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IMPLEMENTATION OF A LOVE-BASED CURRICULUM IN ISLAMIC CREED AND MORAL EDUCATION AT ISLAMIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis implementasi nilai-nilai Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta dalam pembelajaran Akidah Akhlak di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Medan, meliputi perencanaan, pelaksanaan, evaluasi, hambatan, serta upaya mengatasinya. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif naturalistik. Informan dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling, meliputi kepala madrasah, wakil kepala madrasah bidang kurikulum, dan guru Akidah Akhlak. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Keabsahan data diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber, teknik, waktu, serta konfirmasi informan. Analisis dilakukan melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta berlangsung secara bertahap dengan mengintegrasikan kasih sayang, empati, keteladanan, kepedulian, dan penghargaan terhadap peserta didik. Perangkat pembelajaran masih mengacu pada Kurikulum Merdeka, sedangkan pelaksanaan pembelajaran telah menerapkan pendekatan humanis dan evaluasi karakter secara berkelanjutan. Hambatan utama meliputi keterbatasan perangkat pembelajaran khusus, pelatihan, kesiapan guru, dan beban administrasi. Upaya penanggulangan dilakukan melalui dukungan pimpinan, pendampingan kurikulum, koordinasi, serta pengembangan kompetensi guru. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya penyelarasan administrasi kurikulum dengan praktik pembelajaran untuk memperkuat pendidikan karakter berbasis kasih sayang. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi kontekstual bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam yang humanis, meskipun perubahan perilaku jangka panjang belum dapat dipastikan.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta, Pembelajaran Akidah Akhlak, Pendidikan Karakter

Abstract

This study examines the implementation of Love-Based Curriculum values in Islamic Creed and Moral Education at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Medan, focusing on instructional planning, classroom implementation, learning evaluation, barriers, and institutional responses. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study selected informants purposively, including the principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, and Islamic Creed and Moral Education teacher. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Trustworthiness was strengthened through source, methodological, and temporal triangulation, alongside member checking. Data analysis involved reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Findings reveal that curriculum implementation remains gradual, emphasizing compassion, empathy, exemplary behavior, mutual respect, and character development. Instructional documents continue to follow the Independent Curriculum, while classroom practices increasingly incorporate humanistic interactions and continuous behavioral assessment. Major barriers include limited curriculum-specific materials, insufficient professional training, teacher adaptation requirements, and administrative responsibilities. Institutional strategies involve leadership support, curriculum coordination, professional discussions, and teacher development. The study highlights the importance of aligning curriculum documentation with compassionate instructional practices to strengthen character education. These findings offer contextual insights into humanistic Islamic education, although long-term behavioral improvements remain unverified.

Keywords: Love-Based Curriculum, Islamic Creed and Moral Education, Character Education

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing human resources by fostering intellectual competence, moral integrity, emotional maturity, and social responsibility. Beyond transmitting knowledge, education is expected to cultivate individuals who demonstrate empathy, compassion, respect, and ethical awareness in their interactions with others. However, contemporary educational institutions continue to encounter challenges associated with bullying, aggressive behavior, declining empathy, and inconsistencies between students' moral understanding and everyday conduct. These challenges underscore the importance of educational approaches that integrate academic development with character formation. Research indicates that well-designed social and emotional learning programs can improve students' behavior, emotional competencies, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Furthermore, positive teacher–student relationships contribute significantly to students' engagement, motivation, and educational development (Roorda et al., 2011).

In Indonesia, strengthening character education has become an important priority in curriculum development, particularly within Islamic educational institutions. One emerging approach is the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta), which emphasizes compassion, empathy, mutual respect, care, and humane relationships throughout the educational process. This approach seeks to establish learning environments that nurture students' intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and moral development. Its underlying principles are consistent with research demonstrating that supportive classroom relationships, emotionally responsive teaching, and positive school environments facilitate meaningful learning experiences (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Similarly, the development of caring educational communities can strengthen students' social responsibility and commitment to ethical behavior (Battistich et al., 1997).

Within Islamic education, compassion constitutes an essential principle of teaching and character development. The Qur'an emphasizes gentleness, forgiveness, and consultation in interpersonal relationships (Qur'an 3:159), while describing the Prophet Muhammad as possessing exemplary moral character (Qur'an 68:4). These principles provide a theological foundation for integrating compassionate pedagogical practices into Islamic Creed and Moral Education (Akidah Akhlak). The subject aims to strengthen students' religious beliefs while encouraging the practical application of Islamic moral values. Nevertheless, instruction emphasizing memorization and conceptual understanding may not adequately ensure behavioral transformation. Moral development requires opportunities for reflection, modeling, emotional engagement, and consistent ethical practice (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008; Lickona, 1996).

