



RECONSTRUCTION OF PAI LEARNING THROUGH THE LOVE CURRICULUM: PAI TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN INTERNALIZING THE VALUES OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION AND STUDENT WELL-BEING

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Abstract:

This study aims to reconstruct Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through a Love-Based Curriculum as a practical strategy to integrate Aqidah Akhlak values, religious moderation, and students' psychological well-being at MI Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, and then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum is not only implemented through teacher–student interaction but is also institutionalized within instructional documents and the cultural system of the school. At the practical level, teachers apply compassion-oriented pedagogy in Aqidah Akhlak learning through personal greetings, empathetic narratives, and emotional reflection. At the institutional level, compassion-based values are integrated into lesson plans, character reports, and school activities such as Salam Kasih Sayang and collective prayer. This implementation has proven effective in fostering moderate character, enhancing social empathy, and strengthening students' emotional well-being. The study concludes that the Love-Based Curriculum serves as an alternative instructional model for PAI that is relevant for addressing issues of intolerance and the empathy crisis in Islamic elementary education.

Keywords: *Love-Based Curriculum, Islamic Religious Education, Religious Moderation, Student Well-being, Moderate Character.*

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and rapid technological development, social and religious diversity has become an inevitable reality in Indonesia. The rise of intolerance, religious radicalism, and bullying has increasingly threatened students' psychological well-being and the harmony and safety of social life. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) holds a strategic position within the Islamic education system as it is responsible for instilling the values of *wasathiyah* and respect for differences. However, in its practical implementation, PAI still faces substantial challenges in shaping students to become moderate individuals who experience emotional well-being. Islamic education is expected to bridge social tensions, particularly in the area of religious moderation, yet a gap remains between conceptual understanding and classroom implementation (Dewi et al., 2024). This condition highlights the need for a new approach to religious education that goes beyond cognitive orientation and embraces affective dimensions, as emphasized in the study

Pedagogies of Care, Dignity, Love, and Respect (Green et al., 2021). Therefore, examining the reconstruction of PAI learning through a Love-Based Curriculum is highly urgent to explore strategies for integrating religious moderation values and student well-being, thereby strengthening psychological resilience as the foundation for moderate character in a plural society (Maulidin et al., 2025).

Based on preliminary observations at Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah Islamic Elementary School, the learning process of Aqidah and Akhlak remains predominantly textual and revolves around the memorization of doctrinal material. As a result, students tend to understand religious teachings at a conceptual level without experiencing emotional engagement with the values being taught. This condition contributes to a less empathetic classroom atmosphere, where students are not fully trained to appreciate differences or to respond to others with sensitivity. Teachers admitted that this pattern emerged due to the absence of a clear pedagogical model that places affection and care at the core of religious instruction. To respond to this challenge, efforts to apply a Love-Based Curriculum were initiated, aiming to embed compassionate values in every stage of Aqidah and Akhlak instruction. Such an approach is expected to nurture a more moderate attitude and psychological resilience among students as they interact within diverse social settings (Rachmah Amalia et al., 2024; Zuhdi & Syarief, 2023).

Previous studies have explored the reconstruction of the PAI curriculum with an emphasis on religious moderation and the development of moral character through humanistic and contextual learning approaches. However, most of these studies remain largely theoretical and have not fully integrated compassion as a core value within the Aqidah and Akhlak learning model. Moreover, the practical impact of a Love-Based Curriculum as a strategy for instilling moderation values and enhancing student well-being has not been widely examined empirically at the *madrasah ibtidaiyah* level (Fanani & Hidayah, 2024). This research offers novelty by developing a reconstruction model of PAI learning based on a Love-Based Curriculum that integrates Aqidah Akhlak values and religious moderation to foster tolerance, psychological resilience, and students' emotional well-being (Amalia, 2024). International scholarship on the Pedagogy of Love also highlights the transformative potential of affective approaches in addressing the crisis of empathy and intolerance in educational settings. However, these discussions largely focus on Western educational contexts and have yet to address the lived realities of Islamic primary education in Indonesia (Green et al., 2021).

