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Love-Based Curriculum A Philosophical Perspective and Its Relevance to Social Emotional Learning

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ABSTRACT
Rising cases of violence and declining empathy in educational settings indicate that learning still places primary emphasis on cognitive attainment. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has responded to this situation through the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, KBC); however, existing studies have focused largely on its implementation and have yet to systematically elaborate its philosophical foundations. This study aims to analyze the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of the KBC and their relevance to the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) framework of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The study employed a library research design with a conceptual–philosophical analysis approach. The primary sources were the KBC Guidelines, enacted through Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 6077 of 2025, and the CASEL SEL framework document, while the secondary sources comprised relevant journal articles and books. The data were analyzed through content analysis involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that, ontologically, the KBC positions love as a relational reality that connects human beings with God, with one another, and with nature; epistemologically, knowledge of love is constructed through empathic experience, reflection, and habituation within the madrasah culture; and axiologically, love serves as a source of ethical, aesthetic, and social-utility values. All five SEL competencies have counterparts in the KBC, while the KBC adds a transcendental dimension that is not made explicit in SEL. This study offers an integrative KBC–SEL conceptual framework that can serve as a basis for developing instruction, assessment, and empirical research in madrasahs.

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century presents major challenges for education, particularly in shaping learners' character holistically (Care et al., 2018). The rise in violence, intolerance, and moral crises among students reflects the fact that education remains narrowly focused on academic achievement, while social, emotional, and spiritual development is often neglected (Sukiman et al., 2021). The Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (*Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia*, JPPI) recorded 573 cases of violence in schools, madrasahs, and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) throughout 2024, double the 285 cases recorded in 2023; 36% of these occurred in religious educational institutions (Wulandari, 2024). This situation indicates that education has not yet fully succeeded in fostering the empathy, care, and social responsibility that should lie at the heart of the learning process (Kallio et al., 2024).

In light of this reality, the education sector needs to re-evaluate the extent to which the goals of national education have been achieved. Education is not merely a space for accumulating knowledge but a place where human values grow and flourish (Balaguer et al., 2025). It is in this spirit that the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, KBC) emerged, initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and enacted through Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 6077 of 2025. The KBC seeks to reorient education so

that it is not confined to cognitive attainment alone. By instilling the values of compassion, empathy, and social sensitivity, the KBC aims to create a learning process that is warmer and more meaningful (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam [Ditjen Pendis], 2025). It guides teachers and students to understand one another, to cultivate care, and to view learning as a journey toward becoming fully human.

Theoretically, the idea of placing love at the heart of education has deep roots. Fromm (1956) regarded love as an art that requires care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge; love is therefore a capacity that can be learned and practiced rather than merely a feeling. Freire (1970/2005) asserted that dialogue in education cannot exist without a profound love for the world and for people. Noddings (2013) subsequently developed the ethics of care, which places the relation between the one-caring and the cared-for at the foundation of moral education. In more recent scholarship, pedagogical love is understood as the teacher's commitment to recognizing the potential of every learner and accompanying them sincerely (Kaukko et al., 2022; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011), while Lanas and Zembylas (2015) showed that love in education has transformative power because it fosters engagement with justice and the common good. In the Islamic tradition, Al-Ghazali regarded *mahabbah* (love) for God as the culmination of the moral and spiritual journey and the ultimate aim of moral education (*akhlak*) (Abu Zahrin et al., 2020; Alavi, 2007).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL), meanwhile, has developed into the most widely cited framework for developing social and emotional competencies in schools. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as the process through which learners acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, show empathy, establish supportive relationships, and make responsible decisions. The framework is articulated in five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020). A meta-analysis of 213 school-based programs showed that SEL improves students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011), and its positive effects remain evident in follow-up studies (Taylor et al., 2017). Recent developments advocate implementing SEL systemically across classrooms, school culture, families, and communities (Mahoney et al., 2021).

Both traditions attend to the affective and relational dimensions of education, yet they proceed from different assumptions. SEL originates in the tradition of developmental psychology and does not explicitly include a spiritual dimension, whereas the KBC departs from a theocentric worldview that makes love for Allah and His Messenger the source of values (Aliyah et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2025). A fair comparison of the two therefore requires the lens of educational philosophy. Ontology examines the nature of the reality underlying a curriculum; epistemology examines the sources of knowledge and the ways in which it is acquired and validated; and axiology examines the values and goals to be achieved (Ilahiya & Nugraha, 2025; Priatna, 2020). These three dimensions enable researchers to assess whether the similarities between the KBC and SEL exist only at the level of practice or also at the level of underlying assumptions.

