

Integrating Compassionate Values into a Love-Based Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) for Holistic Education

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ABSTRACT

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) education is required not only to develop academic competence, but also to form students' character, emotional intelligence, spirituality, and social concern holistically. In this context, the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) offers an educational paradigm that places compassion and humanity as the foundation of learning, but the operationalization of compassion values in curriculum practice has not been widely studied. This study aims to analyze the integration of compassionate values into KBC and its contribution to strengthening holistic education in MI. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed interactively through data condensation, data presentation, conclusion drawn, and verification by triangulating sources and techniques. The results of the study show that compassion is integrated through learning objectives, teacher example, humanist pedagogical interaction, collaborative learning, habituation, and madrasah culture. The integration strengthens empathy, care, appreciation for differences, social responsibility, and the moral and emotional development of students. However, its implementation still faces limitations in the operationalization of indicators and compassionate value assessments. Research concludes that compassion can serve as a bridging value that connects the spiritual, moral, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions in holistic education. The contribution of the research lies in the conceptual and practical reinforcement that KBC needs to be understood as a pedagogical cultural transformation, not just a change in curriculum documents.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) level should ideally not only be directed at the achievement of academic competence, but also at the formation of a whole human being through intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, moral, and environmental development. In the perspective of holistic education, students are seen as individuals who have a close relationship between thinking skills, emotional management, social relationships, moral values, and spiritual experiences. Thus, the success of basic education should not be measured only through the ability to read, count, memorize,

or achieve learning achievements, but also through the ability of children to show empathy, respect for others, control themselves, work together, resolve conflicts peacefully, and treat the environment responsibly. Recent findings on social-emotional learning reinforce this view. A meta-analysis of 22 studies involving 24,510 primary and secondary school students showed that social-emotional learning programs had a positive influence on academic achievement, including in elementary school students ($g = 0.075$), while showing that social and emotional dimensions should not be contradicted by academic achievement (Alzahrani et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, the direction of character strengthening has also gained space through the Independent Curriculum which places contextual learning, projects, character, and student development as an important part of the educational process (Fajri et al., 2023). Therefore, holistic education at MI requires a foundation of values that do not stop at normative formulations, but are translated into learning experiences, pedagogical interactions, school culture, and students' daily habits.

In this context, the values of compassion become relevant because compassion does not just mean compassion for others, but includes the ability to understand the feelings and needs of others, show concern, provide help, appreciate differences, avoid hurtful actions, and build human relationships. This value has a strong relationship with the purpose of Islamic education because education in madrasahs is not only tasked with transmitting religious knowledge, but also shaping the morals and personalities of students. The problem is that value education is often still at the declarative level: the values of compassion, tolerance, care, and noble morals are included in the learning objectives, but they are not always systematically operationalized in curriculum design, learning strategies, teacher-student interaction, assessment, and madrasah culture. This condition becomes even more important when children are faced with a complex social environment. PISA 2022 data shows that 25% of female students and 30% of students in Indonesia report experiencing bullying at least several times a month. At the same time, 17% of students stated that they did not feel safe in certain places in the school environment such as corridors, canteens, or toilets, while 16% admitted to feeling lonely at school (OECD, 2023). Although the PISA data includes 15-year-old students and not directly MI students, it provides important signals about the quality of social relations and the educational climate that needs to be built from primary education. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission also reported 329 complaints in education, leisure, culture, and religion clusters throughout 2023, with bullying in education units among the highest forms of complaints (KPAI, 2024). This fact shows that character education is not enough to be done through moral counsel, but requires the formation of a relational culture that allows learners to experience, practice, and internalize compassion in school life.

