



# The Pedagogy of Love in Moral Education: Reconstructing the Teacher–Student Relationship from an Islamic Humanistic Perspective

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## Abstract

Moral education in Islam has traditionally tended to be practiced through a normative and disciplinary approach that emphasizes behavioral compliance. However, this approach often overlooks the emotional and relational dimensions between teachers and students. This article aims to examine the concept of the pedagogy of love as an alternative approach in Islamic moral education that places loving relationships as the primary foundation for character development. This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis to examine the thoughts of classical and contemporary scholars regarding love, ethics, and education. The findings indicate that the pedagogy of love is capable of fostering a dialogical, empathetic, and transformative educational relationship between teachers and students. This approach not only fosters moral compliance but also cultivates a deep ethical awareness. Teachers are no longer positioned merely as enforcers of rules and punishments but rather as role models who embody love, respect, and sincerity in the learning process. Through this approach, students find it easier to internalize moral values because they feel valued and understood as human beings. The pedagogy of love also fosters a harmonious and inclusive educational environment that supports the holistic development of students' personalities spiritually, emotionally, and socially. In the context of modern education, which is facing a moral crisis and dehumanization, this approach is relevant for reviving humanistic values in the Islamic educational process. Thus, the pedagogy of love is relevant as a new paradigm in humanistic Islamic education in the modern era.

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## INTRODUCTION

Character education holds a very important position in the Islamic tradition because the primary goal of Islamic education is not only oriented toward the mastery of knowledge but also toward the formation of character and a personality of noble moral character. Throughout the history of Islamic education, the educational process has always been directed toward shaping individuals who possess a balance between intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects (Fandra & Rambe, 2025).

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However, the practice of moral education in various educational institutions today often places greater emphasis on normative and disciplinary approaches that focus on compliance with rules. Such approaches tend to view students as objects of education who must be guided through control and punishment. As a result, the emotional bond between teachers and students is often neglected, causing the educational process to lose its human dimension. In this context, moral education is often reduced to merely shaping outward behavior without deeply touching the students' inner consciousness (Maharani et al., 2025; Mubarak & Muslihah, 2022). This situation highlights the need to reconstruct the paradigm of moral education into a more humanistic one that places interpersonal relationships as the primary foundation of the educational process (Latif, 2022).

The development of modern society has also had a significant impact on changes in the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship in the world of education. Technological advancements, a culture of individualism, and an educational orientation that places too much emphasis on academic achievement have caused educational relationships to become increasingly formal and mechanical. Teachers are often positioned merely as conveyors of material, while students are viewed as recipients of information who must meet curriculum targets. This situation causes the educational process to lose affective values such as empathy, compassion, and respect for the humanity of students. In Islamic education, this condition contradicts the principle of *tarbiyah*, which positions the teacher as a *murabbi* a mentor who educates through exemplary behavior and compassion. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself exemplified a gentle, dialogical, and loving educational method in nurturing his companions. Therefore, Islamic education requires an approach capable of restoring the relational and emotional dimensions in educational interactions so that character development is not coercive but rather grows from the students' inner awareness and experiences (Qonaah et al., 2025).

The concept of the pedagogy of love emerges as an alternative educational approach that places compassion at the core of the learning process. The pedagogy of love holds that education is not sufficient when limited to the transfer of knowledge and the enforcement of discipline; rather, it must be built through warm, dialogic relationships that respect human dignity. From this perspective, love is understood not merely as a personal emotion but as an ethical stance that encourages teachers to understand students' needs, potential, and psychological conditions (Kesuma et al., 2025; Nurbaiti et al., 2020). The pedagogy of love approach positions teachers as educators who are emotionally present in students' lives, thereby making the educational process more meaningful. Through relationships grounded in love, students will more readily embrace moral values because they feel valued and accepted. The pedagogy of love also rejects educational practices that emphasize verbal or symbolic violence, as these have the potential to harm students' psychological development and hinder the formation of authentic character.