This research holds significant urgency as it responds to the strategic challenges of Islamic education in Indonesia in shaping a generation that not only understands religious teachings correctly but also embodies moderate character and balanced psychological well-being. Amid the growing symptoms of intolerance and psychosocial pressure among students, the Love-Based Curriculum is presented as a comprehensive innovation to address these issues. Emphasizing the internalization of compassion allows for a more humanistic, contextual, and holistic learning process oriented toward character formation. Through this model, students are expected to grow into tolerant individuals who are emotionally resilient and mentally healthy. Furthermore, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to policy development and the implementation of PAI learning models that are relevant to contemporary educational needs in madrasah settings (Maulidin et al., 2025; Mubarok & Sunarto, 2024).

This paper, therefore, aims to examine how the reconstruction of PAI through a Love-Based Curriculum can serve as an effective strategy for

teachers—particularly in Aqidah and Akhlak subjects—to internalize moderation values while simultaneously enhancing students' well-being in Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah Islamic Elementary School. The discussion is structured into three focal points: first, analyzing the convergence between Aqidah and Akhlak values, the principles of moderation, and the concept of a Love-Based Curriculum; second, exploring the reconstruction of Aqidah and Akhlak learning practices through compassion-oriented pedagogy; and third, examining the impact of the Love-Based Curriculum on strengthening students' moderate character and psychological well-being.

This study assumes that reconstructing Aqidah and Akhlak learning through a Love-Based Curriculum can become an effective approach in internalizing moderation values and improving students' well-being. A pedagogical model that harmonizes affection, tolerance, and emotional adaptability is believed to be capable of shaping students into individuals who are emotionally stable, spiritually reflective, and socially moderate. The findings of this research are expected to provide practical implications for Islamic Religious Education teachers in designing and practicing learning models that are humanistic, context-sensitive, and character-oriented. Additionally, this study offers conceptual contributions to the development of Islamic education policies that emphasize humanity, emotional balance, and student well-being in a holistic manner (Suparta & Wahyudi, 2022).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, as it aims to explore the implementation of a Love-Based Curriculum in Aqidah and Akhlak learning through an in-depth examination of real classroom practices. The case study approach enables the researcher to capture the pedagogical dynamics experienced by teachers and students in a natural learning environment without manipulating the setting. Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah Islamic Elementary School is selected as the unit of analysis, as this institution has initiated a shift from conventional cognitive-based instruction toward a more compassionate, value-integrated approach in religious education. The research participants consist of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, the school principal, and selected students, who were chosen through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the implementation of compassionate learning strategies. By focusing on those who are actively engaged in the teaching-learning process, this study seeks to construct a holistic understanding of how the integration of love, moderation, and religious values is practiced and experienced in the classroom setting.

Data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observation was carried out to examine how love-based pedagogical strategies were enacted in the classroom, particularly in terms of teacher-student interaction, communication style, and emotional atmosphere during Aqidah and Akhlak sessions. In-depth interviews were conducted with PAI teachers, the school principal, and students to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding the shift toward a compassionate learning model. Documentation analysis was used to examine lesson plans, assessment records, school activity logs, and other administrative artifacts that reflect the integration of Love-Based Curriculum principles into formal learning structures. Data analysis followed the interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, the researcher filtered and categorized the collected information according to thematic relevance. In

the data display stage, thematic narratives were organized to identify emerging patterns. Finally, in the verification stage, the researcher formulated interpretive conclusions to ensure consistency and validity of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integration of Aqidah, Love-Based Curriculum, and Religious Moderation

The initial findings indicate that teachers, school leadership, and students at Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah Islamic Elementary School have begun to reinterpret Aqidah and Akhlak learning as more than a cognitive exercise. During observation, it was noted that the teacher positioned Aqidah not merely as doctrinal instruction but as a pathway to cultivate emotional connection with divine values and interpersonal harmony. This shift demonstrates an early form of integration between Aqidah Akhlak, Love-Based Curriculum, and moderation values within classroom interactions. To structure this finding clearly, the following table presents the thematic patterns that emerged from the field:

Informant Code	Key Statement from Observation and Interviews	Emerging Theme
Teacher	“We want students to understand Aqidah not only as memorization but as a way of loving Allah and showing care to others.”	Integrative Aqidah-Oriented Love
Teacher	“If religion is taught with gentleness, students will feel that Islamic knowledge brings peace, not pressure.”	Compassionate Instruction
Principal	“We encourage our teachers to harmonize Aqidah, love, and mutual respect so that moderation grows from classroom experience.”	Policy Orientation Toward Moderation
Student	“When the teacher explains that Akhlak means soft hearts and closeness to Allah, I feel more motivated to learn.”	Love of Knowledge and Divine Connection
Student	“Stories about compassion help me understand that faith also means not hating others even if they differ.”	Moderation through Empathy

The data show a consistent pattern: Aqidah is being reframed not as rigid doctrine but as a lived expression of love, empathy, and respectful difference. This emerging pedagogical stance resonates with the idea that love-centered learning can humanize religious instruction and deepen students’ affective engagement with Islamic values. (Green et al., 2021) emphasizes that a pedagogy of love nurtures dignity and emotional openness in the classroom, allowing knowledge to be internalized rather than merely memorized. Similarly, (M. Hanafi et al., 2022) argue that moderation in Islamic education must move beyond normative discourse and be embodied through daily educational practices that normalize empathy and relational ethics. This is further supported by Zuhdi & Syarif (2023), who highlight that students’ well-being increases when learning environments activate emotional connection rather than fear-based compliance. Therefore, the integration observed in this setting indicates not only curriculum adaptation but a deeper cultural shift toward a

more compassionate and moderation-oriented Islamic education model (Zuhdi & Syarief, 2023).

The integration of Aqidah values, the Love-Based Curriculum, and Religious Moderation at Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah Islamic Elementary School indicates that compassion-oriented pedagogy has begun to form part of the learning culture. This finding resonates with the study “Pendekatan Kasih Sayang dalam Pembentukan Karakter pada Anak Usia Dini Perspektif Hadits Nabi Muhammad SAW” which affirms that a compassion-based approach significantly strengthens children’s religious character formation from early Islamic education (Rambe et al., 2024). This is reinforced by (Parjiman et al., 2023) who argue that the integration of love and tolerance values can create an inclusive and peaceful learning atmosphere. In addition, (M. Hanafi et al., 2022) in *Tafsir Moderasi Beragama* emphasize that the internalization of moderation must be cultivated through daily practices of *rahmah* rather than through purely verbal instruction. Compared to the discourse on moderation in Islamic education presented in Atlantis Press Proceedings (2021), which remains largely conceptual, this study places greater emphasis on the practical implementation of compassionate language in real classroom interactions at the Islamic elementary school level. Therefore, this research enriches local literature by presenting concrete evidence of how a Love-Based Curriculum can operate in the context of foundational Islamic education. (Malik et al., 2022).

The emergence of integration between Aqidah Akhlak, the Love-Based Curriculum, and Religious Moderation at Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah Islamic Elementary School did not occur spontaneously but was shaped by teachers’ growing awareness of the emotional needs of learners in modern Islamic education. Zuhdi & Syarif (2023) affirm that Islamic well-being among students can only develop when religious learning provides emotional safety, affection, and recognition of students’ inner experiences (Zuhdi & Syarief, 2023). The cultivation of moderation, therefore, must be grounded in the habituation of *rahmah* in school life, not merely through theoretical explanation. Teachers who incorporate compassionate interaction in daily classroom routines are more effective in nurturing students’ tolerance and empathy. Thus, the underlying reason for the emergence of this value integration is the institutional realization that Aqidah instruction must be accompanied by affective engagement, enabling learners not only to cognitively understand but also emotionally experience the values of love and moderation in educational practice (Indonesia, 2019; Parjiman et al., 2023).

Reconstruction of Aqidah and Akhlak Learning through Compassion-Based Strategies

Classroom observation revealed a significant shift in the pedagogical strategies used in Aqidah and Akhlak learning. Rather than beginning with direct doctrinal instruction, the teacher first cultivated students’ emotional readiness through personal greetings, gentle language, and attentive responses to their affective state. Following this, the teacher employed storytelling infused with compassion and encouraged emotional reflection, allowing moral values to be connected with students’ daily lived experiences. This pattern indicates that the reconstruction of learning practices was not merely technical or method-based but has evolved into a relational and affective transformation. This aligns with the argument of Afriyanto & Anandari who asserts that the renewal of Islamic education must begin with the transformation of teacher–student relationships rather than solely through formal curriculum modification (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024).