Theoretically, the Love-Based Curriculum can be understood through the interconnected perspectives of caring pedagogy, social learning, and moral education. Caring relationships create educational conditions in which students feel respected, supported, and motivated to participate (Wentzel, 1997). Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing exemplary behavior, while research on prosocial development highlights the influence of empathy and supportive interpersonal interactions (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Moreover, autonomy-supportive teaching practices encourage students to internalize educational values rather than merely comply with external

expectations (Reeve, 2009). Together, these perspectives suggest that compassion-centered instruction can facilitate the transition from moral knowledge to meaningful ethical conduct.

These considerations are particularly relevant to Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 3 Medan, an Islamic senior high school in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Preliminary observations and interviews conducted by the researcher indicate that the implementation of Love-Based Curriculum principles remains in an adjustment phase. Teachers continue using instructional materials developed under the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) and, in some instances, the previous 2013 Curriculum. Nevertheless, compassionate communication, teacher modeling, character-building routines, and empathetic classroom interactions have begun to characterize Islamic Creed and Moral Education instruction. Preliminary findings also suggest persistent challenges involving student discipline, responsibility, and consistent respect for others. These observations indicate a potential discrepancy between students' conceptual understanding of Islamic morality and its practical expression.

Implementing compassion-centered education requires systematic integration across instructional planning, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation. Effective planning should incorporate moral objectives, student-centered strategies, and opportunities for ethical reflection. Classroom implementation should prioritize respectful communication, positive relationships, and meaningful participation. Evaluation should extend beyond cognitive achievement to include observable behavioral development and social responsibility. Previous studies have established the importance of classroom emotional support, instructional quality, and constructive teacher–student interactions (Pianta et al., 2012; Cornelius-White, 2007). However, implementation may be constrained by teachers' limited conceptual understanding, insufficient professional development, administrative responsibilities, and institutional readiness (Fullan, 2007; Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Although existing scholarship provides substantial evidence concerning caring pedagogy, character education, and supportive classroom environments, its direct application to the Love-Based Curriculum within Islamic Creed and Moral Education remains insufficiently understood. Research on teacher empathy and classroom relationships demonstrates important educational benefits (Cooper, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004), while studies of school climate emphasize the significance of institutional support for students' social development (Thapa et al., 2013). Nevertheless, these findings do not independently explain how compassion-centered curriculum principles are operationalized within the distinctive theological, pedagogical, and organizational context of Indonesian Islamic senior high schools.

Accordingly, this study pursues two objectives: first, to describe the implementation of Love-Based Curriculum values in Islamic Creed and Moral Education at MAN 3 Medan through instructional planning, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation; and second, to analyze the obstacles encountered during implementation and the strategies employed to address them. Its distinction lies in examining these interconnected dimensions through a context-sensitive qualitative perspective rather than treating compassionate teaching merely as an abstract educational ideal. The study is significant because it seeks to provide empirical insights into curriculum adaptation, teacher practices, and character development within Islamic education. Its findings are expected to inform

institutional policies, professional development, and pedagogical strategies that promote compassionate learning environments and the practical internalization of Islamic moral values.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Creed and Moral Education (Akidah Akhlak) at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 3 Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected to develop an in-depth, contextual understanding of instructional planning, classroom implementation, learning evaluation, and challenges associated with integrating compassion-centered educational values. The research adopted a naturalistic orientation, examining educational practices within their authentic institutional setting without manipulating classroom activities or introducing experimental interventions.

The research site was purposively selected because MAN 3 Medan had begun incorporating Love-Based Curriculum principles into Islamic Creed and Moral Education while continuing to utilize instructional materials developed under the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) and the 2013 Curriculum. The researcher's previous teaching practicum experience at the institution also facilitated contextual familiarity and field access. Research participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their institutional responsibilities, professional knowledge, and direct involvement in curriculum implementation. Key informants included the madrasah principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, and Islamic Creed and Moral Education teachers. Snowball sampling was considered when additional perspectives were necessary to deepen the investigation.

Data collection involved classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations focused on teacher–student interactions, compassionate communication, instructional strategies, character-building activities, and classroom environments. In-depth interviews explored participants' experiences and interpretations concerning curriculum planning, implementation, assessment practices, institutional support, and implementation barriers. Documentary evidence included lesson plans, teaching modules, syllabi, instructional records, and student assessment documents. Integrating these techniques enabled the researcher to examine relationships between institutional expectations, teachers' reported practices, and observable classroom experiences.

