new educational paradigm emphasizing compassion, humanity, and ethical relationships as the foundation of learning processes. The curriculum promotes the integration of five interconnected dimensions of love love of God, love of humanity, love of knowledge, love of the environment, and love of the nation within educational activities and school culture (Rohman et al., 2026; Sharma et al., 2025). Unlike conventional instructional models centered primarily on doctrinal mastery, the Love-Based Curriculum seeks to foster meaningful learning experiences that encourage students to embody religious values in concrete social practices. In this sense, the curriculum represents an important attempt to reconstruct Islamic Religious Education from a transmissive paradigm toward a more humanistic and transformative orientation.

Despite growing scholarly interest in the Love-Based Curriculum, empirical research investigating its pedagogical implementation remains limited. Existing studies largely focus on conceptual discussions, philosophical analyses, or curriculum

policy frameworks rather than examining how love-based principles are operationalized within classroom interactions and school culture. Furthermore, previous research has predominantly discussed character education, religious moderation, and humanistic pedagogy in general terms without specifically exploring how the integration of the Five Dimensions of Love reconstructs Islamic Religious Education and shapes students' religious experiences at the elementary school level (Afihilmi et al., 2026; Sikana et al., 2025). Consequently, important questions remain regarding how love-based pedagogical values influence learning processes, teacher–student relationships, and the development of students' religious character in practice.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. Specifically, the research investigates how the curriculum reconstructs learning practices from doctrinal transmission toward humanistic learning through the integration of the Five Dimensions of Love. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize conceptual and policy dimensions, this research focuses on the lived pedagogical experiences of teachers and students within authentic educational settings. Moreover, the study contributes to broader international discussions concerning humanistic education, compassionate pedagogy, and religious character formation by providing empirical evidence from the context of Islamic primary education.

The novelty of this research lies in its effort to position the Love-Based Curriculum not merely as an educational policy innovation but as a pedagogical framework for the humanization of Islamic Religious Education. The study develops an analytical understanding of how love-based values transform learning interactions, religious experiences, and students' character formation within elementary schools. By integrating humanistic educational theory, Islamic pedagogical philosophy, and empirical analysis of curriculum implementation, this research contributes theoretically to the reconstruction of religious education discourse while also offering practical implications for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to develop more meaningful, compassionate, and transformative models of Islamic learning.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education through the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in elementary schools. The research specifically focuses on three interrelated dimensions: the transformation of learning practices toward humanistic pedagogy, the integration of the Five Dimensions of Love within educational activities, and the impact of the curriculum on students' religious character formation. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to contemporary efforts toward humanizing religious education in the twenty-first century.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education through the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in elementary schools. A qualitative

approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand deeply the meanings, experiences, interactions, and pedagogical processes underlying the implementation of love-based learning within its natural educational setting. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to investigate complex social and educational phenomena holistically while emphasizing participants' perspectives, contextual realities, and lived experiences (Robert K. Yin, 2008). In the context of this study, the qualitative approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of how teachers, students, school leaders, and parents interpreted and experienced the transformation of Islamic Religious Education from doctrinal instruction toward more humanistic and compassionate learning practices.

The study specifically adopted a case study design because it allows researchers to investigate contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). Case study research is particularly relevant for examining educational innovations, pedagogical transformation, and curriculum implementation processes because it provides rich and contextualized descriptions of social realities. Through this design, the study sought to generate a comprehensive understanding of how the Love-Based Curriculum was implemented, negotiated, and experienced within the daily practices of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. Furthermore, the case study approach enabled the researchers to capture the interaction between curriculum policy, school culture, teacher pedagogy, and students' religious character formation as interconnected dimensions of educational practice.

The research was conducted at MIN 2 Bondowoso, an Islamic elementary school that has integrated the principles of the Love-Based Curriculum into Islamic Religious Education learning activities and school culture. The site was selected purposively based on several considerations relevant to the focus of the study. First, the school had actively implemented the values of compassion, empathy, and character education through various pedagogical and cultural programs. Second, the institution represented an educational environment that emphasized the humanization of learning through the integration of religious, social, and emotional dimensions within classroom activities. Third, the school demonstrated a commitment to strengthening students' religious character through contextual and value-oriented educational practices. Purposive site selection is widely recommended in qualitative research because it allows researchers to select information-rich cases capable of providing meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Research participants consisted of one principal, two Islamic Religious Education teachers, six students, and four parents selected through purposive sampling techniques. The participants were chosen based on their direct involvement, experiences, and knowledge regarding the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum within the school environment. The principal was selected because of his role in educational leadership and curriculum policy implementation. Islamic Religious Education teachers were selected because they functioned as the primary actors responsible for designing and implementing love-based pedagogical practices in the classroom. Students were selected as the central recipients of educational

