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Integrating a Love-Based Curriculum into Islamic Religious Education for Character Development in the Digital Era: An Integrative Literature Review

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Abstract: This study examines the integration of a Love-Based Curriculum into Islamic Religious Education as a framework for strengthening student character in the digital era. Employing an integrative literature review design, the study synthesized scholarly articles, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, and educational policy documents published between 2010 and 2026. Relevant literature was systematically collected from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, DOAJ, Google Scholar, Garuda, and SINTA and analyzed through thematic synthesis involving open coding, axial coding, categorization, and conceptual interpretation. The findings indicate that *mahabbah* (love), *rahmah* (compassion), and *amanah* (trustworthiness) function not only as moral outcomes but also as pedagogical mechanisms that facilitate character formation through caring educational relationships, reflective learning, ethical guidance, and value internalization. The literature further suggests that deep learning, digital ethics, and collaboration among schools, families, and communities strengthen students' moral resilience and responsible participation in digitally mediated environments. The originality of this study lies in integrating pedagogical love, Islamic educational philosophy, deep learning, and digital ethics into a unified conceptual framework for character development. This study contributes to contemporary Islamic education by offering a humanistic and spiritually grounded model that balances intellectual competence, ethical responsibility, emotional maturity, and moral resilience in response to the challenges of digital transformation.

***Abstrak**: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji integrasi Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam sebagai kerangka penguatan karakter peserta didik di era digital. Penelitian menggunakan desain integrative literature review dengan mensintesis artikel ilmiah, buku, bab buku, prosiding konferensi, dan dokumen kebijakan pendidikan yang diterbitkan pada periode 2010–2026. Literatur yang relevan dikumpulkan secara sistematis melalui basis data Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, DOAJ, Google Scholar, Garuda, dan SINTA, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan sintesis tematik melalui tahapan open coding, axial coding, kategorisasi, dan interpretasi konseptual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai mahabbah (cinta), rahmah (kasih sayang), dan amanah (tanggung jawab) tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai tujuan moral, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme pedagogis yang membentuk karakter melalui hubungan pendidikan yang penuh kepedulian, pembelajaran reflektif, bimbingan etis, dan internalisasi nilai. Literatur juga menunjukkan bahwa deep learning, etika digital, serta kolaborasi sekolah, keluarga, dan masyarakat berkontribusi dalam memperkuat ketahanan moral dan partisipasi digital yang bertanggung jawab. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi konsep pedagogical love, filsafat pendidikan Islam, deep learning, dan etika digital dalam satu kerangka konseptual pengembangan karakter. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan pendidikan Islam yang lebih humanis dan berlandaskan spiritualitas dengan menyeimbangkan kompetensi intelektual, tanggung jawab etis, kematangan emosional, dan ketahanan moral dalam menghadapi tantangan transformasi digital.*

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed educational practices, communication patterns, and students' social interactions worldwide. Although digitalization has created unprecedented learning opportunities, it has also intensified concerns regarding cyberbullying, misinformation, intolerance, declining empathy, and weakened moral responsibility among young people (Revalina, Moeis, & Indrawadi, 2023; Subandi et al., 2025). These developments suggest that contemporary education faces not only academic challenges but also a crisis of character, requiring more comprehensive, human-centred educational responses. Consequently, character education has regained strategic importance as a means of cultivating morally responsible, socially sensitive, and spiritually grounded individuals capable of navigating the complexities of the twenty-first century (Taufik, 2020; Syarnubi et al., 2021).

Within Islamic educational contexts, Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam [PAI]*) is expected to play a central role in fostering students' moral character and spiritual awareness. However, scholars have frequently criticised conventional Islamic Religious Education for emphasising doctrinal transmission, memorisation, and cognitive achievement while paying comparatively limited attention to affective and spiritual development (Masykuri, Qodriyah, & BZ, 2020). As a result, students may acquire religious knowledge without consistently translating Islamic values into everyday behaviour. Similar concerns have been identified in broader educational scholarship, which highlights the limitations of educational models that prioritise academic performance while neglecting empathy, compassion, care, and moral responsibility (Gill & Thomson, 2020; Slote, 2010). These concerns indicate the need for educational approaches that integrate intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions of learning.

Recent educational scholarship increasingly emphasises the importance of pedagogical love, care ethics, and humanistic education as foundations for meaningful learning. Pedagogical love promotes learning environments characterised by empathy, emotional safety, mutual respect, and caring teacher–student relationships (Loreman, 2011). Likewise, care ethics scholars argue that education should prioritise relational engagement and human flourishing rather than merely academic attainment (Rabin, 2011; Rabin, 2014; Velasquez et al., 2013). Empirical studies further suggest that caring educational relationships contribute to students' emotional well-being, moral development, motivation, and identity formation (Díaz-Megolla & Falcon, 2025; Nemet, Zec, & Krstić, 2022; Zembylas, 2017).