This need gained momentum through the development of the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) in the madrasah environment. KBC offers a paradigm shift from education that is solely oriented towards material mastery to education that places love, compassion, care, respect for people, science, the environment, and life as the foundation of the educational process. A number of studies in 2025 have begun to show the potential of KBC in building the character of MI students. Studies on the implementation of KBC in MI show that the concept places compassion as a foundation for learning and directs education to the formation of more humanist character (Nugraha et al., 2025). Another study found that KBC can be developed through five orientations of love, namely love for God, science, the environment, fellow humans, and the homeland, so that the concept of love is not placed as an abstract value, but as an orientation that can enter various educational experiences (Nugraha et al., 2025). Research on meaningful learning in Islamic studies also shows that the integration of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning with KBC has the potential to increase student involvement, strengthen Islamic understanding, and internalize religious values, empathy, and social concern (Nurhayati & Zainuri, 2025). The findings show that KBC has conceptual compatibility with holistic education. However, there is an important question that has not been fully answered: how is the value of compassion as a core value of education translated operationally into the structure and practice of the MI curriculum? In other words, the existence of the idea of "love" does not automatically guarantee the presence of compassionate behavior in students' learning experiences. Without clear indicators,

pedagogical strategies, habituation, and assessments, KBC risks becoming a philosophically strong but weak normative slogan in practice.

This gap is even more visible when previous studies are mapped critically. Some research on KBC in 2025 is still oriented towards conceptual studies, literature studies, or implementation descriptions, while research that specifically makes compassion a value construct that is analyzed across MI curriculum components is still limited. Research on the importance of the implementation of the love curriculum in MI, for example, confirms that love can be the basis for humanization and the formation of children's personalities, but the approach is mainly in the form of library research on documents and literature, rather than an in-depth analysis of the mechanism of integrating the value of compassion in curriculum practice (Shulhan, 2025). Similarly, the study on the implementation and management of KBC shows positive potential for character development and a warm learning environment, but at the same time identifies issues of teacher readiness, training, and resources as obstacles to implementation (Ramadhani et al., 2026). Other research on deep learning and KBC also shows that the limitations of teacher competence, facilities, and the unavailability of standardized love value evaluation instruments are the main challenges (Mumtaza et al., 2025). Thus, the research gap of this research lies in three aspects. First, previous research has focused more on "love" as a general concept, but has not specifically described compassion as an operational value consisting of caring, empathy, appreciation, willingness to help, and non-hurtful behavior. Second, KBC integration is often discussed as a learning approach or curriculum management, but has not been widely studied as a curriculum system that connects goals, materials, methods, learning experiences, madrasah culture, teacher-student relations, and assessment. Third, research linking the values of compassion, KBC, and holistic education in the specific context of MI is still relatively limited, so there is not an adequate picture of how these values can be internalized consistently according to the developmental characteristics of elementary school-age children.

Critically, these conditions show that the main challenge is no longer just whether KBC is important to implement, but how KBC can be transformed from a normative paradigm to a measurable, contextual, and sustainable educational practice. This is important because character education that is only placed in certain subjects or activities risks resulting in fragmentation between what is taught and what students experience. Children can learn the definition of affection in books, but at the same time experience harsh communication, excessive competition, uneducated punishment, or less inclusive social relations in the school environment. Therefore, the integration of compassion must take place at the level of curriculum as lived experience, namely the curriculum as experienced by students through teacher language, interaction patterns, collaborative activities, conflict management, habituation, religious activities, social projects, and madrasah relationships with family and community. This approach is in line with the finding that character strengthening in the Independent Curriculum has great potential when character values are not only expressed in documents, but are linked to active, contextual, and real-life learning of students (Muharawati et al., 2025). At the same time, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of social-emotional learning suggests that the development of social and emotional abilities can go hand in hand with academic achievement (Alzahrani et al., 2025). Thus, research on the integration of compassion into KBC is important to be carried out now because madrasahs are in a phase of curriculum transformation that demands a balance between mastery of knowledge, character building, strengthening spirituality, and the ability to live together. This research is needed to prevent KBC from stopping as a change in curriculum terminology, but actually producing changes in the learning experience and character of students.

