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Love-Based Curriculum Management through the Integration of *Tepa Selira* Values in Islamic Early Childhood Education: A Four-Function Conceptual Framework for *Raudlatul Athfal*

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A R T I C L E I N F O

Keywords:

Ethnopragmatics;
Early Childhood Education;
Love-Based Curriculum;
Local Wisdom;
Tepa Selira;

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*/KBC), officially structured around the *Panca Cinta* (Five Loves) by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2025), faces a critical challenge in Islamic Early Childhood Education (specifically *Raudlatul Athfal*/RA): the scarcity of authentic, culturally grounded managerial and pedagogical resources. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the transformation of *Tepa Selira* (empathy and social care) values embedded in the *petatah-petitih* (aphorisms) of *Sunan Gunung Jati* into a comprehensive curriculum management framework. Employing a two-phase qualitative design (1) interdisciplinary conceptual modeling integrating ethnopragmatics and psychopedagogy, and (2) structured expert validation involving two Cirebon cultural experts and two ECE specialists, this study analyzed eight purposively selected aphorisms. The findings reveal four conceptual categories of Tepa Selira values: social harmony, empathy and social care, politeness and self-regulation, and humanistic religiosity. These values were systematically transformed into the Four-Layer Conceptual Transformation Model: (1) Cultural-Philosophical Foundation, (2) Academic-Theoretical Validation, (3) Pedagogical Translation guided by "concretization without simplification," and (4) Curriculum Management Operationalization. The fourth layer explicitly maps the values across four managerial functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Expert validation indicated high conceptual alignment and appropriateness (mean score: 3.88/4.00). This study contributes a managerially operational and pedagogically sound blueprint for contextualizing the KBC's *Panca Cinta* across diverse cultural landscapes in Islamic ECE.

Keywords:

Etnopragmatik;
Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini;
Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta;
Kearifan Lokal;
Tepa Selira;

Penerapan Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (KBC), yang secara resmi disusun berdasarkan Panca Cinta oleh Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2025), menghadapi tantangan krusial dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Islam (khususnya Raudlatul Athfal/RA): kelangkaan sumber daya manajerial dan pedagogis yang otentik serta berakar pada budaya. Penelitian ini mengatasi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menganalisis transformasi nilai-nilai Tepa Selira (empati dan kepedulian sosial) yang tertanam dalam petatah-petitih (pepatah) Sunan Gunung Jati menjadi kerangka kerja manajemen kurikulum yang komprehensif. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif dua fase, yaitu (1) pemodelan konseptual interdisipliner yang mengintegrasikan etnopragmatik dan psikopedagogi, serta (2) validasi ahli terstruktur yang melibatkan dua pakar budaya Cirebon dan dua spesialis PAUD, penelitian ini menganalisis delapan pepatah yang dipilih secara purposif. Temuan penelitian

mengungkapkan empat kategori konseptual nilai-nilai Tepa Selira: keharmonisan sosial, empati dan kepedulian sosial, kesopanan dan pengaturan diri, serta religiositas humanistik. Nilai-nilai ini secara sistematis diubah menjadi Model Transformasi Konseptual Empat Lapis: (1) Landasan Budaya-Filsafat, (2) Validasi Akademik-Teoretis, (3) Penerjemahan Pedagogis yang dipandu oleh "konkretisasi tanpa penyederhanaan," dan (4) Operasionalisasi Manajemen Kurikulum. Lapis keempat secara eksplisit memetakan nilai-nilai tersebut ke dalam empat fungsi manajerial: perencanaan, pengorganisasian, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi. Validasi oleh para ahli menunjukkan keselarasan konseptual yang tinggi serta kesesuaian (skor rata-rata: 3,88/4,00). Penelitian ini memberikan kerangka kerja yang operasional dari segi manajemen dan kokoh secara pedagogis untuk mengkontekstualisasikan Panca Cinta KBC di berbagai lanskap budaya dalam pendidikan anak usia dini (PAUD) Islam

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education curriculum management cannot be reduced merely to fulfilling administrative structures and ensuring the completeness of curriculum documents. The fundamental challenge faced by Islamic educational institutions lies in how the values that constitute the ontological identity of Islamic education *tawhid, rahmah, adab,* and public benefit are operationally translated into learning objectives, meaningful learning experiences, a living educational culture, and authentic pedagogical practices in the classroom (Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2018). Orstein & Hunskins (2018) emphasize that a curriculum is not merely a plan for learning, but rather a system encompassing interconnected processes of design, implementation, and evaluation. In the context of Islamic education, the value dimension is not an addition, but an epistemological foundation that determines the direction of all curriculum components (Abuzar et al., 2024; Asykur et al., 2025; Rizki & Rijal, 2026; Şahin & Kesik, 2019; Tuzer, 2026). Nevertheless, studies of Islamic education curriculum management still tend to focus on structural and formal aspects, while the mechanisms through which values are translated into educational praxis have received insufficient attention (Al-Jayyousi et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Setiawan et al., 2025). The gap between the ideals of values and the realities of implementation calls for a curriculum management approach that is not merely technocratic, but also reflective and transformative (Sudibyo, 2024,Glatthorn et al., 2018).