A number of previous studies have examined the KBC from various perspectives, ranging from the readiness of madrasah teachers (Nada & Listiana, 2025), its application in Arabic language learning (Laili, 2024) and early childhood education (Dinata et al., 2025), a comparison of the 2013 Curriculum and the KBC (Syaripudin et al., 2025), an AI-based love curriculum (Sadri et al., 2025), the KBC and religious moderation (Khairani et al., 2025), and the KBC and the humanistic approach (Qamariah & Anwar, 2025), to the role of the KBC in instilling the values of tolerance and harmony (Inayah et al., 2025). Even studies closer to the focus of the present research have not addressed this issue. Shabrina et al. (2025) examined the KBC through the philosophy of education but did not map it onto a social-emotional competency framework, whereas Aliyah et al. (2024) constructed SEL within an Islamic paradigm without drawing on the KBC, which was only enacted in 2025. This review of previous research shows that most studies have focused on implementation and pedagogical aspects and have not yet explored in depth

either the philosophical foundations of the KBC or its relationship with Social Emotional Learning (SEL). This gap needs to be addressed because, without clarity regarding its philosophical foundations, the implementation of the KBC risks being reduced to slogans and ceremonial activities, as reflected in the challenges of implementing the KBC in *madrasah ibtidaiyah* (Islamic elementary schools) that have begun to be reported (Mukaromah et al., 2025).

This gap provides the rationale for the present study, which seeks to fill it through a conceptual inquiry that integrates the perspectives of educational philosophy (ontology, epistemology, and axiology) with SEL theory. The study is guided by two questions: (1) What are the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of the KBC? and (2) How are these philosophical foundations relevant to the five SEL competencies? Theoretically, this study offers an integrative KBC–SEL conceptual framework that extends SEL with a transcendental dimension. Practically, the framework can serve as a reference for teachers and madrasah curriculum developers in designing instruction and assessment. Through this inquiry, the study is expected to make a conceptual contribution to strengthening a basic education that is more humanistic, more transformative, and grounded in the value of love.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative inquiry employing a library research design that draws on literature, including books, scholarly articles, and official documents (Sari & Asmendri, 2020; Zed, 2014). This design was chosen because the object of study consists of ideas and concepts rather than behaviors observed in the field. Specifically, the study follows the theory synthesis approach to conceptual articles, which integrates several theoretical frameworks to generate a new understanding of a phenomenon (Jaakkola, 2020).

The primary data sources were the Love-Based Curriculum Guidelines enacted through Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 6077 of 2025 (Ditjen Pendis, 2025) and the SEL framework document published by CASEL (2020). Scholarly articles, books, and other academic literature addressing related themes served as secondary data sources. Searches were conducted through Google Scholar, Garuda, DOAJ, and international publisher portals using the keywords "*kurikulum berbasis cinta*" (love-based curriculum), "*kurikulum cinta*" (love curriculum), "pedagogical love," "love-based education," and "social emotional learning." Sources were selected according to three criteria: (a) direct relevance to the research focus; (b) publication within the last ten years, except for classic works serving as theoretical references; and (c) traceability through a DOI or an official link. The distribution of the sources analyzed is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of research data sources

No.	Source category	Number	Example references
1	Policy documents, official frameworks, and supporting data	4	Ditjen Pendis (2025); CASEL (2020); Wulandari (2024)
2	Studies on the Love-Based Curriculum	14	Malik et al. (2025); Mukaromah et al. (2025); Shabrina et al. (2025)
3	Social Emotional Learning theory and research	12	Durlak et al. (2011); Mahoney et al. (2021); Aliyah et al. (2024)
4	Love in education and religious traditions	19	Noddings (2013); Kaukko et al. (2022); Alavi (2007)
5	Philosophy of education, character, and holistic education	22	Priatna (2020); Mahmoudi et al. (2012); Widodo (2019)
	Total	**71**	

The data were collected through a literature search, the selection of primary and secondary sources, and a critical review of key ideas, which were then developed into an analytical instrument in the form of a category framework aligned with the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data were subsequently analyzed using interpretive content analysis

