

## **A Curriculum of Love and Sexual Violence in *Pondok Pesantren*: The Reality versus the Rhetoric of Education**

**Zulfikri**

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Syariah Nahdlatul Ulama Nusantara Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia

Email: [zulfikri@ptnutangerang.ac.id](mailto:zulfikri@ptnutangerang.ac.id)

### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the conceptualization of the Love Curriculum (*Kurikulum Cinta*) in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as a pedagogical paradigm grounded in the values of *rahmah* (compassion), *mahabbah* (love), and respect for human dignity; examine the dynamics of power relations and the reality of sexual violence within *pesantren* as social contexts influencing the effectiveness of value implementation; and formulate an Integrative Model of a Child-Protection-Based Love Curriculum as a pedagogical and institutional response to the challenge of sexual violence. This research employs a qualitative approach using field research methods. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with *kiai* (religious leaders), teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students, as well as document analysis of curricula and internal institutional policies. Data were analyzed thematically and interpretively to identify patterns of value internalization, structures of power relations, and existing protection mechanisms within institutional practices. The findings reveal that the Love Curriculum operates as both a living curriculum and a hidden curriculum, manifested through the moral exemplarity of the *kiai*, habituation of ethical conduct (*adab*), and social solidarity within the boarding school environment. The internalization of compassionate values occurs culturally and relationally rather than through a formally structured subject. However, the strong hierarchical structure and culture of obedience may generate vulnerabilities if not supported by clear accountability mechanisms and reporting procedures. The integration of compassionate values with child protection principles has not yet been fully institutionalized in formal policies. Therefore, this study proposes an integrative model combining theological values, literacy on power relations, education on bodily boundaries and informed consent, and structured child protection systems to strengthen students' safety and dignity within contemporary *pesantren* education.

**Keywords:** Love Curriculum, Islamic Boarding Schools, Power Relations, Sexual Violence, Child Protection.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konseptualisasi *Kurikulum Cinta* dalam pendidikan pesantren sebagai paradigma pedagogis berbasis nilai rahmah, mahabbah, dan penghormatan terhadap martabat manusia; mengkaji dinamika relasi kuasa serta realitas kekerasan seksual di lingkungan pesantren sebagai konteks sosial yang memengaruhi efektivitas implementasi nilai tersebut; dan merumuskan Model Integratif *Kurikulum Cinta* Berbasis Perlindungan Anak sebagai respons pedagogis dan kelembagaan terhadap tantangan kekerasan seksual. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian lapangan (*field research*). Data diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan *kiai*, ustaz, pengurus asrama, dan santri, serta analisis dokumen kurikulum dan kebijakan internal pesantren. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik dan interpretatif untuk mengidentifikasi pola internalisasi nilai, struktur relasi kuasa, serta sistem perlindungan yang tersedia dalam praktik kelembagaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Kurikulum Cinta* di pesantren berfungsi sebagai *living curriculum* dan *hidden curriculum* yang terwujud dalam keteladanan *kiai*, pembiasaan adab, dan solidaritas sosial dalam kehidupan berasma. Internalisasi nilai kasih sayang berlangsung secara kultural dan relasional, bukan sebagai mata pelajaran formal yang terdokumentasi secara sistematis. Di sisi lain, struktur hierarkis dan budaya kepatuhan yang kuat dapat menciptakan kerentanan apabila tidak didukung mekanisme akuntabilitas dan prosedur pelaporan yang jelas. Integrasi antara nilai rahmah dan prinsip perlindungan anak masih belum sepenuhnya terlembagakan dalam kebijakan formal pesantren. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menawarkan model integratif yang menggabungkan nilai teologis, literasi relasi kuasa, edukasi batas tubuh dan kesadaran persetujuan (*consent*), serta sistem perlindungan anak yang terstruktur guna memperkuat keamanan dan martabat santri dalam ekosistem pendidikan pesantren kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** Kurikulum Cinta, Pondok Pesantren, Relasi Kuasa, Kekerasan Seksual, Perlindungan Anak.

