

The Love-Based Curriculum Approach in Teaching Islamic Beliefs and Ethics: An Innovation for Character Building

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Abstract

Moral crises in the educational environment such as violence, bullying, low empathy, and a weakening of social responsibility require the teaching of Akidah Akhlak to move beyond a cognitive orientation toward the internalization of values that touch upon the affective and spiritual dimensions of students. This article aims to analyze the Love-Based Curriculum as an innovative approach to Akidah Akhlak education in madrasahs, focusing on the concept of Panca Cinta, implementation strategies, classroom practice examples, and its implications for character building. The research employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method through the synthesis of policy documents, journal articles, and relevant Islamic educational literature. The findings indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum positions love for Allah and the Prophet, love for knowledge, love for oneself and others, love for the environment, and love for the homeland as pedagogical foundations that can be translated into teacher exemplification, dialogic communication, reflection on experiences, acts of kindness projects, the cultivation of moral character, and humanistic assessment. The novelty of this article lies in the development of a contextual implementation design for the Love-Based Curriculum in the subject of Aqidah Akhlak, enabling teachers to connect the subject matter of Aqidah with students' real-life moral experiences in a more humanistic, practical, and transformative manner.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Aqidah and Akhlak holds a strategic position in madrasah education because it serves as the primary arena for fostering students' faith, manners, moral awareness, and social behavior. However, real-world challenges in the educational environment indicate that values education has not yet fully succeeded in preventing violence, bullying, and unhealthy social relationships among students. Research on ethics education indicates that such instruction plays a crucial role in shaping students' character based on sound religious and ethical values (Fadillah et al., 2026). The Indonesian Child Protection Commission notes that 35% of 114 cases of violence against children occurred in educational institutions, while Paudpedia reports that 34.51% of students are at risk of sexual violence and 24.4%

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experience various forms of bullying. These data indicate that character education must be strengthened through an approach that not only enhances religious knowledge but also fosters a sense of safety, empathy, and moral responsibility within the school environment (Direktorat Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2025; KPAI, 2024). Strengthening Islamic religious education is imperative because modernization and globalization, which are heavily laden with technology devoid of divine values, can pose a threat to the development of humanity (Ridhahani, 2022).

Normatively, national education is aimed at developing students' potential so that they become people of faith, piety, and noble character competent, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible. This direction aligns with the strengthening of the Merdeka Curriculum, which provides flexibility, student-centered learning, and character development tailored to the context of each educational institution. The Merdeka Curriculum in Akidah Akhlak (Faith and Ethics) education emphasizes a student-centered learning approach with the aim of fostering an understanding of faith that is not merely cognitive but is also reflected in daily behavior (Abdullah et al., 2026). In the context of madrasahs, the Decision of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 6077 of 2025 regarding the Guidelines for the Love-Based Curriculum underscores the need to implement a curriculum that shapes the character of the nation's children and fosters a harmonious educational environment through the internalization of the value of love. Thus, the Love-Based Curriculum can be understood as an articulation of Islamic education policy that brings together national goals, character needs, and the distinctiveness of madrasahs.

Theoretically, the Love-Based Curriculum aligns with humanistic educational perspectives that view students as whole individuals, not merely objects of knowledge transfer. Islamic education also recognizes the concepts of *tarbiyah* and *ta'dib*, which emphasize the holistic development of the human person, encompassing knowledge, faith, character, emotions, and social responsibility. Within this framework, love is not interpreted as a sentimental feeling, but rather as a pedagogical principle that encourages teachers to build safe educational relationships, respect the dignity of students, foster moral awareness, and direct knowledge toward the common good. The Love-Based Curriculum is built upon five pillars of love: love for Allah and the Prophet, love for knowledge, love for oneself and others, love for the environment, and love for the homeland (Abdullah, Lutviyana, et al., 2026). Therefore, the Love-Based Curriculum is appropriately positioned as an approach that integrates spiritual values, social ethics, and meaningful learning within the framework of Akidah Akhlak (Malik et al., 2025; Qomaria et al., 2026).