These perspectives resonate strongly with Islamic educational values, particularly *mahabbah* (love), *rahmah* (compassion), and *amanah* (trustworthiness), which constitute essential foundations of Islamic morality. Within this framework, the emergence of the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*) represents an effort to reposition compassion, empathy, and

meaningful human relationships at the centre of educational practice. Rather than viewing education primarily as a process of discipline enforcement and information transmission, the Love-Based Curriculum promotes restorative and humanising learning environments that support students' holistic development (Burhanudin, 2025; Fatiroh & Sukhoiri, 2026; Murtadho, Zainuri, & Yasir, 2026). This transformation also redefines teachers as *murabbi* and *muaddib* who nurture intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth through role modelling, dialogue, and ethical guidance (Masitoh, Erhamwilda, & Suhardini, 2025). Studies on caring pedagogy similarly demonstrate that teacher–student relationships significantly influence character formation, ethical awareness, and social responsibility (Rattray & Tang, 2026; Rabin & Smith, 2013; Syafi'i & Noviani, 2026).

The relevance of this educational framework becomes increasingly significant in the digital era. Students are now immersed in environments shaped by social media, artificial intelligence, algorithm-driven information flows, and global cultural influences. While these developments offer educational benefits, they also pose ethical challenges related to misinformation, digital anonymity, online intolerance, and weakened moral accountability (Putra et al., 2026; Syafri & Budin, 2025). Consequently, Islamic education must develop approaches that integrate character education with digital literacy and ethical responsibility. Recent studies suggest that moral resilience, ethical reflection, and responsible digital citizenship are essential competencies for contemporary learners (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Ismail, Parinduri, & Ibarra, 2025; Zuhri et al., 2026).

In response to these challenges, scholars increasingly advocate deep learning approaches that emphasise critical reflection, meaningful understanding, contextual application of knowledge, and lifelong learning competencies. Within Islamic education, deep learning encourages students to move beyond memorisation toward reflective engagement with religious values and moral principles (Rosadah et al., 2025). This perspective aligns with holistic educational frameworks that integrate cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions of development (Khimmataliev et al., 2025; Shaleh et al., 2024; Subiyantoro, Rohmadani, & Achadi, 2026). Accordingly, integrating a Love-Based Curriculum with deep learning offers a promising framework for strengthening student character while addressing the intellectual and ethical demands of contemporary education.

Despite growing scholarship on Love-Based Curriculum, character education, humanistic pedagogy, and deep learning, the literature remains fragmented. Existing studies primarily focus on specific implementations of Love-Based Curriculum (Burhanudin, 2025; Murtadho et al., 2026), deep learning approaches (Faroqi, Tauhid, & Khoiri, 2025; Rosadah et al., 2025), or character education independently (Subandi et al., 2025; Syarnubi et al., 2021). Limited attention has been devoted to systematically synthesising how a Love-Based Curriculum can be integrated into Islamic Religious Education to strengthen character development within the context of digital transformation. Furthermore, few studies connect Islamic concepts such as *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* with broader international discussions concerning pedagogical love, care ethics, humanistic education, and digital-age character formation.

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps through an integrative literature review of the Love-Based Curriculum within Islamic Religious Education.

Specifically, it aims to: (1) examine the conceptual foundations of the Love-Based Curriculum; (2) analyse how *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* contribute to character development; and (3) explore opportunities and challenges associated with implementing this framework in digital educational environments. By integrating Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary discussions on pedagogical love, deep learning, and digital ethics, this study contributes to developing a more humanistic, spiritually grounded, and contextually relevant model of Islamic education for the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed an integrative literature review design to systematically synthesize and critically evaluate scholarly knowledge on integrating a Love-Based Curriculum into Islamic Religious Education for character development in the digital era. This approach was selected because it accommodates diverse forms of evidence, including empirical studies, theoretical articles, conceptual papers, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, and educational policy documents, thereby enabling a comprehensive examination of complex educational concepts such as pedagogical love, character education, Islamic pedagogy, deep learning, and digital ethics (Gill & Thomson, 2020; Mortari, 2025).

The literature search was conducted between January and March 2026 using Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, DOAJ, Google Scholar, Garuda, SINTA, Dimensions, and Crossref. These databases were selected because they provide extensive coverage of educational, Islamic studies, and social science publications. The search employed combinations of keywords and Boolean operators, including "Love-Based Curriculum," "Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta," "Pedagogical Love," "Compassion-Based Education," "Ethics of Care," "Islamic Religious Education," "Islamic Pedagogy," "Character Education," "Mahabbah," "Rahmah," "Amanah," "Deep Learning," "Digital Ethics," and "Digital Literacy." Reference lists of highly relevant publications were also manually examined to identify additional influential sources. To ensure quality and relevance, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established (Table 1).