(Krippendorff, 2018) through three main stages: data reduction, data display in systematic patterns or categories, and logical conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020). In the reduction stage, the researchers coded statements in the sources relating to the nature of love, the sources and means of acquiring knowledge, and the values and goals of education. In the display stage, these statements were grouped into deductive categories consisting of the three philosophical dimensions and the five SEL competencies and were then organized into a comparison matrix. In the conclusion-drawing stage, the researchers interpreted patterns of similarity, difference, and convergence between the KBC and SEL. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source triangulation, namely by comparing official documents with academic studies, and through peer debriefing among the author team to reach agreement on coding and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With this design, the study is expected to produce findings that are valid, relevant, and meaningful for the development of scholarship on the Love-Based Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Terminology of the Love-Based Curriculum

The Love-Based Curriculum is a learning framework designed to emphasize the holistic development of learners' character. It focuses not only on mastery of academic content but also places learning experiences and social interaction at the core of the educational process. In this approach, students are engaged actively and reflectively, so that they not only learn cognitively but also hone their emotional and social capacities. Empathy, self-awareness, and the ability to interact with the surrounding environment are essential components, making education more humane and supportive of the development of the whole person. Every step of learning is directed toward respecting diversity, fostering a sense of responsibility, and building warm and supportive relationships between teachers and students (Ditjen Pendis, 2025).

The goal of the Love-Based Curriculum is to shape a generation that is humanist, nationalist, naturalist, and tolerant, in which love serves as the main principle guiding learners' attitudes and behavior (Syaripudin et al., 2025, p. 13). The curriculum instills the values of care for others, ecological awareness, and social responsibility so that students can play an active role in community life (Kemenag, n.d.). Love here is not merely a feeling but the ethical and moral foundation that guides everyday decisions and actions (Qamariah & Anwar, 2025). Accordingly, education through the KBC shapes not only intelligent minds but also hearts and souls full of compassion, tolerance, and care, enabling every child to develop into a whole person capable of applying human values in their life.

International literature and research indicate that concepts similar to the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) are widely known as character education (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025), love-based education (Shih, 2022), and pedagogical love (Kaukko et al., 2022). Although the terminology differs, the principles they advance are closely aligned with those of the KBC in emphasizing the importance of emotional, social, and character development in education (Kaukko et al., 2022). In the global context, although the term "KBC" itself is rarely used outside Indonesia, the core idea behind the curriculum—education that balances cognitive, emotional, and social aspects—has already become a subject of global educational discourse (Ghiasvand & Sharifpour, 2024). The difference is that the KBC explicitly takes love for Allah and His Messenger as its point of departure, making the spiritual dimension a structural component of the curriculum rather than a mere supplement (Malik et al., 2025).

Ontology of the Love-Based Curriculum

Ontology, as a branch of philosophy, examines the nature of the existence of all things, both abstract and concrete, in order to discover the essence of reality. As part of metaphysics, ontology explores "being" universally, beyond mere material existence, and addresses fundamental questions such as whether reality is solely material, whether there are basic elements underlying it, and whether reality is monistic, dualistic, or pluralistic (Priatna, 2020). From this perspective,

reality is understood as fact that reflects a deeper truth behind observable phenomena (Smallwood, 2025).

In the educational context, the ontology of the KBC is a philosophical inquiry that positions love as a fundamental reality (Qamariah & Anwar, 2025). Love is understood not merely as a moral or ethical value but as an ontological basis that unites human beings, nature, and God in harmony. Consequently, education is understood not only as the transfer of knowledge but as an expression of love that builds relationships among students, teachers, society, nature, and God, thereby producing human beings who are of good character, empathetic, and civilized (Ditjen Pendis, 2025).