Previous research indicates that the Love-Based Curriculum has begun to be studied in various contexts of Islamic education. Abdullah found that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah Laboratory of the State Islamic University of Bukittinggi contributed to character building through positive communication and the instillation of values. Maharani, Nugraha, Zainuri, and Hamzah assert that the Love-Based Curriculum in elementary madrasahs places compassion at the foundation of learning through the five pillars of love. Nst and Al-Husna also found that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Akidah Akhlak instruction at State Senior High School 1 Mandailing Natal influenced pedagogical relationships, learning motivation, and the character development of students. The implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Akidah Akhlak instruction involves planning that integrates the value of love into learning objectives, implementation through teacher modeling and reflective activities, and evaluation that emphasizes the character-building process (Abdullah & Saudah, et al., 2026). These findings indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum has conceptual and practical potential to strengthen values education in madrasahs

(Abdullah, 2025; Lestari et al., 2025; Maharani et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, there are still gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. Some previous studies have discussed the Love-Based Curriculum conceptually or at the general implementation level, whereas discussions that specifically outline the implementation design of the Love-Based Curriculum in Akidah Akhlak remain limited. In fact, Akidah Akhlak has distinctive characteristics because it includes material on faith, etiquette, moral conditioning, and ethical decision-making. This gap forms the basis of the novelty of this article, namely formulating a more operational implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum through mapping the values of the Five Loves, learning strategies, examples of classroom activities, assessment models, and managing implementation challenges. This novelty is crucial to ensure that the Love-Based Curriculum does not remain merely a policy slogan but is realized as a pedagogical practice that teachers can utilize in the classroom (Indriastuti et al., 2025; Qomaria et al., 2026).

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze the concept of the Love-Based Curriculum and the values of Panca Cinta in Akidah Akhlak instruction, formulate contextual and practical implementation strategies, and present concrete examples of the application of the Love-Based Curriculum to strengthen students' character. This article is expected to contribute to Akidah Akhlak teachers, madrasah principals, curriculum developers, and Islamic education researchers in developing learning that is more dialogic, reflective, humanistic, and oriented toward the formation of akhlakul karimah (Taslim & Al-Husna, 2025; Yafi et al., 2023).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach in the form of a literature review. This approach was chosen because the focus of this article is not to quantitatively test the impact of the Love-Based Curriculum in the field, but rather to examine, interpret, and synthesize the literature to formulate a conceptual design for the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Akidah Akhlak instruction. A relevant literature review is used when researchers aim to build conceptual understanding, identify patterns of findings, and formulate directions for the development of practice based on existing literature (Akem et al., 2025; Aryasutha et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2018, 2025, 2026; Ikhlas et al., 2025; Veradegita et al., 2021).

Research data sources were obtained from policy documents and scientific publications relevant to the Love-Based Curriculum, Panca Cinta, Akidah Akhlak, character education, humanistic learning, and affective assessment. The search was conducted through Google Scholar, the Garuda Portal, DOAJ, journal websites, the official website of the Ministry of Religion, the BPK regulations website, the KPAI website, and Paudpedia. The keywords used include "Love-Based Curriculum," "Panca Cinta," "Akidah Akhlak learning," "love-based curriculum Islamic education," "madrasah character education," "humanistic evaluation of Islamic Religious Education," and "Love-Based Curriculum for madrasahs."

The inclusion criteria for sources include: publications in Indonesian or English; relevance to the study's focus; inclusion of verifiable data or concepts; publication primarily between 2017 and 2026; and the availability of accessible source links. Policy documents and regulations are still included even if they were published earlier because they serve as the primary normative foundation, such as Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. Sources that are irrelevant, lack clear publisher or author identification, contain unsubstantiated claims, or do not support the research focus are excluded from the analysis.