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Year	2010–2026	Published before 2010
Language	English and Indonesian	Languages other than English and Indonesian
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, educational policy documents	Non-academic writings, blogs, opinion articles, unpublished manuscripts
Research Topic	Love-Based Curriculum, Pedagogical Love, Islamic Religious Education, Character Education, Humanistic Education, Deep Learning, Digital Ethics	Studies unrelated to education, character development, or Islamic education
Academic Quality	Publications with clear theoretical or methodological foundations	Publications lacking methodological or conceptual clarity
Accessibility	Full-text accessible publications	Publications without accessible full texts

The literature selection process consisted of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The initial search yielded 247 publications. After duplicate removal, 208 records remained for title and abstract screening. A total of 129 publications were excluded because they did not address the study themes. Subsequently, 79 full-text publications were assessed for eligibility, resulting in the exclusion of 34 studies due to limited relevance or insufficient methodological and conceptual information. Forty-five studies were retained as the core dataset. To strengthen the theoretical foundation, 13 seminal publications on pedagogical love, care ethics, and humanistic education were identified through manual searching, producing a final corpus of 58 sources.

Table 2. Literature Selection Process

Stage	Number of Sources
Records identified through database searching	247
Records after duplicate removal	208
Records excluded after title and abstract screening	129
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	79
Full-text articles excluded	34
Core studies included in analysis	45
Additional seminal references identified manually	13
Total sources analyzed	**58**

Data were analyzed using thematic synthesis involving four stages: open coding, axial coding, thematic categorization, and conceptual synthesis. Open coding identified recurring concepts such as pedagogical love, *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, *amanah*, care ethics, teacher as *murabbi*, deep learning, digital ethics, digital literacy, and moral resilience. Axial coding grouped related concepts into broader analytical categories, while thematic categorization generated six major themes: (1) conceptual foundations of the Love-Based Curriculum; (2) pedagogical love and humanistic Islamic education; (3) teacher roles in character formation; (4) deep learning and value internalization; (5) character development in the digital era; and (6) implementation challenges and opportunities. Finally, conceptual synthesis integrated findings across themes to develop a framework explaining how *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* contribute to character development through Islamic Religious Education.

To enhance trustworthiness, source triangulation was employed by comparing theoretical, empirical, and policy-oriented literature from diverse educational contexts (Afriyanto & Khoiri, 2024; Saadah, Prasetiyo, & Rahmayati, 2022). Analytical rigor was further strengthened by integrating international scholarship on pedagogical love and care ethics (Díaz-Megolla & Falcon, 2025; Loreman, 2011; Pessi, 2026; Rabin & Smith, 2013; Slote, 2010; Velasquez et al., 2013) with contemporary studies on Islamic education, digital pedagogy, and character development (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Khimmataliev et al., 2025; Shaleh et al., 2024; Subiyantoro et al., 2026).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Foundations of the Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education

The reviewed literature indicates that the Love-Based Curriculum represents a significant pedagogical shift within Islamic Religious Education by repositioning compassion, empathy, and human relationships as central elements of learning. Rather than functioning solely as a mechanism for transmitting religious knowledge, Islamic Religious Education is reconceptualized as a holistic process that integrates cognitive, affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions of character development (Suratin & Munawarsyah, 2025). Across the reviewed studies, this curriculum is consistently grounded in the Islamic values of *mahabbah* (love), *rahmah* (compassion), and *amanah* (trustworthiness), which serve as ethical foundations for nurturing personal and social responsibility (Murtadho, Zainuri, & Yasir, 2026).

The emergence of the Love-Based Curriculum is closely linked to critiques of conventional educational approaches that prioritize cognitive achievement and doctrinal mastery while providing limited opportunities for affective engagement and value internalization (Masykuri, Qodriyah, & BZ, 2020). Several studies suggest that students may acquire substantial religious knowledge without developing corresponding moral behaviors when learning is dominated by memorization and examination-oriented practices (Fatiroh & Sukhoiri, 2026; Faradhita et al., 2025). Consequently, the Love-Based Curriculum seeks to bridge the gap between religious understanding and ethical action by embedding compassion-based values within learning experiences, teacher–student relationships, and school culture.

The literature further reveals strong conceptual connections between the Love-Based Curriculum and international discussions on pedagogical love, care ethics, and humanistic education. Educational theorists argue that meaningful learning emerges when students experience emotional safety, empathy, mutual respect, and caring relationships within educational environments (Loreman, 2011; Rabin, 2011). Likewise, caring pedagogies have been shown to enhance motivation, well-being, social awareness, and moral development (Rabin & Smith, 2013; Velasquez et al., 2013). Recent reviews also indicate that compassion-centered educational environments support personal growth and strengthen students' capacity for ethical decision-making (Díaz-Megolla & Falcon, 2025).

The reviewed studies also highlight the growing relevance of compassion-based education in response to contemporary challenges arising from digital transformation. Growing exposure to social media, misinformation, digital anonymity, and polarized online interactions has intensified the need for educational approaches that cultivate empathy, ethical awareness, and moral resilience (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Putra et al., 2026; Syafri & Budin, 2025). Within this context, the Love-Based Curriculum offers a framework that integrates Islamic values with contemporary educational demands while maintaining a strong commitment to character formation.