experiences, while parents were involved because they served as important partners in supporting students' character formation both within and beyond school contexts. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants possessed relevant experiences and could provide rich, detailed, and contextually meaningful information regarding the research focus.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The use of multiple data collection methods enabled methodological triangulation and enhanced the richness and credibility of the findings. In-depth interviews were conducted semi-structurally to explore participants' perspectives, interpretations, and lived experiences concerning the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences while enabling the researchers to maintain alignment with the study objective. Interview questions focused on pedagogical transformation, the integration of the Five Dimensions of Love, students' religious experiences, and perceived changes in character formation.

Participant observation was undertaken to examine directly the implementation of love-based pedagogical practices within classroom interactions and school activities. Through observation, the researchers documented teacher–student interactions, learning strategies, students' participation, emotional engagement, and the manifestation of compassionate values during educational activities. Observation is considered particularly valuable in qualitative educational research because it enables researchers to understand social behavior, interactions, and contextual realities that may not be fully captured through interviews alone. Observational activities were conducted continuously during learning processes and school programs related to religious habituation, collaborative activities, and character-building practices.

Document analysis was also employed to strengthen data triangulation and provide contextual evidence regarding curriculum implementation. Documents analyzed included teaching modules, lesson plans, school programs, curriculum documents, reflective notes, photographs of school activities, and other institutional records related to the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum. Document analysis allowed researchers to identify how compassionate and humanistic educational values were formally articulated within pedagogical planning and school policies. Additionally, documentary evidence provided important contextual insights that complemented interview and observational findings.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings, several validation strategies were employed. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from principals, teachers, students, and parents to identify convergent and divergent perspectives concerning curriculum implementation. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing findings derived from interviews, observations, and documentation. These triangulation procedures are considered essential in qualitative inquiry because they strengthen data credibility and reduce the

risk of interpretive bias. In addition, member checking was conducted by returning preliminary interpretations and findings to selected participants to verify the accuracy and appropriateness of the researchers' interpretations. Member checking enhanced the confirmability of the study by ensuring that participants' perspectives were represented authentically within the analysis.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three interconnected processes: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. During this process, the researchers coded and categorized the data according to emerging themes related to pedagogical transformation, the integration of love-based values, and students' religious character formation. Subsequently, the data were displayed in the form of descriptive narratives, matrices, and thematic representations to facilitate interpretation and analytical comparison across participants and data sources. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and conducting continuous verification processes to ensure analytical consistency and interpretive rigor. Data analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the research process, allowing themes and interpretations to emerge progressively from the field data.

Overall, the methodological design of this study was intended to generate an in-depth, contextually grounded, and analytically rigorous understanding of how the Love-Based Curriculum reconstructs Islamic Religious Education through humanistic pedagogical practices in elementary schools. By combining qualitative inquiry, case study methodology, multiple data collection techniques, triangulation procedures, and interactive data analysis, the study sought to produce credible and meaningful findings capable of contributing to broader discussions concerning the humanization of religious education in contemporary educational contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Islamic Religious Education Learning through the Love-Based Curriculum

The findings revealed that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC) significantly transformed the learning orientation of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. Prior to the implementation of the curriculum, classroom learning predominantly emphasized doctrinal transmission, memorization, and cognitive achievement. Teachers functioned primarily as authoritative sources of information, while students tended to participate passively in learning activities. However, after the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum, the learning process gradually shifted toward more humanistic, dialogic, and student-centered practices.

Observational data demonstrated substantial changes in classroom interaction patterns. Teachers no longer relied solely on lecturing and memorization methods but instead facilitated reflective discussions, collaborative learning, contextual storytelling, and experiential activities connected to students' daily lives. During

classroom observations, students appeared more engaged in expressing opinions, sharing personal experiences, and participating in discussions related to moral and religious issues. The learning environment also became emotionally warmer and more participatory compared to conventional instructional practices.

