

Implementation of 'Love Curriculum' Values in Arabic Language Learning Materials and Methods: A Case Study on Strengthening Students' Character at Wali Songo Ngabar Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract: Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) are recognized as strongholds of character education, and at Wali Songo Ngabar Islamic Boarding School, this effort is realized through the 'Love Curriculum' (encompassing obedience, care, and sincerity), which serves as the educational spirit. Intriguingly, this curriculum is required to permeate all disciplines, including Arabic language learning, which often focuses solely on technical aspects. Therefore, this research aims to comprehensively describe the strategies and models for implementing the 'Love Curriculum' values and analyze their impact on strengthening students' character through an in-depth case study. The research employed a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study method; data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with teachers/ustadzah and curriculum managers, and document analysis of curricula and teaching materials. Key findings indicate that integration proceeds systematically through two main channels: (1) Content Integration, involving the selection of teaching materials (texts and hiwar) rich in moral messages, and (2) Pedagogical Integration, involving the adaptation of teaching methods (muhadharah and role-playing) deliberately designed to require students to directly practice the values of care and sincerity. In conclusion, this implementation successfully transformed Arabic into an effective strategic medium for the internalization and maintenance of student character.

Keywords: Arabic Language Learning, Character Strengthening, Language Learning, Love Curriculum, Value Implementation, Wali Songo Ngabar.

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) hold a vital position in shaping the moral and spiritual foundation of Indonesia's young generation. Distinct from general educational institutions, *pesantren* emphasize not only intellectual competence but also the cultivation of spiritual, social, and ethical values in every aspect of learning and daily life (Ramadhani et al. 2025). Character education in the pesantren context is naturally integrated within students' routines, allowing moral values to be instilled through both formal lessons and community living (Nuryadi et al. 2025). One of the most distinctive examples of this

character-based educational model is the implementation of the Love Curriculum at Wali Songo Ngabar Islamic Boarding School, Ponorogo. This curriculum is built upon three core values: obedience (*tha'ah*), care (*ihtimam*), and sincerity (*ikhlas*) which serve as the guiding principles for all teaching and learning activities within the institution.

These values are not merely symbolic but function as ethical guidelines meant to shape students' character and conduct. However, a challenge arises when these moral principles must be integrated into more technical subjects, such as Arabic language learning. In most traditional pesantren, Arabic instruction tends to focus heavily

on linguistic elements grammar (nahwu–sharaf), vocabulary, and text interpretation while the affective and moral aspects are often overlooked. In fact, Arabic possesses strong potential as a transformative medium for moral and spiritual development, provided that teachers design learning experiences that internalize ethical values alongside linguistic skills.

At Wali Songo Ngabar, the implementation of the Love Curriculum within Arabic language teaching has been systematically integrated through two complementary approaches: content integration and pedagogical integration. Content integration involves the deliberate selection of teaching materials, such as dialogues (hiwar) and reading texts that convey moral lessons honesty, trustworthiness, cooperation, and compassion. Pedagogical integration, on the other hand, is reflected in the adaptation of teaching methods such as muhadharah (speech practice) and role-playing, which encourage students to embody care and sincerity through active participation and self-reflection.

This phenomenon deserves scholarly attention because it demonstrates that Arabic, beyond being a language of communication and religious comprehension, can function as a strategic tool for internalizing moral and character education. The integration of the Love Curriculum into Arabic language learning represents a pedagogical innovation that harmonizes cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of education in pesantren.

Accordingly, this study aims to provide a comprehensive description of the strategies and models used to implement the Love Curriculum values within Arabic language learning at Wali Songo Ngabar Islamic Boarding School and to analyze its role in strengthening students' character. The findings of this research are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of value-based learning models in Islamic education and to offer practical insights for educators seeking to incorporate character formation within language teaching.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study was conducted at Wali Songo Ngabar Islamic Boarding School, located in Siman District, Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. The school is one of the oldest and most influential pesantren in the region and is well known for its balance between religious and general education. Arabic language learning takes place mainly in the Tarbiyatul Mu'allimat Al-Islamiyyah (TMt-I) department, which focuses on female students' Islamic studies and Arabic competence. The pesantren environment, where students live and learn in one setting, provides a natural context for observing how values are practiced in daily learning.