These findings suggest that the Love-Based Curriculum should be understood not merely as an instructional innovation but as a broader educational paradigm that redefines the purpose of Islamic Religious Education. Whereas conventional

approaches often emphasize the transmission of religious doctrines, this framework prioritizes character formation through relational, affective, and value-based learning experiences. Learning is therefore viewed as a process of holistic human development in which intellectual growth is inseparable from emotional maturity and spiritual awareness.

From a theoretical perspective, this framework aligns closely with pedagogical love and care ethics. Zembylas (2017) conceptualizes love as an ethical and relational educational practice that promotes human flourishing and social responsibility, while Slote (2010) argues that moral development is fundamentally shaped through experiences of care, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. These perspectives support the view that compassion functions not only as an educational objective but also as a pedagogical mechanism through which values are internalized and translated into behavior.

The convergence between Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary humanistic pedagogy is particularly evident in their shared emphasis on empathy, relationality, and moral responsibility. The values of *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* closely align with discussions of care ethics, virtue development, and human-centred education (Gill & Thomson, 2020; Mortari, 2025). Consequently, the Love-Based Curriculum may be interpreted as a model that integrates Islamic ethical traditions with broader developments in character education and humanistic learning.

Its relevance becomes increasingly significant within digitally mediated educational environments characterized by fragmented social relationships, information overload, and algorithm-driven interactions. The literature suggests that educational approaches grounded in compassion and meaningful human relationships can strengthen students' moral resilience, reflective judgment, and ethical responsibility (Subandi et al., 2025; Zuhri et al., 2026). However, compassion alone is insufficient. The effectiveness of a Love-Based Curriculum depends upon its integration with supportive educational structures, pedagogical practices, and institutional commitments to character development.

Therefore, the principal contribution of the Love-Based Curriculum lies not only in fostering positive interpersonal relationships but also in providing a coherent philosophical foundation for reconstructing Islamic Religious Education as a holistic, humanistic, and contextually responsive educational project. By integrating cognitive, affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions, this framework offers a promising pathway for strengthening student character while addressing the ethical challenges of the digital era.

Mahabbah, *Rahmah*, and *Amanah* as Core Values of Character Formation

The reviewed literature consistently identifies *mahabbah* (love), *rahmah* (compassion), and *amanah* (trustworthiness) as the foundational values underpinning the Love-Based Curriculum and its character formation objectives. Rather than functioning solely as theological concepts, these values operate as educational principles that shape learning environments, teacher–student relationships, and students' moral development. The literature suggests that *mahabbah* provides the affective foundation for positive educational relationships, *rahmah* promotes empathy and social sensitivity, and *amanah* establishes

responsibility, integrity, and accountability as core moral dispositions (Cahyati et al., 2025; Fatiroh & Sukhoiri, 2026; Sukmayeti et al., 2026).

The reviewed studies further indicate that character formation becomes more effective when these values are embedded in daily educational practices rather than taught as abstract religious doctrines. Value internalization is facilitated through habituation, role modelling, reflective learning, and meaningful social interaction, enabling students to transform moral knowledge into ethical behaviour (Agustin et al., 2023; Mukhlasin et al., 2025). Consequently, *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* function as interconnected values that strengthen emotional intelligence, ethical awareness, and social responsibility.

The literature also demonstrates strong conceptual parallels between these Islamic values and contemporary discussions on pedagogical love, care ethics, and virtue education. Educational scholars argue that moral development is nurtured through caring relationships, empathy, and the habitual practice of virtues within supportive learning environments (Doukas et al., 2022; Mortari, 2025; Pessi, 2026; Slote, 2010). In this regard, *mahabbah* aligns closely with pedagogical love, *rahmah* reflects compassion-centred ethics, and *amanah* corresponds to notions of integrity and moral responsibility emphasised in contemporary character education.

Several studies further suggest that compassion-based educational approaches promote prosocial behaviour, tolerance, cooperation, and ethical citizenship within diverse communities (Nemet, Zec, & Krstić, 2022; Tan & Muangasame, 2025). These outcomes are particularly relevant to Islamic education, which seeks to balance personal piety with social engagement. Accordingly, *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* extend beyond individual morality and contribute to the development of socially responsible and ethically engaged citizens.

The significance of these values becomes increasingly evident in digital environments. As students navigate social media, online communities, and digitally mediated communication, compassion, empathy, and trustworthiness serve as important ethical filters that help address misinformation, cyberbullying, online hostility, and declining moral accountability (Putra et al., 2026; Subandi et al., 2025). Thus, these values provide an ethical foundation for responsible digital citizenship and moral resilience.

The findings suggest that *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* should be understood not merely as educational outcomes but as pedagogical mechanisms through which character is formed and sustained. From the perspective of pedagogical love, *mahabbah* creates conditions of acceptance, emotional safety, and authentic care that facilitate value internalization and ethical growth (Loreman, 2011; Vanderheiden, Mayer, & Barcelos, 2025). Likewise, *rahmah* functions as a practical expression of compassion-centred education, promoting empathy, social cohesion, and ethical responsiveness in increasingly diverse and digitally connected societies (Gill & Thomson, 2020; Pessi, 2026). Meanwhile, *amanah* reinforces responsibility and integrity, particularly in contexts requiring ethical decision-making regarding information sharing, communication, and digital participation (Doukas et al., 2022; Mortari, 2025).

