

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A LOVE-BASED CURRICULUM THROUGH SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AT PESANTREN NURULHUDA PAKANDANGAN

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of a love-based curriculum through social activities and community service at Pesantren Nurulhuda Pakandangan. The main focus of this research is on students' involvement in various activities such as social service, community da'wah, and humanitarian programs as a means of fostering character grounded in compassion (mahabbah). The method employed is a qualitative approach with a case study design, utilizing observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that students' active participation in social activities is effective in developing empathy, social awareness, and sensitivity toward societal realities. Furthermore, direct field experiences strengthen the internalization of inclusive and humanistic Islamic values. Therefore, social activities and community service function not merely as external practices, but also as an effective medium for character education in shaping students who are morally grounded, responsive, and oriented toward social welfare. This study underscores that the integration of a love-based curriculum through community engagement plays a strategic role in nurturing a generation that is not only religious but also possesses a strong sense of social responsibility.

Keywords: love-based curriculum, social activities, character education, Islamic boarding school.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi nilai kurikulum cinta melalui kegiatan sosial dan pengabdian masyarakat di Pesantren Nurulhuda Pakandangan. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah pada keterlibatan santri dalam berbagai aktivitas seperti bakti sosial, dakwah masyarakat, dan program kemanusiaan sebagai sarana pembentukan karakter berbasis kasih sayang (mahabbah). Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus, melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa partisipasi aktif santri dalam kegiatan sosial mampu menumbuhkan empati, kepedulian, serta sensitivitas terhadap realitas sosial di masyarakat. Selain itu, pengalaman langsung di lapangan memperkuat internalisasi nilai-nilai keislaman yang inklusif dan humanis. Dengan demikian, kegiatan sosial dan pengabdian masyarakat tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai praktik eksternal, tetapi juga sebagai media pendidikan karakter yang efektif dalam membentuk santri yang berakhlak, responsif, dan berorientasi pada kemaslahatan

sosial. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi kurikulum cinta melalui pengabdian masyarakat memiliki peran strategis dalam mencetak generasi yang tidak hanya religius, tetapi juga memiliki tanggung jawab sosial yang tinggi.

Kata kunci: *kurikulum cinta, kegiatan social, pendidikan karakter, pesantren*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in pesantren plays a strategic role in shaping the character of students so that they are not only intellectually outstanding but also possess social and spiritual sensitivity (Hanaris, 2025). However, in the modern context, educational challenges have become increasingly complex, particularly regarding the rise of individualism, a decline in social empathy, and a lack of concern for humanitarian issues within society (Abdullah et al., 2025). These conditions call for an educational approach that is not only oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also toward instilling deep humanistic values (Ahmad & Nihayatuzzain, 2024).

One relevant approach is the development of a “curriculum of love” (Ifendi, 2025)—an educational model that emphasizes the values of compassion, empathy, and social concern as an integral part of the learning process. In the pesantren tradition (Abdullah & Muawaroh, 2024), these values have in fact long been embodied through the daily practices of students, both in interpersonal relationships and in interactions with the community. However, these values must continue to be contextualized to effectively address the challenges of the times.

A number of previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of strengthening character education through social activities. Thomas Lickona asserts that character development is not sufficient if it focuses solely on the aspect of moral knowledge (moral knowing); rather, it must be complemented by moral feeling and concrete moral action (moral action) (Purwati et al., 2024), one of which can be realized through direct involvement in social activities. Furthermore, Yusuf al-Qaradawi explains that Islamic teachings regard the social dimension as an integral part of worship, in which concern for others is a manifestation of faith (Rahman & Kizi, 2023). In the context of contemporary Islamic education, Azyumardi Azra also emphasizes the importance of the role of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in fostering a moderate Islam oriented toward the public good through active engagement in the community (M. Rahman et al., 2025).

Other research indicates that community service programs in pesantren can enhance students’ empathy, solidarity, and social concern, while simultaneously strengthening the relationship between educational institutions and the surrounding community (Winarsih & Ismail, 2024). These studies demonstrate that experiential learning through social activities is more effective in instilling humanistic values than purely theoretical learning approaches. Therefore, research on the implementation of the “curriculum of love” (Koto et al., 2025) through social activities and community service is becoming increasingly relevant to develop within the context of pesantren education in Indonesia.

The Nurulhuda Pakandangan Islamic boarding school, as one of the Islamic educational institutions based on the pesantren model, demonstrates concrete efforts in implementing the “curriculum of love” through social activities and community service (Zaini et al., 2025). Activities such as social service, community outreach, and humanitarian programs serve as direct learning experiences for students to understand diverse social realities. Through this involvement, students not only learn theoretically but also directly experience the process of internalizing the values of empathy and compassion (Ahmad & Nihayatuzzain, 2024).