In the context of Islamic Early Childhood Education (specifically Raudlatul Athfal/RA), these challenges become increasingly complex given the developmental characteristics of young children. The Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC), officially promulgated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2025), emerges as a value orientation structured around the *Panca Cinta* (Five Loves): (1) love for Allah and His Messenger, (2) love for knowledge, (3) love for the environment, (4) love for oneself and fellow human beings, and (5) love for the homeland. Hereafter, the English translation "Love-Based Curriculum (LBC)" is used interchangeably with the official Indonesian nomenclature "KBC". While LBC aligns with Noddings (2013) ethics of care, abstract values embedded in the Panca Cinta cannot automatically become part of children's learning experiences or institutional policies without systematic curriculum management mechanisms. A curriculum translation process is therefore needed to bridge philosophical values with managerial functions and age-appropriate learning activities

(Drake & Burns, 2004; Beane, 1997). Without clear management mechanisms encompassing planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating, KBC risks becoming mere rhetoric.

Despite the conceptual recognition of the urgency of integrating *Tepa Selira* values into educational curricula, three research gaps remain inadequately bridged. *First*, at the substantive level, research on the *petatah-petitih* of Sunan Gunung Jati remains predominantly situated within the domains of history, philology, descriptive linguistics, or general cultural value studies (Duryat, 2014; Suparman, 2019; Mulyana, 2005; Ekajati, 2009). These studies have not yet addressed the pedagogical and curricular dimensions of the values contained therein. *Second*, at the pedagogical level, character education scholarship in Indonesia has not sufficiently elucidated how local wisdom values are specifically translated into learning experiences appropriate to the developmental characteristics of early childhood (Lickona, 1991; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Narvaez, 2014). The existing literature tends to discuss character education in general terms without elaborating pedagogical translation mechanisms for the PAUD context (Fleer & Pramling, 2015; Muslich, 2011; Al-Khateeb & Hafidh 'Aziz, 2026). *Third*, and most critically, at the managerial level, to the best of our knowledge, no published study has yet developed a conceptual framework that explicitly explains how *Tepa Selira* values are managed through the four curriculum management functions to support KBC implementation in Islamic ECE. A systematic search across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Garuda databases (2015–2026) yielded no study fulfilling these three criteria simultaneously.

On the other hand, value-based education attains deeper meaningfulness when the values taught bear organic connections to the learners' socio-cultural context (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021). In early childhood education, children learn within microsystems profoundly shaped by local culture and social practices (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, integrating local wisdom into the curriculum is an epistemological necessity, providing a cultural scaffold that enables children to comprehend universal values through familiar experiences (Hafidh 'Aziz & Hidayah, 2024; McKinley & Smith, 2019). In the Indonesian context, deliberate incorporation of local wisdom is imperative for sustaining cultural identity while fostering universal human values (Suryadi & Rosyada, 2023).

Within the Javanese-Cirebonese cultural heritage, Tepa Selira denoting the capacity to feel what others feel represents a crystallization of empathy, tolerance, and social care (Mulder, 1996; Geertz, 1960). The petatah-petitih of Sunan Gunung Jati contain a structured value system operating through directive forms, cultural metaphors, and politeness strategies that function as implicit pedagogical instruments (Wierzbicka, 2003; Goddard, 2011). The question is no longer whether these values are relevant, but how they are systematically managed and transformed into an integral part of the educational curriculum system. The author's research identifies four principal value categories within these aphorisms: (1) social harmony, (2) empathy and social care, (3) courtesy and self-restraint, and (4) humanistic religiosity. From an ethnopragmatic perspective, these aphorisms employ directive forms, counsel, prohibitions, cultural metaphors, and politeness strategies as effective mechanisms of social control (Wierzbicka, 2003; Goddard, 2011; Ide, 2006). These speech forms do not merely transmit information but shape moral dispositions and regulate social relations through culturally internalized language (Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Locher & Watts, 2005). The pragmatic force of these utterances lies in their capacity to encode normative expectations within culturally resonant communicative forms, thereby functioning as implicit pedagogical instruments (Eelen, 2001; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). *The question is no longer whether these values are relevant, but how they are managed and transformed into an integral part of the educational curriculum system.*