The interaction among these values reflects a holistic understanding of character formation that integrates affective, ethical, and behavioural dimensions.

Rather than reducing character education to the transmission of moral rules, this framework emphasises the cultivation of dispositions that shape how students think, feel, and act in complex social environments. Such an approach aligns with both Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary theories of virtue development, which view character as emerging through the interaction of values, habits, relationships, and lived experiences (Franzi & de Araújo, 2019; Mortari, 2025).

Therefore, the literature suggests that *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* provide a comprehensive ethical framework for strengthening character development, social responsibility, and moral resilience. Their integration into Islamic Religious Education offers a pathway for nurturing learners who are not only knowledgeable about religious teachings but also capable of translating Islamic values into responsible and compassionate action in contemporary society.

Teacher as *Murabbi*: Moral Modelling and Affective Guidance

The reviewed literature consistently identifies teachers as a central factor in the successful implementation of a Love-Based Curriculum. Within Islamic educational philosophy, teachers are not merely instructors but *murabbi* who nurture learners holistically by integrating intellectual development, ethical cultivation, and spiritual growth (Masitoh, Erhamwilda, & Suhardini, 2025; Widodo & Hadi, 2025). This perspective expands the educational role beyond knowledge transmission to include moral guidance, emotional support, character formation, and spiritual mentoring.

The literature indicates that effective character development is strongly influenced by the quality of teacher–student relationships. Students are more likely to internalize moral values when learning environments are characterized by trust, empathy, respect, and emotional safety (Farhani et al., 2025; Toron et al., 2026). Rather than relying solely on direct moral instruction, teachers contribute to character formation through daily interactions, affective engagement, and personal example. Consequently, role modelling emerges as one of the most frequently identified mechanisms through which values such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, patience, and respect are transmitted and internalized.

Several studies further demonstrate that educators functioning as *murabbi* serve as living representations of Islamic values. Students frequently develop ethical awareness by observing how teachers communicate, resolve conflicts, demonstrate fairness, and respond to social challenges (Suwahyu, 2024; Warsito & Sunhaji, 2026). These findings suggest that moral values become more meaningful when embodied through authentic educational practice rather than presented solely as abstract concepts.

The reviewed scholarship also reveals strong connections between the concept of *murabbi* and international discussions on caring pedagogy, relational education, and pedagogical love. Research consistently shows that supportive teacher–student relationships contribute positively to students' emotional well-being, academic engagement, social development, and moral growth (Rabin, 2011; Velasquez et al., 2013). Similarly, pedagogical love emphasizes that empathy, care, and genuine concern create conditions that facilitate meaningful learning and character formation (Díaz-Megolla & Falcon, 2025; Loreman, 2011). These

perspectives indicate substantial conceptual overlap between Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary humanistic approaches to education.

The importance of affective guidance becomes increasingly evident in digitally mediated educational environments. Students today encounter ethical challenges associated with social media, misinformation, digital anonymity, online hostility, and algorithm-driven communication. Several studies suggest that teachers who facilitate reflection, dialogue, and ethical reasoning help students develop moral resilience and responsible digital behavior (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Syafri & Budin, 2025). Consequently, the role of educators extends beyond teaching digital literacy skills to guiding students in evaluating information critically and participating ethically in digital spaces.

The findings suggest that affective guidance functions as a bridge between moral knowledge and moral action. Students may understand ethical principles conceptually, yet such understanding does not automatically translate into behavior. Through empathy, mentoring, encouragement, and reflective dialogue, teachers help students connect moral principles with real-life experiences and ethical decision-making. This interpretation aligns with care ethics scholarship, which emphasizes that moral development is shaped through relational experiences rather than abstract instruction alone (Pessi, 2026; Slote, 2010).

The literature further indicates that the effectiveness of teachers as *murabbi* depends on institutional support, professional competence, and school culture. Educators may struggle to perform this role effectively when educational systems prioritize standardized assessment and cognitive achievement while marginalizing affective and moral dimensions of learning. Therefore, the successful implementation of a Love-Based Curriculum requires not only individual teacher commitment but also organizational structures that support character education as a core educational objective (Gill & Thomson, 2020; Rattray & Tang, 2026).

Overall, the reviewed literature positions teachers at the centre of the Love-Based Curriculum. Their significance lies not merely in delivering educational content but in creating relational environments where values are embodied, practiced, and internalized. By functioning as *murabbi*, educators facilitate the development of learners who integrate intellectual competence with empathy, moral responsibility, and spiritual awareness. Such a role is increasingly important in educational contexts where character formation must respond simultaneously to technological advancement, social diversity, and growing ethical complexity.