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the concept of love holds a very important place and is closely linked to moral education. Many classical scholars, such as Al-Ghazali, regard love as the foundation of human relationships with God, fellow human beings, and knowledge. According to Al-Ghazali, education must be conducted with gentleness and compassion because the human heart is more receptive to advice when approached with love rather than coercion. This perspective demonstrates that the pedagogy of love is not, in fact, a foreign concept in Islamic education but rather has deep roots in the classical Islamic intellectual tradition. Furthermore, Ibn Miskawaih also emphasized the importance of cultivating moral character through a positive environment and constructive social relationships. In this context, teachers serve not only as instructors but also as moral guides who shape students' character through daily interactions (Maharani et al., 2025). Thus, the

pedagogy of love approach can be understood as an effort to reconstruct the humanistic values of Islamic education that are oriented toward the holistic development of the individual.

Thus, the pedagogy of love can be understood as an effort to reconstruct the humanistic values of Islamic education that are oriented toward the holistic development of the personality. Therefore, the pedagogy of love is strongly relevant to humanistic Islamic education because both emphasize the importance of healthy interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. Education is no longer understood merely as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a process of humane guidance that helps students discover the meaning of life and develop moral awareness. This approach has become increasingly important amid rising cases of school violence, a moral crisis, and low social sensitivity among the younger generation. Education that focuses solely on cognitive aspects without considering the emotional dimension tends to produce individuals who are intellectually intelligent but lack empathy and social concern (Nurlailatus & Istiyana, 2024).

The phenomenon of dehumanization in modern education is one of the key reasons for the emergence of the need for a pedagogy of love. Dehumanization occurs when the educational process places greater emphasis on administrative aspects, academic competition, and numerical achievements than on the human development of students. As a result, the relationship between teachers and students becomes increasingly distant and loses its emotional closeness (Sholihah & Abi Aufa, 2025). In some cases, educational approaches that place too much emphasis on punishment and pressure can even cause psychological trauma in students. These conditions indicate that education requires a new paradigm that better values the emotional and spiritual dimensions of human beings. The pedagogy of love offers a more holistic approach because it views students as individuals with psychological, social, and spiritual needs that must be met in a balanced manner. Through this approach, education is expected to create a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and conducive to optimal character development (Annisa, 2019). Thus, moral education is no longer understood as a process of moral indoctrination but rather as the formation of ethical awareness that grows from positive relational experiences.

The teacher-student relationship in Islam is fundamentally built on respect, compassion, and setting a good example. In the Islamic tradition, teachers are not only tasked with imparting knowledge but also with guiding and nurturing students' character. Therefore, educational success is greatly influenced by the quality of the relationship between teachers and students (Maudiyah et al., 2025). When this relationship is built through an authoritarian and high-pressure approach, students tend to experience fear and lose the freedom to grow. Conversely, a relationship grounded in love and respect creates a more open and conducive learning environment. In the context of the pedagogy of love, teachers are expected to be figures who are not only respected for their authority but also loved for their sincerity and concern for their students. Such a relationship enables dialogic communication, making it easier for students to develop an internal sense of moral awareness. Thus, reconstructing the teacher-student relationship is a crucial step in building an Islamic education that is more humanistic and relevant to the challenges of the modern era.

In addition to its theoretical relevance, the pedagogy of love also holds practical significance in the contemporary world of education. Numerous studies show that a positive learning environment rich in emotional support can enhance students' motivation to learn, mental health, and character development. In character education, an approach that emphasizes compassion has proven more effective than one based solely on punishment. This is because moral values are more easily

internalized when students feel safe and valued. The pedagogy of love also helps create an inclusive school culture that values diversity. In a modern, pluralistic, and complex society, education requires an approach capable of fostering tolerance, empathy, and social solidarity. Therefore, the application of the pedagogy of love in Islamic education is not only relevant for the formation of individual character but is also crucial for building a harmonious and civilized social life.

Research on the pedagogy of love in Islamic education remains relatively limited compared to studies on teaching methods or educational management. Most research in Islamic education focuses primarily on aspects of the curriculum, teaching strategies, and the evaluation of learning outcomes, while the emotional and relational dimensions of education have not yet received much serious attention (Prasidha, 2025). In fact, the success of moral education is greatly influenced by the quality of the relationship between teachers and students. Therefore, research on the pedagogy of love is important for broadening the perspective of Islamic education so that it is not only oriented toward normative aspects but also takes into account the emotional experiences of students. This study seeks to examine the concept of the pedagogy of love from the perspective of humanistic Islamic education by emphasizing the importance of reconstructing the teacher-student relationship as the foundation of moral education. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of a more humanistic, dialogical, and transformative paradigm of Islamic education (Hidayati, 2025).

