

MADRASAH STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "LOVE CURRICULUM" AS CHARACTER EDUCATION IN BANTEN PROVINCE

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Abstract

This study aims to describe madrasah students' perceptions in Serang regarding implementing the Love Curriculum initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The Love Curriculum is an educational approach that emphasizes inculcating values such as compassion, tolerance, empathy, and patriotism in the learning process. The research employed a quantitative method with a survey approach. The sample consisted of 100 randomly selected madrasah students in Serang City. The data collection instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire developed based on students' perception indicators across four main aspects: love for God, love for others, love for the environment, and love for the homeland. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and descriptively using percentages and averages. The findings indicate that the majority of students hold positive perceptions toward the implementation of the Love Curriculum in their madrasahs, particularly in the aspects of fostering tolerance and social concern. However, strengthening love for the environment still needs to be improved through learning activities and practical engagement within the school setting. These findings will provide insights for madrasahs and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in formulating more humanistic and inclusive learning policies.

Keywords: Love Curriculum, Madrasah, Religious Education, Student Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Religious education in Indonesia plays a strategic role in shaping the character of the younger generation so that they can live harmoniously amid diversity. One of the latest initiatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia is the idea of the *Love Curriculum*, which emphasizes the cultivation of compassion, tolerance, empathy, and patriotism through learning processes in both madrasahs and general schools. This concept emerged as a response to the rise of intolerance and radicalism issues that threaten social cohesion.

As a national issue, character education has a long historical root in the formation of the Indonesian nation, and the implementation of curricula oriented toward character values has become crucial in the educational context (Sopandi & Siswanto, 2019). The 2013 Curriculum explicitly highlights the development of spiritual and social attitudes and knowledge and skills competencies, encouraging schools to adopt learning strategies conducive to character formation, such as project-based learning that promotes teamwork, independence, and leadership (Asrofi et al., 2025). Integrating character education across all subjects is a key strategy, with teaching

materials aligned with norms and values explicitly linked to students' daily lives (Prayoga, 2020). Systematic and continuous efforts are required to maximize the outcomes of the national movement for cultural and character education, as effective implementation fosters children's emotional intelligence (Jai et al., 2020).

Character education is not merely about transferring moral knowledge but also about internalizing moral values into students' real actions, which requires a holistic approach and support from the entire school community, including parents (Musyawir et al., 2024). Character education aims to optimize students' ethical behavior through deliberate efforts, encouraging them to actualize good values in their lives, where parents, teachers, and administrators—as stakeholders—must work together to ensure the realization of these values (Suprpto, 2022).

Character values are inculcated in schools through various strategies, one of which is integrating character education into all subjects to strengthen students' personality development (Musyawir et al., 2024). Deliberation and collective activities also instill moral values aligned with the school's vision. Since the enactment of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, character education in Indonesia has been directed toward shaping the nation's dignified character and civilization (Ikhsani et al., 2019).

Character education is manifested through curricula and extracurricular activities, creating a learning environment conducive to students' social and moral development (Asrofi et al., 2025). The learning process includes activities that encourage students to understand the subject matter and develop awareness of the importance of character values until they are reflected in real behavior (Ramadhoan et al., 2025). The urgency of strengthening character is increasingly vital amid today's moral crisis among adolescents (Miftahusalimah et al., 2025). An individual's success is determined by intelligence, attitudes, and character (Egistiani et al., 2023).

As educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, madrasahs bear greater responsibility in internalizing the universal values of peaceful and compassionate religious teachings. Therefore, students' perceptions of the Love Curriculum serve as an initial indicator to assess the extent to which this initiative is understood, accepted, and implemented in their learning environment.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of students' perceptions in supporting the successful implementation of new curricula (Rahmawati, 2020; Sukardi, 2022). However, research on the Love Curriculum as a values-based approach in madrasahs remains limited. Hence, this study aims to describe madrasah students' perceptions in Serang City regarding the Love Curriculum, focusing on four main aspects: love for God, love for others, love for the environment, and love for the homeland.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey method, in which data were collected through questionnaires to obtain information from respondents systematically (Sugiyono, 2019). The research population comprised all madrasah students in Serang City, with a simple random sampling technique applied to select 100 respondents from various public and private madrasahs. The research instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire developed based on students' perception indicators of the implementation of the Love Curriculum, consisting of 20 statement items measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1) Strongly Disagree to 5) Strongly Agree. The reliability test of the instrument was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and descriptively with the aid of SPSS, including calculating mean scores and percentages and classifying students' perception levels (low, moderate, high).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The content validity test was conducted by seeking assessments from two experts: a university lecturer specializing in madrasah educational evaluation and a senior madrasah teacher with more than 10 years of teaching experience. The experts assessed: 1) the relevance of the indicators to the objectives of the Love Curriculum, 2) the clarity of the statement wording, and 3) the appropriateness of the language for madrasah students. The evaluation results showed that all items were declared valid, as they obtained a minimum agreement of 80% from both experts.