One classroom observation showed that students actively discussed examples of empathy and mutual help after the teacher connected Quranic teachings with real-life situations encountered by students in school and family environments. Several students voluntarily shared personal experiences about helping friends and resolving conflicts peacefully. Such interactions reflected the emergence of reflective and meaningful learning experiences rather than merely procedural religious instruction.

The transformation of learning practices was further confirmed through interview findings. One Islamic Religious Education teacher explained:

> "*After implementing the Love-Based Curriculum, students became more active in classroom discussions and were able to connect religious lessons with their daily experiences. Previously, they mostly listened and memorized, but now they express their feelings and perspectives more openly*." (T1, Interview, 2026)

Another teacher similarly stated:

> "*The classroom atmosphere changed significantly. Students are no longer afraid of making mistakes when expressing opinions. Learning has become more communicative and emotionally engaging*." (T2, Interview, 2026)

Student interviews also indicated that they experienced religious learning as more meaningful and enjoyable after the implementation of the curriculum. One student stated:

> "*Religious lessons are now easier to understand because teachers explain them using stories and examples from our daily lives*." (S3, Interview, 2026)

These findings suggest that the Love-Based Curriculum transformed Islamic Religious Education from a transmissive instructional model toward a more humanistic pedagogical orientation emphasizing dialogue, reflection, emotional engagement, and meaningful learning experiences.

Table 2. Transformation of Islamic Religious Education Learning Before and After the Implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum

Aspect	Before LBC	After LBC
Teacher's Role	Main source of information	Facilitator and learning companion
Learning Method	Lecture and memorization	Reflection, discussion, habituation
Learning Orientation	Mastery of religious content	Internalization of values
Student Participation	Passive	Active and participatory
Assessment Orientation	Cognitive achievement	Cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions

Integration of the Five Dimensions of Love in Islamic Religious Education

The findings further revealed that the Five Dimensions of Love (Panca Cinta) became the foundational framework guiding the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum within learning activities and school culture. These dimensions consisted of love of God, love of humanity, love of knowledge, love of the environment, and love of the nation. Teachers integrated these values systematically into classroom instruction, habituation programs, and school activities.

The value of love of God was implemented through collective prayer, congregational worship, Quran recitation, spiritual reflection, and gratitude practices. Observational findings indicated that these activities were not conducted merely as ritual obligations but were accompanied by reflective discussions concerning sincerity, thankfulness, and ethical conduct. Teachers encouraged students to understand worship as part of building meaningful relationships with God and other human beings.

One teacher explained:

"*We do not only ask students to pray or memorize religious texts. We also encourage them to understand why compassion, gratitude, and honesty are important in everyday life*." (T1, Interview, 2026)

The dimension of love of humanity was reflected through collaborative learning, peer assistance, respectful communication, and social care activities. During observations, students were frequently seen helping classmates experiencing learning difficulties and demonstrating respectful behavior during classroom discussions. Teachers consistently encouraged students to appreciate differences of opinion and avoid mocking or discriminatory behavior.

One student stated:

"*Our teacher always reminds us to respect our friends, even if we have different opinions*." (S5, Interview, 2026)

Meanwhile, the dimension of love of knowledge was implemented through exploratory learning, questioning activities, and reflective dialogue. Teachers provided opportunities for students to ask questions freely and express personal ideas concerning religious and social issues. The dimensions of love of the environment and love of the nation were integrated through environmental cleanliness programs, tree-planting activities, discipline practices, and participation in national celebrations.

Table 3. Integration of the Five Dimensions of Love in Learning Activities

Five Dimensions of Love	Forms of Implementation
Love of God	Collective prayer, congregational worship, spiritual reflection
Love of Humanity	Collaborative learning and sharing activities
Love of Knowledge	Discussion and knowledge exploration
Love of the Environment	School cleanliness and environmental programs
Love of the Nation	Discipline and civic participation activities

These findings indicate that the integration of the Five Dimensions of Love enabled religious learning to become more contextualized and experientially meaningful. Religious values were not merely communicated theoretically but were embodied through concrete educational practices and social interactions.

The Impact of the Love-Based Curriculum on Students' Religious Character

The findings also demonstrated that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum contributed positively to the development of students' religious character. Changes in students' behavior were observed not only during classroom learning but also within broader school and family contexts. Teachers and parents consistently reported improvements in students' empathy, social awareness, responsibility, tolerance, and worship consciousness.