The analysis technique employs content analysis with four main stages. First, data reduction is conducted by selecting information directly related to the concepts of the Love-Based Curriculum, the Five Principles of Love, Akidah Akhlak practices,

and character education. Second, categorization is performed by grouping findings into themes such as concepts, strategies, implementation examples, impacts, and challenges. Third, interpretation was conducted by linking policy sources and previous research findings. Fourth, synthesis was performed to formulate an applicable implementation model of the Love-Based Curriculum within Akidah Akhlak. Content analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to systematically interpret the meaning, patterns, and relationships among ideas.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of the Love-Based Curriculum and the Five Values of Love

The Love-Based Curriculum is an educational approach that places love at the foundation of learning relationships, madrasah culture, and character development. In the official guidelines from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Love-Based Curriculum is intended to provide clear and systematic guidance so that madrasahs can instill the values of love through the learning process, social interaction, nurturing, and institutional culture. The Love-Based Curriculum does not separate knowledge from values, because knowledge is understood as a path to wisdom, compassion, and benefit for others. Within the framework of Akidah Akhlak, this understanding is crucial because the teaching of faith and moral values is not sufficient when conveyed merely as concepts; rather, it must be experienced as a way of life filled with compassion, propriety, and responsibility.

The Five Loves form the core values of the Love-Based Curriculum and can be understood as the five directions for character development in students. First, love for God and His Messenger strengthens the spiritual dimension and the awareness that all human actions are connected to a responsibility toward the Creator. Second, love of knowledge fosters a motivation to learn, curiosity, and an appreciation for knowledge. Third, love for oneself and others builds empathy, respect for human dignity, and the ability to live together. Fourth, love for the environment instills ecological responsibility. Fifth, love for the homeland fosters a moderate, tolerant, and public-good-oriented national commitment (Maharani et al., 2025). Implementing these values in education requires planning that integrates religious character into instructional materials, implementation through consistent practice and teacher modeling, and evaluation that encompasses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Thus, the development of religious character is not merely a learning objective but is also internalized throughout the entire educational process (Arnita et al., 2026).

In Akidah Akhlak instruction, the Five Loves can serve as a bridge between normative content and students' life experiences. Topics such as faith in Allah, the Beautiful Names of Allah, respect for parents, proper conduct among friends, the prohibition against backbiting, the dangers of slander, environmental awareness, and social responsibility can be developed not merely as rote memorization of definitions, but as exercises in moral awareness. Teachers can link each topic to reflective questions: how does this value manifest in daily behavior, how can students put it into practice, and how can the classroom become a safe environment for everyone. In this way, the Love-Based Curriculum enriches Akidah Akhlak as a learning experience that connects faith, knowledge, emotion, and action (Qomaria et al., 2026; Yafi et al., 2023).

Table 1. The Five Principles of Love and Directions for Implementation in Akidah Akhlak Education

Value of <i>Panca Cinta</i>	Character Orientation	Example of Akidah Akhlak Material	Implementation Strategy
Love for Allah and His Messenger	Spiritual awareness, gratitude, reliance	<i>Asmaul Husna</i> , faith in Allah, morals of the Prophet	Gratitude reflection, exemplary stories, worship journals,

	on Allah, and the Prophet's exemplary conduct		and etiquette projects
Love for knowledge	Curiosity, critical thinking, and appreciation of the learning process	Etiquette in seeking knowledge, academic honesty, learning responsibility	Guiding questions, discussions, presentations, source literacy, and feedback
Love for self and others	Empathy, respect for dignity, anti-bullying, and care	Morals toward parents, teachers, peers; prohibition of gossip and tale-bearing	Case studies, role play, reflective letters, class dialogues, and kindness projects
Love for the environment	Ecological concern and responsibility toward Allah's creation	Trustworthiness, prohibition of corruption (<i>fasad</i>), cleanliness as part of faith	Cleanliness actions, environmental posters, water-saving ablution, and behavior observation
Love for the homeland	Moderation, tolerance, social responsibility, and national commitment	Tolerance (<i>tasamuh</i>), brotherhood (<i>ukhuwah</i>), deliberation (<i>musyawarah</i>), humanitarian solidarity	Diversity discussions, deliberation practice, and social activities in madrasah