Social activities and community service hold great potential as effective tools for character education. Direct interaction with the community allows students to develop sensitivity toward social issues (Abdullah & Muawaroh, 2024), such as poverty, inequality, and other humanitarian needs. Furthermore, these experiences also reinforce Islamic values that are inclusive (Zaini et al., 2025), tolerant, and oriented toward the common good.

Nevertheless, there have been few studies that specifically examine how the “curriculum of love” is implemented through social activities within the pesantren environment, nor the extent to which it is effective in shaping students’ character (Maskur & Ansori, 2025). Therefore, this study is important to fill this gap by conducting an in-depth examination of community service practices as a medium for internalizing values of compassion within the pesantren. The novelty of this study lies in its analytical focus, which specifically examines the implementation of the “curriculum of love” through social activities and community service as the primary means of shaping students’ character at the Nurulhuda Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School. Unlike previous studies, which generally place character education within a theoretical framework or classroom learning, this study emphasizes an experiential learning approach grounded in social reality as a space for the internalization of the value of compassion (mahabbah).

Furthermore, this study offers an integrative perspective combining Islamic values Hamzah & Iksan, (2025), social practices, and a love-based curriculum—an area that has not yet been thoroughly explored within the pesantren context. Thus, this study not only enriches the discourse on Islamic education but also presents a practical model for implementing a curriculum that is humanistic (Qamariah & Anwar, 2025), contextual, and oriented toward strengthening students’ empathy and social concern. Consequently, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of the concept of a “caring curriculum” in Islamic education, while also providing practical insights for Islamic boarding schools in designing educational models that are more humanistic, contextual, and responsive to the needs of the community.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design (Ahid & Musrifah, 2024), which aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the

“Curriculum of Love” (Ifendi, 2025) through social and community service activities at the Nurulhuda Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School. This approach was chosen because it allows for a contextual and holistic exploration of the phenomenon in line with the realities on the ground. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Chand, 2025). Observation was used to directly observe the students’ involvement in social activities; interviews were conducted with religious leaders, teachers, and students to gather diverse perspectives; and documentation was used to supplement the data, including activity records, photographs, and notes on the pesantren’s programs. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source and method triangulation, thereby ensuring that the data obtained are scientifically accountable (Bredeweg & Winkels, 1998). Using this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of social activities as a means of internalizing the curriculum’s values of love in shaping the character of santri who are empathetic and socially conscious.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the “curriculum of love” at the Nurulhuda Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School is concretely reflected in various social activities designed not merely as extracurriculars, but as an integral part of the educational process. These social activities serve as a practical space for students to internalize the values of love (mahabbah), empathy, and social responsibility through direct experience within the community. First, social service activities have become a regular program that involves students in concrete actions such as distributing basic food supplies, providing financial assistance to orphans, and aiding underprivileged communities. In these activities, students not only serve as implementers but are also involved in the entire process—from planning to the distribution of aid. This process cultivates social sensitivity while fostering a collective awareness of the importance of solidarity and concern for vulnerable groups (Mustar, 2026).

Second, community outreach serves as a form of service that emphasizes the dissemination of inclusive and compassionate Islamic values. Students are deployed into the community to lead religious study sessions, deliver sermons, or participate in other religious activities, both within the pesantren’s immediate vicinity and in broader regions. Through these activities, students learn to communicate with diverse segments of society and gain firsthand understanding of socio-religious dynamics. Dakwah is not only understood as the delivery of religious material but also as a practice of compassion, tolerance, and a persuasive approach (Musahlan, 2026).

Third, humanitarian programs and social response initiatives are an important part of community service. In certain situations, such as natural disasters or social emergencies, students are involved in fundraising, aid distribution, and collaboration with local

communities. These activities reinforce the value of compassion that transcends boundaries and foster an awareness that Islamic teachings require active involvement in helping others regardless of their background (Suhaimi, 2026). Fourth, there are also community empowerment activities, such as teaching Quranic literacy, educational mentoring for children, and community-based social initiatives. Students serve as agents of change who not only provide immediate assistance but also contribute to enhancing community capacity. This approach demonstrates that community service in Islamic boarding schools is not merely charitable but also transformative (Maulidi, 2026).

