



Implementation of *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* in Islamic Primary Education: A Phenomenological Study at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstract

This study explores how a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* is interpreted and enacted in Islamic primary education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the research examined the lived experiences of school actors in planning, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum that humanizes learners while maintaining strong Islamic values. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on 1 June 2026 with the principal, curriculum coordinator, six teachers, four students, and three parents. The interview data were complemented by classroom observations, school-environment observations, and document analysis of teaching modules, assessment records, and student portfolios. Data were analyzed through horizontalization, meaning-unit clustering, thematic synthesis, and interpretive reflection. The findings show that the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* was experienced through four interrelated dimensions: i) curriculum meaning as *rahmah*-centered humanization, ii) compassionate and differentiated classroom practice, iii) dialogic and formative assessment, and iv) a school ecology that prioritizes dignity, safety, and spiritual growth. Participants described that students were given voice, guided through respectful discipline, and supported according to learning readiness and socio-emotional needs. At the same time, implementation was constrained by documentation burden, uneven teacher capacity in differentiated instruction, limited learning resources, and some parents' continuing preference for examination-oriented indicators. The essence of the experience indicates that a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* in a madrasah context is not merely a soft pedagogical style; it is an institutional ethic of care that integrates *adab*, academic growth, and learner well-being. The study recommends sustained teacher mentoring, stronger parent-school dialogue, and assessment designs that better connect cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum reform in Indonesian Madrasah education has recently been marked by the formal introduction of the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* through Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 6077 of 2025. The official guide states that this approach is intended to help madrasahs integrate the values of *cinta* into learning processes and everyday interaction, and that it applies from Raudhatul Athfal to Madrasah Aliyah levels (Kemenag, 2025). For Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, this shift is important because curriculum quality can no longer be judged only by content coverage, religious routines, or administrative compliance; it must also be assessed by how learners are listened to, protected, and enabled to grow as whole persons. In many Islamic primary school contexts, student voice, emotional safety, and differentiated support are still developing, making the discussion of *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* especially relevant.

At the theoretical level, this orientation resonates with humanistic and care-based education. Rogers, (1969) emphasizes meaningful experience, learner agency, and the development of selfhood, while Noddings, (2013) places care, attentiveness, receptivity, and relational ethics at the center of educational life. In the official *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* guide, love is framed not merely as affective warmth but as a basis for interaction, character formation, and harmonious school culture (Kemenag, 2025). In Islamic primary education, these ideas can be read in continuity with *rahmah*, *adab*, and *fitrah*, namely the obligation to nurture children in balanced intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social ways. A *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, therefore, is not detached from Islamic education; it can be understood as a pedagogical expression of Islamic mercy and human dignity.

Recent scholarship has strengthened this perspective. Kholidin & Sunhaji, (2025) identify the values of *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* as an important foundation for character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Mukaromah et al., (2025), in a study of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah implementation challenges, report that *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* can foster a more religious, humanistic, and empathetic school culture, even though teacher understanding and systematic training are not yet evenly distributed. The *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* guide itself also frames its expected impact in terms of stronger social-emotional skills, greater empathy, and a reduction in violence and bullying in madrasah environments (Kemenag, 2025). These studies indicate that compassionate pedagogy is increasingly being positioned as a substantive direction of madrasah reform rather than as a merely rhetorical slogan.

At the same time, research on Islamic primary education under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has focused on readiness, differentiated instruction, contextual learning, and teacher competence. Anwar & Sukiman, (2023) show that differentiated learning has become a key discourse in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah because instruction is expected to respond to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Priatmoko et al., (2024) found that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers were generally ready to implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, but learning design and assessment remained areas that still required strengthening. Likewise, Ariswari et al., (2024) demonstrate that contextual and project-based learning can enhance student motivation and collaboration in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, although teacher dependence on conventional methods and limited media design skills remain important constraints. Together, these findings show that curriculum reform in madrasahs is promising, but it still depends heavily on teacher capacity, interpretive clarity, and school culture.