Table 1. Summary of Content Validity Test Results

No	Aspect/Item
Aspect: Love for God	
1	I am taught always to draw closer to God.
2	I am taught to love and care for God's creations.
3	The teacher teaches the importance of daily prayer and worship.
4	I feel at peace studying in the madrasah because of its religious atmosphere.
Aspect: Love for Others	
5	I am taught to respect friends who have different opinions.
6	I am taught to help friends who are in difficulty.
7	I am taught to respect teachers and parents.
8	The madrasah holds social service activities.
Aspect: Love for the Environment	
9	I am taught to maintain the cleanliness of the classroom and madrasah.
10	The madrasah has a garden or greenery.
11	I am taught to throw garbage in its proper place.
12	The madrasah has electricity/water saving programs.

Aspect: Love for the Homeland

- 13 I am taught to respect national symbols.
- 14 I participate in flag ceremonies in an orderly manner.
- 15 I am taught to be proud of being an Indonesian citizen.
- 16 The teacher explains the importance of unity and togetherness.

General

- 17 The teacher sets an example of mutual respect.
- 18 The madrasah environment supports polite behavior.
- 19 I feel comfortable studying in the madrasah.
- 20 I experience the values of the Love Curriculum in daily life at the madrasah.

Conclusion: All Questionnaire Items: *Implementing the Love Curriculum in Madrasah* was declared valid.

The reliability test was conducted by administering the questionnaire to 30 students outside the research sample. The instrument is reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value exceeds 0.70 (Sugiyono, 2019).

Tabel 2. Reliability Test Results

Test	Cronbach's Alpha	Criterion	Decision
Instrument Reliability	0.87	High	Reliable

A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.87 was obtained, indicating that the instrument is reliable and suitable for collecting data on madrasah students' perceptions of the Love Curriculum. Furthermore, the results show that students' perceptions of the Love Curriculum in Serang fall into the positive category, with an average score of 81% (high category), as presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Students' Perception Results

No	Perception Aspect	Key Indicators	Average (%)	Category
1	Love for God	Faith, compassion for creatures	88%	High
2	Love for Others	Tolerance, empathy, cooperation	85%	High
3	Love for the Environment	Cleanliness, greening, energy saving	73%	Sedang
4	Love for the Homeland	Nationalism, pride in identity	78%	High
Average			81%	High

The findings of this study reveal students' perceptions of implementing the Love Curriculum values, which encompass four main aspects: love for God, love for others, love for the environment, and love for the homeland. Each aspect was measured through several indicators, averaged in percentage scores, and categorized into high, medium, or low levels. The results for each aspect are described as follows:

1. Love for God (88% – High). This aspect obtained the highest average score of 88%, which falls into the high category. This indicates that students possess strong faith and embrace the value of compassion toward God's creations. It suggests that cultivating spiritual values has been successfully implemented and internalized among students.
2. Love for Others (85%—High). This aspect also falls within the high category, with a score of 85%. The score reflects students' positive perceptions of social values such as tolerance, empathy, and cooperation. It demonstrates the existence of a culture of mutual respect and collaboration among students, which is essential in shaping positive social character.
3. Love for the Environment (73% – Medium). Unlike the previous two aspects, love for the environment received an average score of 73%, categorized as medium. This indicates that environmental awareness, such as school cleanliness, greening, and energy conservation, still needs strengthening. Greater attention is required through initiatives such as environmental education, school greening programs, or cleanliness campaigns.
4. Love for the Homeland (78% – High). The nationalism aspect scored 78% and falls into the high category. This demonstrates that students have pride in their national identity, respect national symbols, and possess a strong sense of patriotism. Such values represent important social capital for strengthening unity.
5. Overall Average (81% – High). When averaged, the four aspects produced a score of 81%, categorized as high. This finding indicates that, in general, students' perceptions of the Love Curriculum are positive. Most of the values embedded in the curriculum have been well received by students, although greater attention is needed to reinforce environmental awareness.