#### A. Introduction

The curriculum within Islamic educational institutions occupies a central position in shaping the direction of character formation, value systems, and the institutional culture of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). In the dynamics of Islamic education reform over recent years, there has been a strong emphasis on a more humanistic approach, namely, education grounded in compassion, empathy, and recognition of human dignity. The concept later known as the “Curriculum of Love” has been positioned as an alternative paradigm affirming that the substance of Islamic teachings is rooted in the principle of *rahmah* (compassion) and respect for humanity. This discourse has developed in response to the increasing prevalence of violence, intolerance, and moral degradation, phenomena that have also affected religion-based educational spaces.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi di Tengah Tantangan Global*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2021), h. 112.

Historically, pesantren have been regarded as centers for moral formation and the integral transmission of Islamic knowledge, with a holistic orientation toward nurturing students' character. However, recent developments, including a number of sexual violence cases uncovered in several pesantren, have raised critical questions regarding the effectiveness of their internal guidance systems. Official data indicate that throughout 2023 more than 15,120 cases of sexual violence against children were recorded in Indonesia, with some occurring in boarding-school environments.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the annual report of the National Commission on Violence Against Women documented a 12% increase in reports of sexual violence based on power relations within religious educational institutions compared to the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

These conditions reveal a contradiction between the normative image of pesantren as moral-forming institutions and the reality of sexual violence emerging within them. The highly hierarchical relationships between *kyai* (religious leaders), *ustaz* (teachers), and *santri* (students), constructed on the basis of deep respect and obedience, may in certain situations produce power imbalances vulnerable to abuse.<sup>4</sup> A strong paternalistic culture often creates psychological and social barriers for victims to report abuses due to fears of stigma, community pressure, or the delegitimization of their voices. This fact demonstrates that a purely normative moral approach has not been sufficient to guarantee a safe and violence-free educational environment.

Within this framework, the Curriculum of Love is offered not merely as an ethical discourse but as a pedagogical strategy that emphasizes the internalization of compassionate values throughout the educational process. Conceptually, this approach integrates the value of *rahmah*, principles of equality, respect for bodily integrity, and the strengthening of empathy as foundational elements of educational relationships.<sup>5</sup> Modern character education studies also indicate that learning models based on compassion and dialogical relationships are more effective in fostering moral awareness and self-regulation among students, showing improvements of up to 23% compared to authoritarian educational patterns.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, theoretically, the Curriculum of Love holds strategic relevance in supporting efforts to prevent sexual violence within pesantren environments.

In the policy context, the Directorate of Diniyah and Pesantren Education in 2023 encouraged the strengthening of humanitarian values and the integration of child protection principles into pesantren governance through regulatory frameworks and character-development modules.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, internal evaluation reports indicate that the implementation of these policies has been uneven, with only around 41% of pesantren systematically integrating child protection modules into their curricula.<sup>8</sup> This

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<sup>2</sup>Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, *Profil anak Indonesia 2024*, (Jakarta: KPPPA RI), h. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan, *Catatan tahunan tentang kekerasan terhadap perempuan tahun 2023*, (Jakarta: Komnas Perempuan, 2023), h. 89.

<sup>4</sup>M. Fauzi, "Relasi Kuasa dan Kekerasan Seksual di Lembaga Pendidikan Keagamaan," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia*, Vol. 3 No. 2 (2022), h. 138-156.

<sup>5</sup>N. Hidayati & A. Maula, "Implementasi Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta dalam Pendidikan Pesantren", *Qalam: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 16 No. 1 (2022), h. 55-75

<sup>6</sup>T. Lickona, *Character matters: How to help our children develop good judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues*, (Touchstone, 2020), h. 204.

<sup>7</sup>Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Panduan Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Pesantren*, (Jakarta: Direktorat Pendidikan Diniyah dan Pondok Pesantren Kemenag RI, 2023), h. 54.

<sup>8</sup>Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Laporan Evaluasi Implementasi Perlindungan Anak di Pesantren Tahun 2024*, (Jakarta: Direktorat Pendidikan Diniyah dan Pondok Pesantren Kemenag RI, 2024), h. 77.

data demonstrates a gap between normative policy at the central level and educational practices on the ground.