The subject of Faith and Ethics has distinct characteristics from subjects that merely emphasize the acquisition of information. Faith pertains to fundamental beliefs, while ethics pertains to behavioral qualities manifested in human relationships with God, oneself, others, the environment, and the nation. Therefore, the teaching of Faith and Ethics must integrate knowledge, internalization, behavioral practice, habit formation, and attitude assessment. The Love-Based Curriculum provides a foundation for developing this process because it places relationships of love, respect, and empathy as part of the learning strategy, not merely as an additional moral component outside of lessons (Yafi et al., 2023).

The Love-Based Curriculum approach helps teachers avoid the tendency for Akidah Akhlak instruction to become overly verbalistic. Topics such as honesty, trustworthiness, respect for teachers, or the prohibition against backbiting are often easy to memorize, but they do not necessarily become habits unless accompanied by meaningful moral experiences. Therefore, teachers need to bring the material into the students' real-life situations, for example through case studies, discussions of moral dilemmas, reflections on personal experiences, and acts of kindness projects. Such strategies make Akidah Akhlak learning more relevant to students' lives and more effective in shaping moral awareness (Qomaria et al., 2026; Taslim & Al-Husna, 2025).

The Love-Based Curriculum also expands the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers from mere instructors of subject matter to *murabbi* educators who guide students' moral, emotional, social, and spiritual development. As *murabbi*, teachers do not merely explain concepts of right and wrong, but exemplify proper etiquette in communication, patience in dealing with differences in ability, and fairness in treating students. This exemplary behavior is crucial because students often learn values through what they observe and experience in daily classroom interactions. Thus, the quality of the teacher-student relationship serves as a critical determinant of the success of the Love-Based Curriculum (Septikasari et al., 2023). Teachers' ability to manage the classroom,

whether through preventive measures (classroom rules, positive reinforcement) or corrective measures (verbal reprimands, educational sanctions, individualized approaches), is essential for creating a conducive love-based learning environment (Iqbal et al., 2025).

Strategies for Implementing the Love-Based Curriculum in Akidah Akhlak Instruction

The first strategy is the teacher's role as a role model, or *uswab hasanah*. The Love-Based Curriculum will be difficult to implement if teachers merely convey the value of love verbally, while classroom interactions remain filled with threats, negative labels, or communication that demeans students. Teacher exemplary behavior is evident in how they begin lessons with warmth, provide opportunities to ask questions, correct students without humiliating them, respect differing opinions, and consistently demonstrate honesty and discipline. In Akidah Akhlak, exemplary behavior is an integral part of the curriculum because moral values are understood more deeply when students observe them in the teacher's behavior (Abdullah, 2025; Taslim & Al-Husna, 2025).

The second strategy is dialogic communication. Love-based learning does not treat students as passive recipients, but as individuals with their own experiences, questions, and emotional needs. Teachers can use probing questions such as "How do our words affect others' feelings?", "How do we offer a sincere apology?", or "How do we show love for God through our social behavior?" Such dialogue helps students process values reflectively, rather than merely memorizing definitions. Dialogic communication also creates a psychologically safe classroom environment, enabling students to express their opinions more boldly yet respectfully (Qamariah & Anwar, 2025; Yafi et al., 2023).

The third strategy is experiential reflection. Teachers can ask students to write a short journal entry after studying specific material, such as an experience helping a friend, an experience refraining from teasing, or an experience apologizing to a parent. This reflection need not be rigidly evaluated as right or wrong but is used to observe the students' process of moral awareness. In the Love-Based Curriculum, reflection serves to connect the material on faith and ethics with students' inner lives, so that learning does not stop at concepts but moves toward awareness and behavioral change (Salsabila et al., 2025).