Discussion

The findings reveal that madrasah students in Serang City perceive the implementation of the Love Curriculum to be at a high level, with an average percentage score exceeding 80%. This indicates that the values of love for God, others, the environment, and the homeland have been fairly well integrated into students' daily lives. Such outcomes cannot be separated from the role of character education consistently embedded within the learning process and habituation in the madrasah environment. In the era of globalization, marked by the rapid advancement of science

and technology, the younger generation's moral degradation poses a serious challenge (Salafudin et al., 2021). Therefore, the Love Curriculum represents a concrete form of character education aimed at shaping intellectually competent students while possessing mature personalities and integrity (Arti et al., 2024; Romiadi, 2024).

The dimension of love for God obtained the highest score, 88%, indicating strong internalization of religious values among students. This is manifested through routine worship, collective prayers, and teacher role modeling. These findings align with the statement of the Minister of Religious Affairs, who emphasized that the Love Curriculum is designed to strengthen character grounded in religious values (Yaqut, 2024). Within this context, character education assists students in developing faith, self-control, and moral values as guiding principles for their behavior.

The aspect of love for others reached 85%, reflecting that students receive learning experiences encouraging tolerance, empathy, and social cooperation. School programs such as community service and group discussions contribute significantly to fostering mutual respect and social awareness. Aldridge and McLure (2024) similarly found that a religious school climate positively correlates with students' social concern. Character education in this area develops empathy, social interaction skills, and responsible decision-making (Fadilah et al., 2025; Hulu et al., 2025).

The love for the environment dimension scored 73%, the lowest among the four aspects. While some students demonstrated eco-friendly behaviors such as maintaining cleanliness and conserving energy, more concrete actions, such as reforestation, waste management, and building eco-friendly schools, require greater emphasis. This suggests that ecological awareness is not yet fully integrated into students' character development, despite its importance in holistic education (Musyawir et al., 2024). Action-based programs are therefore necessary to foster a sustainable culture of environmental care in schools.

The love for the homeland dimension reached 78%, showing that students experience reinforcement of national values through activities such as flag ceremonies and respect for national symbols. This finding suggests that the Love Curriculum strengthens students' sense of nationalism. Linking character education with nationalism is crucial, as religious and national values can coexist in shaping individuals who are both devout and patriotic (Asrofi et al., 2025).

The research instrument demonstrated strong reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.87, strengthening confidence in the findings. Students' positive perceptions of the Love Curriculum can serve as social capital for supporting the broader implementation of character education policies (Sukardi, 2022). However, the effectiveness of the Love Curriculum depends not only on curriculum design but also on the active role of teachers as facilitators of character formation. Teachers can internalize moral values more effectively through role modeling, intensive interaction, and active learning approaches (Sanderse, 2013). In addition, collaboration between

schools, families, and communities is essential to create a supportive environment for sustainable character development (Djazilan & Wuryandani, 2024). Implementing the Love Curriculum in Serang madrasahs has produced encouraging results, particularly in strengthening spirituality, social relations, and nationalism. However, further efforts are needed to reinforce the environmental dimension and to involve parents and communities as strategic partners in character education. Character formation should not be confined to the classroom alone but must emerge from a continuous process of teaching, habituation, and role modeling.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Love Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education at madrasahs can be carried out through the integration of values such as love for God, love for others, love for the environment, and love for the homeland into teaching materials, habituation activities, teacher role modeling, and school culture. These values are instilled through religious practices, collective prayers, attitudes of tolerance, cooperation, environmental care, and national activities such as flag ceremonies and respect for national symbols.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the Love Curriculum can be effectively implemented through the collaboration of instructional strategies, educator role modeling, and student involvement in madrasah culture. These findings support the efforts of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in strengthening the character and morality of the younger generation through Islamic Religious Education grounded in the values of love.

It is recommended that educators continuously develop teaching methods that strengthen the values promoted by the Love Curriculum and that madrasahs reinforce a school culture that fosters the habituation of these values. Students should also apply the principles of the Love Curriculum in their daily lives. Furthermore, future researchers are advised to broaden the scope of their studies by employing mixed methods and involving parents and the wider community.

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