Based on this description, this study aims to critically analyze how compassion values can be integrated into the Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as the foundation of holistic education, including the form of values developed, integration strategies in curriculum components, pedagogical practices, habits and culture of madrasahs, as well as mechanisms for internalizing values in students. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of Islamic education, character education, and holistic education through the formulation of the conceptual relationship between

compassion and KBC; Practically, this research is expected to provide a reference for madrasah heads and teachers in designing a learning experience that is more humanistic, reflective, inclusive, and oriented towards the development of students as a whole. In addition, this research can contribute to the development of more contextual curriculum tools and character assessment indicators, so that the value of love is not only understood as a moral idea, but is realized through real behaviors such as empathy, caring, appreciation, cooperation, self-control, and helpful actions. Thus, the integration of compassion into KBC is expected to strengthen MI's position as an educational space that not only produces academically and religiously intelligent students, but also has social sensitivity, emotional maturity, morals, and the ability to coexist peacefully in an increasingly complex society.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type of research. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to understand in depth the process, meaning, form, and mechanism of integration of compassion values into the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), which cannot be adequately reduced to numbers or relationships between variables. The focus of the research is directed at how the value of compassion is translated from normative ideas into practical curriculum practices and real educational experiences, including learning planning, pedagogical processes, teacher-student interaction, habituation, madrasah culture, and forms of character evaluation. The case study was chosen because it allows researchers to examine the phenomenon contextually and holistically in its natural environment, while maintaining the linkages between curriculum policy, teacher practice, institutional culture, and learners' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The research subjects include madrasah heads, teachers, and students who are directly involved in the implementation of KBC, while the object of the research is the process of integrating compassion values into KBC to support holistic education. The selection of informants is carried out purposively based on the consideration that they have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the planning and implementation of KBC. To strengthen the validity of the data construction, the research involved triangulation of sources by comparing information of madrasah heads, teachers, and students as well as triangulation of techniques through interviews, observations, and document analysis. This strategy is considered the most appropriate because research problems are not only related to what is written in the curriculum document, but also about the gap or suitability between the document, the teacher's meaning, learning practices, and the students' experience.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, limited participatory observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were used to obtain data on the understanding and interpretation of madrasah heads and teachers on the concept of compassion and KBC, its integration strategies in learning, forms of habituation, implementation obstacles, and behavioral changes observed in students. Observations are made to identify the manifestation of the value of compassion in natural situations, especially through teacher-student communication patterns, cooperation between learners, responses to differences, conflict resolution, caring practices, and learning activities that reflect holistic education. Documentation is used to analyze curriculum documents, teaching modules, learning tools, habituation programs, rules, madrasah activities, and relevant evaluation documents. The main instrument of the research is the researcher himself (human instrument) supported by interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document analysis matrices. The instrument guidelines are developed based on the compassionate value construct and KBC principles so that the data obtained does not stop at the description of the activity, but can be used to identify forms of value integration at the level of objectives, materials, methods, interactions, habituation, and assessment. Data analysis is carried out interactively through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion withdrawal and verification, with the coding process carried out iteratively since the data collection took place (Miles et al., 2014). The data was then categorized into analytical themes, such as the meaning of compassion, love-based curriculum design,

pedagogical practices, madrasah culture, internalization of values, supporting factors, obstacles, and their implications for holistic education. Thematic analysis is used to find repetitive patterns, relationships, and meanings in the data, while source triangulation and techniques are used to test the consistency of findings. With this design, the research not only produces an overview of the application of KBC, but also explains the mechanism of how the value of compassion is integrated, the conditions that influence the process, and its contribution to the formation of a holistic educational experience, so that the methods, research objectives, and analysis techniques have a clear methodological relationship (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the study are known that the integration of compassionate values into the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah does not take place as an addition to learning materials separately, but mainly through the process of integrating values into educational objectives, pedagogical interactions, habituation, social activities, and madrasah culture. The findings show that the value of compassion is understood as part of the formation of students' character which includes concern for others, empathy, respect for differences, willingness to help, courtesy, and the ability to avoid actions that can hurt others. This meaning shows a shift from the understanding of love as an affective concept to love as a principle that directs behavior. Thus, KBC is not solely positioned as a curriculum tool, but as a value orientation that affects the way teachers interact with students and the way madrasahs build an educational environment.