In practice, community service is carried out through a systematic and phased approach. The initial phase begins with values training and orientation, during which students are provided with an understanding of the objectives and ethics of community service. The next phase involves fieldwork, where students interact directly with the community, confront various real-world issues, and learn to adapt to diverse social contexts. The final stage is reflection and evaluation, aimed at internalizing these experiences into values and sustainable learning (Mustar, 2026). Thus, social activities and community service at the pesantren serve not only as a means of practical training but also as an effective medium for character education. Through active involvement in these various activities, students are expected to develop empathy, strengthen social solidarity, and become individuals who are responsive to the needs of the community. This simultaneously reaffirms that the “curriculum of love” finds its relevance in real-world practices that directly touch social life.

The strategy for implementing social and community service activities at the Nurulhuda Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School is systematically designed so that these activities are not merely ceremonial but truly serve as an effective means of internalizing the values of the “curriculum of love.” This strategy emphasizes a balance between thorough planning, participatory implementation, and reflective evaluation (Suhaimi, 2026). First, the strategy begins with a needs-based approach. The pesantren identifies community conditions and needs through communication with local leaders and alumni, as well as direct observation. Consequently, the social programs designed are not top-down but are relevant to the social realities faced by the community. This approach is essential to ensure that community service activities truly have a tangible impact and are not merely symbolic (Mustar, 2026).

Second, according to Suhaimi (2026), a participatory approach is implemented, actively involving students in all stages of the activities. Students are not merely implementers but are also involved in the planning, organizing, and evaluation processes. This strategy aims to foster a sense of responsibility, leadership, and social awareness. In this context, students learn that community service is not merely a task but part of a moral and spiritual calling. Third, Islamic boarding schools employ a strategy of integrating curriculum and practice (integrative learning), in which, according to Mustar (2026), social activities are not separated from the learning process. The values taught in the classical Islamic texts or religious study sessions—such as compassion, justice, and

care—are directly put into practice during community service activities. Thus, there is continuity between the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of the students' education.

Fourth, orientation and mentoring strategies are crucial before students are deployed into the community. Students receive guidance on ethical interaction, social communication, and understanding the context of the communities they will encounter. Additionally, during the implementation of activities, mentors or supervisors provide guidance to ensure the activities align with the pesantren's values and educational objectives (Maulidi, 2026). Fifth, collaboration with various parties—such as the local community, alumni, and social organizations—is implemented. This collaboration expands the scope of the activities while strengthening the resulting social impact. Furthermore, this cooperation serves as a means for students to learn how to build social networks and understand the importance of collective work in addressing social issues (Rahman, 2026).

Sixth, strategies for continuous reflection and evaluation are carried out after the activities take place. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, both individually and in groups, to understand the values gained during the community service process. This evaluation focuses not only on the program's success but also on changes in the students' attitudes and social awareness (Rahman, 2026). With these structured strategies, social activities and community service do not merely become incidental activities but evolve into an effective experiential learning model. These strategies demonstrate that the implementation of the “Curriculum of Love” requires a holistic approach, integrating the aspects of planning, implementation, and reflection in a cohesive manner, thereby fostering students who are empathetic, adaptive, and possess a strong social commitment.

The Values Perspective of the “Curriculum of Love”

Social activities and community service at the Nurulhuda Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School can be analyzed as concrete manifestations of the values of the “Curriculum of Love” (Qamariah & Anwar, 2025), which are not merely normative but also practical. In this context, the “Curriculum of Love” is oriented toward developing individuals who maintain a balance between spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions through direct experiences that engage with the realities of life (Harahap et al., 2025).

Social activities reflect the value of mahabbah as the core of Islamic teachings (Abitolkha & Muvid, 2021). The involvement of santri in assisting underprivileged communities, engaging in social service, and responding to humanitarian issues demonstrates that love does not remain confined to the conceptual realm but is manifested in concrete actions. This value reinforces the orientation that worship is not only vertical toward God but also horizontal toward fellow human beings (Natuna et al., 2025).

There is the value of empathy (ta‘āṭuf) (Mustofa, 2025) that develops through direct interaction with the community. Experiences of social conditions such as poverty, limited access to education, or other humanitarian problems encourage santri to feel what others are going through. Within the framework of the “curriculum of love,” empathy serves as a crucial foundation for building authentic social awareness—not merely the result of indoctrination (Abitolkha & Muvid, 2021); (Aslinda & Amrizon, 2025a).

Community service activities reflect the values of altruism and social concern (itsār), which involve prioritizing the interests of others over one’s own. Santri are trained to step out of their comfort zones and make tangible contributions to society. These values are crucial in shaping the character of santri—one that is not individualistic but rather characterized by a collective orientation and strong social solidarity (Abdullah & Muawaroh, 2024). Additionally, there are the values of inclusivity and tolerance, through which santri learn to interact with people from diverse social backgrounds. Community service serves as a space for social dialogue that brings together differences—whether in cultural, economic, or religious understanding. In this context, the “love” curriculum fosters an open-minded attitude, respect for differences, and a commitment to peaceful approaches (Zaini et al., 2025).