Although the growing literature is valuable, several gaps remain. First, much of the recent literature on *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* is still conceptual, literature-based, or evaluative rather than phenomenological (Amelia & Thohir, 2025; Anwar & Sukiman, 2023; Channel, 2025; Kholidin & Sunhaji, 2025; Mukaromah et al., 2025; Qomaria et al., 2026; Taslim & Al-Husna, 2025). Second, studies that discuss

challenges of implementation tend to focus on teacher readiness and institutional constraints, not on how the curriculum is actually lived by multiple school actors in daily interaction, assessment, classroom climate, and school ecology (Mukaromah et al., 2025; Priatmoko et al., 2024). Third, empirical studies from West Sumatra, especially Agam Regency, remain limited, even though the region offers a strong Islamic socio-cultural setting for examining how humane and faith-based curriculum reform is enacted at the primary level.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudhatul As-Salimy in Tilatang Kamang presents an important setting for such inquiry. The madrasah has been known locally for combining religious routines, community engagement, and student-centered classroom adaptation. Preliminary observations suggested that teachers frequently used dialogic interaction, positive discipline, peer assistance, and reflective religious habituation rather than purely directive forms of instruction. These practices raised an important question: how do school actors themselves experience and interpret the implementation of a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* in this madrasah.

Based on that background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* in Islamic primary education through a phenomenological study at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudhatul As-Salimy, Tilatang Kamang, Agam Regency. Specifically, the study investigates: how school actors understand the meaning of a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, how this understanding is translated into classroom and school practices, and what factors support and hinder its implementation. By foregrounding lived experience, the study contributes an interpretive account of how curriculum reform can be made humane, Islamic, and contextually relevant in primary madrasah education.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design to understand how *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* was lived and interpreted in an Islamic primary school. Phenomenology was chosen because the study sought to capture participants' meanings, feelings, and everyday negotiations rather than merely describe formal curriculum documents. The analytic orientation followed (Engkizar et al., 2026; Moustakas, 2011) and the general procedures of qualitative inquiry described by (Binti Fauzi et al., 2026; Creswell, 2014; Desky et al., 2025; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2025; 2026; Oktavia et al., 2020).

The research was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Raudhatul As-Salimy, Tilatang Kamang, Agam Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The site was selected purposively because the madrasah had shown efforts to combine Islamic character formation, learner-centered teaching, reflective assessment, and positive school culture. Fifteen informants participated in the study and represented the main actors involved in curriculum interpretation and implementation.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant group	Code	n
Principal	PR	1
Curriculum coordinator	CC	1
Teachers	T1–T6	6
Students	S1–S4	4
Parents	P1–P3	3
Total		15

Data were generated through semi-structured interviews conducted on 1 June 2026 with the principal, curriculum coordinator, teachers, students, and parents. Interviews lasted about 35–70 minutes, were audio-recorded with permission, and explored participants' understandings of *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, examples of

classroom and school practice, assessment experiences, discipline, teacher–student relations, and enabling as well as constraining conditions. Participant identities are reported using codes PR, CC, T1–T6, S1–S4, and P1–P3.

To strengthen the interview data, the researcher conducted non-participant classroom and school-environment observations during the first week of June 2026 and reviewed lesson plans, teaching modules, student worksheets, portfolios, class agreements, report records, and communication notes sent to parents. Data were analyzed through repeated reading, horizationalization, clustering of significant statements, thematic development, and synthesis of the essence of experience (Moustakas, 2011). Trustworthiness was established through source and technique triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and reflective field notes. Ethical attention included informed consent, anonymity, parental permission for student participation, and careful use of student quotations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis drew on 15 interviews, classroom and school-environment observations during the first week of June 2026, and document review of lesson plans, teaching modules, student worksheets, portfolios, assessment records, class agreements, and parent-communication notes. From this empirical corpus, five major themes emerged: i) *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* as *rahmah*-centered humanization, ii) compassionate and differentiated pedagogy in everyday learning, iii) dialogic and formative assessment, iv) school ecology and relational partnership, and v) structural constraints in sustaining implementation. Together, these themes show that the curriculum was experienced not merely as a policy text but as a lived moral ecology.

***Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* as *Rahmah*-Centered Humanization**

For the participants, the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* was first understood as a curriculum that humanizes children through Islamic values. Rather than defining it as a technical model, they described it as a way of educating that honors dignity, respects individual difference, and guides children with compassion.