All religions teach about love (Sukiman et al., 2021). In Islam, Al-Ghazali interpreted love as the deepest reality of the human being, connecting the person with God, with others, and with nature. According to him, love for Allah originates from *ma'rifah*, or knowledge; hence, education should be directed toward cultivating awareness of love as the pinnacle of spiritual experience (Alavi, 2007). Hindu teachings view love as *Bhakti* (spiritual love or sincere devotion to God), *Prema* (pure, unconditional love for God and for humans), and *Kama* (romantic and emotional love) (Chandra & Ranjan, 2022). Buddhist teachings define love as a moral and spiritual practice rather than merely an emotion or a romantic relationship; love leads to enlightenment (*nirvana*) through the cultivation of compassion, empathy, and wisdom (Dar, 2019). In Christian teachings, love is spiritual, moral, and practical, not merely romantic; it binds human beings to God and to one another in the harmony of life (Buzguţa, 2024). In Confucian teachings, love is understood through the concept of *Ren* (仁), often translated as "humaneness" or "benevolence." *Ren* is a core value in Confucian ethics that encompasses compassion, empathy, and sincere concern for others. This concept demonstrates the importance of interpersonal relationships and moral responsibility in society (Khan et al., 2022). Across religions, love is understood as a fundamental reality that connects human beings with God, with others, and with nature; it transcends mere emotion or romantic attachment and emphasizes the cultivation of compassion, empathy, moral responsibility, and harmony in life as the foundation of ethics and education (Wang, 2023).

The ontology of the KBC provides a philosophical foundation for an educational paradigm that is holistic, humanistic, and oriented toward social well-being (Ilahiya & Nugraha, 2025). A curriculum grounded in love emphasizes not only cognitive intelligence but also character formation, empathy, social responsibility, and spiritual awareness (Syahroni & Sunardi, 2025). Education thus becomes a means of bringing to life the deepest dimensions of the human being, forming individuals who are harmonious both internally and externally, and contributing to social well-being and to harmonious relationships among human beings, nature, and God (Mahmoudi et al., 2012). In other words, the ontology of the KBC is relational: human beings are understood as creatures whose existence is defined by the quality of their relationships with God, with others, and with nature. This view is the principal feature distinguishing the KBC from character education approaches that are centered solely on the individual.

Epistemology of the Love-Based Curriculum

Epistemology investigates what knowledge is and what its sources and foundations are (Aulia, 2022). The study of epistemology yields an understanding of how knowledge can be acquired, developed, and tested. Epistemology also emphasizes the relationship between the known object and the knowing subject, so that the understanding formed remains consistent and integrated (Arifin & Muluk, 2017). An understanding of epistemology is relevant not only to philosophy but also serves as an important foundation for curriculum development.

From an epistemological standpoint, knowledge of love derives from all elements of life, which continually inspire one another (Suharto, 2022). Universal human values, religious teachings, local wisdom, and everyday life experiences also serve as sources of knowledge (Yasin & Rahmadian, 2024). Through the KBC, learners come to recognize and understand the values of love by observing social interactions, natural phenomena, and humanitarian practices that reflect the interconnectedness of human beings, their fellow humans, and the universe (Kunze, 2021). This process emphasizes students' active engagement as subjects connected to the objects of

knowledge, so that their understanding of love is not merely theoretical but is also shaped through real experiences that foster awareness, empathy, and appreciation of universal harmony (Chan et al., 2021). This pattern is consistent with the four components of moral education in the ethics of care: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Noddings, 2013).

The implementation of a pedagogy of love includes practical aspects such as teachers' attentiveness to students' needs and a classroom environment that supports emotional well-being (Kusumawardani et al., 2024). In the KBC, knowledge of love is constructed through the entire educational experience in the madrasah, including intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities, as well as the creation of a school climate and culture that support the values of love (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). Intracurricular activities provide the theoretical foundations, ideas, and initial understanding of ethics, love, and human relationships in accordance with spiritual and humanitarian principles (Koto et al., 2025). Extracurricular activities, such as the arts and sports, help students understand and internalize the value of love through lived experience and social interaction (Shinta & Arif, 2023). Co-curricular activities, such as group discussions, social projects, and leadership activities, strengthen the application of knowledge through cooperation, empathy, and real-world experience (McKay & Sridharan, 2024). In addition, a positive madrasah environment that emphasizes respect, mutual appreciation, tolerance, and solidarity serves as an important means of reinforcing students' understanding of love, which in turn shapes attitudes, character, and social skills consistent with the principles of universal love (Pardi, 2021). Therefore, knowledge of love in the KBC develops in an integrated, continuous, and comprehensive manner across every aspect of education in the madrasah (Ditjen Pendis, 2025).