The fourth strategy is a kindness project. Concepts such as cooperation, trustworthiness, tolerance, or environmental stewardship can be developed into simple activities, such as helping classmates with their studies, launching an anti-gossip campaign, cleaning the classroom, creating posters on social media etiquette, or practicing water-saving wudu. Kindness projects are important because they provide students with the opportunity to put values into practice and collaborate with their peers. Such activities also align with the example of the Love-Based Curriculum in the official guidelines, which positions projects, experiential learning, and cross-contextual activities as means for internalizing the value of love (Farihin et al., 2025).

The fifth strategy is fostering ethical habits within the classroom culture. Teachers can establish small routines such as greetings, prayers, expressions of appreciation, polite phrases when disagreeing, anti-bullying agreements, maintaining cleanliness, the habit of apologizing when making mistakes, and the practice of performing congregational Dhuha prayer, which have proven to play a crucial role in fostering discipline and shaping students' noble character (Maharani et al., 2025). Habit formation is essential because character is not merely understood as knowledge but must be cultivated through consistent repetition of behavior. When classroom habits are built on the principle of love, students learn that religious values are present in simple daily actions, not just on exam papers (Maharani et al., 2025).

The sixth strategy is humanistic assessment. Assessing religious beliefs and ethics

cannot rely solely on written tests, as many important learning outcomes lie in the realms of attitude, reflection, commitment, and social behavior. Teachers can use reflection journals, attitude observation sheets, portfolios of good deeds, self-assessments, peer assessments, and descriptive feedback (Abdullah, 2017). Such assessments are not intended to judge students personally, but to monitor their progress and provide guidance for improvement. Through humanistic assessment, the Love-Based Curriculum ensures that evaluation remains educational, respects students' dignity, and encourages gradual moral transformation (Salsabila et al., 2025).

Table 2. Implementation Design of the Love-Based Curriculum in a Single Cycle of Akidah Akhlak Instruction

Learning Stage	Focus of Love-Based Curriculum	Teacher and Student Activities	Form of Assessment
Introduction	Building a sense of security and inner readiness	Greetings, prayer, apperception, guiding questions, and agreement on discussion etiquette	Observation of readiness and initial participation
Concept Exploration	Connecting material with the values of <i>Panca Cinta</i>	Brief explanation, exemplary stories, case studies, and dialogic Q&A	Formative quiz and notes on student responses
Experience Reflection	Relating material to students' life experiences	Reflective journals, sharing experiences, and moral dilemma discussions	Reflective journals and descriptive feedback
Value Application	Practicing morals in real actions	Kindness projects, role play, class campaigns, or simple social actions	Project rubric, attitude observation, and portfolio
Closing and Follow-up	Strengthening commitment to behavioral change	Conclusion, prayer, commitment to one good action, and follow-up plan	Self-assessment and progress notes

Implementing the Love-Based Curriculum in the Classroom

When teaching the *Asmaul Husna*, particularly *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim*, teachers can guide students from memorizing meanings toward experiencing compassion. After explaining the meanings of Allah's names, the teacher asks students to share examples of compassion they have received, and then to write down one act of compassion they will perform for a friend or family member over the course of a week. In the next session, students reflect on these experiences without having to disclose sensitive personal details. This approach helps students understand that knowing Allah's attributes should inspire gentle, caring, and responsible behavior (Qomaria et al., 2026).

In lessons on ethics toward parents and teachers, the Love-Based Curriculum can be implemented through reflective letter-writing activities. The teacher asks students to write a thank-you letter to a parent or teacher, not to be evaluated for the beauty of the language, but for the sincerity of the reflection. Afterward, the teacher facilitates a discussion on why Islam places etiquette toward parents and teachers as an essential part of ethics. This activity integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual

dimensions because students not only learn the religious principles but are also encouraged to reflect on the contributions, sacrifices, and moral responsibilities within family and educational relationships (Yafi et al., 2023).