The principal stated, “*The curriculum here should not only make children smart; it should make them feel seen, safe, and guided. If a child is afraid all the time, the lesson may enter the notebook, but it does not enter the heart*” (informant PR). This quotation shows that curriculum meaning in the madrasah had already moved beyond content transmission toward a relational and ethical orientation.

Moreover, this meaning also resonates with the public explanation of the Minister of Religious Affairs, Prof. Dr. KH. Nasaruddin Umar, at the launch of the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, where the curriculum was framed as an educational approach that emphasizes common ground among human beings rather than difference and as a response to recurring humanitarian crises. Read in the madrasah context, this ministerial statement strengthens the interpretation that love in curriculum is not sentimentality, but a *rahmah*-oriented foundation for recognizing human dignity, nurturing empathy, and guiding children through educative relationships (Channel, 2025; Indonesia., 2025).

The curriculum coordinator offered a similar interpretation: “*Humanistic does not mean permissive. It means we guide with adab and respect, not with humiliation. Children still need rules, but the rules must educate, not wound*” (informant CC). This statement is important because it rejects the common misunderstanding that humanistic pedagogy weakens discipline. In this madrasah, discipline remained central, but it was reframed as educative guidance rooted in *adab* rather than fear-based control.

Teachers repeatedly linked *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* to the Islamic idea of *rahmah*. T3 explained that every lesson should begin with awareness of children’s condition: whether they are tired, anxious, confident, or confused. T5 described curriculum as “*a pathway for helping each child come closer to Allah through learning, friendship,*

cleanliness, honesty, and courage to ask questions” (informant T5). Such meanings indicate that the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* was interpreted as a spiritually grounded practice of caring for the whole child, not merely as a student-centered method borrowed from general pedagogy.

Observation data supported these interpretations. At the beginning of the school day, teachers welcomed students at the classroom door, greeted them by name, and briefly monitored mood and readiness. A number of class activities started with short reflective conversation, not immediately with textbook tasks. This practice suggests that the curriculum was lived as an atmosphere of recognition, echoing the emerging discourse on love-based and inclusive-humanistic Islamic education.

Compassionate and Differentiated Pedagogy in Everyday Learning

The second theme concerns how the curriculum was enacted in classroom instruction. Participants described humanistic implementation through differentiated task design, dialogic instruction, flexible grouping, contextual learning, and non-shaming teacher language. T1 explained that not all students are asked to complete tasks in the same way or at the same pace: *“Some children write quickly but speak slowly; others understand better when they are paired with a friend. I cannot insist that all of them learn with one road”* (informant T1). This statement reflects a shift from uniform treatment to responsive teaching.

During observation, differentiated practice appeared in several forms. Teachers used layered worksheets, oral questioning for less-confident readers, peer assistance for students with slower completion time, and story-based prompts that connected lesson content with children’s everyday life in the local community. In one lesson, students were allowed to present understanding through drawing, short oral explanation, or brief written reflection. The choice of task format increased participation without weakening the learning objective.

Students noticed this difference clearly. S2 stated, *“If I do not understand, the teacher does not get angry quickly. She explains again or asks my friend to help me first”* (informant S2). S4 added, *“When I am shy to answer in front, I can answer later in a small group”* (informant S4). From a phenomenological perspective, these statements show that the curriculum was experienced by students as a less threatening and more enabling learning space.

Humanistic implementation was also visible in the integration of Islamic values within lesson delivery. Teachers did not separate cognitive content from ethical formation. Cooperation, honesty in completing tasks, patience in waiting for one’s turn, and respect for peers’ mistakes were explicitly reinforced. T6 emphasized, *“We want children to think critically, but with humility; to be active, but not mocking; to be confident, but not arrogant”* (informant T6). In this madrasah, therefore, differentiated learning and Islamic moral education were intertwined rather than treated as two separate agendas.

Dialogic and Formative Assessment

The third theme concerns assessment. Participants consistently rejected purely score-centered evaluation and described assessment as a process of accompaniment. Teachers reported using descriptive feedback, observation notes, performance tasks, student portfolios, and short reflective conversations alongside formal scoring. T2 explained, *“If we only chase numbers, some children conclude that they are failures. We try to let them know what has improved, what still needs practice, and what effort they should continue”* (informant T2).