Data trustworthiness was strengthened through source, methodological, and temporal triangulation. Source triangulation compared information obtained from different institutional stakeholders, while methodological triangulation examined consistency across interviews, observations, and documents. Temporal triangulation involved reviewing information collected at different times. Member checking was employed to confirm participants' accounts and interpretations, while prolonged engagement supported contextual understanding and credibility.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive framework, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview accounts, observational records, and documentary materials were systematically organized and coded according to emerging patterns and predefined research dimensions. The analysis emphasized instructional planning,

classroom practices, learning evaluation, implementation barriers, and institutional responses. Findings were presented through descriptive thematic narratives supported by cross-source comparisons. Analytical interpretations were continuously reviewed against the collected evidence to identify convergent perspectives, contextual differences, and meaningful explanations of Love-Based Curriculum implementation within Islamic moral education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Implementation of Love-Based Curriculum Values in Islamic Creed and Moral Education at MAN 3 Medan

The qualitative findings indicate that implementing the Love-Based Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 3 Medan represents a gradual process of integrating compassion, empathy, mutual respect, teacher modeling, and character development into existing educational practices. Evidence obtained through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation demonstrates that implementation encompasses three interconnected dimensions: instructional planning, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation. Although the institution has not fully adopted curriculum-specific administrative documents, its instructional practices increasingly reflect the principles of compassion-centered education.

Regarding instructional planning, interviews with the vice principal for curriculum affairs, who simultaneously serves as an Islamic Creed and Moral Education teacher, revealed that existing instructional materials remain based on the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka). Teaching modules, learning objective sequences (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran), and supporting instructional documents were prepared before the introduction of the Love-Based Curriculum. Consequently, comprehensive administrative adjustments have not yet been completed. Nevertheless, teachers have begun integrating compassion, empathy, responsibility, cooperation, and mutual respect into instructional objectives and classroom activities.

The curriculum coordinator emphasized that teachers continue incorporating values consistent with the Love-Based Curriculum despite the absence of fully revised instructional documents. This finding indicates that curriculum implementation is occurring primarily through pedagogical adaptation rather than formal administrative restructuring. Interviews with the madrasah principal confirmed this interpretation. Institutional leadership recognizes curriculum transformation as a gradual process requiring professional readiness, coordination, and sustained guidance. Accordingly, teachers are encouraged to maintain existing instructional frameworks while progressively incorporating compassion-centered principles into their teaching practices.

Classroom implementation provides more visible evidence of these principles. Observations revealed that Islamic Creed and Moral Education teachers employed respectful communication, motivational encouragement, positive behavioral reinforcement, and opportunities for active student participation. Students were encouraged to ask questions, express opinions, participate in discussions, and demonstrate respectful behavior toward teachers and classmates. These interactions contributed to a classroom atmosphere characterized by openness, cooperation, and interpersonal appreciation.

Interview findings further demonstrated that teachers regarded moral education as extending beyond the transmission of religious knowledge. Instructional activities incorporated advice, ethical guidance, behavioral modeling, and connections between Islamic teachings and students' everyday experiences. Teachers emphasized discipline, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and respect as practical expressions of Islamic moral values. The principal similarly highlighted teachers' responsibilities as moral exemplars who guide students through supportive relationships rather than relying exclusively on academic instruction.

Classroom documentation supported these observations by illustrating active teacher–student interactions, structured learning activities, and supportive instructional environments. Photographic records showed teachers providing guidance and students participating in classroom activities. However, these materials primarily documented observable practices rather than independently establishing long-term behavioral transformation.

Learning evaluation constituted the third implementation dimension. Interviews revealed that teachers assessed students' academic understanding alongside their attitudes, responsibilities, discipline, honesty, and interpersonal behavior. Assessment documentation indicated the continued use of knowledge, skills, and attitude evaluations within existing curriculum frameworks. Teachers monitored behavioral development throughout classroom activities and used these observations to determine appropriate guidance.

Students demonstrating positive behavior received encouragement and appreciation, whereas those requiring additional support were approached through advice, motivation, and persuasive guidance. The teacher explained that evaluation results informed subsequent character-building activities, enabling assessment to function as an ongoing educational process rather than merely an administrative requirement.

Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentation revealed consistency regarding the gradual integration of compassion-centered values. Nevertheless, the evidence also indicated differences between formal curriculum documentation and actual classroom practices. The findings therefore characterize Love-Based Curriculum implementation at MAN 3 Medan as an emerging pedagogical transformation embedded within established instructional structures. Its most visible manifestations involve supportive teacher–student relationships, ethical modeling, participatory learning, and continuous attention to students' moral development.

Barriers to Implementing Love-Based Curriculum Values in Islamic Creed and Moral Education and Strategies for Overcoming Them

The second research objective examined the obstacles encountered during Love-Based Curriculum implementation and the strategies developed by institutional leaders and teachers to address them. Qualitative evidence obtained through interviews, observations, and documentary analysis identified several interconnected challenges involving curriculum documentation, teacher preparedness, professional development, administrative responsibilities, and institutional adaptation. These challenges primarily reflected transitional conditions rather than explicit resistance to compassion-centered educational principles.

The most prominent obstacle concerned the absence of instructional materials specifically designed around the Love-Based Curriculum. Interviews with the curriculum coordinator revealed that teaching modules, learning objective sequences, and supporting documents had already been developed under the Independent Curriculum before the new approach was introduced. Consequently, teachers continued using previously prepared materials while incorporating compassion-centered values into their instructional practices.

This situation created a distinction between formal curriculum administration and classroom implementation. Although teachers demonstrated an understanding of the importance of empathy, compassion, and moral development, these principles had not been systematically incorporated into all instructional documents. Documentary analysis confirmed the continued use of existing curriculum materials, supporting interview accounts concerning incomplete administrative adaptation.

A second challenge involved teachers' understanding of the Love-Based Curriculum's conceptual foundations and practical requirements. Interview participants acknowledged that implementing a new educational approach requires time to interpret its objectives, identify appropriate instructional strategies, and develop suitable assessment procedures. Teachers were therefore still adjusting their understanding of how compassion-centered values should be incorporated consistently across instructional planning, classroom activities, and evaluation.

Limited professional training and curriculum socialization constituted another important barrier. Informants indicated that comprehensive professional development opportunities had not yet reached all teachers. Consequently, implementation depended partly on individual initiative, informal discussions, and institutional guidance. This situation suggested uneven opportunities for developing the pedagogical competencies required to translate curriculum principles into systematic classroom practices.

Administrative responsibilities further complicated the transition. Teachers remained responsible for preparing instructional materials, conducting assessments, processing student achievement records, and completing educational reports. These existing obligations reduced the time available for curriculum adaptation and professional learning. The principal acknowledged that institutional change required adjustments in teachers' understanding, instructional habits, and administrative practices.

Despite these constraints, interviews revealed several strategies for supporting implementation. The principal emphasized institutional encouragement, professional guidance, and the gradual integration of compassion-centered principles into existing educational activities. Rather than requiring immediate replacement of instructional documents, institutional leadership encouraged teachers to incorporate empathy, mutual respect, care, and character formation into daily teaching.

The vice principal for curriculum affairs described coordination meetings, professional discussions, and instructional evaluations as mechanisms for assisting teachers. These activities provided opportunities to exchange experiences, clarify curriculum expectations, and identify

practical responses to implementation difficulties. Teachers were also encouraged to participate in available training programs, seminars, and curriculum-related professional development activities.

At the classroom level, the Islamic Creed and Moral Education teacher reported independently studying relevant educational materials and applying humanistic teaching practices. Observations documented respectful communication, motivational support, positive behavioral guidance, and opportunities for student participation. These practices demonstrated that teachers could begin incorporating compassion-centered principles while formal curriculum adaptation remained incomplete.

Cross-source analysis indicated that institutional support and teacher initiative operated as complementary implementation strategies. Leadership provided policy direction and encouragement, curriculum coordination facilitated professional assistance, and classroom teachers translated educational values into instructional interactions.

Nevertheless, the available evidence did not establish whether these strategies had fully resolved the identified barriers. Instead, the findings suggest that MAN 3 Medan was pursuing a progressive implementation process characterized by administrative adjustment, professional learning, and practical experimentation. Sustainable implementation therefore remains dependent on continued institutional coordination, teacher development, and alignment between curriculum documentation and observable educational practices.