Knowledge of love is validated through the application of the values of love in actual behavior, self-reflection, and social evaluation, so that learners' understanding is not only theoretical but also practical and internalized (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). This knowledge can be assessed through observation of students' behavior in social interactions, collaborative projects, or community service activities that require empathy, care, and responsibility. Furthermore, written or oral reflections, such as journals, essays, or group discussions, enable students to evaluate and reflect on their understanding of love and on the relationships among knowledge, experience, and action (Ann Jarvis & Baloyi, 2020). Moreover, a madrasah climate and school culture that support the values of love serve as a context for observing how consistently these values are applied, making the validation of knowledge of love in the KBC a holistic process that fully integrates cognitive, emotional, and social aspects (Widodo, 2019).

Axiology of the Love-Based Curriculum

Axiologically, the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) positions love as the source of all values that guide the educational process. The axiology of the KBC can be examined from three aspects: ethics, aesthetics, and utility value (N, 2024). In terms of **ethics**, the KBC emphasizes that human beings must uphold noble character (*akhlak mulia*), which the KBC incorporates into the five topics of the Love Curriculum: love of Allah and His Messenger, love of knowledge, love of the environment, love of self and others, and love of the homeland (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). Love of Allah and His Messenger is the highest value and the source of love throughout the entire educational process (Malik et al., 2025). This value affirms that human beings learn not merely to become intellectually capable but to draw closer to the Creator and to follow the example of the Prophet in spreading compassion, peace, and the common good (Abu Zahrin et al., 2020). In the KBC concept, love of knowledge and love of the environment are signs of love for Allah, and its initial manifestation is the love of knowledge (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). When knowledge and faith are united, care for the universe as Allah's creation emerges (Bsoul et al., 2022). Love of self and others, together with love of the homeland, constitute the bonds of love in the KBC concept (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). Through these two values, learners are expected to build harmonious and humane relationships that can give rise to a spirit of service to the nation and the state. On the basis of these five values of love, the KBC not only develops the intellect but also forms human

beings who are faithful, knowledgeable, caring toward nature, loving toward others, and committed to building the nation (Ditjen Pendis, 2025).

In terms of **aesthetics**, the KBC aims to develop learners who realize beauty in life and in the universe through learning experiences that are warm, enjoyable, creative, and full of love (Qamariah & Anwar, 2025). Beauty is regarded as a gateway to cultivating gratitude and spiritual closeness to the source of life (Iswahyudi, 2019). In terms of **utility value**, the KBC teaches students to understand that all components of the universe (including themselves) form a single, interconnected whole (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). Through the KBC, learners are trained to develop empathy, cooperation, and a sense of responsibility toward others, nature, and God. Thus, the KBC shapes learners who are intellectually capable and, at the same time, compassionate, able to bring goodness to all of Allah's creation (Rudianto, 2023).

Discussion

The Love-Based Curriculum and Its Relevance to Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

The relevance of the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) to Social Emotional Learning (SEL) reveals a close relationship in developing learners who excel not only academically but also in social and emotional intelligence and in conduct (Dumbuya, 2023). The KBC places love at the center of the values that drive empathy, care, and cooperation (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). The principles of the KBC are in harmony with CASEL's five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Both emphasize the importance of relationships and interaction, although the KBC extends these relationships to encompass nature and God, making the learning process more meaningful and engaging the human dimension in its entirety (Aliyah et al., 2024).

Previous research has shown that education that foregrounds love and social-emotional aspects can enhance students' connectedness to school (Aningsih et al., 2022). The meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011) showed that SEL programs reduce students' conduct problems and emotional distress, while the randomized controlled trial by Jennings et al. (2013) showed that strengthening teachers' awareness and resilience improved emotional support in classroom interactions. By integrating love for God, for others, and for the environment, the KBC essentially develops strong social awareness and a sense of belonging (Inayah et al., 2025). Warm interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, as emphasized in pedagogical love, form the foundation for emotional security and high learning motivation (Kaukko et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the KBC lends spiritual strength to the dimensions of SEL (Ibarra, 2022). Self-reflection in the KBC addresses not only feelings and behavior but also guides students toward a more transcendent self-awareness of their life purpose and their responsibilities as God's creatures (Ditjen Pendis, 2025). This dimension enriches the competencies of responsible decision-making and self-management, because students' decisions are driven not only by social rationality but also by ethical and spiritual commitment (Shulhan, 2025). This finding reinforces the study by Mahmoudi et al. (2012), which argued that education integrating spiritual values results in more comprehensive character development than education focused solely on the psychological domain. It is also consistent with the effort of Aliyah et al. (2024) to construct SEL within an Islamic paradigm for Muslim students in Indonesia.