The novelty of this research lies in the development of a local wisdom-based curriculum management framework that explicitly bridges three conceptual entities: *Tepa Selira* values as the *cultural foundation*, the Love-Based Curriculum as the *philosophical orientation*, and the characteristics of early childhood education as the *developmental context*. Specifically, this research produces a conceptual model comprising four principal stages: (1) Cultural Foundation, identification and interpretation of *Tepa Selira* values within the *petatah-petitih* of Sunan Gunung Jati through an ethnopragmatic approach; (2) Value Interpretation, analysis of the educational meaning of identified values and their relevance to KBC principles; (3) Curriculum Translation, transformation of values into

objectives, content, learning experiences, and instructional strategies appropriate to early childhood development; and (4) Curriculum Management, mapping of curriculum components onto planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation functions. This model offers an original contribution because no prior research has integrated these three dimensions within a single coherent and operational management framework for the Islamic PAUD context (Abuzar et al., 2024; Asykur et al., 2025; Wulandari, 2025).

Based on the background and gaps outlined above, this research aims to: (1) analyze the *Tepa Selira* values contained in the *petatah-petitih* of Sunan Gunung Jati through an ethnopragmatic approach; (2) identify the relevance of these values to the principles and orientations of the Love-Based Curriculum in Islamic Early Childhood Education; and (3) develop a conceptual framework for *Tepa Selira*-based curriculum management that can serve as a guide for KBC curriculum governance in early childhood education. Through the achievement of these three objectives, this research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education curriculum management scholarship and a practical contribution for Islamic PAUD administrators in implementing curricula rooted in local wisdom and oriented toward values of love.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative conceptual research design with two sequential phases. Phase 1 comprises library-based document analysis and conceptual modeling, positioned as a theory-building study. Phase 2 comprises empirical data collection through structured expert judgment and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to assess the appropriateness and feasibility of the proposed framework. This two-phase design is consistent with conceptual-development research that integrates theoretical construction with expert appraisal prior to field implementation. The design is chosen because the primary objective is to bridge cultural texts (*petatah-petitih*), pedagogical theories, and curriculum management principles into a cohesive conceptual model. This approach aligns with conceptual research paradigms that seek to reorganize and integrate existing knowledge to generate new theoretical frameworks or models (Jabareen, 2009; Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Conceptual research, as defined by theory-building scholars, involves the systematic synthesis and reinterpretation of existing concepts to produce novel theoretical contributions (Weick, 1989; Corley & Gioia, 2011). In the context of educational studies, conceptual research has been widely utilized to develop integrative frameworks that bridge cultural, pedagogical, and managerial dimensions (Banks, 2015; Sleeter, 2011).

The selection of the eight *petatah-petitih* from the *Terjemahan Pustaka Nagara* corpus was based on purposive sampling with three explicit inclusion criteria: (1) containing directives or metaphors related to social ethics, empathy, or humanistic values; (2) possessing clear ethnopragmatic markers (e.g., commissive, expressive, or directive speech acts); and (3) demonstrating relevance to early childhood character development. To ensure analytical traceability, the decoding process followed a transparent audit trail. For example, the aphorism *'Den rukun ing sapapada'* was initially coded under 'social interaction.' Through semantic decomposition, it was reconstructed into a cultural script emphasizing communal equilibrium. During axial coding, this script was grouped with aphorism 8 (*'Tepi saliro den adol'*) under the overarching category of 'Social Harmony,' as both share the pragmatic function of conflict avoidance and mutual respect.

The data in this study are divided into primary and secondary sources. The primary data consist of the textual corpus of the *petatah-petitih* (aphorisms and adages) of Sunan Gunung Jati, specifically extracted from Terjemahan Pustaka Nagara. The selection of these aphorisms is purposively based on their relevance to social ethics, empathy, and humanistic values, following the principles of purposive sampling in qualitative textual analysis (Patton, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018). Secondary data comprise academic literature, including books, peer-reviewed journals, and authoritative documents related to ethnopragmatics, local wisdom of Cirebon, Islamic early childhood education, the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC), and educational curriculum management. The selection of secondary sources follows the criteria of relevance, authority, and recency, prioritizing seminal works and contemporary studies published within the last decade (Booth et al., 2016; Ridley, 2012).

To address the research objectives systematically, the data were analyzed using an integrated three-stage analytical procedure. This sequential process ensures a rigorous

transformation from cultural text to an operational management framework, following the principles of iterative and layered analysis in qualitative research (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021).