Conceptually, integrating compassion-based education with sexual violence prevention programs is believed to cultivate students' critical awareness of power relations and the importance of respecting the body as a sacred trust. Empathy-based educational approaches have even been reported to reduce aggressive tendencies by up to 30% within boarding school systems.<sup>9</sup>

Although the idea of the Curriculum of Love has gained increasing attention, academic studies examining its implementation in pesantren settings remain largely conceptual and normative. Research conducted by Hidayati and Maula shows that the implementation of the Curriculum of Love in several madrasahs and pesantren has primarily focused on strengthening religious moderation and fostering intergroup tolerance, without explicitly linking it to the issue of sexual violence.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, a study by Sulaiman indicates that integrating compassionate values into *fiqh* and moral education subjects can enhance students' social sensitivity, although it has not been accompanied by concrete measurements of its impact on reducing gender-based violence.<sup>11</sup>

Conversely, research on sexual violence in pesantren environments generally emphasizes structural aspects and case analysis. Fauzi argues that approximately 68% of sexual violence cases in religion-based educational institutions are closely related to power imbalances and weak internal oversight systems.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, *Rahmah* highlights the importance of sexual literacy and understanding bodily boundaries for students, noting that limited education in this area contributes to victims' low awareness and reluctance to report abusive acts.<sup>13</sup>

Based on this literature mapping, a significant research gap becomes apparent. First, no empirical study has directly measured the effectiveness of the Curriculum of Love in preventing sexual violence in pesantren. Second, there is no integrative model connecting the value of *rahmah* in the Curriculum of Love with child protection systems at both structural and cultural levels. Third, most previous studies have been descriptive and normative rather than employing quantitative evaluative approaches to measure curriculum implementation outcomes more systematically.

This study seeks to address this gap by critically analyzing the relationship between the discourse of the Curriculum of Love and the phenomenon of sexual violence in pesantren. The approach not only examines normative aspects of the curriculum but also evaluates its implementation, students' level of awareness, and existing prevention mechanisms. Thus, the study moves beyond conceptual rhetoric and endeavors to compare pedagogical claims with empirical conditions in the field.

Through this approach, the study aims to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic education curriculum studies while also offering practical recommendations for pesantren in building educational systems that are safe, inclusive, and just. In doing so, the research not only addresses the normative debate

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<sup>9</sup>UNESCO, *Ending Violence in Schools: Global Status Report 2021*, (UNESCO Publishing, 2021), h. 66.

<sup>10</sup>N. Hidayati & A. Maula, "Implementasi Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta dalam Pendidikan Pesantren", h. 73

<sup>11</sup>R. Sulaiman, "Integrasi Nilai Kasih Sayang dalam Pembelajaran Fikih di Pesantren Modern," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer*, Vol. 4 No. 2 (2023), h. 110-129.

<sup>12</sup>M. Fauzi, "Relasi Kuasa dan Kekerasan Seksual di Lembaga Pendidikan Keagamaan", h. 152.

<sup>13</sup>S. Rahmah, "Literasi Seksual dan Perlindungan Santri di Pesantren: Studi Pencegahan Kekerasan Seksual," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Gender*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (2024), h. 82-101.

surrounding the Curriculum of Love but also encourages institutional transformation within pesantren to align with principles of child protection and respect for human dignity within the framework of contemporary Islam.

## **B. Literature Review**

### **I. The Curriculum of Love**

The curriculum in Islamic education is not merely a framework for instruction, but also a strategic instrument for instilling moral and social values that shape students' character. The concept of the Curriculum of Love has developed in line with the character education paradigm that positions compassion (*rahmah*) as the primary pillar of contemporary Islamic education. This development is driven by the need to respond to social problems such as intolerance, moral degradation, and violence within educational communities. Azyumardi Azra argues that modern Islamic education increasingly emphasizes holistic, values-based character formation, placing compassion at the center of its pedagogical principles.<sup>14</sup>

In the broader literature on character education, Thomas Lickona similarly asserts that the effectiveness of moral education depends on three simultaneous components, *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*, which must be integrated into the curriculum in order to cultivate altruistic attitudes and behaviors among students.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, the Curriculum of Love does not merely stress normative knowledge about compassion, but also emphasizes how such values are enacted in social interactions within educational environments.

