



Implementing the Love-Based Curriculum in Humanistic Islamic Religious Education Learning at a State Islamic Senior High School in Blora

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Abstract:

Humanistic education places relational quality at the core of learning, yet how the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) is translated into everyday pedagogical decisions in madrasahs remains under-examined. This qualitative case study examined KBC implementation at a State Islamic Senior High School (MAN) in Blora, the conditions shaping it, and how it appears in students' learning experiences, drawing on curriculum enactment and teacher agency. Fourteen purposively selected participants took part: one deputy head for curriculum, three Islamic Religious Education teachers, and ten students. Data comprised one interview per participant, three observation sessions, and teaching modules, analysed with the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña framework and reflexive thematic analysis. Love values were translated into attention to students' conditions, open communication, appreciation, restorative discipline, and adaptive teaching. Only some of these practices were directly observed, because classroom observation was limited to one Akidah Akhlak session; the remainder were reported by informants, as were the institutional supports (policy, lesson-plan templates, religious culture, teacher development) and constraints (limited time, administrative workload, academic demands, uneven student readiness). Students generally described classroom interactions as safe and open, with variation across teachers, and comparisons with earlier experience were drawn only from informants who had spent time at the school before the study. KBC implementation emerges as a relational and contextual translation process shaped by teacher interpretation and institutional conditions rather than uniform procedure, and the findings offer a preliminary indication of a normative-religious anchor for the pedagogy of love. The study does not establish causality or academic effectiveness.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Contemporary education is no longer understood merely as the mastery of academic knowledge and skills, but also as an effort to foster students' well-being, agency, and social-emotional development (OECD, 2025). In this orientation, the quality of the relationship between educators and students is an important factor in learning engagement and the school experience (García-Rodríguez et al., 2023). International education policy has likewise begun to treat the strengthening of relational skills as part of teachers' professional competence (OECD, 2026). In Indonesian madrasahs, a similar direction is pursued through the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, KBC), which makes love the normative foundation of educational provision through the *Panca Cinta* (Five Loves) framework: love of Allah and His Messenger, love of knowledge, love of oneself and fellow human beings, love of the environment, and love of the homeland (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). The challenge of implementation arises when these normative values have to be turned into concrete pedagogical decisions, because teachers are expected to act on them in classroom interactions rather than merely understand them as philosophical ideas. In the Islamic education literature, this orientation relates to the term *tarbiyah*, which stresses nurturing and developing learners, and *ta'dib*, which stresses the cultivation of *adab* (proper conduct) (al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2004).

Love in the context of learning needs to be distinguished at two different but interrelated levels. At the normative-religious level, love in KBC derives from the teachings of Islam and is formulated doctrinally through the Five Loves. At the academic level, love is studied through the pedagogy of love and the ethics of care. The pedagogy of love regards the quality of relationships as an integral part of educational practice, whereas the ethics of care emphasises educators' concern and responsiveness to students' intellectual and emotional needs (Noddings, 2013; Chen & Shih, 2025). These two academic frameworks are not identical to the normative values of KBC. In this study they serve as reading tools for understanding how religious-normative values take pedagogical form in learning interactions (de Arriba Rivas & Ibáñez Ruiz del Portal, 2023). This choice is consistent with the humanistic education tradition, which regards warm relationships that respect students as a prerequisite for meaningful learning (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Empirical evidence from a meta-analysis shows that learner-centred teacher-student relationships are associated with positive affective and behavioural outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007). This classic finding is reinforced by a more recent systematic review of teacher-student attachment relationships (García-Rodríguez et al., 2023) and by work on loving pedagogy that positions empathy, care, and respect as elements of the pedagogical relationship (Wang et al., 2022).

To examine how curriculum values are translated into practice, this study combines two complementary frameworks that are not used interchangeably. Curriculum enactment views the curriculum as a process in which values and policies are interpreted and brought to life by educational actors in practice, and it therefore serves as a process lens (Ross, 2024). Teacher agency explains the actor side: how teachers' professional room for manoeuvre interacts with environmental conditions, beliefs, and resources, thereby enabling or constraining particular pedagogical actions (Priestley et al., 2012; Biesta et al., 2015; Rich, 2021). Studies in Indonesia show that teachers do exercise professional judgement when recontextualising the official curriculum to suit their classroom conditions (Qoyyimah et al., 2020). The link between the two frameworks and the research questions is stated explicitly: the first question traces the process of value translation (enactment), the second traces the conditions that open and constrain teachers' room for action (agency), and the third traces how this appears in students' learning experiences as the outcome of that process.

The KBC literature available to date can be mapped into several areas of focus. Literature reviews and philosophical foundations of KBC at the madrasah ibtidaiyah (primary) level have been produced, as have conceptual studies drawing on the philosophy of education (Maharani et al., 2025; Shabrina et al., 2025). Empirical studies have begun to document the formation of humanist character in madrasah ibtidaiyah, the strengthening of humanist values in madrasahs, the application of KBC policy in Islamic religious education at the madrasah tsanawiyah (lower secondary) level, and the role of KBC in solidarity and moral integration (Az-Zabaniyyah Muailah, 2026; Ramadani & Muizzuddin, 2026; Saputra et al., 2026; Latifah et al., 2026). At the madrasah aliyah (upper secondary) level, the available work focuses on problems in KBC planning (Rosada & Mutammam, 2026). The pedagogy of love in Islamic moral education has also been conceptualised (Kumalla et al., 2026). This mapping reveals three gaps. First, attention remains concentrated on the conceptual and planning stages, so how love values are translated into everyday pedagogical decisions has been little explored. Second, evidence at the madrasah aliyah level is still limited. Third, among the KBC literature that could be traced, no study yet combines the perspectives of curriculum managers, teachers, and students while clearly distinguishing observed practices from practices that are merely reported. This study addresses these gaps in order to show not only that KBC is implemented, but also how, and under what conditions, its values are translated.

The urgency of this research is both practical and theoretical. Practically, KBC has only recently been made mandatory through Minister of Religious Affairs Decree (KMA) No. 1503 of 2025 and Director General of Islamic Education Decree No. 6077 of 2025, so empirical evidence from the early stage of implementation is needed to refine policy support and teacher development (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). Theoretically, the study tests the usefulness of the pedagogy of love, curriculum enactment, and teacher agency as a combined lens for reading the implementation of a religiously grounded curriculum in Islamic schools.

This study confines its scope to the relational-humanistic dimension of the Five Loves, namely care, empathy, respect for students, positive communication, and the creation of a sense of safety. This dimension was chosen because it is the most directly visible in everyday teacher-student interaction and the most traceable through interviews, classroom observation, and learning documents. Other dimensions, such as love of the homeland and love of the environment, are realised largely through activities outside the classroom, such as worship routines, literacy, cleanliness, and civic activities. These activities are read as institutional context rather than as the focus of analysis. Consequently, the findings explain KBC implementation in its relational-humanistic dimension, not KBC implementation as a whole. The study is also limited to the teaching of PAI subjects, so the practices of teachers of general subjects are not examined, and the findings should not be read as describing all learning in the madrasah (data limits are detailed in the Method section).