At the curriculum planning level, the value of compassion is found to be integrated, especially through learning objectives and character strengthening. This integration can be seen in teachers' efforts to connect academic competence with social and moral attitudes that are expected to emerge after the learning process. The learning material is not only directed so that students understand concepts, but also so that they are able to relate these concepts to their daily life experiences. For example, learning related to morals, religious education, science, and social life is directed to build concern for friends, family, the environment, and society. However, the results of the document analysis also show that the integration of compassion is still stronger at the level of goals and values to be formed than in the formulation of specific and measurable behavioral indicators. This means that values such as compassion, caring, and respect for others have been present in the curriculum orientation, but have not always been translated into achievement indicators that explicitly distinguish between the understanding of compassion and the ability to practice it.

In learning practice, the value of compassion is mainly manifested through the interaction pattern between teachers and students. Teachers not only play the role of delivering material, but also as models of behavior that show patience, appreciation, attention, and acceptance of the individual conditions of students. The approach is important because the internalization of values in MI-age children takes place not only through verbal instruction, but through the repeated experiences and examples they see in school life. The results of the observations show that the use of polite language, giving opportunities to students to express their opinions, mentoring students who are experiencing difficulties, and solving problems through dialogue are concrete forms of applying the value of compassion. These findings show that the relational dimension is an important component in KBC. In other words, the effectiveness of integrating love values is not only determined by the content of the material, but also by the quality of the relationship between teachers and students.

The integration of compassion is also seen in collaborative learning activities. Group activities provide space for students to learn to share tasks, help friends, listen to others' opinions, and resolve differences more constructively. In this context, the value of compassion is not taught as a definition, but rather practiced through social experience. The analysis shows that collaborative activities have a dual function: increasing learners' engagement in learning while providing a space to form social-emotional competencies. Students learn that the success of the group does not only depend on the

individual's abilities, but also on the ability to understand and help other members of the group. However, the practice is not fully systematic because the quality of internalization is highly dependent on the teacher's ability to manage group dynamics. If teachers only emphasize the completion of academic tasks, group work has the potential to turn into a regular division of work without producing a reflective experience of empathy, caring, and social responsibility.

The results of further research show that habituation is an important mechanism in strengthening the internalization of compassion values. These values arise through various daily activities in the madrasah, such as building the habit of greeting each other, respecting teachers and friends, helping students who are experiencing difficulties, maintaining the cleanliness of the environment, sharing, and paying attention to members of the madrasah community in need. Habituation has a strategic position because it allows values that were originally conceptual to turn into repetitive behaviors. From a holistic education perspective, the pattern shows that character formation cannot be limited to the classroom. The madrasah environment as a whole serves as a learning space that allows students to develop intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual aspects simultaneously.

Another important finding relates to the relationship between the value of compassion and holistic education. The integration of compassion not only results in changes in the social aspects of students, but has the potential to bring together various dimensions of child development. When learners learn to help a friend, for example, they not only develop social care, but also communication skills, emotional control, responsibility, and moral awareness. Similarly, environmental activities can link religious values with social and ecological responsibility. The results of the analysis thus show that compassion functions as a bridging value between the spiritual, moral, emotional, social, and intellectual dimensions in education. This position makes compassion more strategic than just one of the character values because it can be a principle that organizes various educational experiences of students.