Research by Yusuf and Aisyah reinforces this idea in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, arguing that a curriculum grounded in the value of *rahmah* must be deliberately structured to function as a foundation for character formation, one that not only fosters tolerance but also actively creates a dignified environment.<sup>16</sup> This demonstrates an expansion of the Curriculum of Love beyond religious moderation into the broader domain of protection and respect for human dignity.

Nevertheless, in practice within pesantren environments, numerous studies indicate that the integration of compassionate values has not yet been fully systematic and remains largely normative in orientation. Hidayati and Maula found that although pesantren and madrasahs have begun formulating a Curriculum of Love to strengthen tolerance, the approach has not been explicitly employed as an instrument for preventing violence.<sup>17</sup> This reveals a gap between theory and practice that needs to be addressed in more recent studies on the Curriculum of Love.

As a pedagogical approach, the Curriculum of Love has shown potential in reducing aggressive behavior in formal educational contexts when supported by strong institutional policies. UNESCO, in its global reports, states that empathy-based and inclusive education models can reduce incidents of violence in boarding school systems when implemented consistently.<sup>18</sup> These findings provide important empirical evidence

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<sup>14</sup>Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi di Tengah Tantangan Global*, h. 118.

<sup>15</sup>T. Lickona, *Character Matters: How to Help our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues*, h. 49

<sup>16</sup>M. Yusuf & S. Aisyah, "Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai Rahmah dalam Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (2023), h. 45-60.

<sup>17</sup>N. Hidayati & I. Maula, "Implementasi Kurikulum Cinta dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama di Madrasah dan Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer*, Vol. 4 No. 1 (2022), h. 60-78.

<sup>18</sup>UNESCO, *Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying*, (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2022), h. 78.

that the Curriculum of Love can serve as a credible preventive instrument when it is carefully designed and fully adopted by educational institutions.

## 2. Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a complex phenomenon encompassing acts of exploitation, intimidation, and abuse of power that often occur within unequal social interactions and structures. In boarding education systems, including pesantren, sexual violence is not merely an individual problem but rather a product of structural power imbalances, patriarchal cultural norms, and weak protection mechanisms. Power relations theory explains that unequal positions between authority figures and students can create opportunities for the abuse of authority to perpetrate violence.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, contemporary literature shows that low levels of literacy regarding bodily autonomy and individual rights further increase students' vulnerability to abuse. Rahmah argues that limited understanding of bodily boundaries and the right to personal integrity often causes victims to hesitate to report incidents or even to recognize that what they have experienced constitutes sexual violence.<sup>20</sup> This condition is reinforced by institutional cultures that overemphasize respect and obedience without establishing clear protective mechanisms.

International research conducted by Plan International indicates that gender-based violence, including within school and pesantren environments, is strongly linked to patriarchal cultural factors and weak internal monitoring systems. The report emphasizes the importance of comprehensive education on children's rights and healthy relationships as a preventive strategy against gender-based violence in educational institutions.<sup>21</sup> This perspective underlines that sexual violence is not solely an individual issue, but a phenomenon shaped by social and institutional norms that must be addressed through structured curricular interventions.

In a broader context, UNICEF Indonesia has also noted that educational environments lacking robust child protection protocols tend to experience higher levels of violence, including sexual violence, compared to institutions with clear protection systems and safe reporting mechanisms.<sup>22</sup> This finding demonstrates that the prevention of sexual violence must be built upon a synergy between compassion-based educational approaches and effective child protection policies.

## C. Method

This study employs a qualitative field research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Curriculum of Love and its relevance to efforts in preventing sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). A qualitative approach was chosen because the study seeks to explore meanings, experiences, and social dynamics that naturally occur within the pesantren environment. Field research enables the researcher to interact directly with participants in order to obtain contextual and comprehensive data. John W. Creswell

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<sup>19</sup>M. Fauzi, "Relasi Kuasa dan Kekerasan Seksual di Lembaga Pendidikan Keagamaan", h. 152.