Research Design

This research applied a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design (McCain et al. 2023). The qualitative design was chosen to explore in depth the process and meaning behind the integration of Love Curriculum values in Arabic language learning. The intrinsic case study allowed the researcher to focus specifically on one institution, Wali Songo Ngabar, to understand its unique educational culture and approach to character development.

Participants and Data Sources

The main participants in this study were Arabic language teachers (ustadzah), curriculum coordinators, and first-grade students at the TMI program. Participants were selected purposively, meaning that only those directly involved in planning and implementing the Love Curriculum were included.

Data were collected from three main sources (Morgan 2022):

1. Observation of Arabic classes and daily learning activities.
2. Interviews with teachers, students, and curriculum managers.
3. Document analysis of syllabi, lesson plans, and institutional materials related to character education.

Procedures

The data collection process lasted for about three months. During this period, the researcher joined several Arabic classes, observed classroom interactions, and took part in informal conversations with students and teachers. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using semi-structured questions to give participants freedom to share their experiences. All interviews were recorded with permission and later transcribed for analysis.

Data from observations, interviews, and documents were compared to ensure consistency and credibility.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman’s (1994) model, which includes three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Hamzani et al. 2023). The researcher first selected and summarized important information, then organized it into thematic categories, and finally interpreted patterns related to how the Love Curriculum was applied in Arabic language teaching and how it supported students’ character formation.

Results and Discussion

Integration of “Love Curriculum” Values into Arabic Learning Materials

Based on field observations and document analysis, the integration of Love Curriculum values in Arabic language instruction is systematically designed by teachers. The core values obedience (tha’ah), care (ihtimam), and sincerity (ikhlas) are reflected in lesson plans, classroom instructions, and learning materials. Teachers intentionally select dialogues (hiwar) and reading passages that highlight Islamic moral messages such as honesty, cooperation, and mutual respect.

For instance, in one observed lesson, students practiced a dialogue about teamwork during cleaning activities (an-nazhafah), where they learned both Arabic expressions and social responsibility. Teachers emphasized that the purpose of language learning is not only linguistic

accuracy but also moral cultivation. One teacher stated, “We teach Arabic not only for communication, but to shape sincerity and respect through what students say.”

This aligns with findings by Pudjiastuti et al. (2025), who reported that values-based language learning effectively links academic content with character education outcomes. Similarly, M. Huda (2024) emphasized that Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in embedding moral principles through everyday learning materials that reflect faith and discipline.

Integration of Values into Teaching Strategies and Learning Practices

Observation data show that Arabic language teachers at Wali Songo Ngabar apply participatory and value-oriented learning methods consistent with the Love Curriculum. Activities such as muhadharah (speech practice), role-playing, and collaborative discussions provide opportunities for students to practice Arabic while embodying moral values.

During *muhadharah*, students deliver short Arabic speeches on topics like honesty or kindness, while teachers give feedback on both grammar and sincerity of delivery. In role-playing sessions, students act out everyday situations helping a friend, apologizing, or showing gratitude allowing them to experience ihtimam (care) in action. Students interviewed said these activities made Arabic “feel alive and meaningful,” because moral lessons were naturally connected to language use.

According to (Abuemira. 2024) , integrating sociocultural interaction in Arabic learning improves not only linguistic proficiency but also moral sensitivity and empathy. This supports the view that learning is most effective when students are emotionally engaged in a value-based context.

The Teacher’s Role as a Moral and Spiritual Model

Teachers serve as moral exemplars who demonstrate sincerity, patience, and discipline qualities central to the Love Curriculum. Observation revealed that teachers at Ngabar often extend their care beyond class, guiding students informally in the dormitory and daily routines. Students mentioned that they are inspired more by

teachers' behavior than their words, reflecting the idea that education through example is most powerful.

