

Curriculum of Love and Religious Moderation in Madrasah Learning: Strategy for Building a Generation with Humanistic and Tolerant Character

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the implementation of the curriculum of love and religious moderation in madrasah learning and assess its impact on the learning climate and students' character development. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and a case study method, the research was conducted at MTsN 2 Tanah Datar, involving teachers, school principals, and students as subjects. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis of teaching tools. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, employing techniques and source triangulation to ensure validity. A hermeneutic approach was applied to capture the deeper meaning of participants' experiences in implementing values of love and moderation. The findings indicate that this curriculum fosters a more harmonious classroom climate, increases student engagement, and cultivates discipline and responsibility. In conclusion, the curriculum of love and religious moderation proves effective in shaping a conducive learning environment and developing students' humanistic and tolerant character. It is recommended for broader implementation in madrasahs, accompanied by teacher training and value-based curriculum evaluation to ensure sustainability and relevance.

Keywords: Curriculum of love; Inclusive learning; Madrasah education; Religious moderation; Student character.

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1. Introduction

Madrasah education in Indonesia faces significant challenges in shaping students who excel not only academically but also in character, peacefulness, and respect for diversity. The frequent occurrence of bullying, symbolic violence, and intolerant attitudes in educational environments underscores the urgent need to integrate the values of love and religious moderation into the learning curriculum (Latif, 2019). The Curriculum of Love is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the affective development of students, such as compassion, empathy, and responsibility. Meanwhile, religious moderation prioritizes justice in religious expression, interfaith tolerance, rejection of violence, and respect for local cultures. Within the context of madrasahs, a curriculum based on love and religious moderation functions not only as a preventive strategy against conflict but also as a transformative path toward cultivating an inclusive and tolerant generation of learners (Azra, 2020; Mufid, 2023). Implementing such a curriculum has become an urgent necessity to foster school harmony and promote a positive learning culture. Therefore, this study aims to explore the implementation of the Curriculum of Love and Religious Moderation in madrasah instruction and assess its impact on the learning climate and character development of students (Syamsuddin & Mahmud, 2021).

The Curriculum of Love, developed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, emphasizes nine core principles (9K): diversity, togetherness, kinship, independence, equality, usefulness, honesty, sincerity, and sustainability. These principles are encapsulated within six themes of love: love for God, the Prophet Muhammad, oneself, fellow human beings, the environment, and the nation (Kemenag, 2022). In madrasahs, this curriculum can be implemented through religious activities that foster love for God, such as morning Qur'anic recitation (tadarus), congregational prayers, and collective supplication and remembrance (doa and dzikir). To instill love for others, madrasahs can conduct social initiatives such as community service, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), and charity programs for underprivileged communities (Muslichah, 2021).

Religious moderation as an educational approach emphasizes justice in religious expression, interfaith tolerance, the rejection of extremism, and respect for local traditions. In the madrasah context, it serves not only as a conflict-prevention mechanism but also as a transformative approach to nurturing inclusive and tolerant learners (Zarkasyi, 2022). Studies have demonstrated that reinforcing religious moderation values in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary madrasah (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) level can be achieved by integrating these values into lesson plans, teaching materials, and assessment instruments (Rahmawati et al., 2021). Developing a school culture based on Islamic moderation values can involve fostering a child-friendly academic environment, promoting religious tolerance, and nurturing environmental awareness (Ismail, 2020). Strategies for integrating religious moderation into the madrasah curriculum may include multicultural education enhancement, teacher training, and collaboration with multiple stakeholders (Kurniawan, 2022).

Love-based education reminds us that religion should not be used as a tool for division or judgment, but as a path toward peace, compassion, and unity. Through this approach, young generations are taught to perceive diversity as a blessing rather than a threat (Wahid, 2019). As the frontline of religious education, madrasahs play a strategic role in shaping students' character. A curriculum grounded in love enables students to appreciate differences, develop empathy, and live harmoniously within a pluralistic society (Nasution, 2021). The implementation of the Curriculum of Love and Religious Moderation in madrasahs has shown a positive impact on creating a conducive learning environment and fostering humanistic, tolerant student character. Integrating the values of compassion and moderation into learning has proven effective in reducing conflict potential and enhancing students' social relationships (Ma'arif, 2022).

This curriculum not only prevents conflict but also serves as a medium for internalizing universal Islamic values such as *rahmah* (compassion), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood). This is aligned with the Islamic concept of *Wasathiyah*, which emphasizes balance and moderation in all aspects of life (Hidayatullah, 2020). The implementation of the Curriculum of Love and Religious Moderation can also strengthen students' character in navigating the challenges of globalization and the rapid flow of information. With these values, students are expected to become agents of peace and tolerance in society (Fauzi & Hartati, 2020).