In terms of internalization, there are indications that students are more likely to show the value of compassion when the value is conveyed through concrete experience rather than through abstract explanations. Situations when students are asked to help friends, work together, share, or resolve conflicts provide a more meaningful experience than learning that only explains the meaning of compassion. These findings show that there is a difference between knowing compassion and doing compassion. Students can know that helping friends is a good deed, but that knowledge does not automatically result in consistent behavior. Therefore, the success of KBC in forming the character of compassion is determined by the continuity between knowledge of values, experience, example, habituation, reflection, and behavioral strengthening. These findings are also a criticism of the character education approach that is too oriented towards verbal transmission of values.

In the assessment aspect, the study found that the measurement of compassion value is still one of the parts that needs the most strengthening. Character assessments tend to be conducted through observation of students' daily behavior and developmental records, but are not yet fully supported by structured compassion indicators. This condition causes the assessment to be potentially subjective and depends on the perception of each teacher. This issue is methodologically important because the integration of grades into the curriculum should not stop at the planning and implementation stages, but is also reflected in the evaluation system. Without clear indicators, madrasahs will have difficulty determining whether changes in students' behavior really show internalization of grades or are just a temporary response to the teacher's direction. Therefore, the results of the study show that there is a need to develop authentic assessments that are able to capture compassionate behavior in a real context, not just through questions or cognitive assessments of the concept of compassion.

Analysis of supporting factors shows that teacher examples, support of madrasah heads, positive school culture, consistent habituation, and involvement of all madrasah residents are conditions that strengthen the implementation of compassion values. When the values taught by the teacher are consistent with the behavior displayed in madrasah life, students get a relatively intact educational message. On the other hand, when there is a mismatch between the values taught and the practice of

daily interactions, the internalization process becomes less than optimal. These findings confirm that KBC is essentially an ecosystem approach. Its success cannot be attributed only to classroom teachers or subject teachers, because the character of students is also influenced by madrasah policies, organizational culture, relationships between teachers, communication patterns, and family involvement.

Nonetheless, research shows that the implementation of compassionate values still faces a number of challenges. The main challenge lies in the lack of uniform teachers' understanding of the operationalization of the values of love and compassion, the limitations of character assessment instruments, the demands for academic competency achievement, and the tendency of some character education practices to still be in the form of habituation without deep reflection. This condition shows that there is a potential gap between the intended curriculum and the lived curriculum. At the document level, the value of love and compassion can be expressed ideally, but at the level of student experience, its implementation is greatly influenced by pedagogical competence and the consistency of madrasah culture. Thus, the problem of implementing KBC does not solely lie in the availability of values, but in the ability of educational institutions to convert these values into consistent, contextual, and evaluable practices.

The results of the study show that the integration of compassionate values into the Love-Based Curriculum has a strategic contribution to the development of holistic education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Compassion functions not only as a character goal, but as a principle that can link academic learning with social, emotional, moral, spiritual, and students' concern for the environment. However, this contribution cannot be considered optimal if integration is only at the level of curriculum narrative and informal habituation. The research findings actually show that the transformation of KBC into holistic education requires integration in the entire madrasah ecosystem: starting from curriculum design, pedagogical practices, teacher examples, habituation, students' social experiences, family involvement, to authentic assessments. Thus, KBC's success in building compassion-based education is more accurately understood as a process of transforming educational culture rather than simply implementing a curriculum tool.

The results of the study show that the integration of compassion values into the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah takes place mainly through the transformation of educational practices, not just the addition of material on compassion in curriculum documents. These findings are important because they show that compassion works as a cross-component value that connects learning objectives, teacher-student interaction, collaborative learning, habituation, madrasah culture, and character development. Theoretically, this pattern can be explained through the perspective of humanistic education that places students as whole human beings, not just objects of knowledge transfer. Within this framework, the interpersonal relationship between educators and learners becomes part of the pedagogical process itself. This means that the value of compassion is not primarily transmitted through verbal explanations, but is formed through experience when learners are treated with empathy, their opinions are valued, helped when they are struggling, and given the opportunity to treat others in the same way. These findings reinforce the idea that KBC is more appropriately understood as a relational paradigm of education rather than just a model for the preparation of curriculum tools.