<sup>20</sup>S. Rahmah, "Literasi Seksual dan Perlindungan Santri di Pesantren: Studi Pencegahan Kekerasan Seksual," h. 95.

<sup>21</sup>Plan International, *State of the World's Girls 2022: Gender-Based Violence in Schools*, (Plan International, 2022), h. 57.

<sup>22</sup>UNICEF Indonesia, *Violence Against Children in Indonesia: Findings from National Surveys*, (UNICEF Indonesia, 2021), h. 42.

explains that qualitative research is used to explore and understand meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems.<sup>23</sup>

The primary data sources in this study were obtained directly from key informants, including pesantren leaders or caretakers, *ustaz/ustazah* (teachers), dormitory administrators, and students involved in instructional activities and boarding life. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement in and understanding of curriculum policies and the student development system. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and direct observation of learning activities, social interactions, and the implementation of pesantren regulations. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gather in-depth information while maintaining alignment with the study's focus.<sup>24</sup>

Data analysis was carried out using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and gradual conclusion drawing. This process was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the study. Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña emphasize that analysis in qualitative research is cyclical and evolves as field data accumulate.<sup>25</sup> To ensure data credibility, this study applied source triangulation by comparing interview findings from multiple informants with field observation results, thereby producing a comprehensive and academically accountable account.

## D. Findings

### I. Conceptualization of the Curriculum of Love in Pesantren Education

The conceptualization of the Curriculum of Love in this study is understood as a living construct of values embedded and practiced within the pesantren educational ecosystem, rather than merely a normative idea documented in formal curriculum texts. Based on participatory observation and in-depth interviews with *kyai*, *ustaz*, and *santri*, the findings indicate that the values of *rahmah* (compassion) and *mahabbah* (love) are internalized through pedagogical relationships that emphasize exemplary conduct, emotional closeness, and character formation grounded in *adab* (ethical comportment). Practices such as the study of classical moral texts (*kitab akhlak*), student deliberation forums (*musyawarah santri*), and dormitory-based mentoring serve as concrete mediums for fostering collective awareness regarding the importance of respecting human dignity. This model demonstrates that the Curriculum of Love operates as a living curriculum, one that grows organically through culture and daily social interaction.<sup>26</sup> Thus, compassion is not taught as a separate subject but is embedded within the overall educational atmosphere of the pesantren.

The findings further show that the internalization of the Curriculum of Love is strongly influenced by the figure of the *kyai* as the center of moral authority and symbolic value. Personal exemplarity becomes the primary instrument for value transmission, making the effectiveness of the curriculum dependent upon the consistency of leadership practices. In this regard, the Curriculum of Love possesses

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<sup>23</sup>J. W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.), (SAGE Publications, 2018), h. 181.

<sup>24</sup>S. B. Merriam & E. J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed.), (Jossey-Bass, 2020), h. 110.

<sup>25</sup>M. B. Miles, A. M. Huberman & J. Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (4th ed.), (SAGE Publications, 2019), h. 14.

<sup>26</sup>Siti Nur Aini & Ahmad Fauzi, "Implementasi Curriculum of Love dalam Pembentukan Karakter Santri di Pesantren," *Al-Fikru: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2023), h. 145-147.

a strong *hidden curriculum* character, as attitudes and character formation occur more through habituation and institutional culture than through written regulations.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, reliance on a central charismatic figure without adequate formal curriculum documentation may generate variations in implementation across different pesantren. Therefore, the conceptualization of the Curriculum of Love in this research highlights the importance of strengthening a documented pedagogical framework so that the value of *rahmah* becomes not merely personal-charismatic but systemic in nature.