The State Islamic Senior High School in Blora (MAN Blora) was chosen as the empirical context because it has formally implemented KBC since the issuance of the Love-Based Curriculum Guidelines in 2025. According to the deputy head, this implementation is marked by the active involvement of the deputy head for curriculum and the Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI) teachers in integrating KBC values into the Madrasah Operational Curriculum (*Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah*, KOM) and the Teaching Modules (*Modul Ajar*). The madrasah also granted access to collect data from three groups of informants during the same period. These considerations make MAN Blora an information-rich case for tracing value translation at an ongoing stage of implementation, although it is not intended to represent all madrasahs.

On the basis of this account, the study positions KBC not merely as a document or a set of normative values but as a process of curriculum enactment involving educators' interpretation, pedagogical decisions, interaction with students, and the conditions of the madrasah environment. The aim is to understand in depth how KBC is implemented in learning at MAN Blora, guided by the following research questions.

1. How are love values implemented in the learning process at MAN Blora?
2. What conditions shape the process of translating KBC values into learning practice at MAN Blora?
3. How is KBC implementation manifested and experienced in learning at MAN Blora?

This formulation keeps the research focus, data collection strategy, analytical process, and presentation of findings aligned, so that each question is answered on the basis of the empirical evidence collected in the case studied (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).



Method

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design because its aims call for an in-depth understanding of processes, experiences, and meanings in a natural setting rather than statistical measurement (Priya, 2021; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The case is bounded contextually to KBC implementation at MAN Blora and temporally to data collection over roughly one month, from late August to September 2026.

This period coincided with the start of the odd semester of the 2026/2027 academic year, that is, after the KBC Guidelines were issued in 2025 and at a time when KBC values had already been written into the Teaching Modules used by teachers. Because the Ministry of Religious Affairs has not yet published a document setting out a KBC implementation timeline, the identification of this phase is the researchers' contextual judgement, confirmed by the deputy head for curriculum. The study does not aim to measure change over time but to capture the process of value translation at one particular phase; the findings are therefore read as a snapshot of that phase rather than of the implementation cycle as a whole. An important consequence of the timing of data collection is that Grade X students had been at the madrasah for only about two months and therefore had no "before KBC" experience at MAN Blora; this is taken into account when interpreting temporal comparisons in the Results section.

Participants and Rationale for the Number of Participants

Participants were selected purposively on the basis of their involvement in, and knowledge of, KBC implementation. They comprised one deputy head for curriculum (W), three PAI teachers teaching Fikih (Islamic jurisprudence), Akidah Akhlak (Islamic creed and ethics), and Al-Qur'an Hadis (Qur'an and Hadith) (G1–G3), and ten students (S1–S10), namely five Grade X students (aged 15–16) and five Grade XI students (aged 16–17). The three teachers had 6–15 years of teaching experience and were all directly involved in integrating KBC values into learning. Because selection involved recommendations from madrasah management, there is a risk that the teachers most active in implementing KBC were chosen, so the findings are not read as representing all teachers. All the teachers studied teach PAI subjects; teachers of general subjects were not participants. All three teachers were interviewed, but only the Akidah Akhlak teacher was observed teaching.

PAI learning was limited to Fikih, Akidah Akhlak, and Al-Qur'an Hadis because the teachers of these three subjects were directly involved and were recommended by the madrasah.

Islamic Cultural History (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam*) was not covered, so the findings are not read as describing the whole PAI subject cluster in the madrasah.

Students were nominated by their homeroom teachers on the basis of their involvement in learning, variation in levels of active participation, and willingness to share their experiences, not on the homeroom teachers' judgement of who would be comfortable being interviewed. This mechanism carries a potential for gatekeeper bias if homeroom teachers tend to nominate communicative students. To reduce this, the researchers explicitly asked for variation in levels of participation, and in practice variation in experience was found, including one informant (S6) who distinguished experiences across teachers.

The number of 14 participants was determined with reference to the concept of information power, whereby sample adequacy is determined by the specificity of the study aim, the information density of each participant, the quality of the interview dialogue, and the analytic strategy, not by statistical representation (Malterud et al., 2016). The aim of this study is narrow, namely one value dimension in one bounded case, and participants were chosen because they had direct knowledge of KBC. The three groups of informants provide complementary perspectives: curriculum managers at the policy level, teachers at the level of practice, and students at the level of experience. Thematic patterns within each group began to repeat before all participants had been interviewed, so this number was judged adequate to answer the research questions. This adequacy is understood as an analytic judgement, not as a claim of absolute data saturation.

Data Collection Procedures and Techniques

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. The lead researcher interviewed each participant once, for 15–20 minutes. The semi-structured interview guide was developed from the KBC framework and teacher agency, and contained 8–10 core questions along with probing questions about how KBC is understood, how it is applied, the conditions that shape it, and students' experiences. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian, recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim; the excerpts quoted in this article were translated into English by the authors. The adequacy of information in interview studies is determined not only by the number of participants but also by the specificity of the study aim and the quality of the dialogue between researcher and participant (Malterud et al., 2016). The relatively short duration limited the depth of probing, especially with the deputy head and the teachers, so their accounts are treated as informant reports rather than verified facts. To maintain rigour, questions were concentrated on the three research foci, and themes originating from a single participant, such as the limited facilities mentioned by W, are flagged in the Results section as single-source perceptions.

Observation was carried out in three sessions, as detailed in Table 1. The first session observed Akidah Akhlak lessons in Grades X and XI for 35 minutes per class; the second observed the Friday Tahlil (communal devotional recitation) and Friday Amal (Friday charity) activities; and the third observed the BESTIE programme and the congregational Duha and Zuhr prayers. The Clean and Healthy Saturday (*Sabtu Bersih dan Sehat*) activity was not observed directly; information about it was obtained from interviews. Recording focused on teacher–student interaction, communication patterns, the 5S culture, and the conduct of habituation activities. Only practices recorded in the field notes, namely teacher–student interaction during lessons, observed communication patterns, and the conduct of habituation activities, are reported as directly observed. Because its scope was limited to one teacher and one subject, observation served as a complement to the interviews, not as the primary evidence. Triangulation of techniques is therefore understood as an effort to enrich understanding and test the consistency of sources, not as the proof of a single truth (Nowell et al., 2017; Tracy, 2010). Documentation

comprised one Teaching Module for the Akidah Akhlak subject used in teaching, which was analysed to confirm the formal formulation of KBC values, together with photographs of activities that served only as descriptive supporting data. The Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM), academic calendar, class timetable, and disciplinary records were not reviewed; information about these documents is treated as informant reports.

Table 1. Summary of Observation Sessions

Session	Activity observed	Class, subject, and teacher	Duration	Date
1	Classroom learning	Grades X and XI; Akidah Akhlak; Akidah Akhlak teacher	35 minutes per class	29 August
2	Friday Tahlil and Friday Amal	Madrasah activity	35 minutes	11 September
3	BESTIE programme; congregational Duha and Zuhr prayers	Madrasah activity	35 minutes	15 September

Note: all observation data were recorded in field notes (data limits are detailed in the Method section).