This finding resonates with Safitri et al. (2025), who highlighted that teachers in Islamic schools play a transformative role as moral models within contextual learning environments. Likewise, Nabila (2025) concluded that consistent teacher attitudes foster students' moral development and intrinsic motivation to behave ethically.

Such findings confirm that in Islamic boarding schools, teacher character functions as the living embodiment of the curriculum's values, bridging the gap between theory and real practice.

Collaboration Between Classroom and Dormitory Culture

Document review and observation confirmed that the internalization of Love Curriculum values extends beyond classroom activities. The dormitory setting serves as an ongoing laboratory of character education. Morning routines, group cleaning, and prayer sessions reinforce obedience and care among students.

This cultural continuity supports Retnasari et al. (2023), who found that a strong school culture is the backbone of religious character development in pesantren settings. At Ngabar, dorm supervisors (*musyirifah*) and teachers cooperate to ensure that values practiced in Arabic classes respectful language, sincerity, and empathy become part of daily student life.

Students also reported feeling that Arabic expressions of politeness and gratitude are easier to apply in real interactions because they constantly hear and use them in daily communication. This supports Yusuf (2025), who emphasized that character education is most successful when reinforced through consistent institutional culture and practice.

Impact on Students' Character and Motivation

Integrating moral values into Arabic language learning has led to observable character improvement. Interviews and observations revealed that students became more disciplined, empathetic, and intrinsically motivated to learn. They viewed Arabic not only as a linguistic tool but as a means of self-improvement.

One student expressed, "Learning Arabic now feels meaningful because it teaches us to be better people, not just to memorize grammar." This sense of emotional engagement aligns with Filippou et al. (2022), who reported that value-based education enhances student motivation by linking personal growth with learning objectives.

Moreover, teachers confirmed that students who internalize *ikhlas* and *ihitimam* tend to perform better academically and socially. This shows that the Love Curriculum promotes not only moral awareness but also holistic student development.

Methodological Reflection

The qualitative case study design provided flexibility to explore interactions and emotions that quantitative data might overlook. Through direct observation, the researcher experienced how teachers corrected students gently, how peers supported each other, and how sincerity shaped the classroom atmosphere. Interviews allowed for deeper understanding of teachers' pedagogical intentions, while document analysis confirmed that the institution's written policies truly aligned with daily practice.

This triangulation of data strengthened validity and demonstrated that the Love Curriculum was not only conceptual but implemented consistently. As Fathahilah (2025) noted, integrative curriculum design in Islamic boarding schools requires alignment between planning, teaching, and cultural context precisely what was observed in this study.

General Discussion

Overall, the results show that the success of Love Curriculum implementation depends on three interrelated factors: thoughtful planning, teacher consistency, and cultural reinforcement. When materials, pedagogy, and institutional culture align with shared moral values, learning becomes holistic addressing the cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions of education.

This study thus confirms findings by Chasanati & Taufiq (2025) that value-based curriculum models can foster sustainable moral character when embedded in both formal instruction and daily life. The Love Curriculum serves not only as a teaching innovation but also as a moral ecosystem that shapes identity, faith, and language simultaneously.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that the implementation of the Love Curriculum at Wali Songo Ngabar Islamic Boarding School has a significant role in strengthening students' character through Arabic language learning. The three key values obedience (tha'ah), care (ihliman), and sincerity (ikhlas) are not only taught conceptually but are integrated into the materials, teaching strategies, and daily interactions within the school environment.

Teachers act as role models who demonstrate these values through their attitude and consistency, while the dormitory culture continuously reinforces them outside the classroom. This combination creates a coherent learning ecosystem that supports both moral and academic growth.

Overall, this research confirms that character education becomes more effective when it is practiced and experienced in everyday activities rather than taught as abstract theory. The Love Curriculum approach can therefore be seen as an innovative model that links language mastery with moral and spiritual formation. Further research is recommended to explore how this model can be applied and sustained in other Islamic educational institutions with different contexts and student backgrounds.

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