Stage 1: Ethnopragmatic Interpretation (Text to Cultural Value) The first stage involves decoding the *petatah-petitih* to extract the underlying *Tepa Selira* values. This process draws upon Wierzbicka's (2003) cultural script theory and Goddard's (2011) Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework. Instead of imposing external analytical categories, the aphorisms are analyzed using semantic primes to uncover the culturally specific cognitive and moral scripts embedded in the Cirebonese-Javanese context. This ethnopragmatic approach ensures that the identified values of empathy, tolerance, and social care remain authentic to their cultural epistemology before being translated into educational concepts (Wierzbicka, 1997, 2014; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014). The analytical procedure follows the steps proposed by Goddard (2011): (1) identification of key cultural concepts, (2) decomposition into semantic primes, (3) reconstruction of cultural scripts, and (4) validation against native speaker intuitions and existing ethnographic literature.

Stage 2: Pedagogical Translation (Cultural Value to Educational Meaning) In the second stage, the culturally grounded values identified in Stage 1 are pedagogically translated to fit the developmental characteristics of early childhood and the philosophical orientation of the Love-Based Curriculum (LBC). This involves mapping the abstract cultural values onto concrete, age-appropriate educational meanings. The translation process utilizes the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2014) and the ethics of care (Noddings, 2003, 2013) to ensure that the values of *Tepa Selira* are reformulated into learning objectives, content themes, and relational experiences that foster *mahabbah* (love), empathy, and respect among young children. The pedagogical translation follows the framework proposed by Villegas and Lucas (2002) for culturally sustaining pedagogy, which emphasizes the transformation of cultural knowledge into developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

Stage 3: Curriculum Management Mapping (Educational Meaning to Management System) The final stage constructs the conceptual framework by mapping the pedagogically translated values into the core functions of curriculum management. Drawing upon established curriculum management theories (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Glatthorn et al., 2018; Marsh, 2010), the educational components are systematically integrated into four managerial functions: (1) *Planning* (formulating vision, mission, and learning objectives based on *Tepa Selira* and LBC), (2) *Organizing* (structuring resources, roles, and learning environments to support value internalization), (3) *Implementing* (designing instructional strategies and school culture that actualize love-based and empathetic practices), and (4) *Evaluating* (developing authentic assessment mechanisms to measure the internalization of *Tepa Selira* values). This stage produces the final conceptual model of Love-Based Curriculum Management, following the systems approach to curriculum development proposed by Oliva and Gordon (2013) and the curriculum management framework articulated by Daresh and Male (2020).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the conceptual framework, this study employs theoretical triangulation and critical peer debriefing, following the quality criteria for qualitative research proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and extended by Creswell and Poth (2018). Theoretical triangulation is achieved by cross-verifying the ethnopragmatic interpretations with established cultural and linguistic theories (Denzin, 2012), and validating the pedagogical translations with developmental psychology and Islamic educational philosophy. Furthermore, the proposed management framework was subjected to critical review and logical auditing by experts in Islamic early childhood education and curriculum studies to ensure its coherence, operational viability, and philosophical soundness (Cohen et al., 2018; Maxwell, 2013). The proposed management framework was subjected to critical review by four purposively selected experts. This procedure constitutes a single-round expert validation with FGD elaboration; it does not employ the iterative, anonymous cycles characteristic of the Delphi technique, and is therefore described strictly as expert validation.

All experts provided written informed consent prior to participation. The study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. No child participants were involved in this conceptual and expert-validation phase.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Ethnopragmatic Construction of *Tepa Selira* Values in Sunan Gunung Jati's Aphorisms

The first stage of analysis revealed that the eight *petatah-petitih* of Sunan Gunung Jati constitute an integrated value system, each encoding distinct yet interconnected *cultural script*s through specific ethnopragmatic strategies. Rather than functioning as mere linguistic artifacts, these aphorisms operate as sophisticated instruments of social control and moral education, employing directive forms, cultural metaphors, and politeness strategies that reflect the high-context communicative norms of Cirebonese society (Mey, 2005, 2020; Wierzbicka, 2014; Goddard, 2011).

The analysis identified eight distinct ethnopragmatic value dimensions embedded within the aphorisms, each representing a unique facet of *Tepa Selira*:

First, *"Den rukun ing sapapada. Kudu rukun karo kabeh, aja seneng padu"* (Live in harmony with all; do not enjoy conflict) encodes a socio-cosmic literacy, where social harmony is perceived as a reflection of cosmic order. The *cultural script* dictates: *[It is not good to do bad things to others. One must want good things for others. When living together, people must not harm one another.]* This aphorism employs directive and expressive speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), functioning as both moral invitation and social expectation within Cirebon's heterogeneous agrarian-coastal society (Koentjaraningrat, 2015; Mulder, 1996).