To make the status of the evidence traceable in the Results section, each piece of data was given a source code: W (interview with the deputy head for curriculum), G1-G3 (teacher interviews), S1-S10 (student interviews), O (observation), and D (documents). Interviews (W, G, S) yield informants' perceptions and reports, whereas O yields practices observed directly and D yields written formal formulations. This distinction is used to separate observed practices from practices that are only reported. Data from the three techniques were compared through triangulation of techniques to obtain a fuller picture of the case.

Several data limits apply throughout the Results and Discussion sections and are therefore set out only here. First, classroom observation was limited to a single Akidah Akhlak session, so practices in Fikih and Al-Qur'an Hadis come from interviews. Second, practices that are private in nature, such as restitution dialogues, could not be observed. Third, the deputy head's statements about policy, the Madrasah Operational Curriculum, the academic calendar, and disciplinary records were not confirmed through documents. Fourth, students' experiences come from self-reports, which are vulnerable to social desirability bias. Unless otherwise stated, statements about practices, conditions, and experiences in the sections that follow should be read as informant reports. Being candid about these limits is part of maintaining transparency and quality in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010).

Data Analysis

Data management followed the framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which comprises data condensation and data display, while themes were established through reflexive thematic analysis (Miles et al., 2014; Braun & Clarke, 2021). The two frameworks do not stand side by side as two separate methods but were used sequentially. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were first condensed and displayed following the procedure of Miles et al., and then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

The application of reflexive thematic analysis followed the phases described by Braun and Clarke: familiarisation with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021). The numbers of students mentioned in the Results section are descriptive, intended to show the spread of experience rather than to weight themes, because in this approach the importance of a theme is not determined by its frequency. The resulting themes are presented in Table 2. By way of illustration, the initial codes "teacher gives opportunities to ask questions" and "teacher patiently re-explains" were grouped by similarity of meaning into the category "open communication", which was then developed into the theme "creating a sense of safety in learning interactions"

once the pattern recurred across data sources and was relevant to the research questions. In this approach, themes are understood as the product of the researcher's active construction through an iterative, reflexive process, not as objects that already exist and simply await discovery in the data. Analytic transparency was maintained through a reflective journal recording methodological decisions and analytic memos at each stage of coding, so that the development from data to codes, categories, and themes can be traced (Nowell et al., 2017).

All coding and theme development was carried out by one researcher, the lead researcher. In reflexive thematic analysis this is consistent with its principles, since the quality of the analysis is determined by the depth of the researcher's engagement and reflexivity, not by inter-coder agreement or checking by a second coder (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021). In its place, the credibility of the analysis was safeguarded through a reflective journal recording methodological decisions, analytic memos at each stage of coding, triangulation of sources and techniques, and a brief member reflection at the end of each interview as an initial confirmation of the researcher's understanding (Nowell et al., 2017).

Data from the deputy head, teachers, and students were compared operationally through a source-by-theme matrix, that is, by mapping each theme to the informant groups that raised it. The matrix showed that some themes, such as variation in implementation across teachers, arose specifically from the students' perspective, whereas the deputy head and teachers acknowledged it only in general terms, as uneven implementation, without referring to particular teachers. This difference in level of specificity is reported as a finding rather than simply reconciled.

Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexive thematic analysis treats the researcher's subjectivity as an analytic resource to be explained openly, not as a bias to be eliminated (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Coding and theme development were done by the lead researcher, who is a student at IAI Khozinatul Ulum Blora and has no structural relationship with MAN Blora. The researcher's educational background in Islamic Religious Education, and academic closeness to the Islamic values underlying KBC, provide contextual understanding of love-based teaching practices. However, this background may also influence the researcher's interpretation, particularly in understanding religious practices and the meaning of KBC values in the madrasah. To counterbalance this tendency, the researcher recorded assumptions and analytic decisions in a reflective journal, flagged data that did not fit a positive reading, such as S6's statements, and kept observed data separate from reported data (Berger, 2015; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

Trustworthiness of the Data

Trustworthiness was maintained through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, each of which was realised through concrete research actions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of sources (deputy head, teachers, students) and of techniques (interviews, observation, documentation), as well as a brief member reflection at the end of interviews to confirm the researcher's understanding of participants' statements. This member reflection was not member checking of the final analysis, so it is not used as evidence of theme validation. Transferability is not claimed as generalisation but pursued through thick description of the madrasah context, participant characteristics, and research procedures so that readers can judge the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Dependability and confirmability were supported by the researcher's reflective journal and analytic memos at each stage of coding, so that the traceability of the link between data, analysis, and interpretation is maintained (Ahmed, 2024).

Research Ethics

This research was carried out after obtaining written permission from the madrasah and consent from the adult participants, namely the deputy head and the teachers. Because some students were under 18, the research was also accompanied by parental or guardian consent and the students' own willingness to take part. This consent was documented through parental/guardian consent forms in accordance with applicable procedures. Students were also informed that they had the right to decline or withdraw from participation at any time without academic consequences. The conduct of the research followed the principles of research ethics, namely participant consent, protection of identity confidentiality, voluntary participation, and respect for participants' rights throughout data collection.

Participant confidentiality was maintained through coding (W, G1-G3, S1-S10) and the removal of names, initials, and personal identifiers from all quotations. However, because the madrasah's name is given and the position of deputy head for curriculum is held by only one person, the anonymity of W and the teachers cannot be fully guaranteed. Data were presented selectively, avoiding irrelevant information that might reveal personal identity, and quotations that might offend particular parties, such as S6's statement about the teaching style of some teachers, are presented without naming the teacher or subject. This study obtained written permission from the madrasah as well as parental or guardian consent and the students' willingness to participate. Attention to ethics of this kind is one of the quality criteria in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010).

Result

The analysis produced five themes, presented in Table 2. Themes 1 and 2 mainly answer the first research question, themes 3 and 4 answer the second, and theme 5 answers the third; the relationships among the themes are summarised in Figure 1. The following subsections present the findings by research question, referring to these themes.