When teaching about backbiting, slander, and spreading false rumors, teachers can use case studies involving verbal bullying, negative comments on social media, or the circulation of unverified stories. The discussion should be guided not toward shaming the perpetrator, but toward understanding the impact of such speech on the victim, the perpetrator, witnesses, and the classroom environment. Students can be asked to role-play various perspectives and then identify ethical actions they can take when they see a classmate being belittled. This strategy is relevant to the practical needs of educational institutions that still face issues of violence and bullying, making Akidah Akhlak a learning approach that serves both as prevention and as a means of restoring social relationships (Direktorat Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2025).

In the lesson on *tasamuh* (tolerance), teachers can link the learning to differences in character, academic ability, family background, and habits among students in the classroom. Students are encouraged to formulate polite phrases when disagreeing, ways to respect peers with different abilities, and forms of assistance that do not belittle others. Thus, *tasamuh* is not taught as an abstract concept but as a social skill practiced in everyday conversations. This application reinforces the goals of the Love-Based Curriculum to build a harmonious, inclusive, and respectful madrasah environment (Malik et al., 2025).

In lessons on environmental stewardship, teachers can develop simple projects such as classroom cleanliness audits, campaigns to reduce plastic waste, water-saving wudu practices, or posters promoting “caring for God’s creation.” These projects help students understand that ethics are not limited to interpersonal relationships but also encompass a responsibility toward nature as God’s creation. When students connect cleanliness, ecological balance, and gratitude to Allah, Akidah Akhlak learning becomes more contextual and experiential. This strategy aligns with the Love-Based Curriculum model, which integrates love for Allah, the Prophet, and the environment through experiential learning activities. Learning methods such as group discussions, case studies, and project-based assignments contribute to developing students’ critical, analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking skills, which are core competencies in Love-Based Curriculum based learning (Abdullah et al., 2026).

Table 3. Examples of Love-Based Curriculum Activities Based on Akidah Akhlak Material

Material	Curriculum Value Based on Love	Learning Activities	Product/Indicator
<i>Asmaul Husna Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim</i>	Love for Allah and fellow beings	Reflection on experiences of receiving and giving affection	Action journal of kindness for one week
Morals toward parents and teachers	Love for self and others	Writing thank-you letters and discussing manners	Reflective letter and behavioral commitment
<i>Ghibah</i> , fitnah, and <i>namimah</i>	Love for others and anti-bullying	Case studies, role play, and formulation of ethical actions	Poster/campaign against gossip and slander
<i>Tasamuh</i>	Love for others and love for the homeland	Practicing polite dialogue when disagreeing	Rubric of respectful communication
Morals toward the	Love for Allah	Cleanliness projects,	Project portfolio

environment	and love for nature	water-saving ablution, and environmental posters	and attitude observation
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CONCLUSION

The Love-Based Curriculum is an innovative approach to teaching Akidah Akhlak because it positions love as a pedagogical principle that connects faith, ethics, teacher-student relationships, madrasah culture, and character development. The Five Values of Love can be translated into learning through teacher role modeling, dialogic communication, reflection on experiences, acts of kindness, the cultivation of moral values, and humanistic assessment. With this approach, Akidah Akhlak functions not merely as a subject that conveys religious norms, but as a space for the internalization of values that foster empathy, responsibility, discipline, spiritual awareness, and social concern among students.

The practical implication of this article is the need for Akidah Akhlak teachers to develop the role of a *murabbi* who guides students morally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Madrasahs also need to build an institutional culture based on love through friendly communication, educational conflict resolution, the cultivation of good manners, parental involvement, and continuous evaluation. The limitation of this article lies in its nature as a literature review, meaning it has not directly tested the effectiveness of the implementation design in the classroom. Further research is recommended to conduct observations, interviews, surveys, or classroom action research to empirically test the impact of the Love-Based Curriculum on students' character.

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