Observed Teaching Action	Classroom Expression	Pedagogical Meaning
Personal greetings to students	Calling students by name, asking about their emotional state	Building Emotional Readiness
Compassionate storytelling	Linking moral values to empathetic narratives	Love-Oriented Moral Narrative
Gentle correction without anger	Redirecting student behavior without threats or harsh tone	Non-violent Moral Guidance
Emotional reflection prompt	Teacher asks, “How did you feel in that moment?”	Affective Reflection
Peer appreciation practice	Students are encouraged to express verbal appreciation to classmates	Cultivation of Social Empathy

This pedagogical approach is consistent with the findings of (Muhammad & Surana, 2025), who emphasize that the cultivation of compassionate interaction between teachers and students can strengthen spiritual motivation and emotional connection within religious learning. Similarly, (Darmiah, 2024), in her study on the “*Profil Pelajar Rahmatan lil Alamin*”, asserts that PAI teachers who embody compassion in their classroom practices are more effective in fostering mutual respect and tolerance among learners. In the same vein, (Dr. Nurmiati, 2020) in her book “*Implementasi Kurikulum PAI di Sekolah Dasar*” argues that the success of curriculum reconstruction is largely determined by the teacher’s role as an affectionate figure rather than merely a transmitter of religious doctrine. More conceptually, (Ali Mahmudi et al., 2024) contend that a PAI teacher is not only an instructor but also a spiritual-affective model who must present love as the foundational ethos of Islamic education.

The approach applied by teachers at MI Darul Hikmah aligns with the findings of (Muhammad & Surana, 2025), who emphasize that compassion-based routines are effective in strengthening students’ emotional engagement. However, unlike (Darmiah, 2024) who focuses only on the dimension of tolerance, this study highlights a more practical transformation in teachers’ pedagogical strategies.

The reconstruction of compassion-based teaching strategies at MI Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah is driven by teachers’ awareness that purely verbal instruction and moral commands are no longer effective for today’s generation of learners. (Dr. Nurmiati, 2020) notes that the implementation of the PAI curriculum often fails to touch the emotional dimension because teachers still act as instructors rather than facilitators of affection. In contrast, (Darmiah, 2024) demonstrates that when teachers create empathetic interaction, students respond to moral instruction more sincerely and emotionally. Furthermore, the study on Islamic well-being by (Zuhdi & Syarief, 2023) explains that a classroom climate rooted in love allows students to form an emotional attachment to religious values, leading to deeper internalization and moral stability. Therefore, the emergence of compassion-oriented reconstruction in PAI learning is not incidental but reflects a pedagogical awareness that love-based interaction is essential for actualizing Akhlak education in contemporary Islamic schooling (Veronika & Zaini, 2024).

Love-Based Curriculum, Student Well-being, and the Strengthening of Moderate Character

Documentary analysis reveals that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum at MI Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah is not only reflected in classroom interactions but also embedded within the school's administrative documents. The Lesson Plan (RPP) explicitly includes affective indicators such as *demonstrating compassion toward peers* and *respecting others' opinions* as formal objectives of Aqidah and Akhlak instruction. In addition, daily attitude records show that assessment is not limited to academic compliance but also considers expressions of empathy, emotional regulation, and student responses when witnessing a peer in distress. Weekly school documentation also features an agenda titled *Salam Kasih Sayang and Collective Prayer*, where students are encouraged to greet one another using positive affirmations and mention their friends by name in prayer before learning begins. These documentary findings indicate that the Love-Based Curriculum is not merely verbal or symbolic but institutionalized as a cultural system that emphasizes emotional well-being and the formation of moderate character.