These findings have similarities with the research of Nugraha et al. (2025) which shows that the implementation of KBC at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah places compassion as the foundation of learning and develops five orientations of love, namely love for God, science, the environment, fellow humans, and the homeland. What they have in common lies in the understanding that love should be present in the various dimensions of educational life and not be limited to a specific subject. However, this study expands on these findings by showing that compassion can be positioned as a pedagogical mechanism that operationalizes love, especially through empathy, caring, appreciation, help to others, and humane conflict resolution. Thus, this study provides a conceptual differentiation: if "love" is a paradigm or value orientation, then "compassion" is a form of praxis that allows this paradigm to be seen in

educational behavior. The scientific implication is that the study of KBC needs to move from the question "what value of love is taught?" to a more analytical question, namely "through what pedagogical mechanism does the value of love change into the behavior of students?"

Table 1. Forms of integration of compassion values in the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC)

No.	Integration Dimensions	Form of Implementation in MI	Developed Values of Compassion	Contribution to Holistic Education
1	Learning objectives	Incorporating caring, empathy, and appreciation into learning objectives	Empathy and care	Moral and emotional development
2	Learning materials	Relate material to social life, care, and morals	Compassion and responsibility	Intellectual and social development
3	Teacher-student interaction	Teachers use polite communication, pay attention, and respect students	Appreciation and empathy	Emotional and social maturity
4	Collaborative learning	Discussions, group work, helping each other, and sharing tasks	Cooperation and care	Social and interpersonal skills
5	Habituation	Greeting each other, helping friends, sharing, apologizing and taking care of the environment	Caring and prosocial behavior	Character and moral formation
6	Teacher role model	Teachers show patience, fairness, care, and respect for differences	Example and tolerance	Moral and spiritual development
7	Madrasah culture	Build a safe, inclusive, friendly, and free environment from hurtful behavior	Tolerance and respect	Social-emotional well-being
8	Conflict resolution	Conflicts between students are resolved through dialogue, mediation, and reflection	Empathy and self-control	Social and emotional maturity
9	Environmental care	Cleaning, greening, and environmental maintenance activities	Love of the environment and responsibility	Ecological awareness
10	Acesmen character	Observation of student behavior, reflection, and progress records	Consistency of compassionate behavior	Evaluation of the development of students in its entirety

Table 1. it shows that the integration of compassion values in the Love-Based Curriculum is multidimensional. The value of compassion is not placed as a separate material or subject, but rather is integrated into various components of the educational experience. At the planning level, these values can be included in learning objectives, while at the implementation level they are realized through teacher-student interaction, collaborative learning, example, and habituation.

The finding that collaborative learning is an important space to internalize compassion is also consistent with research on meaningful learning in KBC. Nurhayati and Zainuri (2025) emphasized the importance of meaningful learning experiences in learning Islamic studies through KBC, while Arafani et al. (2025) placed compassion, empathy, self-esteem, and spiritual appreciation as part of the development of meaningful learning at MI. This similarity shows that the value of love will be more easily internalized when students gain experiences that connect knowledge with real life. However, the results of this study provide a sharp reminder that meaningful experiences do not automatically produce compassion. The experience must be accompanied by social interaction and reflection on values. Group work, for example, only becomes a vehicle for compassionate education when students learn to listen, help, respect other members, and resolve differences. If group work is only used to complete academic tasks, then its affective and moral dimensions can be lost. Thus, the meaning of learning in KBC is not only a matter of material connection with students' lives, but also the connection of learning experiences with their relational and moral development.