Second, *"Den eling marang mati. Elinga, urip iku mung mampir ngombe. Yen wong eling mati, ora bakal sembrono, ora gampang nyakiti wong liya"* (Remember death; life is but a brief stop for a drink) embodies existential and spiritual literacy. The metaphor *"mampir ngombe"* (a brief stop for a drink) reduces worldly existence to its ephemeral nature, serving as an internal moral compass. The *cultural script* states: *[Life in this world is very short. Death is certain. Every bad deed will have its consequence.]* This represents a sophisticated acculturation of Islamic Sufism with Javanese *nrimo* (acceptance) (Geertz, 1960; Koentjaraningrat, 2015), preventing impulsive behavior and worldly greed.

Third, *"Wedia ing Allah lan melasa marang sapapada"* (Fear Allah and show compassion to all) articulates a theo-social literacy that balances vertical (*hablum minallah*) and horizontal (*hablum minannas*) relationships. The term *"wedia"* conveys a fear mixed with reverence and awe, not paralyzing terror. The *cultural script* affirms: *[Allah is All-Powerful and All-Knowing. Humans are weak creatures in need of help. To honor Allah is to show compassion to His creation.]* This reflects the core *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* teaching in Cirebon that ritual piety is invalid without social piety (Al-Attas, 1995; Nasr, 2002).

Fourth, *"Ingsun titipna tajug lan fakir miskin"* (I entrust you with the mosque and the poor) represents the highest civic and political literacy, delivered by Sunan Gunung Jati in his dual capacity as Sultan and Wali (Suryaman, 2015; Wildan, 2015). The *cultural script* mandates: *[A good society must protect its places of worship. A good society must protect the vulnerable. Leaders and citizens are both obligated to care for these two pillars.]* This aphorism employs commissive and indirect directive speech acts, functioning as a morally binding testament for successors.

Fifth, *"Sugih bei rerawat, mlarat beli gegulat"* (The wealthy should nurture and honor; the poor should not beg or lose dignity) encodes an economic and class-ethics literacy that redefines "wealth" as the capacity to *rerawat* (nurture/honor) and "poverty" as maintaining *izzah* (dignity). The *cultural script* states: *[If one has excess, one must share it. If one lacks, one must remain strong and not burden others. One's dignity is not determined by wealth.]* This aphorism prevents *gumunggung* (arrogance) among the wealthy and *ngrendahake* (self-degradation) among the poor, maintaining social equilibrium (Geertz, 1960).

Sixth, *"Aja ilok ngijek rarohi ing wong"* (Never trample on others' feelings) embodies an emotional literacy that elevates *rasa* (feeling) to a sacred principle. The metaphor *"ngijek"* (to trample) powerfully depicts arrogance and the loss of *tepa selira*. The *cultural script* affirms: *[Every person has feelings and dignity. To demean others is a grave wrongdoing. One must place oneself in another's position before acting.]* This reflects Cirebon's high-context culture where "saving face" and "protecting feelings" are unwritten sacred laws (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ide, 2006).

Seventh, *"Gaguneman sifat kang pinuji"* (Speak with praiseworthy character) articulates a linguistic-spiritual literacy where language mirrors the soul. The *cultural script* states: *[Words reflect the heart's content. A good person speaks only good things. Before speaking, one must ensure good intentions and words that do not harm.]* This integrates the Islamic concepts of *Qaulan Sadida* (truthful speech) and *Qaulan Layyina* (gentle speech) with Cirebonese-Javanese communication ethics prioritizing *alus* (refinement) (Al-Ghazali, 2010; Geertz, 1960).

Eighth, *"Tepi saliro den adol"* (Let *tepa selira* be practiced in daily social transactions) represents a praxis literacy, transforming empathy from abstract concept into concrete action. The term *"adol"* (to sell/practice) is culturally specific, positioning *tepa selira* as the "social currency" of Cirebon. The *cultural script* affirms: *[Feel what others feel. Those feelings must be manifested in concrete actions. We are interconnected; their happiness is my happiness.]*

3.1.2 Categorization of *Tepa Selira* Values: Four Conceptual Domains

Through axial coding (Saldaña, 2021; Clarke & Braun, 2014), the eight aphorisms were organized into four interconnected conceptual categories, revealing the multidimensional nature of Sunan Gunung Jati's teachings (Table 1).

Tabel 1. Categorization of Tepa Selira Values

Category	Constituent Aphorisms	Conceptual Meaning
Social Harmony	1, 8	*Tepa Selira* is manifested through the ability to build harmonious relationships, mutual respect, and the avoidance of conflict in communal life.
Empathy and Social Care	3, 4, 5, 6, 8	*Tepa Selira* is manifested through the capacity to feel others' conditions, express compassion, assist vulnerable groups, and honor every individual's dignity.
Politeness and Self-Regulation	2, 6, 7	Self-regulation forms the foundation of polite behavior, enabling individuals to control speech and actions so as not to harm others.
Humanistic Religiosity	2, 3, 4	Spirituality does not end at the relationship with God but is manifested through social responsibility and behavior that honors fellow humans.