This study aims to explore how the Curriculum of Love and Religious Moderation is implemented in madrasah instruction and evaluate its impact on the learning climate and students' character formation. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study will examine the experiences of teachers, principals, and students in adopting the curriculum (Setiawan, 2023). The findings are expected to contribute to the development of a more humanistic and inclusive madrasah curriculum and serve as a reference for policymakers in designing religious education curricula centered on the values of love and moderation (Yusuf & Fadhil, 2022). Additionally, this study aims to enrich Islamic education scholarship, particularly in developing curricula grounded in the universal Islamic values of *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy to all creation) (Amin, 2021). Consequently, the Curriculum of Love and Religious Moderation can become an effective educational model for shaping a generation that is characterized by strong moral values, tolerance, and a commitment to peace. Ultimately, this research seeks to offer strategic recommendations for implementing this curriculum in madrasah to foster a harmonious educational environment and contribute to building an inclusive and tolerant society.

2. Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study method to explore in depth the implementation practices of the curriculum of love and religious moderation at MTsN 2 Tanah Datar. This approach was chosen for its capacity to enable a holistic understanding of phenomena within their natural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The research participants include Islamic education teachers, the school principal, and students, selected through purposive sampling due to their direct involvement and informed perspectives on the subject matter (Patton, 2015).

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), three months of participatory observation (Angrosino, 2007), and document analysis of the curriculum, lesson plans (RPP), and assessment materials

(Bowen, 2009). The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

To ensure data trustworthiness, the study employed methodological and source triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), member checking (Birt et al., 2016), and the maintenance of an audit trail to secure dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). A hermeneutic approach (Gadamer, 2004) was also adopted to interpret the meanings participants ascribed to the values of love and moderation in the learning process. Open and axial coding techniques (Charmaz, 2014) were utilized to identify emerging conceptual patterns in the data.

Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld. Research permissions were obtained from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was preserved to protect identities. The researcher also engaged in prolonged field immersion and maintained reflective field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) to enhance credibility and depth of findings. This case study is expected to contribute conceptually to the development of value-based curriculum practices in madrasahs, particularly in the context of moderate and inclusive character education.

3. Results and Discussion

Research findings show that the curriculum of love and religious moderation has been integrated into various learning components in madrasahs, including learning design, teaching strategies, school culture, and non-academic evaluation. The four indicators of religious moderation—principles of justice, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for local culture—are implemented through a holistic and contextual approach.

3.1 Learning Design: Integrating the Values of Love and Religious Moderation

The learning design in madrasahs has undergone significant transformation by integrating values of compassion and tolerance into the curriculum. Teachers actively incorporate these values into subjects such as Fiqh, Aqidah Akhlaq, and Arabic. This approach aligns with humanistic educational theory, which emphasizes the holistic development of individual potential.

According to Wulandari and Mafariech (2025), applying humanistic theory in Islamic religious education creates a learning environment that supports students' physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. This increases students' intrinsic motivation and deepens their understanding of Islamic values. In this context, the teacher acts as a facilitator who helps students find meaning in learning rather than merely delivering information. This role enables students to be more active in the learning process and to develop empathy and tolerance toward differences.

The learning design that integrates values of love and religious moderation also includes the use of student-centered methods such as group discussions and case studies. These methods encourage students to think critically and understand others' perspectives. In addition, the use of relevant and contextual teaching media helps students connect lesson content with real-life experiences, reinforcing their understanding of the values being taught.

Evaluation in this learning design focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also includes affective and psychomotor assessments, ensuring that students not only

understand the material but also practice the values they learn. Implementing such a holistic learning design requires training and professional development for teachers, enabling them to design and deliver effective and meaningful lessons. Collaboration among teachers, students, and parents is also essential to support the success of this learning design, creating a conducive and inclusive learning environment. Thus, a learning design that integrates values of love and religious moderation in madrasahs not only enhances educational quality but also shapes students into tolerant, empathetic, and responsible individuals.

3.2 Learning Strategies: Fostering Empathy and Tolerance through Collaboration

Learning strategies in madrasahs have evolved to nurture empathy and tolerance among students. Collaborative learning models and discussions are used to encourage students to listen to and understand differing opinions. This approach supports the development of social attitudes and cooperation among students. According to Irmayanti (2023), collaborative learning enables students to learn from one another, strengthen social relationships, and develop effective communication skills. This is vital in building an inclusive and harmonious learning community. Group discussions also provide students the opportunity to explore various perspectives, increasing their understanding of diversity and reducing prejudice and stereotypes.