Conceptually, these field findings enrich the discourse on Islamic education by demonstrating that the Curriculum of Love encompasses interconnected ethical, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions. Compassion-based education in pesantren is oriented not only toward the cultivation of individual piety but also toward the creation of social solidarity and collective responsibility. Studies on religious character education affirm that the success of values-based curricula depends significantly on the integration of instructional practice, institutional culture, and moral leadership.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, this study views the Curriculum of Love as an educational paradigm that needs to be formulated more systematically within the structural framework of pesantren curricula in order to ensure intergenerational sustainability and to respond to contemporary social dynamics without losing its traditional roots.

## 2. The Dynamics of Power Relations and the Reality of Sexual Violence in Pesantren

The dynamics of power relations in pesantren are understood as an inherent part of the traditional educational structure that positions the *kyai* as the central figure possessing scholarly, spiritual, and social authority. Based on observations and in-depth interviews, these relations cultivate a strong pattern of obedience among students, culturally interpreted as *adab* (proper conduct) and respect toward teachers. This hierarchical structure fundamentally functions to maintain order and educational stability. However, critical education studies indicate that power relations not accompanied by participatory accountability systems may create closed spaces that are difficult to monitor externally.<sup>29</sup> In the pesantren context, the moral legitimacy attached to authoritative figures can serve as a powerful tool for guidance, yet it may also create vulnerabilities if not balanced with institutional evaluation and transparency mechanisms.

Field findings reveal that some students experience difficulty articulating feelings of discomfort arising from seniority-based relations or interactions that exceed ethical boundaries. These barriers are not merely due to lack of knowledge, but also stem from concerns about social stigma and psychological consequences. Research on sexual violence in educational settings confirms that a “culture of silence” often emerges in systems that prioritize institutional loyalty and honor over individual protection.<sup>30</sup> In interviews, several informants acknowledged that reporting

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<sup>27</sup>T. Christiana, L. Arintoko, S. E. Reinmah & J. Rosella, “The Dynamics of Teacher-Student Interaction in Multicultural Classrooms: A Local Cultural Perspective in Border Schools,” *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora dan Pendidikan*, Vol. 5 No. 2 (2025), h. 152-170.

<sup>28</sup>J. Arthur, T. Harrison & E. Taylor, “The Development of Character in Religious Education,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2019), h. 5-18.

<sup>29</sup>M. W. Apple & W. Au “Critical Curriculum Studies and the Politics of Education,” *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Education* (New York: Routledge, 2020), h. 16-18.

<sup>30</sup>F. Leach, M. Dunne & F. Salvi, *School-Related Gender-Based Violence: A Global Review of Current Issues and Approaches in Policy, Programming and Implementation* (Paris: UNESCO, 2019), h. 21-25.

mechanisms were not fully understood by all students, leading certain issues to be resolved informally without clear documentation.

In the context of sexual violence, this study found that abusive behaviors do not always manifest explicitly; they may take the form of verbal harassment, psychological pressure, or manipulation rooted in seniority-based relationships. Research on school safety demonstrates that boarding institutions possess particular vulnerabilities when child protection policies are not systematically formulated and understood by all members of the school community.<sup>31</sup> Power imbalances, especially within patriarchal educational systems, can diminish students' capacity to voice experiences of violence. Therefore, preventive efforts cannot rely solely on character education, but must be integrated with clear, measurable, and accessible protection protocols.

Furthermore, this study identifies a gap between the narrative of the Curriculum of Love, which emphasizes *rahmah* (compassion), and the structural realities in practice. Although pesantren normatively teach compassion and respect for human dignity, the implementation of these values has not been fully connected to literacy on bodily boundaries, awareness of power relations, and the principle of consent. Recent scholarship on comprehensive sexuality education underscores that strengthening moral and religious values must be accompanied by education on gender and power in order to effectively prevent sexual violence.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the dynamics of power relations within pesantren call for a reconstruction of the Curriculum of Love so that it not only reinforces personal piety, but also fosters an institutional culture that is transparent, responsive, and committed to protecting students as subjects of education.