Table 2. Themes from the Analysis, Example Codes, and Data Sources

Theme	Brief description	Example codes in the data	Data sources
1. Translating love values into learning planning and instruments	Five Loves values are carried down into the KOM, learning objectives and Teaching Module templates, and affective assessment.	learning objectives contain Five Loves elements; Teaching Module template; affective assessment rubric	W, G1-G3, D (Teaching Module)
2. Teachers' attention and appreciation in classroom interaction	Care, appreciation, open communication, and restorative discipline are enacted by teachers in their interactions with students.	teacher gives opportunities to ask questions; teacher patiently re-explains; restitution dialogue	G1-G3, S1-S10, W, O (partial)
3. Teachers' interpretation and room for agency	Teachers adjust their emotional approach, methods, pace, and appreciation, so implementation varies across teachers.	teacher as learning architect; adjustments in pace and scaffolding; some teachers are still rigid	W, G1-G3, S6, O (partial)
4. Supporting and constraining institutional conditions	Policy support, teacher development, and religious culture confront limited time, administrative workload, and academic targets.	religious culture and habituation; Learning Community (Kombel) and in-house training (IHT); administrative workload; academic targets	W, G1-G3
5. Students' relational experience	A sense of safety, confidence to ask questions and give opinions, and closeness to teachers, as reported by students.	dares to ask because the teacher does not get angry; comfortable giving opinions in discussion	S1-S10, W, G1-G3

1. Implementation of Love Values in Learning Practice.

Love values at MAN Blora are enacted through the integration of KBC values into the planning and delivery of learning, with care, respect, empathy, and positive communication as their main forms. W emphasised that translating KBC into learning instruments “must not stop at being a mere administrative slogan”. According to W, KBC values are carried down into the KOM through the setting of a graduate profile characterised by the Five Loves, learning outcomes that include affective and social-empathy dimensions, and time allocated for religious activities and positive habituation. In the Teaching Modules, every learning objective must contain at least one Five Loves element, and the modules are drawn up in four stages: (a) mapping affective indicators and students’ needs through an initial diagnostic assessment; (b) designing a humanistic learning scenario, namely an opening in which the teacher greets students by name, checks their emotional state, and uses affirming sentences, followed by collaborative methods such as Problem-Based Learning or Jigsaw in the core activities; (c) using polite instructional language and constructive feedback; and (d) assessment that values process, through observation rubrics for empathy and cooperation and self-reflection journals. Document review (D) confirmed part of this account: the Teaching Module does list attitude indicators related to KBC values, while the remaining details are read as informants’ explanations.

Teachers understood KBC as placing affection, care, and the honouring of others as the foundation of an education rooted in the principle of *Rahmatan lil ‘Alamin* (mercy to all creation), so that learning is not understood as mere knowledge transfer. G1 stated, “Affection, care, and the honouring of others are the main foundation of the entire educational process, not merely the transfer of knowledge.” This understanding is translated mainly in three ways: discipline without physical punishment that rests on role modelling, dialogue, and counselling (*tarbiyah wa ta’dib*); relationships of mutual respect among teachers, students, and staff; and the weaving of moral messages, empathy, and social concern into both religious and general subjects. Teachers are positioned as facilitators and as second parents (*murobbi/murobbiyah*), not as authoritarian figures, and violations are handled through mediation and restitution rather than shaming punishment. Practices of appreciation and open communication in teacher-student interaction were directly observed (O), both in the Akidah Akhlak lesson in the classroom and in the madrasah activities observed. In the Akidah Akhlak sessions in Grades X and XI, emotional check-ins, group discussion, differentiated instruction, pace adjustment, and scaffolding were also directly observed (O). Restitution dialogue was not directly observed because it takes place privately outside the observation sessions, and it comes from interviews. More broadly, details of how these practices are carried out, teachers’ pedagogical reasoning, and practices outside the observed sessions, including the teaching of Fikih and Al-Qur’an Hadis, still come from interviews. From the students’ side, this approach creates a sense of comfort. S4 (Grade X) said, “Yes, I feel listened to. For example, when I had trouble understanding the material, the teacher was willing to explain it again patiently without getting angry.”

Beyond classroom interaction, the madrasah maps a number of habituation programmes onto the Five Loves framework as set out in the KBC guidelines (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). Congregational Duha and Zuhr prayers, Friday Tahlil, Friday Amal, the BESTIE programme, and the 5S culture were directly observed in the second and third observation sessions, whereas Monday Literacy (*Senin Literasi*), Clean and Healthy Saturday, *Salawat Nariyah*, the playing of national songs, and extracurricular activities were reported through interviews. These programmes were not analysed as the focus of the study but read as institutional context that provides relational and religious habituation around learning.

These findings show that KBC at MAN Blora does not stop at being a normative idea but is beginning to be visible in pedagogical decisions and actions, as reflected in the integration of values into the KOM and Teaching Modules, the habituation programmes, and S4’s account. Comparison with the KBC Guidelines and earlier research is discussed in the Discussion section.

Teachers' room for interpretation is visible when they adapt methods to students' characters, use discussion to open up space to speak, and attend to individual students' circumstances. W stressed that curriculum documents and Teaching Modules serve as a basic framework, while teachers act as "learning architects" who are free to adjust the emotional approach, methods, and forms of appreciation to the characteristics of their classes. Thus, KBC implementation at MAN Blora appears as the translation of values into practice, not the application of a uniform procedure across all learning situations; a theoretical reading of this pattern is presented in the Discussion section.

Table 3 synthesises five interrelated dimensions of implementation. These dimensions are an analytic grouping, not a sequence of stages passed through step by step, in line with the view that curriculum is enacted through repeated interpretation and adjustment rather than a linear flow from policy to practice (Ross, 2024; Priestley et al., 2012).

Table 3. Synthesis of KBC Implementation at MAN Blora

Implementation Dimension	Empirical Findings	Forms of Practice	Theoretical Perspective	Data Sources
1. Meaning of values	Love is understood as affection, care, empathy, respect, and attention.	Teachers attend to students' conditions and needs.	Pedagogy of Love / Ethics of Care	W, G1-G3
2. Translation of values	Love values are incorporated into the KOM, Teaching Modules, and learning strategies.	Affective indicators, Teaching Module template, and collaborative-dialogic methods.	Curriculum Enactment	W, G1-G3, D (Teaching Module)
3. Teacher interpretation	Teachers adapt their approach to students' characteristics.	Choice of methods and media, pace adjustment, scaffolding, and forms of appreciation.	Teacher Agency	W, G1-G3, O*
4. Pedagogical practice	Love values are enacted in learning interactions.	Listening, motivating, respecting opinions, restitution dialogue (reported), creating a sense of safety.	Pedagogy of Love	W, G1-G3, S1-S10, O*
5. Students' experience and manifestation	Students gain space to speak and participate; the learning atmosphere is reported as more comfortable, open, and supportive.	Asking questions, giving opinions, joining discussion; students feel valued and close to their teachers.	Pedagogy of Love; student voice (opportunity-to-speak dimension)	S1-S10, W, O*

Note: W = deputy head for curriculum; G = PAI teacher; S = student; D = document (Teaching Module); O = observation. W, G, and S data are informants' perceptions or reports (data limits are detailed in the Method section). An asterisk (*) on O means that only some of the practices in that row were directly observed, limited to Akidah Akhlak lessons. D confirms only the Teaching Module; the integration of values into the KOM comes from W's account.