From the perspectives of ontology, epistemology, and axiology, the relationship between the KBC and SEL becomes an increasingly solid foundation for humanistic education (Shabrina et al., 2025). The ontology of the KBC positions love as the deepest reality uniting human beings, God, and nature. This principle is consistent with SEL, which holds that social relationships and emotional well-being are essential to human existence as interconnected beings (Durlak et al., 2011). The epistemology of the KBC, which constructs knowledge through empathic experience and social interaction (Aldrup et al., 2022), is aligned with the constructivist approach of SEL, which emphasizes learning through reflection, collaboration, and real-life practice (Crescenzo et al., 2023). In the axiological domain, both approaches share an ethical commitment to shaping learners who are compassionate, socially aware, and capable of making responsible decisions for the common good (Mahoney et al., 2021). The integration of these three dimensions of educational

philosophy shows that the KBC and SEL not only enhance personal competencies but also give rise to a school culture that is beautiful, meaningful, and rich in human values (Mukaromah et al., 2025; Waryani et al., 2025). The relationship between the philosophical dimensions of the KBC (Ditjen Pendis, 2025) and the SEL competencies (CASEL, 2020) is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Relationship between the philosophical dimensions of the Love-Based Curriculum and Social Emotional Learning competencies

Philosophical Dimension of the KBC	SEL Competency	Form of Relevance
Ontology: Love is understood not merely as a moral or ethical value but as an ontological basis that unites human beings, nature, and God in harmony.	Self-awareness Social awareness	Strengthens learners' identity as persons who are valuable, loved, and called to live in harmony with others and with all of creation.
Epistemology: Knowledge of love derives from revelation, human values, life experience, and social interaction, and is acquired through real experience, self-reflection, and empathic relationships among learners, teachers, nature, and God.	Self-management Responsible decision-making	Learning about love is not merely theoretical but develops through the practice of emotion regulation, empathy, and wise moral action.
Axiology: Love is the highest value, guiding behavior toward goodness, justice, and collective well-being.	All five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making	Encourages learners to embody love in concrete behavior, uphold justice and care, and contribute to collective well-being.

The relevance of the Love-Based Curriculum to the five SEL competencies shows that education is fundamentally rooted in the recognition of human dignity, that is, of human beings as creatures who are loved and who love (Inayah et al., 2025). Learners are not merely invited to understand the value of love through theory but to experience and reflect on it in their everyday relationships with themselves, their peers, their teachers, and their surroundings (Uusiautti et al., 2013). This integration presents the school as a place that nurtures compassion, grounds character, and enables learners to learn to become fully human, so that education produces not only an intelligent generation but also one that brings goodness to all (Qudsiyah et al., 2025).

The mapping in Table 2 shows that the relationship between the KBC and SEL is not one-to-one. The ontology of the KBC relates primarily to self-awareness and social awareness, and its epistemology to self-management and responsible decision-making, whereas its axiology informs all five competencies simultaneously. All of these relationships unfold within the madrasah ecosystem, which encompasses intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities as well as the climate and culture of the madrasah. This synthesis is visualized as a conceptual framework in Figure 1.