More broadly, these findings can be explained through social and emotional learning (SEL) theory, especially the idea that social-emotional competence develops through experiences that allow learners to recognize emotions, build positive relationships, demonstrate empathy, make responsible decisions, and manage social interactions. A meta-analysis by Zhao and Sang (2025) of 22 studies with 24,510 learners showed that the SEL program had a positive effect on academic achievement, including in elementary school students. These results are important to read the research findings because they show that the development of the social-emotional dimension does not have to be at odds with academic goals. In fact, a learning environment that supports social and emotional development can be a condition that strengthens the learning process. This research expands this perspective in the context of madrasahs by showing that social-emotional development can be given the foundation of Islamic values through KBC. Thus, compassion in KBC can be seen as a form of contextualization of SEL into the paradigm of Islamic education, rather than as a concept that stands separate from academic and religious learning.

The findings on the importance of teacher role models also have a strong theoretical foundation. Teachers in this study not only function as curriculum implementers, but also become living models of the values to be instilled. When teachers communicate politely, provide opportunities for students to speak, help students who are struggling, and resolve conflicts through dialogue, learners gain firsthand experience of how compassion is practiced. This phenomenon can be explained through Bandura's social learning theory, that social behavior can be studied through observation of behavioral models and consequences. In the context of KBC, teachers are a very dominant model because the intensity of teacher-student interaction at the MI level is relatively high. Therefore, the incompatibility between the curriculum message and the teacher's behavior will result in a contradictory hidden curriculum. Conversely, consistency between the values said and the behavior shown will strengthen the internalization process. These findings also strengthen the study on teacher training in the implementation of KBC which places teachers' pedagogical, affective, and implementive competencies as important factors in realizing humanist and compassionate learning.

From this perspective, the success of compassion integration is not primarily determined by the existence of KBC documents, but by the teacher's capacity to translate abstract values into everyday pedagogical decisions. This explains why the value of compassion is more visible in interaction and habituation than in structured curriculum indicators. Love values are relatively easy to write into visions, goals, or teaching tools, but they are much more complex when they have to be translated into learning questions, classroom management strategies, feedback patterns, how to handle student mistakes, or conflict resolution mechanisms. Mukaromah et al.'s (2025) research on the problem of implementing KBC in MI also shows that the implementation of KBC faces practical challenges that cannot be solved only through changes in curriculum documents. Therefore, the results of this study

support the argument that the main problem of KBC lies in the translation gap, which is the gap between the ideal curriculum paradigm and the pedagogical practice that occurs in the classroom.

The findings on habituation also suggest that compassion develops through repetitive, social, and contextual processes. Children of MI age have not fully developed the ability to moral abstraction like students at higher education levels. Therefore, values such as care and empathy are easier to understand when embodied in concrete actions: helping friends, sharing, apologizing, respecting differences, caring for the environment, and resolving conflicts nonviolently. In the perspective of character education, the process shows that character formation requires continuity between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Learners don't know enough that helping a friend is a good deed; They need to have emotional care and get the opportunity to actually perform the action. Thus, the results of this study explain why habituation is one of the dominant mechanisms in the implementation of KBC: habituation provides behavioral repetition that allows values to move from the cognitive level to the dispositional level.

However, the findings of the study also show important problems in the assessment aspect. The integration of compassion has been seen in practice, but its assessment indicators have not been fully structured. This condition shows an imbalance between curriculum intention, pedagogical enactment, and assessment system. The curriculum can state that students must have compassion and care, teachers can practice this through learning, but if the assessment system is only oriented towards academic results, then the value of compassion remains in a peripheral position. This finding becomes even more relevant when it is associated with KBC studies that still emphasize a lot of concepts and initial implementation. The Nugraha et al. (2025) study, for example, mapped the strategies, challenges, and impacts of KBC through a literature study, while this study shows the need to go further by building behavioral evaluation mechanisms that allow the internalization of values to be observed systematically. Scientifically, this means that the development of KBC requires the operationalization of the compassionate construct, not just the philosophical elaboration of love.