2. Conditions Shaping KBC Implementation.

KBC implementation takes place under institutional conditions that provide a number of supports. According to W, curricular and administrative support is evident in five respects. First, alignment of curriculum documents: the Five Loves and the value of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* have been written into the vision, mission, and graduate profile and made character learning outcomes referenced across all subject clusters. Second, the Curriculum Team provides a Teaching Module template with columns for an emotional approach or affection-based apperception, an affective assessment rubric, and guidance on positive instruction, so that teachers can weave in the love dimension without a complicated administrative burden. Third, curriculum policy gives flexibility in time allocation and learning outcomes so that teachers can adjust their teaching pace when a class needs emotional strengthening first. Fourth, the assessment system combines cognitive achievement with a daily attitude journal and peer empathy observation sheets. Fifth, the academic calendar and class timetable have allocated time for habituation programmes. All

of these statements are the perceptions of the curriculum manager (W) and have not been confirmed through the madrasah's policy documents, which were not reviewed in this study.

From the perspective of teachers and madrasah leaders, reported support includes a positive discipline policy without physical punishment, leaders' role modelling in treating teachers and staff fairly, the availability of teachers with empathy-based pedagogical and personal competence, a friendly counselling space, facilities for religious activities, a 5S culture and fellowship (*silaturahmi*) among madrasah community members, and active parental involvement. Teacher development is carried out through a weekly Learning Community (Kombel) and an internal subject teachers' forum (MGMP) as spaces for sharing good practice; in-house training (IHT) at the start of each semester, with speakers who are character education experts, child psychologists, or *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* practitioners; academic supervision converted from an administrative format into coaching dialogue; and senior-junior teacher mentoring. The external support mentioned includes Ministry of Religious Affairs guidance on religious moderation and child-friendly madrasahs, the supportive role of school supervisors, and collaboration with the Education Office, the police, community health centres (*Puskesmas*), community organisations, and universities for teacher training, mental health support for students, and bullying-prevention education. This study has no observational data on changes in teaching practice before and after development activities, so these factors are reported as factors that informants perceive as supportive, not as factors verified to have changed practice. Even so, these conditions suggest that the application of love values depends not only on individual teachers' initiative but also on an institutional environment that provides legitimacy, direction, and professional support (Priestley et al., 2012).

On the other hand, KBC implementation faces a number of constraints. W described a dilemma between the burden of content and the depth of emotional relationships: empathetic dialogue and collaborative discussion take considerable time, so teachers "often experience an inner conflict between pursuing syllabus completion and giving space for character mentoring" to students who need attention. This pressure is reinforced by external benchmarks, such as university entrance selection, graduation assessments, and the expectations of some parents that still focus on cognitive achievement, so that some teachers and students risk reverting to an orientation toward instant results. W also mentioned limited facilities, such as comfortable classrooms, interactive learning media, and private consultation rooms, as well as teachers' workloads filled with routine administrative tasks, which trigger physical and mental fatigue (burnout) that erodes patience and the quality of attention given to students.

From the teachers' side, the reported obstacles include a shift in mindset from fear-based discipline to respect built through affection, which takes time and the deconstruction of old habits; a heavy administrative burden and dense content targets that limit the energy and time available for personal emotional attention; and the challenge of staying consistently patient and empathetic under personal pressure or a high workload. W and the teachers acknowledged that old habits still surface among a small number of teachers, who reflexively return to the old patterns of discipline when tired, when cognitive targets slip, or when the class feels hard to control. From the students' side, obstacles relate to the diversity of emotional readiness and learning styles. Students from less harmonious or less attentive family backgrounds may be awkward or defensive, or may interpret a love-based approach as leniency. Some teenagers regard care-based or religious programmes as a formality or image-building, so their trust has to be built gradually. Peer dynamics, including veiled teasing, sometimes influence behaviour more strongly than the empathy values being taught. Students accustomed to passive lectures also need longer to adapt to learning that demands activity and the courage to voice opinions. All of these obstacles come from interviews (W, G) and were not directly observed. Overall, the obstacles relate more to limits of space, facilities, and readiness, and to old habits that have not

fully shifted, than to explicit rejection of love values, but they still affect the consistency of implementation (Rich, 2021). This is reflected in a teacher's statement: "The administrative burden and the dense curriculum content targets often leave teachers without the energy and time to give students personal emotional attention" (G3).

Teachers' room for agency at MAN Blora appears in the space for pedagogical decisions that the madrasah explicitly opens up. W stated that teachers are given "very broad pedagogical freedom and autonomy" because curriculum documents and Teaching Modules serve only as a basic framework, with teachers acting as "learning architects". W described this autonomy in three forms: differentiating the emotional approach (for example, a persuasive approach, gradual guidance, or peer tutors for passive classes, and firm yet courteous shared agreements for very active classes); modifying methods and media, including adjusting pace and providing special support (scaffolding) for students who face difficulties; and flexibility in forms of appreciation and assessment, including alternative assignment options. At the same time, W and the teachers acknowledged that this room for agency is limited by structural demands, as seen in the small number of teachers who return to the old patterns of discipline. This pattern shows teachers negotiating between structural demands (academic targets, time, workload) and the orientation of KBC values, not merely adjusting methods. KBC implementation at MAN Blora therefore does not proceed linearly from policy to practice but through interpretation, adjustment, and pedagogical negotiation under particular institutional conditions.

To examine agency more sharply, this study draws on an ecological view that understands agency as an achievement formed in particular situations through three dimensions: iterational (past experience and habits), projective (orientation to the future), and practical-evaluative (judgement of the demands of the situation) (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Priestley et al., 2015). The projective dimension appears in G1's understanding that affection and the honouring of others are the foundation of education, not merely the transfer of knowledge. The iterational dimension appears in W's and the teachers' acknowledgement that old disciplinary habits still surface when teachers are tired or the class is hard to control. The practical-evaluative dimension appears when teachers weigh the demands of covering content and the administrative burden against time for personal attention, as G3 stated. This reading shows that teachers' actions are formed from beliefs, habits, and the conditions they face at the same time (Biesta et al., 2015). Because statements about broad pedagogical autonomy come mainly from W, claims about teacher agency are limited to what the teachers themselves said. For example: "When I teach, I try to choose learning methods that suit students' needs so that they not only understand the material but also learn to respect differences and care for others" (G1).

Table 4. Conditions Shaping KBC Implementation at MAN Blora

Supporting Conditions	Source	Constraining Conditions	Source
Religious culture, madrasah culture, and habituation programmes (5S, Tahlil, BESTIE)	W, G1-G3	Limited class time and dense content	W, G1-G3
Madrasah policy, KOM, and KBC-oriented Teaching Module templates	W, G1-G3	Administrative burden and teacher burnout	W, G1-G3
Training, supervision, Kombel/MGMP, and teacher mentoring	W, G1-G3	Academic target demands and external achievement measures (exams, university selection)	W, G1-G3

Supporting Conditions	Source	Constraining Conditions	Source
Teacher autonomy and adaptation to students' characteristics	W, G1-G3, O*	Limited facilities (classrooms, interactive media, private consultation rooms)	W
Flexibility in time allocation and learning outcomes; support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, external parties, and parents	W, G1-G3	Diversity of student readiness and residual habits of old-style discipline	W, G1-G3

Note: all conditions in this table come from informants' perceptions or reports (W, G; data limits are detailed in the Method section). An asterisk (*) on O indicates that only some of the teachers' adaptation practices (open communication and appreciation) were directly observed in the Akidah Akhlak lesson.