Observational findings showed that students became more willing to help peers, maintain classroom cleanliness, and communicate politely with teachers and classmates. Students also appeared more accustomed to greeting others respectfully, apologizing after conflicts, and resolving disagreements peacefully during group activities.

One parent explained:

"*I noticed that my child became more disciplined in performing prayers and more caring toward family members after participating in school activities*." (P2, Interview, 2026)

Another parent similarly stated:

"*My child now often reminds other family members to pray together and helps with household responsibilities without being asked repeatedly*." (P4, Interview, 2026)

Teachers also observed that students demonstrated stronger emotional sensitivity and social responsibility during school activities. One teacher noted:

"*Students are now more empathetic toward friends experiencing difficulties. They voluntarily help others without being instructed by teachers*." (T2, Interview, 2026)

Table 4. The Impact of the Love-Based Curriculum on Students' Religious Character

Character Aspect	**Findings**
Empathy	Helping classmates experiencing difficulties
Tolerance	Respecting differences of opinion
Social Awareness	Participating actively in sharing activities
Responsibility	Maintaining cleanliness and completing tasks
Worship Consciousness	Performing worship voluntarily

Overall, the findings indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum contributed to the strengthening of students' religious character through the integration of compassionate values, reflective learning experiences, and meaningful social interactions. The curriculum not only influenced students' cognitive understanding of religion but also fostered emotional, social, and spiritual development within everyday educational practices.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum contributed significantly to the transformation of Islamic Religious Education from doctrinal transmission toward humanistic and student-centered learning. This transformation was reflected in changes in pedagogical orientation, classroom interaction patterns, emotional engagement, and students' active participation during learning processes. Such findings reinforce contemporary critiques of traditional religious education that emphasize memorization and cognitive achievement while neglecting emotional, social, and experiential dimensions of learning (Jenuri et al., 2025; Mujiburrahman et al., 2025).

The observed pedagogical transformation aligns closely with the principles of humanistic learning theory developed by Carl Rogers, who emphasized that meaningful learning occurs when students actively construct understanding through personally relevant experiences and emotionally supportive environments. The findings revealed that students became more confident, reflective, and participatory when religious learning was connected to their everyday experiences. This supports previous studies suggesting that humanistic learning environments foster deeper engagement, intrinsic motivation, and emotional involvement among learners (Rodliyah et al., 2024; Salim et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum functioned not merely as a curriculum policy but as a transformative pedagogical framework emphasizing compassion, dialogue, and relational learning. This supports Freire's 2005 critique of "banking education," which positions students as passive recipients of information. In contrast, the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum created dialogical learning spaces in which students actively interpreted, discussed, and reflected upon religious values within social contexts. Such practices are consistent with humanizing pedagogy, which emphasizes mutual respect, critical engagement, and ethical relationships between teachers and learners.

The integration of the Five Dimensions of Love within learning activities also represents an important contribution to the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education. Rather than presenting religion solely as doctrinal content, teachers integrated values of compassion, social responsibility, environmental awareness, and civic engagement into everyday educational practices (Agus et al., 2025; Park et al., 2025). These findings resonate with Noddings' ethics of care framework, which argues that caring relationships constitute the moral foundation of meaningful education. Within this perspective, education becomes a relational process through which students develop empathy, ethical sensitivity, and responsibility toward others.

The findings additionally demonstrate that love-based pedagogical practices contributed to students' religious character formation through habituation, reflective learning, and contextualized moral experiences. Students exhibited increased empathy, tolerance, worship consciousness, and social responsibility both within school and family environments. These findings support previous studies emphasizing that character education becomes more effective when values are internalized through experiential and participatory learning rather than through

moral instruction alone. Similarly, Hartanto argues that love-centered educational approaches strengthen emotional intelligence and social awareness because students experience ethical values directly within educational interactions (Maity et al., 2025; Turan Bora & Akbaba Altun, 2025).

From a broader perspective, this study contributes to contemporary international discussions concerning the humanization of education in religious contexts. The findings suggest that Islamic Religious Education possesses substantial potential to function as a transformative educational space capable of nurturing holistic human development when implemented through compassionate and humanistic pedagogies. In contrast to conventional models focused narrowly on doctrinal mastery, the Love-Based Curriculum enabled students to experience religion as a lived ethical practice connected to empathy, humanity, and social responsibility (Hamdanah et al., 2026; Zawawi, 2023). This finding is particularly relevant within contemporary educational contexts characterized by moral fragmentation, social polarization, and increasing concerns regarding violence and intolerance among young people.