Based on the above discussion, it can be understood that the pedagogy of love is a relevant educational approach to addressing various problems in modern education, particularly in Islamic moral education. This approach places the relationship of love and compassion at the core of the educational process, so that character development is not achieved through coercion but rather through positive and meaningful relational experiences. From the perspective of humanistic Islamic education, the pedagogy of love serves as a means to humanize individuals and develop students' full potential in a balanced manner. Therefore, reconstructing the teacher-student relationship through the pedagogy of love approach is a strategic step toward building an Islamic education system that is more dialogic, inclusive, and oriented toward the development of moral consciousness. Thus, this research is important to explore the concept of the pedagogy of love in greater depth, as well as its relevance to moral education in the modern era.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand, examine, and describe in depth the concept of the pedagogy of love in moral education, as well as its relevance to the reconstruction of teacher-student relationships from the perspective of humanistic Islamic education. Qualitative research emphasizes the in-depth meaning, interpretation, and understanding of social phenomena and ideas, making it suitable for conceptual and philosophical studies (Anidar et al., 2026; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2023, 2025, 2026; Gusnanda et al., 2025; Htay et al., 2025; Saidi et al., 2025; Wahyuni et al., 2025).

The research method employed is a literature review, as the primary sources of this study are drawn from various works related to the pedagogy of love, moral education, humanistic Islamic education, and teacher-student relationships from an Islamic perspective. This study examines various primary and secondary sources, such as books, scientific journals, academic articles, works by prominent figures in Islamic education, and previous research findings relevant to the research theme. This approach is used to gain a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the concept of the pedagogy of love and its implementation in Islamic education.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from the works of prominent figures in education and Islamic thinkers, such as Imam Al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawaih, Paulo Freire, and other humanistic educators who discuss the concepts of love, ethics, and educational relationships. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from scientific journals, reference books, undergraduate theses, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and research articles relevant to the research topic. These data were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and connection to the research focus.

The primary instrument in this study is the researcher themselves (human instrument). In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument responsible for collecting, identifying, interpreting, and analyzing data in depth. Additionally, the researcher used supporting instruments such as documentation notes, data classification sheets, and literature analysis forms to facilitate the process of collecting and grouping data based on research themes.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and a literature review. The researcher collected various written sources related to the pedagogy of love and humanistic Islamic education, then identified the main concepts relevant to the research focus. Next, the data obtained were classified into specific categories, such as the concept of love in Islamic education, teacher-student relationships, moral education, and humanistic approaches in education. The data analysis technique used in this study was content analysis. Content analysis was used to understand the meanings, ideas, and messages contained in the various literary sources examined. The analysis process was carried out in several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and focused on data relevant to the research theme. Next, the data were systematically presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate the interpretation process. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the results of the interpretation of the analyzed data (Engkizar et al., 2023, 2026; Kasmar et al., 2019; Muswara & Zalnur, 2019; Oktavia et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2021).

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation that is, comparing various sources of literature relevant to the research topic. The researcher also cross-checked the data and theories used to ensure that the research findings possess a high degree of credibility and objectivity. Thus, this research method is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the pedagogy of love as an approach to humanistic Islamic moral education.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Moral education in Islam is fundamentally aimed not only at fostering behavioral compliance but also at cultivating a moral consciousness that springs from the heart and a person's spiritual awareness. However, the practice of moral education in various educational institutions still often relies on a normative approach that emphasizes rules, punishments, and formal discipline. While such an approach can indeed create behavioral order in the short term, it often fails to foster a deep ethical consciousness in students. In many cases, students obey rules out of fear of punishment, not because they understand the moral significance of their actions. This situation indicates that moral education still tends to focus on the external aspects of the human being and has not yet optimally addressed the affective and relational dimensions. The pedagogy of love emerges as a critique of educational models that place too much emphasis on authority and control. This approach places compassion at the core of education so that the relationship between teacher and student is built on a foundation of respect, empathy, and sincerity (Irawan et al., 2025). Thus, the educational process not only produces formal compliance but also

fosters moral awareness that grows from emotional experiences and positive human relationships.