3. Manifestations of KBC in Humanistic Learning Experience.

The manifestation of KBC implementation is most clearly visible in students' learning experience. They described learning as an enjoyable experience because teachers pay attention, listen to opinions, give motivation, and open up opportunities to ask questions and express views. Students described their interactions with PAI teachers as a safe and comfortable space for asking questions and giving opinions. Of these students, those in Grade XI compared the present with their earlier experience at MAN Blora, so their comparisons are read as perceived change. Grade X students, who had been at the madrasah for only about two months, described present conditions without any basis for comparison at MAN Blora, so their accounts are read as descriptions of experience, not of change. The sense of safety reported is also shaped by many dimensions of school climate, so it cannot be attributed to KBC alone (Wang & Degol, 2016). S3 (Grade XI) said, "If I don't understand, I dare to ask again because the teacher doesn't get angry and instead helps me slowly." Because this study has no baseline data from before systematic KBC implementation, the improved enthusiasm and confidence that students felt are reported as change perceived by informants, not as measured change. This is consistent with reports from teachers and W that students are now more open in telling stories, asking questions, or asking for help, and no longer show resistance when discipline is enforced through restitution dialogue. The results on this aspect are therefore better described as manifestations of learning experience reported by informants than as measured improvements in academic achievement.

The quality of teacher-student relationships is another important manifestation. W described a shift from rigid, fear-based relationships to respect-based ones: students "no longer feel afraid or pressured when facing teachers" and feel safe asking questions, admitting they do not understand, or voicing opinions without worrying about being judged. The phrases "no longer" and "shift" refer to the temporal comparison offered by W. For students who gave no time reference, the quality of relationships is reported as a condition "felt to be open or familiar" at the time of the study, with no claim of change. At the level of practice, teachers were reported to translate love values through willingness to listen, giving motivation, attending to students' conditions, and building relationships grounded in trust. When students are late or undisciplined in submitting assignments, teachers were reported not to impose sanctions immediately or reprimand harshly in public, but instead to invite students to talk privately (restitution) to understand the obstacles and seek solutions together, and to accompany them with scaffolding as facilitator and mentor. The concept of student voice that is relevant here is visible in the opportunity-to-speak dimension, that is, the space for asking questions and giving opinions that teachers open up. Other dimensions, such as students' influence on learning decisions (influence) or formal recognition of their input (recognition), are not yet visible in the data, so use of this concept is limited to the opportunity-to-speak dimension (Cook-Sather, 2006).

A further manifestation appears in student engagement. Teachers use group discussion so that all students get a chance to speak, while students said they feel safer asking questions and giving opinions and described themselves as more enthusiastic and confident in joining lessons. This reported pattern of open communication is consistent with the teacher–student interaction observed in classroom learning and madrasah activities (O), although classroom observation covered only one Akidah Akhlak lesson in two classes. This suggests that love values are present not only through teachers’ attentiveness but also through the creation of a pedagogical space that allows students to have a voice in learning. S1 (Grade XI) said, “Now I am more confident asking the teacher when there is material I don’t understand, because the teacher gives us the chance to ask.” S5 (Grade XI), meanwhile, said, “I feel more comfortable giving my opinion in discussions because the teacher gives all students a chance to speak.”

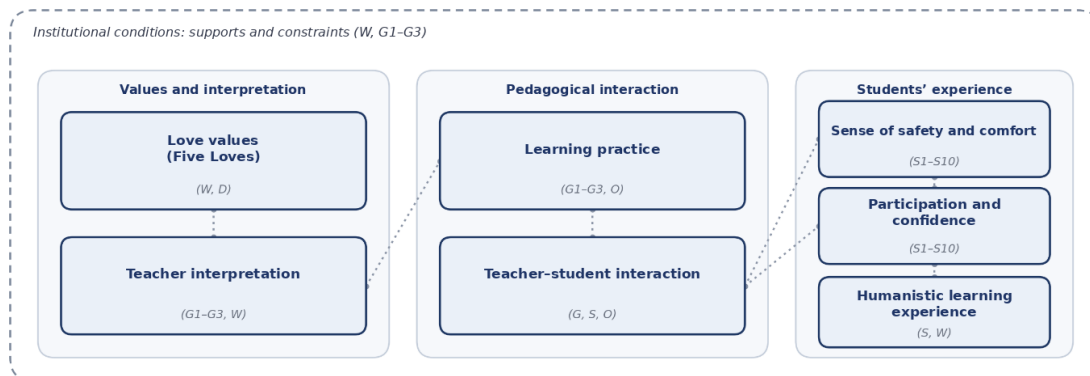
Even so, the experience is not uniform. S6 (Grade X) explained, “There’s still a bit of a difference. Some teachers make lessons really fun and often do ice breakers, but there are also one or two teachers who are still rather stiff, even though they’re already much friendlier than before.” The statement about “one or two teachers who are still stiff” comes from a single informant (S6) and was not explicitly confirmed by other students, so it is not extended into a general picture of all teachers. The variation S6 described is treated as a case that enriches the analysis, not as an exception to be ignored. The statement shows that the same value can take different forms in different classrooms, in line with the view that teachers’ actions are shaped by the interaction of capacity, beliefs, and the conditions in which they work (Priestley et al., 2012). Because S6 did not name a teacher or subject, it cannot be determined whether this variation concerns the PAI teachers who were participants, and no conclusion is drawn beyond what was reported. The statement is broadly consistent with W’s and the teachers’ acknowledgement that KBC implementation is not yet even and that a small number of teachers may return to the old patterns of discipline when tired, without referring to particular teachers. The difference between teachers perceived as “fun” and those who are “still stiff” appears to relate to variation in the use of interactive methods (discussion, ice breaking) and in openness of communication outside lesson hours, not to rejection of KBC values; even teachers regarded as stiffer were reported to be friendlier than before. This finding strengthens the argument that teacher agency produces variation in enactment, that is, teachers interpret and realise the same values in different ways according to their teaching style and comfort.

At the level of madrasah climate, W and the teachers reported a calmer, safer, and more inclusive atmosphere, with a tradition of morning greetings and routine religious habituation that they said fosters positive energy from the gate to the classroom. They also reported declines in teasing, verbal abuse, and serious disciplinary violations, which they attributed to the BESTIE programme and the instilling of the Five Loves, as well as a growing culture of mutual help through Friday Amal, communal work (*kerja bakti*), and collaboration among teachers. Because this study did not examine disciplinary records or bullying cases before and after KBC, these declines are informants’ judgements, not verified figures. W and the teachers assessed KBC’s success realistically as a transformation that is still growing, namely a strong initial foundation that is not yet even. To strengthen it, the madrasah plans to simplify administration through templates for teaching instruments and digital attitude reporting, to strengthen Kombel and teacher coaching focused on emotion management and positive discipline, to develop affective assessment rubrics that are simpler yet valid, and to deepen synergy with parents through a KBC Parenting programme. The hope expressed is that KBC will become a self-sustaining, enduring system that does not depend on particular leaders or teachers and that will serve as a model for other madrasahs.