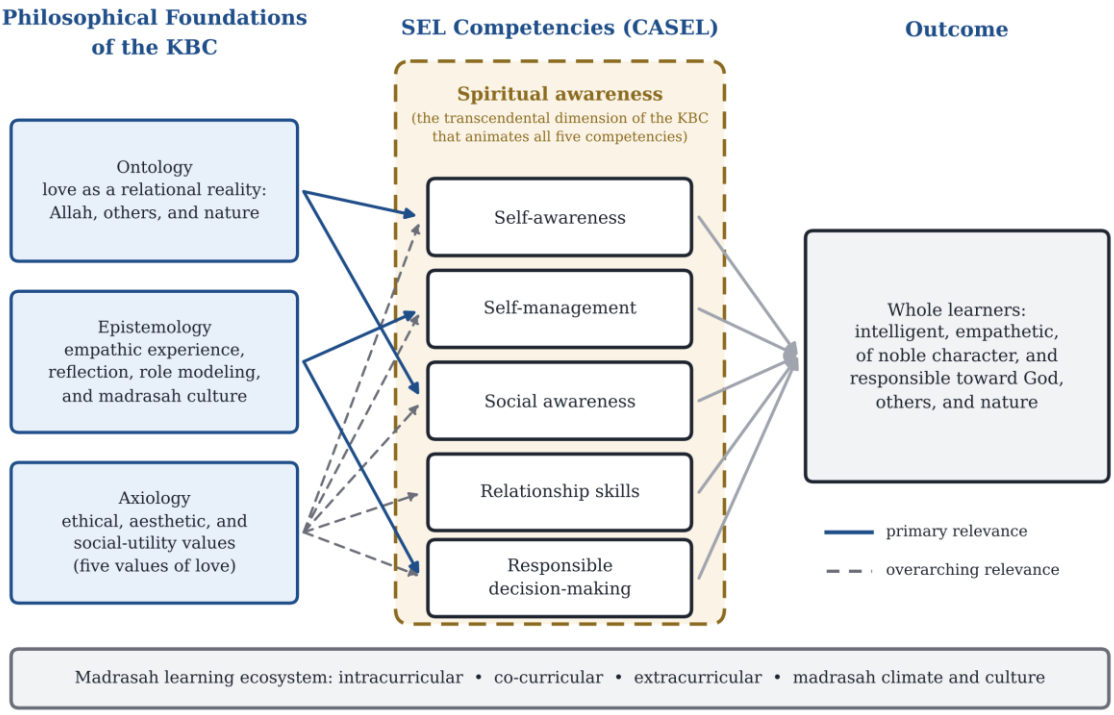


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for integrating the Love-Based Curriculum and Social Emotional Learning

Nevertheless, the integration of the KBC and SEL does not mean that the two are identical. There are at least three fundamental differences. First, at the ontological level, SEL views social-emotional competencies as learnable psychological skills, whereas the KBC views them as expressions of love that originate in one's relationship with God. Second, at the epistemological level, SEL relies on empirical evidence of program effectiveness (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017), while the KBC also recognizes revelation and exemplary role models as sources of knowledge. Third, at the axiological level, SEL emphasizes responsible decisions for oneself and the community, whereas the KBC adds an orientation toward worship (*ibadah*) and the common good (*maslahah*) for all of creation. These differences, however, open up space for complementarity: SEL provides operational formulations of competencies and indicators, while the KBC gives these competencies transcendental meaning and motivation. On this basis, this study proposes that spiritual awareness can be positioned as a dimension that animates all five SEL competencies in the context of madrasah education.

This framework has implications for basic education, particularly in *madrasah ibtidaiyah*. Teachers can use the five values of love as learning themes, while the five SEL competencies serve as observable behavioral indicators. For example, the value of love of self and others can be translated into indicators such as recognizing emotions, restraining angry reactions, and offering help to peers. Reflective journals, collaborative projects, and habituation within the madrasah environment can be combined with observational assessment and self-assessment (Ann Jarvis & Baloyi, 2020; Ditjen Pendis, 2025). Nevertheless, this study has limitations, as it is conceptual in nature and relies on documents and literature available up to 2025. The proposed framework still needs to be tested through empirical research, for example by developing KBC–SEL assessment instruments and testing the effectiveness of instruction based on this framework in madrasahs.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) has a coherent philosophical foundation. Ontologically, the KBC positions love as a relational reality that unites human beings, nature, and God; epistemologically, knowledge of love is constructed through real experience, self-reflection, role modeling, and madrasah culture; and axiologically, love serves as a source of ethical, aesthetic, and social-utility values for collective well-being. This foundation is relevant to

all five competencies of Social Emotional Learning (SEL)—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—while also extending SEL with a transcendental dimension in the form of spiritual awareness. The main contribution of this study is an integrative KBC–SEL conceptual framework that positions SEL as the operational formulation of competencies and the KBC as the source of their meaning and motivation. Practically, the framework can be used by teachers and madrasah curriculum developers to design learning objectives, strategies, and assessments that address the cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual domains. Future research should develop and validate KBC–SEL assessment instruments and test the effectiveness of instruction based on this framework through development or experimental research in *madrasah ibtidaiyah*.

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