The concept of the pedagogy of love in Islamic education has strong roots in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Prophet is known as an educator who emphasized gentleness, compassion, and setting a good example in teaching his companions. He did not merely impart knowledge through lectures but also through an emotional approach that made his companions feel valued and loved. In various accounts, the Prophet demonstrated patience toward his companions' mistakes and preferred a dialogical approach over harsh punishment. This approach demonstrates that love in education is not merely an emotional attitude but an educational method capable of profoundly shaping character. Education built on a foundation of compassion fosters a sense of security and emotional closeness, making it easier for students to embrace moral values. In the context of modern education, the Prophet's approach is highly relevant because many educational institutions are experiencing a crisis in teacher-student relationships. Therefore, the pedagogy of love can be understood as an effort to revive the values of Islamic *tarbiyah*, which regard human beings as the subjects of education who must be treated humanely and with respect (Listiana et al., 2025).

The study's findings indicate that the teacher-student relationship is a key factor in the success of character education. In humanistic Islamic education, teachers are viewed not only as conveyors of knowledge but also as spiritual and moral guides responsible for shaping students' personalities. A harmonious relationship between teachers and students fosters a comfortable and conducive learning environment, enabling students to be more receptive to the learning process. Conversely, relationships built on fear and pressure tend to foster passivity, low self-esteem, and even resistance to the educational process. The pedagogy of love emphasizes that teachers must demonstrate empathy, care, and respect for students' psychological well-being. When students feel valued as human beings, they develop intrinsic motivation to learn and improve themselves. Thus, character education is no longer understood as a process of moral indoctrination but as a process of guidance that helps students discover ethical awareness within themselves. This demonstrates that the quality of interpersonal relationships in education has a significant influence on the holistic character development of students (Kamilah, 2024).

From the perspective of the pedagogy of love, teachers hold a strategic position as moral role models who set concrete examples in daily life. Setting a good example is a crucial element because students tend to learn by observing their teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, the success of character education is determined not only by the material taught but also by the quality of the educator's own character. Teachers who are friendly, patient, and respectful of students are more readily accepted and emulated than those who are harsh and authoritarian. Research findings indicate that a compassionate approach fosters strong emotional bonds between teachers and students, allowing the internalization of moral values to occur naturally. In Islamic education, a teacher's example is even considered more effective than verbal advice alone because students directly observe the application of moral values in real life. The pedagogy of love requires teachers not only to be instructors but also to be inspirational figures capable of fostering a sense of safety and comfort in the learning process (Rahman, 2016).

In addition to strengthening interpersonal relationships, the pedagogy of love also contributes to building a humanistic and inclusive educational environment. A humanistic educational environment is a learning atmosphere that values diversity, freedom of thought, and the emotional development of students. In this approach, students are not viewed as objects that must submit absolutely to the teacher's authority, but as individuals who possess the potential and the right to develop.

Research findings indicate that a learning environment filled with respect and compassion can enhance students' self-confidence, creativity, and active participation in the learning process. Conversely, a high-pressure educational environment often causes students to experience anxiety and a loss of motivation to learn. The pedagogy of love provides a space for dialogue that allows students to express their opinions and feelings without fear. This approach is particularly important in humanistic Islamic education because the goal of education is not only to produce intellectually intelligent individuals but also emotionally and socially mature human beings.

The phenomenon of dehumanization in modern education is one of the factors that underscores the urgency of implementing a pedagogy of love. Dehumanization occurs when education is more focused on academic targets, grade competition, and administrative achievements than on the development of human character. In such situations, the relationship between teachers and students becomes increasingly formal and mechanical. Students are treated as objects of evaluation, while their emotional and psychological aspects are often neglected. Research findings indicate that these conditions can lead to mental stress, low levels of social empathy, and a decline in the quality of interpersonal relationships within the school environment. The pedagogy of love emerges as an alternative approach that seeks to restore humanistic values in education. This approach emphasizes the importance of attending to students' emotional well-being and the need for dialogic and supportive relationships in the learning process. Education grounded in love creates a more comfortable learning environment and builds students' self-confidence (Deviar & Pribadi, 2019).