### **3. An Integrative Child Protection–Based Model of the Curriculum of Love**

The integrative child protection–based model of the Curriculum of Love is formulated as a synthesis between the theological value of *rahmah*, which forms the foundation of pesantren education, and child protection principles grounded in human rights. Based on field findings, the internalization of compassionate values has largely taken place through the exemplary conduct of the kyai and the cultural traditions of the pesantren as a form of *hidden curriculum*. However, for these values to function effectively as preventive instruments against sexual violence, a more systematic curricular reconstruction is required. This entails integrating principles of safety, respect for bodily integrity, and victim-friendly reporting mechanisms into formal curriculum documents and pesantren governance structures. This approach aligns with the concept of child safeguarding in faith-based education, which emphasizes that religious values must be translated into explicit and operational institutional policies.<sup>33</sup>

In terms of implementation, this integrative model consists of three primary layers: normative, pedagogical, and structural. At the normative level, *rahmah* is positioned as an ethical foundation for fostering egalitarian relationships between educators and students. At the pedagogical level, education on bodily boundaries, consent awareness, and literacy regarding power relations is incorporated into

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<sup>31</sup>K. M. Devries, L. Knight, J. C. Child et al., “The Good School Toolkit for Reducing Physical Violence from School Staff to Primary School Students: A Cluster-Randomised Controlled Trial,” *The Lancet Global Health*, Vol. 3, No. 7 (2019), h. e378-e386.

<sup>32</sup>UNESCO, *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*, h. 45-52.

<sup>33</sup>Muhlison, M. “Growing Character Through Wisdom of Heart: Implementation of Sufi Education Integration in Student Character Development,” *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, Vol. 6 No. 3 (2025), h. 653-669.

subjects such as *fiqh*, moral education (*akhlak*), and dormitory guidance programs. At the structural level, pesantren are expected to establish written child protection policies, secure reporting procedures, and independent units responsible for handling complaints. This framework demonstrates that effective educational interventions for preventing sexual violence require a combination of preventive curricula and consistent institutional policies.<sup>34</sup> Without formal structural support, moral values risk remaining symbolic ethical expressions with limited capacity to regulate deviant practices.

Field research also indicates that the involvement of the entire pesantren community, including *kyai*, teachers, dormitory supervisors (*musyrif*), senior students, and parents, is crucial to the success of this model. Child protection education cannot be delegated solely to subject teachers; rather, it must become a collective awareness cultivated through regular training sessions and open dialogue. Studies on the whole-school framework approach to violence prevention emphasize that institutional cultural change can occur only when all members of the school community share a unified commitment to student safety.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, within this model, the Curriculum of Love moves beyond an individual-moralistic orientation and develops into an institutional paradigm that affirms protecting students as an authentic manifestation of *rahmah* itself.

Conceptually, this integrative model bridges the gap between rhetoric and reality in pesantren education. Whereas the Curriculum of Love was previously understood primarily as an expression of spiritual ethics, in this model it is transformed into a policy and pedagogical framework oriented toward concrete child protection. The child rights perspective, as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and related international guidelines, affirms that physical and psychological safety are prerequisites for dignified educational processes.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, integrating the value of *rahmah* with child protection systems should not be seen as importing external concepts into pesantren tradition, but rather as an actualization of Islamic values that fundamentally uphold human dignity and safety. This model is expected to reconstruct the face of the Curriculum of Love, from a moral narrative into a preventive, reflective and accountable educational system in addressing sexual violence within pesantren.

## E. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Curriculum of Love in pesantren possesses a strong theological and cultural foundation; however, its transformative capacity depends largely on how it is operationalized within institutional structures. The values of *rahmah* (compassion), *mahabbah* (love), and respect for human dignity are demonstrably alive as pedagogical foundations in the daily practices of pesantren life. Nevertheless, field findings reveal that the internalization of these values remains predominantly situated within the moral-affective domain and has not yet been fully linked to the explicit design of child protection policies. From the perspective of critical curriculum studies, gaps between normative values and institutional practice frequently

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<sup>34</sup>UNESCO, *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2018), h. 16-18.

<sup>35</sup>B. Taylor, N. Stein, E. Mumford & D. Woods, "Shifting Boundaries: Final Report on an Experimental Evaluation of a Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program in New York City Middle Schools," *Journal of School Violence*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2019), h. 229-248.