Deep Learning and Digital Ethics in Islamic Character Education

The reviewed literature indicates that deep learning has emerged as an important approach within Islamic Religious Education for moving beyond memorization-oriented instruction toward meaningful and transformative learning. In this context, deep learning refers to an educational process that promotes critical thinking, reflective understanding, contextual application of knowledge, and value internalization through meaningful learning experiences rather than merely acquiring information (Aliyah, Norlianti, & Mukmin, 2025; Faroqi, Tauhid, & Khoiri, 2025; Rosadah et al., 2025). Within Islamic Religious Education, this approach encourages students to engage with religious teachings as ethical principles that guide personal conduct and social interaction.

The literature suggests that deep learning contributes to character formation by helping students connect religious knowledge with contemporary realities. Through reflective learning, ethical dialogue, and contextual problem-solving, students are encouraged to examine moral dilemmas, evaluate consequences, and develop judgments grounded in Islamic values (Aliyah et al., 2025; Dzulfiqar, 2025). Rather than promoting passive acceptance of information, deep learning facilitates active engagement with values such as honesty, responsibility, justice, and compassion, thereby supporting the transition from moral knowledge to ethical action.

The reviewed studies also highlight the increasing importance of digital ethics within contemporary character education. As students spend more time in digitally mediated environments, educational institutions face challenges related to misinformation, cyberbullying, hate speech, digital addiction, online intolerance, and declining moral accountability (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Putra et al., 2026). Consequently, character education can no longer be confined to physical classrooms but must address ethical behaviour in online interactions. Several studies suggest that integrating digital literacy with character education can strengthen responsible digital citizenship, critical information evaluation, and ethical decision-making (Ismail, Parinduri, & Ibarra, 2025; Syafri & Budin, 2025).

The relationship between deep learning and digital ethics is particularly significant in Islamic educational contexts. Reflective learning activities, collaborative inquiry, ethical dialogue, and value-based problem solving provide opportunities for students to navigate digital environments while maintaining moral and spiritual commitments (Khimmataliev et al., 2025; Shaleh et al., 2024). Through these processes, digital literacy evolves beyond technical competence and becomes an ethical capacity that enables students to evaluate information responsibly, communicate respectfully, and participate constructively in online communities.

The findings suggest that deep learning and digital ethics should be understood as complementary dimensions of contemporary Islamic character education. Deep learning provides the cognitive framework necessary for critical reflection and value internalization, whereas digital ethics offers the moral framework required for responsible participation in technology-mediated environments. Together, they support the development of learners who can integrate intellectual competence with ethical responsibility.

From a theoretical perspective, the reviewed literature indicates that character formation is strengthened when students critically engage with religious teachings, relate them to lived experiences, and reflect on their practical implications. This finding aligns with humanistic educational perspectives that emphasize meaningful learning, personal growth, and reflective engagement as central components of educational development (Gill & Thomson, 2020; Khimmataliev et al., 2025). Character therefore emerges not through passive transmission of moral rules but through active processes of ethical reflection and value construction.

The literature further highlights that Islamic values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *rahmah* (compassion), and justice provide relevant ethical foundations for addressing contemporary digital challenges. Students increasingly

encounter algorithm-driven information environments, rapid communication networks, and growing social polarization, all of which require capacities for information verification, empathy, self-regulation, and ethical judgment (Putra et al., 2026; Subandi et al., 2025; Zuhri et al., 2026). These findings suggest that digital ethics has become an indispensable component of Islamic character education.

Importantly, the reviewed studies do not support the assumption that technological innovation alone can strengthen character development. Rather, technology appears most beneficial when integrated within educational environments characterized by strong pedagogical relationships, reflective learning, and clear ethical orientations (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Chee, 2025; Subiyantoro, Rohmadani, & Achadi, 2026). Similarly, the literature provides limited evidence that artificial intelligence directly contributes to character formation. Instead, character development continues to depend primarily on the quality of educational relationships, ethical dialogue, value-based guidance, and reflective learning processes. Consequently, technological innovations should be viewed as complementary tools that support, rather than replace, human-centered educational practices.

Overall, the integration of deep learning and digital ethics offers a promising framework for strengthening character education in the digital era. By combining reflective learning, ethical reasoning, digital literacy, and Islamic values, this approach may contribute to the development of learners who are intellectually competent, morally responsible, and capable of navigating complex digital environments with integrity and spiritual awareness. Such integration reflects the broader objectives of the Love-Based Curriculum, which seeks to harmonize cognitive development, character formation, and human flourishing within contemporary Islamic educational settings.

Implementation Challenges: Teacher Competence, Assessment, and Infrastructure

The reviewed literature indicates that although the Love-Based Curriculum offers considerable potential for strengthening student character, its implementation faces several structural and pedagogical challenges. Across the analyzed studies, three issues consistently emerge as critical barriers: teacher competence, assessment practices, and educational infrastructure (Haikal, Ginting, & Styawan, 2025; Warsito & Sunhaji, 2026). These factors significantly influence the extent to which compassion-based educational principles can be translated into meaningful classroom practices and sustainable institutional cultures.