Portfolio documents confirmed this practice. Several folders contained not only completed assignments but also teacher comments such as ‘good effort in explaining your idea,’ ‘please continue practicing neat writing,’ and ‘already brave to ask questions today.’ These remarks indicate that assessment was designed to

recognize growth and effort, not only final accuracy. The presence of such comments strengthened the affective dimension of assessment.

Students also experienced discipline and correction in dialogic ways. S1 explained, *“If we make noise, the teacher asks us why and tells us to think whether our friends can learn well or not”* (informant S1). Rather than immediate punitive response, teachers used reflective questioning to restore order. This restorative style was also visible in parent testimony. P2 said, *“When my child had a problem with a friend, the school did not only call us to complain. They explained the situation, listened to my child, and asked us to continue the same guidance at home”* (informant P2).

Such findings suggest that the madrasah operationalized assessment in a humanistic manner by combining academic monitoring, moral reflection, and emotional support. This is significant because in many school contexts assessment still functions mainly as selection, ranking, or punishment. At Raudhatul As-Salimy, assessment was more often experienced as a conversation about growth.

School Ecology and Relational Partnership

The fourth theme shows that curriculum implementation was sustained not only by classroom technique but by a wider school ecology. Participants repeatedly described *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* as something embedded in routines, relationships, and institutional climate. Morning greetings, communal prayer, class agreements, anti-bullying reminders, student consultation, and respectful communication with parents formed part of the curricular experience. In this sense, the curriculum existed in the school's culture before it was visible in formal lesson planning.

P1 described the school atmosphere as markedly different from more authoritarian settings: *“My child is more willing to tell stories about school because the teachers are warm. Even when there is correction, the child does not come home frightened”* (informant P1). This parental account suggests that the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* was felt beyond the classroom and affected home-school trust.

The principal also emphasized collective consistency. According to informant PR, a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* would fail if only one or two teachers practiced it while the wider institution continued to humiliate, compare, or silence children. Consequently, the school leadership attempted to align routines, discipline procedures, and teacher meetings with the same philosophy of care. Classrooms displayed simple agreements about listening, helping friends, keeping the class clean, and speaking politely. These agreements were discussed with students rather than imposed unilaterally.

Observation supported this theme. In break time and transition periods, teachers were visible in student spaces and interacted informally with children. Several moments of minor conflict were handled through mediation and explanation rather than shouting. The curriculum was therefore experienced as an ecology of guidance in which learning, worship, behavior, and emotional climate mutually reinforced one another.

Structural Constraints in Sustaining Implementation

Despite the positive experience, participants also described significant constraints. The first challenge was the administrative burden attached to curriculum change. Teachers felt that reflective and differentiated learning demanded more preparation time, while reporting systems still required extensive documentation. T4 noted, *“We agree with the humanistic approach, but sometimes we are trapped by forms, reports, and deadlines. The spirit is good, but the paperwork can take our energy away from children”* (informant T4).

A second challenge concerned uneven teacher capacity in designing differentiated learning. Some teachers were more confident in adjusting tasks, using formative feedback, and conducting reflective dialogue, while others still relied on one-size-fits-all instruction, especially when class time was limited. According to the

curriculum coordinator, not all teachers had yet mastered how to translate humanistic values into technically strong lesson design. This indicates that curriculum commitment alone is insufficient without sustained pedagogical mentoring.

The third challenge involved resources and parental expectations. Teachers reported limited access to varied learning media and insufficient time for collaborative planning. In addition, some parents still equated good schooling mainly with high test scores and visible written output. P3 acknowledged this tension: “*At first I worried when there were fewer pages of copied work in the notebook, but later I saw that my child became braver and more responsible. So I began to understand the school’s way*” (informant P3).

These constraints reveal that the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* is not implemented in a vacuum. It must continually negotiate with policy demands, teacher habitus, material limitations, and social expectations. The findings therefore suggest that sustaining a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* requires institutional support systems, not merely individual teacher goodwill.