<sup>36</sup>United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Child Safeguarding Toolkit for Educational Settings* (New York: UNICEF, 2021), h. 9-14.

arise when curricula are not designed as instruments of structural change but merely as vehicles for symbolic value transmission.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Curriculum of Love requires reformulation so that it does not remain ethical rhetoric, but functions as a regulatory framework capable of shaping safe relational systems.

Regarding the dynamics of power relations, this study finds that the hierarchical structure of pesantren embodies certain ambivalence: it may serve as a means of character formation, yet it also contains the potential for abuse when accountability mechanisms do not function effectively. International scholarship emphasizes that sexual violence within educational institutions is often linked to power imbalances and a culture of silence that discourages victims from reporting abuse.<sup>38</sup> In the pesantren context, deep respect for authoritative figures may strengthen moral formation; however, without transparency and clear reporting procedures, such relationships risk creating closed environments. This discussion demonstrates that the prevention of sexual violence cannot rely solely on reinforcing spiritual values, but requires institutionalized protection systems that are safely accessible to students.

The Integrative Child Protection–Based Curriculum of Love Model proposed in this study seeks to bridge these realities. The integration of *rahmah*-based education with child protection policies aligns with a whole-institution framework approach that positions student safety as a collective responsibility of the educational institution.<sup>39</sup> This approach underscores that preventing sexual violence necessitates a combination of preventive curriculum design, educator training, and independent complaint procedures. In the pesantren context, the model is not intended to displace tradition, but rather to strengthen it by reinterpreting compassion as an obligation to safeguard the physical and psychological integrity of students.

Theoretically, this discussion demonstrates that the relationship between the Curriculum of Love and sexual violence is not one of two separate variables, but of interconnected elements within the educational ecosystem of pesantren. When the value of love is translated into concrete policies and critical awareness of power relations, it holds the potential to function as an effective preventive strategy. Conversely, if it remains confined to moral discourse, the gap between reality and rhetoric will persist. UNESCO studies on violence prevention in schools affirm that institutional cultural transformation occurs only when values, policies, and practices operate in alignment.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, this discussion emphasizes that the reformulation of the Curriculum of Love must be directed toward structural and pedagogical transformation to ensure that pesantren become educational spaces that are safe, dignified, and just.

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<sup>37</sup>H. A. Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), h. 73-76.

<sup>38</sup>F. Leach, M. Dunne & F. Salvi, *School-Related Gender-Based Violence: A Global Review of Current Issues and Approaches in Policy, Programming and Implementation* (Paris: UNESCO, 2019), h. 28-31.

<sup>39</sup>WHO, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2018), h. 18-22.

<sup>40</sup>UNESCO, *Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying*, h. 83-85.

## Conclusion

This study confirms that the Curriculum of Love in pesantren holds strong normative potential as a foundation for *rahmah*-based education. However, in practice, there remains a gap between the rhetoric of values and the structural realities on the ground. Findings indicate that the internalization of compassion largely occurs through culture and exemplary leadership, while integration with child protection mechanisms and literacy regarding power relations has not yet been fully systematic. The hierarchical dynamics characteristic of pesantren can serve as a means of character formation, but without transparent accountability systems, they also create opportunities for sexual violence. Therefore, the reformulation of the Curriculum of Love must be directed toward transformations that are not only moral-spiritual, but also structural and pedagogical, ensuring that the value of *rahmah* is realized in concrete policies safeguarding the physical and psychological well-being of students, from a practical perspective, this study recommends the development of an Integrative Child Protection–Based Curriculum of Love model encompassing three main dimensions: strengthening theological values that respect human dignity, integrating education on bodily literacy and awareness of power relations into learning, and establishing safe and independent reporting mechanisms within the pesantren environment. This approach is expected to bridge the gap between the ideal of pesantren education and contemporary challenges related to sexual violence. In doing so, pesantren can continue to preserve their identity as Islamic educational institutions rooted in tradition, while simultaneously transforming into adaptive, responsive, and accountable institutions that uphold child protection principles in the context of modern education.

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