Discussion

Implementation of Love-Based Curriculum Values Through Instructional Planning, Classroom Practices, and Learning Evaluation

The findings demonstrate that implementing the Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Creed and Moral Education at MAN 3 Medan involves more than formally adopting a new curriculum framework. Its implementation reflects a gradual transformation of instructional practices, teacher–student relationships, and educational assessment toward compassion-centered character development. This interpretation highlights the distinction between administrative curriculum compliance and meaningful pedagogical implementation. Although existing instructional documents remain grounded in the Independent Curriculum, teachers have begun incorporating compassion, empathy, responsibility, and mutual respect into everyday educational activities.

From the perspective of instructional planning, the findings suggest that curriculum transformation can initially emerge through the reinterpretation of existing learning objectives and pedagogical strategies. Teachers integrate moral values into previously established instructional structures without immediately replacing every administrative document. This process illustrates how educational reform depends on teachers' professional understanding and their capacity to translate institutional expectations into classroom practices. Opfer and Pedder (2011) emphasize that teacher professional learning develops through interactions among individual experiences, institutional conditions, and educational practices. Similarly, Desimone (2009) identifies coherent professional development as essential for improving instructional implementation.

The observed integration of compassion-centered principles is consistent with the theoretical foundations of caring pedagogy. Battistich et al. (1997) argue that caring educational communities foster interpersonal responsibility, belonging, and shared moral commitments. Within Islamic Creed and Moral Education, these principles acquire additional significance because instructional objectives explicitly emphasize religious belief, ethical responsibility, and exemplary conduct. Compassion-centered learning therefore provides a pedagogical connection between understanding Islamic teachings and practicing moral behavior.

Classroom observations revealed that teachers encouraged participation, respectful communication, cooperation, and positive interpersonal interactions. These findings correspond with Cornelius-White's (2007) meta-analysis, which demonstrates that learner-centered teacher–student relationships are associated with favorable educational outcomes. Likewise, Roorda et al. (2011) establish that positive affective relationships between teachers and students contribute to engagement and achievement. Although the present study does not quantitatively measure these outcomes, its qualitative observations illustrate classroom practices consistent with these established educational mechanisms.

Teacher modeling also emerged as an essential component of implementation. Teachers communicated moral expectations through their own conduct, including respectful language, patience, encouragement, and constructive responses to student behavior. Lickona (1996) identifies exemplary adult behavior and a caring school community as important foundations of effective character education. Furthermore, Narvaez and Lapsley (2008) explain that moral character development requires educational approaches that integrate ethical understanding with practical judgment and habitual behavior. These perspectives reinforce the importance of demonstrating moral values rather than presenting them exclusively as theoretical knowledge.

The findings also highlight the significance of emotional support in developing classroom environments conducive to ethical learning. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) demonstrate that teachers' social and emotional competencies influence classroom relationships and educational environments. Wentzel (1997) similarly identifies perceived pedagogical caring as an important dimension of student motivation. In the context of MAN 3 Medan, supportive communication and participatory learning can therefore be interpreted as educational conditions that may facilitate students' willingness to engage with moral instruction.

Learning evaluation represents another significant dimension of implementation. The teacher's emphasis on discipline, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect indicates an effort to assess moral development alongside cognitive achievement. This approach aligns with Durlak et al. (2011), who demonstrate the educational significance of integrating social and emotional competencies into school-based learning. Taylor et al. (2017) further establish that social and emotional learning interventions can produce sustained developmental benefits.

Nevertheless, the present findings require careful interpretation. Observed positive classroom interactions do not necessarily establish enduring changes in students' moral character. Moreover, existing assessment practices have not yet been demonstrated to constitute a fully

standardized Love-Based Curriculum evaluation framework. The study therefore identifies meaningful initial implementation rather than comprehensive institutional transformation.

Overall, the findings suggest that compassion-centered Islamic education requires alignment among curriculum planning, classroom relationships, teacher modeling, and formative moral assessment. The distinctive contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how these dimensions can begin developing within an established curriculum framework during institutional transition.

Implementation Barriers and Institutional Strategies for Strengthening the Love-Based Curriculum

The findings concerning implementation barriers reveal that introducing compassion-centered education involves complex organizational and pedagogical adjustments. At MAN 3 Medan, the primary challenges were associated with existing curriculum documentation, limited professional development, teachers' conceptual preparedness, and administrative responsibilities. These obstacles demonstrate that educational reform cannot be understood merely as the introduction of new instructional values. Instead, successful implementation requires sustained coordination between institutional policies, teachers' professional competencies, and everyday classroom practices.