These strategies also include project-based learning, where students work together to solve real-life problems, thereby strengthening their problem-solving and collaboration skills. Moreover, student-centered learning approaches allow students to take an active role in the learning process, boosting their motivation and engagement. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students in developing critical and reflective thinking skills. The use of technology in learning strategies can also enhance interactivity and accessibility, allowing students to learn independently and collaboratively. Evaluation in this learning strategy includes both formative and summative assessments, providing constructive feedback to support students' development. Thus, learning strategies that emphasize collaboration and discussion not only improve learning outcomes but also shape students into empathetic, tolerant, and responsible individuals.

3.3 School Culture: Creating an Inclusive and Child-Friendly Environment

An inclusive and child-friendly school culture is a key factor in supporting the implementation of the curriculum of love and religious moderation in madrasahs. Madrasahs promote inter-class religious activities, character training, and anti-bullying programs to create a positive and harmonious learning environment.

According to Mu'is et al. (2023), humanistic-based inclusive education management in madrasahs creates a supportive environment for all students, including those with special needs. This strengthens the sense of togetherness and appreciation of diversity among students. The anti-bullying programs implemented in madrasahs involve the entire school community—including teachers, students, and parents—to jointly prevent and address bullying. This approach raises awareness and collective responsibility for creating a safe and comfortable environment for all students. Inter-class religious activities, such as congregational prayer and religious study sessions, reinforce students' spiritual and moral values and foster solidarity among them. Regular character training helps students develop positive attitudes such as empathy, tolerance, and responsibility, which are essential in building an inclusive school culture.

Furthermore, madrasahs provide space for students to express themselves and participate in decision-making, enhancing their sense of ownership and involvement in the school community. The use of restorative approaches to resolve conflicts among students also helps to build a culture of mutual respect and constructive problem-solving. Thus, an inclusive and child-friendly school culture not only supports the implementation of the curriculum of love and religious moderation but also creates a learning environment conducive to students' academic and social development.

3.4 Non-Academic Evaluation: Measuring Students' Affective and Social Aspects

Non-academic evaluation in madrasahs includes assessing students' affective aspects and social attitudes, which are essential components in their progress reports. This evaluation highlights the importance of character development and moral values in education.

According to Wardatusshopa et al. (2025), appropriate affective assessment instruments help teachers shape students' character, enhancing the quality of both learning processes and outcomes. Attitudinal scales such as Bogardus, Thurstone, Guttman, and Likert can be used to objectively measure students' spiritual and social attitudes. This evaluation also includes observing student behavior in various situations, providing a comprehensive picture of their character development. Self-assessments and peer assessments are used to encourage student reflection and self-awareness regarding their attitudes and behavior. Teachers provide constructive feedback based on the evaluation results, helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement in affective and social aspects.

Non-academic evaluations are also used to design appropriate interventions for students needing additional support in character development. Thus, comprehensive and systematic non-academic evaluation supports students' character development in line with the values of love and religious moderation. The implementation of the love and religious moderation curriculum has had a positive impact on creating more harmonious classroom climates with fewer conflicts and fostering responsibility and discipline among students. Students who develop a love for learning show more active participation and healthier social relationships. This supports the humanistic education theory, which positions students as active and emotional subjects in the learning process (Wibowo et al., 2023).

Integrating the values of religious moderation into learning also strengthens students' understanding of the importance of tolerance and diversity. Activities such as group discussions on religious diversity, collaborative projects addressing social issues, and constructivist methods enhance critical thinking and inclusive attitudes among students (Fasyiransyah et al., 2023). Furthermore, this approach aligns with Islamic education principles that emphasize values such as rahmah (compassion), tasamuh (tolerance), and ukhuwwah (brotherhood). Integrating these values into the curriculum helps prevent radicalism and extremism among students (Imamah, 2023). The findings of this study indicate that integrating the curriculum of love and religious moderation into madrasah learning significantly contributes to shaping inclusive, tolerant, and morally upright student character. This approach not only prevents conflict but also serves as a medium for internalizing the universal values of Islam in students' daily lives.

4. Conclusions

The implementation of the curriculum of love and religious moderation in madrasas shows a positive impact in forming a conducive learning climate and humanistic and tolerant student characters. The integration of the values of compassion and moderation in learning has been proven to be able to reduce the potential for conflict and improve the quality of social relations between students. This curriculum is recommended for wider adoption with the support of teacher training and value-based curriculum evaluation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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