Social activities also embody the value of self-transformation. Hands-on field experiences not only impact the community but also reshape students’ perspectives on life. They learn about the meaning of simplicity, responsibility, and the importance of the individual’s role in creating social change (Bandura, 2001). Thus, the “Curriculum of Love” shapes not only behavior but also inner consciousness. From an educational perspective, these activities demonstrate the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Purwati et al., 2024). Students not only understand the concept of goodness but also feel it and put it into practice. This is the essence of the “curriculum of love” as a holistic and transformative educational approach.

Overall, this analysis shows that social activities and community service are not merely supplementary programs but rather the core of implementing the “curriculum of love” in Islamic boarding schools (Aslinda & Amrizon, 2025b). Values such as compassion, empathy, care, and tolerance are naturally internalized through direct experience, resulting in students who are not only ritually religious but also humanistic and responsive to social issues.

Character Shaped Within the Context of the “Curriculum of Love”

Social activities and community service at Islamic boarding schools serve not only as a means of internalizing values but also as a space for fostering strong character (Maskur & Ansori, 2025) in students. This character is formed through a process of repeated, reflective, and contextual direct experience, resulting in a personality that is resilient in the face of social dynamics (Aini et al., 2023). Empathetic and socially conscious character traits are formed (Mustofa, 2025). Students who are directly involved in

community activities tend to exhibit a high level of sensitivity to the suffering and needs of others. This character does not emerge instantly but through real-world interactions that allow students to “experience” social conditions firsthand. The empathy that develops is deep-seated (deep empathy), not merely fleeting sympathy.

Subsequently, a strong sense of responsibility (Ali, 2021) emerges. Involvement in the planning and implementation of social activities trains students to uphold trust, complete tasks, and commit to shared goals. They learn that every action has social consequences, so responsibility is not only individual but also collective. Next, the character traits of independence and resilience develop. Field experiences often expose students to less-than-ideal conditions, such as limited facilities, cultural differences, or communication challenges (Hartono, 2016). These situations train them to adapt, find solutions, and persevere in difficult circumstances. This resilience serves as an important asset in a dynamic social life.

Furthermore, social leadership is cultivated (Abdullah & Muawaroh, 2024). In community service activities, students are often assigned roles as coordinators or program implementers. This hones their ability to manage teams, communicate effectively, and make decisions. The leadership that emerges is not authoritarian but rather based on servant leadership grounded in the value of compassion. Consequently, inclusive and tolerant character traits emerge (Aini et al., 2023). Interaction with a diverse community encourages students to respect differences and avoid exclusionary attitudes. They learn that diversity is a social reality that must be addressed wisely (M. F. Rahman et al., 2020). This character trait is crucial for building a peaceful and harmonious society. Furthermore, it fosters integrity and sincerity (Ahmad & Nihayatuzzain, 2024). Selfless social activities train students to do good not for the sake of reward, but out of moral and spiritual awareness. This integrity serves as a vital foundation for shaping individuals who are honest, consistent, and trustworthy. Upon deeper analysis, these character traits demonstrate that a “love-based” curriculum fosters students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and socially mature. The strong character that is formed is holistic, encompassing cognitive, affective, and practical aspects. Thus, the pesantren is not merely a place for the transfer of knowledge but also a space for shaping individuals who are capable, empathetic, and actively contribute to community life.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the “curriculum of love” through social and community service activities at the Nurulhuda Pakandangan Islamic Boarding School demonstrates that education based on the value of compassion can be concretely realized through the direct involvement of students in social realities. Activities such as social service, community outreach, and humanitarian programs are not only means of religious practice but also effective tools for internalizing the values of empathy, compassion, and social responsibility.

A systematic implementation strategy—ranging from needs-based planning, participatory approaches, integration with learning, to continuous reflection—strengthens the effectiveness of these activities as a model of experiential learning. From the perspective of the “curriculum of love,” these activities embody core values such as mahabbah, empathy, altruism, and inclusivity, which are naturally internalized through social interaction. Furthermore, this implementation has been shown to contribute to shaping the strong character of boarding school students, including empathetic attitudes, responsibility, independence, social leadership, tolerance, and integrity. Thus, the “curriculum of love” not only produces students who are religiously observant but also humanistic, adaptable, and deeply committed to the common good of society. This underscores that Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in shaping a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also of strong character and socially empowered.

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