Teacher competence is identified as one of the most decisive factors in successful implementation. Many educators remain accustomed to teacher-centered approaches that prioritize content delivery and cognitive achievement, making it challenging to adopt pedagogical models emphasizing empathy, dialogue, reflection, and affective guidance (Suwahyu, 2024; Widodo & Hadi, 2025). Furthermore, the increasing integration of digital technologies requires teachers to possess not only pedagogical and subject-matter expertise but also digital literacy competencies that support ethical and character-oriented learning. The literature suggests that limitations in technological competence may reduce educators' capacity to integrate compassion-based values effectively within digitally mediated learning environments (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Putri et al., 2025).

A second challenge concerns assessment practices. The reviewed studies consistently note that educational evaluation systems remain heavily focused on measurable cognitive outcomes, while affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions receive comparatively limited attention (Toron et al., 2026). As a result, character development is often treated as a secondary educational outcome despite being a central objective of the Love-Based Curriculum. Several scholars therefore advocate authentic assessment approaches capable of capturing behavioural development, ethical awareness, empathy, responsibility, and social engagement more comprehensively (Abdillah et al., 2025; Syarnubi et al., 2021).

Infrastructure represents a further challenge, particularly in contexts where technological resources, internet connectivity, and institutional support remain limited. The literature indicates that inadequate digital infrastructure can hinder the implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches that combine reflective learning, digital literacy, and character education (Haikal et al., 2025; Mufid et al., 2026). These constraints are especially evident in rural and economically disadvantaged educational settings, where unequal access to technology may restrict opportunities for interactive and digitally supported learning.

The reviewed studies also highlight the importance of institutional readiness and policy alignment. Successful implementation requires coherence among curriculum goals, school leadership, teacher professional development, assessment systems, and organizational culture (Khimmataliev et al., 2025; Novita et al., 2026). Educational reforms frequently encounter difficulties when compassion-based values are promoted at the policy level but receive limited support through institutional structures and everyday educational practices. Consequently, character-oriented innovation requires systemic commitment rather than isolated classroom initiatives.

The findings suggest that implementing a Love-Based Curriculum should be understood as an organizational and systemic process rather than a purely pedagogical intervention. Its effectiveness depends on the capacity of educational institutions to create environments that support sustained value internalization. From this perspective, teachers serve as key mediators between curriculum ideals and educational practice. Effective implementation requires competencies extending beyond subject knowledge to include emotional intelligence, ethical sensitivity, reflective facilitation, and digital pedagogical skills (Chee, 2025; Rattray & Tang, 2026). Therefore, professional development programs should strengthen both technological competencies and educators' capacities for affective guidance and character-oriented instruction.

The literature further reveals tensions between contemporary accountability systems and the goals of character education. Standardized assessment frameworks often privilege academic achievement because such outcomes are easier to measure and compare. However, compassion, integrity, responsibility, empathy, and moral awareness are expressed through complex behaviours that conventional testing procedures cannot adequately capture. This observation aligns with broader discussions in character education scholarship advocating more holistic and authentic evaluation models that recognize moral and affective dimensions of learning (Doukas et al., 2022; Mortari, 2025).

Infrastructure-related challenges also highlight broader issues of educational equity. Although digital technologies may expand opportunities for reflective and personalized learning, their benefits remain unevenly distributed across educational contexts. The literature suggests that technological disparities may unintentionally reinforce educational inequalities when schools lack adequate resources to support innovative learning models (Mufid et al., 2026; Putra et al., 2026). Consequently, efforts to strengthen character education through digital integration should be accompanied by policies that promote equitable access to educational resources.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that successful implementation of a Love-Based Curriculum requires synergy among teacher competence, authentic assessment, adequate infrastructure, supportive leadership, and institutional commitment. Without such systemic support, compassion-based educational ideals may remain aspirational rather than becoming transformative practices capable of addressing the ethical and educational challenges of the digital era.

School–Family–Community Collaboration for Value Internalization

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that character formation cannot be achieved through classroom instruction alone. The internalization of values such as *mahabbah* (love), *rahmah* (compassion), and *amanah* (trustworthiness) is most effective when educational experiences are reinforced through continuous interactions across schools, families, and communities. Character development therefore emerges as a cumulative process shaped by multiple social environments rather than a product of formal education alone (Djazilan & Wuryandani, 2024; Syah et al., 2025).

Schools play a strategic role in establishing structured environments that promote value habituation through learning activities, institutional culture, extracurricular programs, and daily social interactions (Erlina et al., 2026; Toron et al., 2026). However, the literature also suggests that school-based initiatives often have limited impact when the values promoted in educational settings are not reinforced within students' homes and broader social environments. Consequently, effective character education requires continuity between formal learning and everyday life experiences.