The continued use of Independent Curriculum instructional materials represents an important characteristic of the institutional transition. Although teachers have begun incorporating compassion-centered principles into their teaching, formal instructional documents have not been comprehensively revised. This discrepancy illustrates the distinction between intended curriculum changes and enacted classroom practices. Coburn (2003) explains that meaningful educational reform requires changes in teachers' beliefs, instructional practices, and organizational relationships rather than superficial adoption of policy terminology. Accordingly, the implementation observed at MAN 3 Medan can be interpreted as an emerging process of pedagogical adaptation that has not yet achieved complete administrative alignment.

Teacher preparedness constitutes another central concern. The findings indicate that teachers require additional opportunities to understand the conceptual foundations, instructional implications, and assessment requirements of the Love-Based Curriculum. Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that professional learning emerges from interconnected individual and institutional processes. Consequently, providing information about a new curriculum may be insufficient unless teachers receive opportunities to examine its practical relevance, reflect on their experiences, and develop appropriate instructional strategies.

Limited training opportunities further emphasize the importance of structured professional development. Desimone (2009) identifies content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation as essential characteristics of effective teacher development. These principles suggest that professional assistance at MAN 3 Medan would benefit from sustained activities connecting compassion-centered educational concepts with classroom implementation. Professional discussions, collaborative lesson planning, instructional

observations, and reflective evaluation could strengthen teachers' ability to translate curriculum expectations into consistent pedagogical practices.

Administrative responsibilities also influence teachers' capacity to engage with educational reform. The findings demonstrate that preparing instructional documents, conducting assessments, and completing institutional reports compete with the time required for curriculum adaptation. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) identify workload and time pressure as significant contributors to teachers' occupational stress. Although the present research did not directly measure teacher stress, its findings indicate that administrative demands constitute a practical constraint on professional adaptation.

Institutional leadership emerged as an important source of implementation support. The madrasah principal encouraged teachers to incorporate compassion, empathy, and moral guidance into existing instructional activities while progressively adjusting curriculum documentation. This strategy reflects the significance of leadership in shaping educational conditions and supporting instructional improvement. Robinson et al. (2008) demonstrate that leadership practices closely connected to teaching and learning are particularly relevant to educational outcomes.

The curriculum coordinator's role further illustrates the importance of collaborative professional relationships. Coordination meetings, instructional discussions, and professional guidance provided opportunities for teachers to exchange experiences and address implementation difficulties. Vescio et al. (2008) show that professional learning communities can support changes in teaching practices and student learning. Within MAN 3 Medan, collaborative activities therefore represent a potentially valuable mechanism for strengthening collective understanding of compassion-centered education.

At the classroom level, teachers' independent learning and humanistic instructional practices indicate professional commitment despite incomplete institutional preparation. Their emphasis on respectful communication, positive reinforcement, and student participation corresponds with Reeve's (2009) explanation of autonomy-supportive teaching. Such practices encourage students' engagement through supportive educational relationships rather than excessive external control.

The findings nevertheless suggest that institutional commitment alone cannot guarantee comprehensive curriculum implementation. Sustainable improvement requires clearer instructional guidance, accessible professional development, manageable administrative expectations, and systematic evaluation of educational practices. Thapa et al. (2013) emphasize that supportive school climates depend on interconnected relationships, institutional practices, and organizational conditions.

Therefore, the implementation barriers identified at MAN 3 Medan should be interpreted as transitional challenges requiring coordinated institutional responses. The study contributes to existing scholarship by demonstrating how leadership support, professional collaboration, and teacher initiative can facilitate the initial integration of compassion-centered values within Islamic moral education, even before complete curriculum restructuring has occurred.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Creed and Moral Education at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Medan has progressed gradually through instructional planning, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation. Although instructional documents remain primarily based on the Independent Curriculum, teachers have incorporated compassion, empathy, mutual respect, exemplary behavior, and character development into educational practices. Classroom implementation emphasizes supportive teacher–student relationships, positive communication, participatory learning, and moral guidance. Learning evaluation integrates cognitive assessment with continuous observation of students' attitudes, responsibilities, discipline, and interpersonal behavior. Nevertheless, implementation faces several challenges, including limited curriculum-specific instructional materials, insufficient professional training, teachers' adaptation requirements, and administrative workloads. Institutional responses involve leadership support, curriculum coordination, professional discussions, teacher development, and independent pedagogical learning. These findings demonstrate that compassion-centered educational practices can emerge within existing curriculum structures before comprehensive administrative adjustments are completed. However, the available qualitative evidence does not establish long-term improvements in students' moral behavior. Sustainable implementation requires systematic instructional alignment, continuous professional development, institutional collabora

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