Cross-tabulation analysis revealed that each aphorism may belong to multiple categories simultaneously, demonstrating the holistic and non-reductionist nature of these teachings (Miles et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). For instance, the second aphorism (*Den eling marang mati*) belongs simultaneously to Politeness and Self-Regulation and to Humanistic Religiosity, while the eighth aphorism (*Tepi saliro den adol*) spans both Social Harmony and Empathy and Social Care.

The categorization into four domains was not merely a thematic grouping but the result of iterative axial coding (Saldaña, 2021). The analytical traceability is evident in how abstract cultural scripts were mapped to educational constructs. For instance, aphorisms emphasizing self-control and linguistic refinement (e.g., *'Gaguneman sifat kang pinuji'*) were systematically coded under 'Politeness and Self-Regulation' because their pragmatic force aims at internal moral compassing. Conversely, aphorisms directing outward social action (e.g., *'Ingsun titipna tajug lan fakir miskin'*) were coded under 'Empathy and Social Care' due to their commissive nature targeting vulnerable groups. Cross-tabulation further revealed the holistic nature of these teachings, where a single aphorism often serves multiple pedagogical functions simultaneously.

3.1.3 Pedagogical Translation: From Cultural Wisdom to Child-Appropriate Learning

The pedagogical translation stage mapped each *Tepa Selira* value onto Thomas Lickona's three dimensions of character education (*moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, *moral action*) (Lickona, 2004; Arif et al., 2023; Hafizallah, 2024) and Erik Erikson's psychosocial stage of *Initiative vs. Guilt* (ages 4–6) (Erikson, 1995; Ladd, 2005; Newman, 2000). The analysis indicated conceptual alignment that all eight aphorisms align organically with three elements of the Indonesian Early Childhood Learning Outcomes (*Capaian*

Pembelajaran/CP): Religious Values and Character, Self-Identity, and Foundations of Literacy and Arts (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

For example, the sixth aphorism (*"Aja ilok ngijek rarohi ing wong"*) translates pedagogically as follows:

a. Moral knowing: Children understand that harsh words can hurt others' feelings.
b. Moral feeling: Children experience affective empathy when witnessing a peer's sadness.
c. Moral action: Children use "magic words" (please, thank you, sorry), avoid mocking, and courageously apologize.

This translation aligns with Erikson's *Initiative vs. Guilt* stage, where children's social initiative is directed toward positive interaction and social competence rather than guilt-inducing aggression (Downie & Proulx, 2022; Kalla et al., 2022; Lyons, 2024). The pedagogical implementation includes storytelling (*"The Turtle Who Was Hurt"*), role-play (*"Emotion Detective"*), and habitual practices (*"Magic Words Tree"* and *"Peace Corner"*) (Boysen et al., 2022; Eriani et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024).

3.1.4 The Four-Layer Conceptual Transformation Model

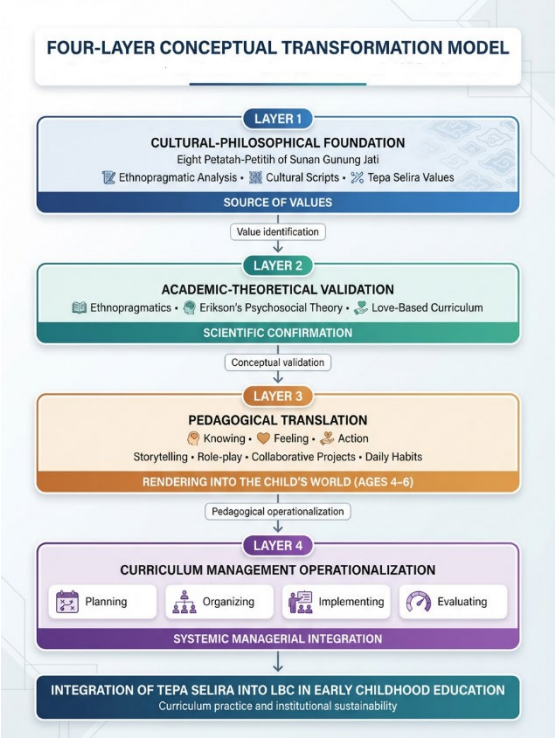

Figure 1. Four-Layer Conceptual Transformation Model

The central finding of this research is the Four-Layer Conceptual Transformation Model (Figure 1), which systematically bridges cultural wisdom and early childhood curriculum through four interconnected layers:

Layer 1: Cultural-Philosophical Foundation (Source of Values). This layer comprises the eight *petatah-petitih* as time-tested local wisdom (over five centuries) (Suryaman, 2015; Wildan, 2015; Arovah et al., 2017). At this stage, *Tepa Selira* values remain abstract, philosophical, and contextually bound to Cirebonese culture. Ethnopragmatic analysis identifies the literacy dimensions, cultural contexts, pragmatic meanings, *cultural scripts*, and cultural values of each aphorism (Mey, 2005, 2020; Goddard, 2011).