Parental involvement emerges as a critical factor in this process. Parents function as primary agents of socialization who influence children's moral development through role modelling, emotional support, communication patterns, and value reinforcement (Syafri & Budin, 2025). Several studies indicate that students demonstrate stronger character development when educational messages communicated at school are supported by consistent family practices. Such consistency enables learners to perceive moral values as meaningful principles that guide daily behaviour rather than merely institutional expectations.

The literature further highlights the contribution of communities in sustaining character education. Religious organizations, community leaders, youth groups, and social institutions provide contexts in which students can practice empathy, cooperation, civic responsibility, and social engagement (Pierrakos et al., 2023; Tan & Muangasame, 2025). Likewise, extracurricular activities, community service programs, collaborative projects, and faith-based initiatives offer opportunities for

learners to translate ethical values into concrete actions while strengthening responsibility, leadership, and social commitment (Fatiroh & Sukhoiri, 2026; Irfani et al., 2025).

The importance of collaboration becomes even more evident within digitally connected societies. Students increasingly interact through online networks, social media platforms, and digital communities that extend beyond the direct supervision of schools and families. Consequently, the development of ethical digital behaviour requires coordinated efforts among educators, parents, and community stakeholders to ensure that values promoted in educational settings remain relevant and consistently reinforced across diverse social contexts (Putra et al., 2026; Subandi et al., 2025). Such collaboration may strengthen students' capacity to navigate misinformation, online hostility, and other ethical challenges associated with digital participation (Amirudin, Muzaki, & Nurhayati, 2026; Putra et al., 2026).

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of a Love-Based Curriculum depends substantially on the existence of interconnected educational ecosystems rather than isolated instructional interventions. This observation aligns with ecological perspectives on education, which emphasize that human development is shaped by interactions among multiple social environments. From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, such collaboration reflects the principle of *mas'uliyyah musytarakah* (collective responsibility), whereby schools, families, and communities share responsibility for nurturing moral and spiritual development.

The reviewed literature further indicates that family involvement functions as a bridge between educational ideals and everyday practice, while community engagement extends character education beyond personal morality toward social responsibility and civic participation (Gill & Thomson, 2020; Mortari, 2025; Pierrakos et al., 2023; Tan & Muangasame, 2025). Through repeated exposure to *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* across multiple social contexts, students are more likely to internalize these values and translate them into consistent patterns of behaviour.

Overall, the literature suggests that school–family–community collaboration serves as a crucial mechanism for sustaining the long-term impact of the Love-Based Curriculum. Character formation is most likely to occur when compassion-based values are reinforced through educational practices, family relationships, community engagement, and digital interactions. Therefore, the success of a Love-Based Curriculum should be assessed not only through classroom outcomes but also through its capacity to foster broader educational ecosystems that support the development of ethically responsible, socially engaged, and spiritually grounded individuals.

CONCLUSION

This study found that integrating a Love-Based Curriculum into Islamic Religious Education represents more than a pedagogical innovation; it constitutes a comprehensive framework for character development that integrates cognitive, affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions of learning. The literature synthesis indicates that *mahabbah* (love), *rahmah* (compassion), and *amanah* (trustworthiness) function not only as educational values but also as pedagogical

mechanisms through which character is internalized and sustained. The findings further suggest that character formation is strengthened through the interaction of caring teacher–student relationships, reflective learning processes, digital ethics education, and collaborative educational ecosystems involving schools, families, and communities. These findings reveal that relational and compassion-centered dimensions of Islamic Religious Education may have a greater influence on character development than previously assumed, challenging conventional approaches that primarily emphasize cognitive achievement and the transmission of religious knowledge. Consequently, this study opens new discussions regarding the role of pedagogical love as a foundation for holistic Islamic education in the digital era.

Academically, this study strengthens previous scholarship on Islamic character education, pedagogical love, care ethics, and humanistic learning by demonstrating their conceptual convergence within the framework of a Love-Based Curriculum. The findings support existing arguments concerning the importance of empathy, compassion, and ethical relationships in educational practice while extending these discussions into the context of Islamic Religious Education and digital-age learning. More importantly, this study introduces an integrative conceptual framework that connects *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, *amanah*, pedagogical love, deep learning, and digital ethics as mutually reinforcing dimensions of character formation. This framework contributes to contemporary debates on how Islamic education can remain responsive to technological transformation while preserving its humanistic and spiritual foundations.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. As an integrative literature review, the analysis is based entirely on previously published studies and does not include direct empirical investigation of Love-Based Curriculum implementation. In addition, the reviewed literature originates from diverse educational contexts, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should therefore conduct empirical studies in Islamic schools, madrasahs, and *pesantren* to examine how *mahabbah*, *rahmah*, and *amanah* are operationalized in educational practice and how they influence student character development. Comparative studies across educational levels, institutional contexts, and cultural settings are also recommended to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness, challenges, and sustainability of Love-Based Curriculum implementation. Furthermore, future research should explore the interaction among pedagogical love, digital citizenship, and emerging educational technologies to develop character education models that are both technologically responsive and ethically grounded.

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