Source of Documentation	Documented Content	Educational Implication
Lesson Plan (RPP)	Affective indicators such as <i>showing compassion</i> and <i>respecting peers' opinions</i> are listed as learning objectives	Love values are formally recognized as part of instructional goals, not mere additions
Daily Attitude Notes	Teachers record students' empathetic responses, such as helping or comforting peers	Emotional well-being and empathy are acknowledged as assessment criteria beyond cognition
Weekly School Agenda (<i>Salam Kasih Sayang & Collective Prayer</i>)	Students are encouraged to greet each other positively and pray for one another by name	School culture promotes empathy and reinforces moderate character through habituation
Visual Documentation	Photos/videos show students affirming and supporting each other after lessons	Moderation and well-being are practiced through tangible acts of social affirmation

The integration of the Love-Based Curriculum documented in school records indicates that students' emotional well-being has begun to be recognized as a core objective of Islamic education. This aligns with the findings of (Dorri Sedeh & Aghaei, 2024), who argue that the elements of *Positive Emotion* and *Meaning* in learning can generate inner calm and strengthen students' spiritual motivation. Likewise, (Kurnaengsih et al., 2024) affirm that Islamic schools that embed compassion into their routine activities possess a greater potential to cultivate a healthy and moderate emotional climate. In the context of character moderation, (Yudistira et al., 2024), in their study on the *Profil Pelajar* zprinciple of tolerance and non-violence. Furthermore, a study published in the International Journal of Wellbeing highlights that consistent practices of social appreciation and collective prayer significantly enhance students' sense of connectedness, which becomes a crucial basis for the

development of moderate character in Islamic education. (Pant & Rastogi, 2024).

The documentary application of the Love-Based Curriculum at MI Darul Hikmah is consistent with the findings of (Dorri Sedeh & Aghaei, 2024), who emphasize that students' emotional well-being can be nurtured through simple affective rituals. However, unlike (Kurnaengsih et al., 2024) who focus solely on school climate, this study demonstrates value internalization through formal institutional documentation.

The implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum integrated with the reinforcement of well-being and moderate character at MI Darul Hikmah Al-Fatimiyah did not emerge incidentally, but stemmed from an institutional awareness that religious learning must address the inner well-being of students. (Yudistira et al., 2024) assert that a Rahmatan lil Alamin-oriented character can only be developed when compassion is institutionalized through school culture rather than merely taught through cognitive instruction. This is reinforced by (Pant & Rastogi, 2024), who state that the documentation of emotional appreciation and collective prayer has a direct impact on enhancing students' social connectedness. Furthermore, (Kurnaengsih et al., 2024) demonstrate that when school activities contain elements of empathy and communal prayer, students tend to internalize religious moderation as a spiritual experience rather than a normative concept. Thus, the documented application of the Love-Based Curriculum reflects a deliberate institutional strategy to construct well-being as the foundational basis for the formation of moderate character (Wahid et al., 2024).

This study contributes significantly to the scholarly development of Islamic Religious Education by demonstrating that the Love-Based Curriculum functions not merely as a spiritual concept but as a practical model systematically documented within instructional tools and school culture. Unlike previous studies on religious moderation that remain largely normative, this research provides concrete evidence that students' emotional well-being can serve as an indicator of the success of Akhlak education through the integration of compassion-based values into educational administration. Accordingly, this study expands the paradigm of PAI from a cognitive orientation toward an affective-transformational approach that is highly relevant to the context of Islamic elementary education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through a Love-Based Curriculum has successfully integrated the values of Aqidah Akhlak, religious moderation, and students' emotional well-being in a holistic manner. The field findings indicate that teachers did not merely modify teaching strategies methodologically, but shifted the orientation of learning toward an affective approach that emphasizes compassion, empathy, and respect for diversity. School documentation further confirms that the Love-Based Curriculum is not limited to theoretical discourse but is institutionalized within instructional planning, school culture, and assessment systems that recognize student well-being as a key indicator of Akhlak education.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education discourse by expanding the paradigm of PAI from a purely cognitive approach to an affective-transformational framework. Practically, the Love-Based Curriculum can serve as an alternative model for PAI teachers in *madrasah ibtidaiyah* to strengthen moderate character and psychological resilience among students amid increasing intolerance and socio-emotional

pressures. Future research may focus on quantitatively measuring the effectiveness of the Love-Based Curriculum in shaping the profile of *Pelajar Rahmatan lil Alamin* or developing teacher training modules based on compassion-centered pedagogy in PAI instruction.

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