Layer 2: Academic-Theoretical Validation (Scientific Confirmation). This layer bridges local wisdom and modern science. The values identified in Layer 1 are tested and indicated conceptual alignment through three theoretical frameworks: Mey's (2005) ethnopragmatics (language as social action), Erikson's (1995) psychosocial development (*Initiative vs. Guilt*), and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' (2025) Love-Based Curriculum (LBC) dimensions of love. The triangulation results indicated conceptual alignment all four conceptual categories across all three frameworks (Nurfajriani et al., 2024; Rofiah & Bungin, 2021; Susanto et al., 2023).

Layer 3: Pedagogical Translation (Rendering into the Child's World). This core layer translates validated abstract values into developmentally appropriate learning experiences for children aged 4–6. Each value is decomposed into Lickona's three dimensions (*knowing-feeling-action*) and operationalized through concrete activities: storytelling, role-play, collaborative projects, and daily habitual practices (Lickona, 2004; DeRobertis, 2006; Joseph, 2021). The governing principle is "concretization without simplification"—values are translated into experiences children can understand and live without reducing their philosophical depth. For instance, the abstract concept of *tepa selira* is translated into the concrete routine of *"Tepa Selira Ambassador,"* where children take turns wearing a special badge to observe and assist peers in need.

Layer 4: Curriculum Management Operationalization (Systemic Managerial Integration). This final layer organizes all pedagogically translated components into a structured curriculum management system across the four canonical management functions (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Glatthorn et al., 2018). Rather than ending at curricular implementation, this layer dictates how school leaders and teachers manage the integration of Tepa Selira and KBC. Table 2 presents the complete mapping matrix.

Tabel 2. Curriculum Management Functions and Tepa Selira Integration Matrix

Management Function	*Tepa Selira* Integration	KBC (*Panca Cinta*) Alignment	Concrete Operationalization in RA
Planning	Formulation of vision, mission, and learning objectives derived from the four Tepa Selira categories.	All five *Panca Cinta* dimensions embedded in institutional vision.	Annual curriculum plan (Prota), semester plan (Prosem), and daily lesson plan (RPPH) with explicit Tepa Selira objectives.
Organizing	Structuring of human resources, learning environments, and materials to support value internalization.	*Cinta Lingkungan* (environment design); *Cinta Diri dan Sesama (*role allocation).	Teacher role distribution (facilitator, model); establishment of Peace Corner, Emotion Corner, Magic Words Tree; teaching material development.
Implementing	Design and delivery of instructional strategies and school culture actualizing empathetic practices.	*Cinta Allah dan Rasul-Nya* (spiritual routines); *Cinta Ilmu* (inquiry); *Cinta Tanah Air* (cultural rituals).	Storytelling, role play ("Emotion Detective"), collaborative projects, daily Routines ("*Tepa Selira* Ambassador"), *Asmaul Husna* recitation.
Evaluating	Development of authentic Assessment mechanisms Measuring value internalization across moral knowing–feeling–action.	All five dimensions Assessed through developmental indicators.	Anecdotal records, Developmental checklists, portfolios, systematic observation; reporting aligned with *Capaian Pembelajaran*.

The four layers are connected by three bridging mechanisms: (1) Conceptual categorization (axial coding) bridges Layers 1 and 2; (2) Lickona's character dimensions bridge Layers 2 and 3; and (3) Curriculum components bridge Layers 3 and 4.

3.1.5 Expert Validation Results

The conceptual framework was validated through expert judgment and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving two Cirebon cultural experts and two early childhood education (ECE) experts. It is crucial to note that the resulting validation scores reflect the conceptual appropriateness, internal coherence, and theoretical feasibility of the framework as judged by experts, rather than empirical evidence of its pedagogical effectiveness in a classroom setting(Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Cohen et al., 2018). The validation employed a 4-point scale (4 = Highly Appropriate, 3 = Appropriate with Minor Revision, 2 = Major Revision Needed, 1 = Inappropriate).