The study also highlights the importance of integrating emotional and relational dimensions into religious learning processes. Previous studies have shown that emotionally supportive learning environments significantly influence students' moral and spiritual development because emotional experiences shape how learners interpret and internalize values. The implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum demonstrated that compassion-oriented pedagogies may strengthen students' sense of belonging, emotional security, and ethical awareness, thereby supporting holistic character formation.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum also requires strong institutional commitment, teacher readiness, and supportive school culture. Humanistic and compassionate pedagogies cannot function effectively if educational environments remain dominated by rigid authority structures, excessive academic pressure, or purely cognitive assessment systems. Therefore, educational transformation toward more humanistic religious learning requires not only curriculum innovation but also broader cultural and pedagogical change within schools.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum represents a promising alternative framework for reconstructing Islamic Religious Education in contemporary elementary schools. By integrating compassion, dialogue, meaningful experience, and ethical relationships into educational practices, the curriculum contributes to the humanization of learning and the strengthening of students' religious character. Consequently, this study provides important theoretical and practical implications for the future development of Islamic education, particularly in promoting more humane, contextual, and transformative models of religious learning in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC) significantly contributes to the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level through the humanization of learning processes and the strengthening of students' religious character. The findings reveal that the impact of the Love-Based Curriculum extends beyond initial expectations, particularly in transforming classroom interaction patterns, students' emotional engagement, and the internalization of religious values in everyday life. The curriculum shifted learning practices from teacher-centered doctrinal instruction toward more humanistic, dialogic, participatory, and experience-oriented pedagogical approaches. Through the integration of the Five Dimensions of Love love of God, humanity, knowledge, the environment, and the nation students experienced religious learning not merely as cognitive acquisition but as a meaningful ethical and social practice connected to their daily realities.

The study also found that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum positively influenced students' religious character development. The observed changes were reflected in increased empathy, social awareness, tolerance, responsibility, and worship consciousness among students. Importantly, these transformations were evident not only within classroom activities but also in students' behaviors in family and social environments. These findings challenge conventional assumptions that Islamic Religious Education primarily functions as a medium for doctrinal transmission and cognitive mastery. Instead, the study demonstrates that religious education grounded in compassion, reflection, and meaningful social interaction can foster more holistic forms of spiritual, emotional, and moral development.

From a scholarly perspective, this research contributes to contemporary discussions on humanistic religious education and compassionate pedagogy by strengthening previous findings regarding the importance of affective and experiential dimensions in religious learning. The study confirms earlier arguments suggesting that meaningful educational experiences play a significant role in character formation while simultaneously extending existing discussions through the introduction of the Love-Based Curriculum as a pedagogical framework for the humanization of Islamic Religious Education. Furthermore, the findings challenge purely cognitive-oriented approaches to religious instruction by demonstrating that emotional engagement, relational interaction, and contextual learning experiences are equally essential in fostering students' religious consciousness and ethical behavior. In this regard, the study contributes conceptually to the broader discourse on reconstructing religious education in response to contemporary educational and social challenges.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted within a single Islamic elementary school context involving a relatively limited number of participants, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader educational settings. Second, the study focused primarily on the implementation process and participants' experiences without measuring long-term behavioral transformation quantitatively. Third, because the study employed a qualitative case

study approach, the findings reflect context-specific educational realities that may differ across schools, cultural settings, and institutional environments. Therefore, further research involving larger samples, multiple educational institutions, and mixed-method approaches is necessary to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and sustainability of the Love-Based Curriculum in different educational contexts.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. Educational institutions should strengthen the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum through continuous teacher professional development, particularly in humanistic and compassionate pedagogical practices. Schools should also develop supportive institutional cultures that encourage empathy, dialogue, collaboration, and reflective learning as integral components of religious education. In addition, stronger collaboration between schools and families is essential to ensure the consistent internalization of compassionate and religious values within students' daily lives. Policymakers are encouraged to support the broader development of humanistic religious education models capable of responding to the moral and social challenges of contemporary society. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore the implementation of love-based pedagogies across diverse educational levels and cultural contexts in order to enrich the theoretical and empirical understanding of humanizing religious education in the twenty-first century.

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