The limitations of the assessment also explain why the results of the study cannot be interpreted simply as evidence that KBC "succeeds in improving" students' compassion. The qualitative design of case studies is more appropriately used to show the mechanisms, forms, contexts, and processes of internalization, rather than to claim causal relationships or quantitative improvements. This is an important difference from SEL intervention studies that measure the effects of programs on specific outcomes. A meta-analysis by Ha et al. (2025), for example, analyzed 40 empirical studies on SEL programs at grades 1–12 and specifically examined the relationship between programs and academic achievement. This research is in a different position: the focus is not on testing the effects of KBC experimentally, but on understanding how the paradigm of love works in the context of madrasahs. These methodological differences actually make complementary contributions. Quantitative studies can answer whether an intervention produces change, while it helps explain why and through what processes those changes may occur.

The findings on supporting factors and obstacles further strengthen that KBC must be understood as a transformation of the madrasah ecosystem. The example of teachers, the support of the madrasah head, the school culture, habituation, and the involvement of all madrasah residents show that the value of compassion cannot be instilled effectively if it is only imposed on the classroom teacher. This is in line with the findings of research on KBC teacher training which emphasizes the importance of improving teacher competence so that the value of love can be translated into learning practices. The difference is that this study shows that individual teacher competencies are not enough. Teachers who understand KBC still face limitations if the institutional culture is not supportive, the learning time is too oriented towards the completion of the material, or the assessment system does not provide room for character development. Thus, the implementation of compassion is multilevel: at the individual level of teachers, classroom interactions, madrasah organizations, families, and social environments.

Conceptually, the results of this study produce the implication that compassion can be positioned as a "bridging value" in holistic education. This value connects the spiritual dimension with the social,

the moral dimension with the emotional, and academic learning with real life. Love for God, for example, does not stop at vertical relationships, but translates into concern for people and the environment. Similarly, academic learning can acquire a moral dimension when knowledge is used to understand the needs of others and solve problems together. The position expands on the findings of previous KBC research that tended to place love as a common paradigm. This research shows that the paradigm requires operational value that can bridge concepts with actions, and compassion is one of the most potential constructs to perform this function.

4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that compassion is not enough to be positioned as an additional value in the curriculum, but needs to be placed as a pedagogical principle that connects the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, and moral dimensions of learners. The integration takes place mainly through teacher examples, humanistic learning interactions, collaborative activities, habituation, and madrasah culture that supports concern and appreciation for others. In synthesis, this study found that the meaning of the Love-Based Curriculum is highly determined by the ability of madrasahs to translate the concept of love into a concrete and consistent educational experience. The scientific contribution of the research lies in the placement of compassion as a bridging value that operationalizes the paradigm of love within the framework of holistic education. However, this study has limitations because it uses a qualitative case study approach so that the findings are greatly influenced by the context of the madrasah being studied and cannot be used to make statistical generalizations. In addition, the internalization of compassion has not been measured with standardized quantitative instruments, so that changes in student behavior are more widely understood through narratives, observations, and contextual interpretation. These limitations show that the results of the study are more appropriately understood as an explanation of the mechanism and context of compassion integration, rather than as evidence of a causal relationship between KBC and the improvement of students' character.

Further research is suggested to develop a more operational model of compassion integration in KBC, especially through the preparation of compassionate competency indicators that include empathy, concern, respect for differences, prosocial behavior, self-control, and the ability to resolve conflicts constructively. The model needs to be tested on several MIs with different regional characteristics, institutional status, and social backgrounds through a mixed methods approach or longitudinal design, so that it can be known not only how the internalization process takes place, but also how the development of compassionate characters changes over time. Subsequent research also needs to involve the perspective of parents and the social environment because character formation does not take place entirely within the madrasah. In addition, the development of authentic assessment instruments based on behavioral observation, self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment is important so that the internalization of love values can be evaluated more objectively. Thus, the future research agenda does not stop at proving that KBC is relevant to holistic education, but moves towards the development of models, instruments, and empirical evidence that allow the value of compassion to be applied, measured, and replicated contextually in Islamic basic education.

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