Research findings also indicate that the pedagogy of love is closely linked to the development of authentic moral consciousness. Authentic moral consciousness is an individual's ability to understand and act upon moral values based on self-awareness, rather than external pressure. In a normative approach, students often obey rules simply out of fear of punishment or a desire for rewards. However, such compliance tends to be temporary and easily changes when external control is no longer present. The pedagogy of love offers a different approach by instilling moral values through positive emotional bonds and meaningful relational experiences. When students feel loved and valued, they are more likely to develop empathy, compassion, and social responsibility. Moral values are no longer understood as a burden of rules but as an inner need that grows from self-awareness. In Islamic education, the formation of this kind of moral awareness is crucial because good character must stem from sincerity of heart and spiritual awareness (Amelia & Thohir, 2025).

In the context of humanistic Islamic education, the pedagogy of love also plays a vital role in developing students' potential holistically. Humanistic education views human beings as creatures with intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions that must develop in a balanced manner. The pedagogy of love supports this concept because it treats students as unique individuals with diverse needs. Teachers are expected to understand students' personalities, backgrounds, and psychological states so that the educational process can be more personalized and meaningful. Research findings indicate that students who receive emotional support from teachers tend to have higher motivation to learn and better social skills. They are also better able to develop self-confidence and the courage to express their opinions. In Islamic education, the holistic development of human potential is an integral part of the educational goals themselves (Neliwati et al., 2023).

The application of the pedagogy of love in character education also has a positive impact on fostering a more peaceful and harmonious school culture. A healthy school culture is determined not only by rules and regulations but also by the quality of social relationships within the educational environment. When teachers

foster interactions filled with love and respect, students will emulate these relationship patterns in their own social lives. Research findings indicate that schools that adopt a humanistic approach tend to have lower levels of conflict and better social relationships among the school community. The pedagogy of love helps foster an atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and social concern within the educational environment. In the context of an increasingly individualistic modern society, these values are crucial for building social solidarity and a harmonious way of life. Islamic education oriented toward compassion will produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses social sensitivity and concern for others.

Based on the results of this discussion, it can be understood that the pedagogy of love is a relevant educational approach for reconstructing the teacher-student relationship in Islamic moral education. This approach places love, empathy, and respect as the primary foundations of the educational process, so that the educational relationship is no longer authoritarian or coercive. The pedagogy of love is capable of creating a learning environment that is dialogical, humanistic, and transformative, allowing students to develop optimally, both intellectually and morally. From the perspective of humanistic Islamic education, this approach is crucial for restoring the essence of education as a process of humanizing human beings. Teachers serve not only as conveyors of knowledge but also as moral guides who embody compassion and set a positive example in the lives of students. Therefore, the pedagogy of love can serve as an alternative paradigm in modern Islamic education to address various problems of dehumanization, moral crises, and strained social relationships within the educational sphere.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the pedagogy of love is a relevant educational approach for reconstructing the teacher-student relationship in Islamic moral education. This approach places compassion, empathy, respect, and exemplary behavior as the primary foundations of the educational process, thereby ensuring that the educational relationship is no longer authoritarian or coercive. Moral education, which has traditionally tended to emphasize normative and disciplinary aspects, has not yet been fully effective in fostering a deep moral consciousness among students. Through the pedagogy of love, the educational process is directed toward building ethical awareness that arises from positive relational experiences between teachers and students. From the perspective of humanistic Islamic education, teachers serve not only as conveyors of knowledge but also as moral and spiritual guides who foster a sense of safety, comfort, and respect for the dignity of students. Thus, the pedagogy of love can serve as an alternative paradigm in modern Islamic education to address the problems of the dehumanization of education, the moral crisis, and the strained interpersonal relationships within educational settings.

The research findings also show that the application of the pedagogy of love has a positive impact on students' character development and the creation of a more humanistic, dialogic, and inclusive educational environment. This approach helps students develop authentic moral awareness because ethical values are not only taught through rules and punishments but also through experiences of love, exemplary behavior, and healthy interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the pedagogy of love fosters a school culture that is harmonious, tolerant, and respectful of diversity. In the context of modern education, which is increasingly competitive and focused on academic achievement, this approach is crucial for restoring the essence of education as a process of humanizing human beings. Humanistic Islamic education through the pedagogy of love is not only oriented toward intellectual

intelligence but also toward the balanced development of students' emotional, social, spiritual, and moral aspects, thereby fostering a generation of individuals with strong character and noble personalities.

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