Taken together, the findings reveal a thematic pattern in how love values take on meaning through a chain of thematic connections in learning practice: these values are translated into

teachers' attention and appreciation, which are linked to more open pedagogical relationships, a sense of safety and comfort among students, and their participation and confidence. This pattern is presented as an interrelated thematic synthesis (Figure 1), not as a linear causal relationship, nor as proof that humanistic learning has been achieved in measurable terms, but as a picture showing that the data are consistent with the humanistic learning orientation that KBC aims at. The manifestation of KBC at MAN Blora can therefore be recognised mainly in the relational dimension and in learning experiences reported by informants.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model (Thematic Synthesis) of KBC Implementation in Humanistic Learning



Note to Figure 1: dotted lines indicate thematic links, not sequence or causal relationships; the outer frame marks the institutional conditions (supporting and constraining) that enclose all the themes; W/G/S/O/D = groups of data sources.



Discussion

1. Implementation of Love Values as Humanistic Learning Practice.

The findings show that love values acquire pedagogical meaning not as concepts that are merely understood but as an orientation that shapes how teachers build learning relationships. This tendency is consistent with the KBC policy, which places love as the spirit of madrasah education and integrates it into madrasah life (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). The attention, respect, and open communication reported by students also align with the ethics of care, which sees care as a reciprocal relationship between the giver and the receiver of care, not merely a one-sided attitude on the teacher's part (Noddings, 2013). The fit with the humanistic tradition is evident in the importance of a classroom climate that respects students (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

The theoretical contribution of this study is preliminary. In studies of the pedagogy of love and the ethics of care, the quality of relationships is understood mainly as an ethical demand of the pedagogical relationship (Noddings, 2013; Wang et al., 2022). In the madrasah, informants linked such relationships to specific religious frameworks, namely *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin, tarbiyah wa ta'dib*, and the role of *murobbi/murobbiyah*. These references are consistent with the Islamic education literature that distinguishes *ta'lim, tarbiyah*, and *ta'dib* with differing emphases; al-Attas proposes *ta'dib* as the most comprehensive concept because it embodies the instilling of *adab*, while Halstead sets out the three terms as a basis for understanding Islamic education (al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2004). The idea of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* itself derives from the Qur'anic affirmation of prophethood as a mercy to all the worlds (QS. Al-Anbiya' [21]: 107). This alignment suggests that KBC's normative framework can serve as a religious anchor for the pedagogy of love, but the evidence in this study comes from informants' discourse when explaining their classroom decisions, not from observation of practices directly driven by those references. The idea of a normative-religious anchor is therefore put forward as a proposition to be tested, not as a proven

finding (Kumalla et al., 2026). KBC takes concrete form not through the addition of new material or procedures but through a change in how teachers treat students, namely as individuals who need to be heard, valued, and given room to participate.

This pattern accords with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' KBC Guidelines, which position KBC as a reference for implementing learning and direct that love values be present in the educational process, not as a curriculum that replaces the existing one (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). Recent research shows similar patterns with different emphases. KBC implementation in madrasah ibtidaiyah is carried out through contextual planning, implementation, and evaluation, with an emphasis on formal planning (Az-Zabaniyyah Muailah, 2026), and KBC values are also translated through practices and interactions that strengthen humanist values in madrasahs (Ramadani & Muizzuddin, 2026). Compared with both, the findings at MAN Blora add a picture, at the madrasah aliyah level, of how PAI teachers translate love values through daily pedagogical decisions, such as the choice of methods and classroom communication patterns, and not only at the formal planning stage. This reinforces the tendency for the main problem of KBC implementation to lie not in accepting love as a principle but in translating it into action that fits students' characteristics and the conditions of the madrasah (Maharani et al., 2025).

2. KBC as Value Translation: Curriculum Enactment and Teacher Agency.

Curriculum enactment is used in this study as a reading lens, not as a theory to be tested; the concept views curriculum policies and values as something that educational actors interpret and then realise in practice according to context (Ross, 2024). The room for adaptation given to teachers shows that KBC implementation does not proceed mechanically but through continuous adjustment between the values set and the realities of teaching. Methods, communication patterns, motivation, pace, and forms of appreciation are adjusted to students' characters, while limited time, administrative workload, academic targets, limited facilities, old disciplinary habits, and the diversity of student readiness constrain that room for manoeuvre. This finding supports the view that teacher interpretation is the main pathway by which curriculum moves from its planned form to its enacted form (Ross, 2024). The pattern is also consistent with the ecological view of agency, namely that teachers' actions are formed from the interaction of capacity, beliefs, and environmental conditions, not from individual will alone (Priestley et al., 2012; Biesta et al., 2015). The finding also accords with the study showing that teachers in Indonesia exercise professional judgement when recontextualising the curriculum to the conditions they face (Qoyyimah et al., 2020).

A critical reading of the broad pedagogical autonomy is also needed. This autonomy opens room for adaptation but can also be a source of variation in the quality of implementation, as reflected in the variation in experience conveyed by S6 and W's acknowledgement that implementation is not yet even. This shows that agency is not a guarantee of uniform quality, and that leadership, development, and a collegial culture play a role in channelling agency in directions consistent with KBC values (Biesta et al., 2015; Rich, 2021).

3. Contextual Factors in the Sustainability of KBC Implementation.

The contextual conditions found show that the sustainability of KBC is shaped by supporting and constraining conditions that sit side by side and that narrow or widen teachers' room for manoeuvre. The data in this study do not yet show mechanistically how these factors affect one another; for example, there are no data showing that curriculum flexibility directly compensates for limited time, or that supervision directly reduces teachers' interpretive burden. These conditions are therefore reported as conditions that coexist in the same implementation space, not as a system of interaction that has been proven. Religious culture, madrasah policy, Teaching Module templates, curriculum flexibility, training, and supervision provide a

foundation for teachers to actualise love values, whereas limited time, administrative workload, academic targets, limited facilities, and the diversity of student readiness constrain the flexibility of implementation.

These findings are consistent with a study in an MTs (madrasah tsanawiyah) which found that KBC values are easier to apply when linked to the religious culture and educational habits already developed in the institution (Saputra et al., 2026), and with a study showing that KBC can develop through classroom practice and school activities when a humanist and inclusive madrasah culture exists (Latifah et al., 2026). This correspondence is read as a pattern that is consistent across madrasah contexts, not as a causal relationship that holds generally. The madrasah culture at MAN Blora can thus be understood as a context that opens space for love values to take practical form, for example through communal worship routines, the 5S culture, and the regularly scheduled BESTIE programme. At the madrasah aliyah level, a study of KBC planning problems identified uneven teacher understanding, still-conventional learning methods, disparities in learning quality, and academic supervision that is not yet optimal (Rosada & Mutammam, 2026). The findings at MAN Blora are not fully aligned with this: the teachers and W did not report uneven understanding of KBC or conventional methods, but rather more structural and habitual obstacles, such as limited time, administrative workload, teacher fatigue, and residual old disciplinary patterns among a small number of teachers, while academic supervision was reported to have been converted from an administrative format into mentoring. What the two share is the unevenness of implementation, not its causes. This difference suggests that the obstacles to KBC implementation may vary depending on the extent to which teacher understanding has been strengthened in each madrasah, so generalising obstacles across contexts should be done with caution. It should be noted that the statements by the teachers and W about relatively adequate understanding are self-reports, not the result of measuring teacher understanding. A study of problems at the early stage of KBC implementation also stresses that an important challenge lies in operationalising values in educational practice (Maharani et al., 2025).