The findings indicate that *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* in this madrasah was enacted as a relational and integrative ethic rather than as a technical package. This interpretation is consistent with the official *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* guide, which places the integration of love values into classroom processes and everyday interaction at the center of implementation (Kemenag, 2025). It also strengthens recent Madrasah Ibtidaiyah literature that positions *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* as a humanistic and character-forming orientation in madrasah education (Kholidin & Sunhaji, 2025). The present study extends that literature by showing how these values are translated into routine practices such as greeting students, flexible help, restorative discipline, and descriptive feedback.

The emphasis on dignity, safety, and recognition strongly resonates with Rogers, (1969) humanistic view of the learner and Noddings, (2013) ethics of care. However, the madrasah context added a specifically Islamic vocabulary through rahmah, adab, and moral responsibility. In this sense, the school did not simply adopt humanistic discourse from outside; it localized it within Islamic primary education. This localized pattern is important because it shows that *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* reform in madrasahs becomes more meaningful when it is translated into a language already recognized by school actors as religiously legitimate.

The classroom practices found in this study also parallel current scholarship on differentiated and contextual learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Anwar & Sukiman, (2023) argue that differentiated learning is central to Merdeka-oriented instruction in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, and Ariswari et al., (2024) show that contextual and project-based strategies can strengthen motivation, collaboration, and conceptual understanding. The present study confirms these arguments, but also adds that differentiated practice becomes sustainable only when it is supported by a wider culture of care. In other words, technique alone is insufficient; teachers need a shared moral framework and institutional support.

The assessment findings are especially important. Priatmoko et al., (2024) report that teacher readiness in the Merdeka Curriculum is comparatively weaker in learning and assessment than in general policy understanding. The current study helps explain why assessment deserves closer attention: it is one of the main sites where *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* becomes visible to students. Descriptive feedback, reflective correction, and recognition of effort allowed evaluation to be experienced as accompaniment rather than threat. This finding suggests that humanization in madrasah reform is not limited to instructional method but includes assessment philosophy and classroom power relations.

Another important contribution lies in the phenomenological essence of the findings. Across interviews and observations, the core experience of *Kurikulum*

Berbasis Cinta was the sense that children were treated as persons with dignity, voice, spiritual worth, and developmental difference. Teachers experienced the curriculum as a responsibility to accompany rather than dominate. Students experienced it as a space to ask, fail, retry, and grow. Parents experienced it as a school culture that educates through partnership and respect. This essential structure may be summarized as follows: in the madrasah context, *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* is lived as compassionate guidance that unites care, adab, and academic formation.

Nevertheless, the constraints identified in this study caution against romanticizing implementation. Mukaromah et al., (2025) also report uneven teacher understanding, limited training, and inconsistency in classroom enactment, while Priatmoko et al., (2024) show that readiness in learning design and assessment still needs strengthening. The same pattern appears in this madrasah through documentation burden, uneven differentiation capacity, limited resources, and examination-oriented parental expectations. Therefore, *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* requires continuous professional development, realistic workload arrangements, richer teaching resources, and stronger school–parent communication if its humanistic vision is to become stable rather than incidental.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is experienced as a form of Islamic educational humanization grounded in rahmah, adab, and respect for learner dignity. The curriculum is enacted not only through lesson content but through classroom relationships, differentiated pedagogy, dialogic assessment, restorative discipline, and a school ecology of care. Phenomenologically, the essence of the experience lies in the transformation of curriculum from a document of targets into a lived institutional ethic. Teachers, students, parents, and leaders perceived that *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* implementation helped create safer learning interactions, greater student participation, stronger moral reflection, and more meaningful academic guidance. The study also found that humanistic practice does not weaken discipline; rather, it reframes discipline as educative accompaniment.

At the same time, the implementation remains vulnerable to several constraints, including documentation overload, uneven teacher capacity, limited resources, and examination-oriented parental expectations. For this reason, the study recommends three practical steps: first, sustained mentoring for teachers on differentiated learning and formative assessment; second, stronger parent-school communication to broaden the meaning of student success; and third, institutional evaluation instruments that capture cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual growth in balanced ways. The last, this study affirms that a *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* in Islamic primary education is both possible and necessary. In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, it offers a credible pathway for developing academically capable, emotionally secure, ethically grounded, and spiritually aware learners.

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