These conditions accord with the direction of KBC policy, which places strengthening teacher capacity, socialisation, mentoring, context analysis, and planning as important parts of implementation (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). Recent research likewise shows that KBC implementation still requires strengthened understanding, mentoring, and institutional readiness so that love values can be translated consistently into practice (Rosada & Mutammam, 2026). Institutional support at MAN Blora therefore does not remove obstacles but provides space for teachers to adapt to varied learning demands. Within this framework, the tension between completing the syllabus and character mentoring reported by W can be read as a conflict between the logic of academic accountability and a relational logic, which teachers cannot resolve individually without policies that reduce the administrative burden.

4. KBC Manifestations and the Status of the Conceptual Model.

The manifestation of KBC at MAN Blora is formulated in the conceptual model in Figure 1. The figure is a thematic synthesis from the reflexive thematic analysis, not a causal model that has been empirically tested. Each box refers to a theme and its group of data sources (W/G/S/O/D) so that the model can be traced back to the data, and the connecting lines depict thematic links, not temporal order or causal relationships. This clarification matters because qualitative data from a single case without a baseline do not permit causal inference. The findings on closeness of relationships and confidence in asking questions are consistent with a meta-analysis showing that learner-centred teacher-student relationships are associated with positive outcomes, especially on affective and behavioural aspects (Cornelius-White, 2007), although that association is correlational and cannot be treated as evidence of a KBC effect. The data show that

teachers' attention and openness of communication are linked, in informants' experience, to a sense of safety, comfort, confidence in asking questions and giving opinions, enthusiasm, and closer relationships. The results of KBC implementation are therefore most evident in the relational dimension and in learning experience, while evidence of improved academic achievement would require additional data designed specifically to measure it.

Interpretation of this manifestation needs to take into account the limits of the data sources. Most of the evidence about students' experience comes from self-reports that may be affected by social desirability, all the more so because students were nominated by homeroom teachers and interviewed on a single brief occasion. School climate research confirms that learning experience is shaped at once by academic, social-relational, safety, and institutional-environment dimensions (Wang & Degol, 2016), so the sense of safety that students reported cannot be attributed to KBC alone. Other KBC studies place humanist values, affection, empathy, and social relationships as the orientation of KBC implementation in madrasahs (Az-Zabaniyyah Muailah, 2026; Kumalla et al., 2026; Latifah et al., 2026; Ramadani & Muizzuddin, 2026), so these findings are consistent with the literature, but consistency is not the same as proof of an effect. This study shows that love values become pedagogically meaningful when they are present in concrete actions that make students feel noticed, valued, safe to speak, and engaged.

5. Contributions, Implications, and Position Relative to Previous Research.

The novelty of this study is compared explicitly with the KBC studies reviewed. Literature studies and philosophical analyses have not presented field data on classroom interaction (Maharani et al., 2025; Shabrina et al., 2025). Empirical studies of KBC implementation present field data but tend to focus on describing practice without tracing the process of value translation through the layered perspectives of curriculum managers, teachers, and students (Az-Zabaniyyah Muailah, 2026; Ramadani & Muizzuddin, 2026). Studies at the aliyah level focus on planning problems, not on the translation of values in learning interactions (Rosada & Mutammam, 2026). This statement refers only to the studies reviewed and is not intended as a generalisation about the entire KBC literature.

The main contribution of this study is to reveal the process and pattern of relational-contextual translation that bridges normative love values and their concrete form in everyday learning interactions. This process is neither automatic nor uniform but is shaped by teachers' room for interpretation and by institutional conditions, such as leadership support, curriculum flexibility, training, limited time, and administrative burden. Theoretically, the study offers a combination of the pedagogy of love, curriculum enactment, and teacher agency as a lens for reading the implementation of a religiously grounded curriculum, and it hints at the role of a normative-religious anchor in the pedagogy of love in Islamic schools, which still needs to be tested through more intensive observation. Practically, the findings imply three things: (a) simplifying the administrative burden so that time for relational mentoring is not eroded; (b) teacher development focused on emotion management and positive discipline to prevent a return to old patterns of discipline; and (c) monitoring mechanisms that are sensitive to variation in implementation across teachers, including involving student voice in a broader sense than mere opportunity to speak. These implications are contextual and need to be tested in other madrasahs.



Conclusion

KBC implementation at MAN Blora is realised through the values of care, empathy, respect, and attention in learning planning and practice, especially through open communication, opportunities to give opinions, discussion, motivation, restitution dialogue, and adjusting the approach to students' characteristics. This is evident in the integration of values into the KOM and Teaching Modules as explained by W, with attitude indicators confirmed in the Teaching

Module, and in teachers' everyday pedagogical decisions. Some of these practices were directly observed, while others were reported by informants (details in the Results section).

KBC implementation is supported by religious culture and madrasah culture, madrasah policy and Teaching Module templates, training and supervision, and room for teachers to adapt, while limited time, administrative workload, academic demands, limited facilities, and the diversity of students' readiness and characters constrain its application. These factors are reported as conditions that coexist in the same implementation space, based on informants' perceptions and reports, not as a causal system that has been tested.

The manifestation of KBC is seen in teacher-student relationships that are felt to be more open and close, a sense of safety and comfort, the courage to voice opinions, and the enthusiasm and confidence that informants reported. This experience is not entirely uniform, as shown by variation in students' perceptions of teachers' teaching styles. KBC implementation does not proceed mechanically but depends on how teachers translate love values into pedagogical action and on the extent to which the institutional environment provides supportive space. KBC takes tangible form mainly in the relational dimension and in learning experience, not in measurable academic achievement. These results describe the practices and experience of implementation in the madrasah studied and are therefore not intended to prove KBC's effectiveness causally or to generalise the findings to all madrasahs.

The findings need to be read with the study's limits in mind: a single madrasah, purposively selected participants, one brief interview per participant, observation limited to one Akidah Akhlak session, document review limited to the Teaching Module, analysis by one researcher, and the absence of baseline data from before KBC implementation. Data collection at the start of the odd semester of the 2026/2027 academic year also makes the findings a snapshot of a single phase. The applicability of this pattern to other contexts is for readers to judge on the basis of contextual similarity, so further research with multiple-case designs, longitudinal observation, and measurement of academic and social-emotional outcomes is needed to test it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

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