Tabel 3. Summary of Expert Validation Scores

Validated Aspect	Cultural Expert 1	Cultural Expert 2	ECE Expert 1	ECE Expert 2	Mean
Internal Coherence	4	4	4	4	4.00
Novelty	4	4	4	4	4.00
Cultural Authenticity	4	4	4	4	4.00
Alignment with LBC 2025	4	4	4	4	4.00
Operational Feasibility	4	3	3	4	3.50
Potential Impact	4	4	4	3	3.75
Overall Mean	4.00	3.83	3.83	3.83	3.88

The overall mean score of 3.88 indicates that the conceptual framework is “Highly Appropriate” for implementation. Validators provided constructive feedback that strengthened the model:

a. Cultural Expert 1 recommended replacing the term “philanthropy” with “generosity” or “compassionate sharing” to better reflect Cirebonese local wisdom.
b. Cultural Expert 2 suggested replacing “Agape” (a Western theological term) with “compassionate love for others” (*cinta kasih kepada sesama*) to enhance cultural resonance.
c. ECE Expert 1 recommended adding concrete examples of age-appropriate behaviors (e.g., waiting for turns, apologizing, managing emotions) and more varied play activities.
d. ECE Expert 2 suggested developing teacher guidebooks and concrete learning media to facilitate classroom implementation.

These recommendations were incorporated into the final conceptual framework, enhancing both cultural authenticity and operational feasibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013). All constructive feedback provided by the validators was systematically reviewed and incorporated into the final conceptual framework to enhance both cultural authenticity and operational feasibility. Specifically, the recommendations to replace Western theological terms ('Agape', 'philanthropy') with culturally resonant alternatives ('compassionate love', 'generous sharing') were fully adopted. Furthermore, concrete examples of age-appropriate behaviors and the recommendation to develop teacher guidebooks were integrated into the operationalization matrix (Table 2), ensuring that the model is not only theoretically sound but practically actionable for RA practitioners.

3.2 Discussions

3.2.1 Bridging Cultural Scripts with the Love-Based Curriculum

The findings indicate that the *Tepa Selira* values exhibit structural alignment with the five dimensions of the Panca Cinta (Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). Love for Allah and His Messenger is represented in aphorisms 2, 3, and 4, where "wedia ing Allah" generates obedience and compassion. Love for Knowledge is manifested in aphorisms 2 and 7, translating into storytelling as knowledge exploration and "Emotion Detective" inquiry activities. Love for the Environment is interpreted through the semantic extension of *melasa* (compassion) to all creation (aphorism 3). While this environmental reading is interpretive rather than explicitly textual, it is deeply rooted in Islamic cosmology. The extension of empathy to non-human creation aligns with the Islamic principle of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin*, where *Tepa Selira* transcends human interactions to encompass ecological stewardship. Love for the Homeland is interpreted through the civic-testamentary character of aphorism 4 ("Ingsun titipna tajug lan fakir miskin") and communal harmony mandates, which form the ontological basis for civic duty and belonging (*hubbul wathan*), translating into the introduction of Cirebonese cultural heritage.

Tabel 4. Tepa Selira Categories and Panca Cinta Alignment Matrix

Panca Cinta Dimension	Constituent Aphorisms	*Tepa Selira* Category	Pedagogical Manifestation
1. Cinta Allah & Rasul-Nya	2, 3, 4	Humanistic Religiosity	*Asmaul Husna* recitation; stories of the Prophet's compassion; caring for creatures as Allah's creation.
2. Cinta Ilmu	2, 7	Politeness & Self-Regulation	"Emotion Detective" inquiry; storytelling as knowledge exploration; reflective questioning.
3. Cinta Lingkungan	3, 4 (implicit)	Empathy & Social Care	"Plant/Animal Doctor" project; Nature Corner care routines; waste-sorting games.
4. Cinta Diri & Sesama	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Social Harmony; Empathy; Politeness	"*Tepa Selira* Ambassador"; "Peace Corner" conflict resolution; "Magic Words Tree".
5. Cinta Tanah Air	1, 4, 8	Social Harmony; Humanistic Religiosity	Introduction to Cirebonese heritage; *petatah-petitih* recitation; traditional games; local hero stories.

Note: The alignment of Cinta Lingkungan and Cinta Tanah Air is interpretive, inferred from the semantic extension of 'melasa' to all creation and the civic-testamentary nature of aphorism 4, consistent with the Islamic principle of Rahmatan lil 'Alamin.

3.2.2 Developmental Appropriateness: The Initiative Vs Guilt Stage

The pedagogical analysis revealed a remarkable congruence between *Tepa Selira* values and Erikson's (1995) psychosocial stage of *Initiative vs. Guilt* (ages 4–6). During this stage, children experience a strong drive to initiate—trying new things, assuming social roles, building peer relationships, and testing their capabilities (Ladd, 2005; Newman, 2000; Smith & Ballard, 1998). When this initiative is supported and directed, children develop *purpose* and *competence* (Downie & Proulx, 2022; Kalla et al., 2022; Lyons, 2024). When repeatedly inhibited or harshly punished, they develop excessive *guilt*, apathy, or loss of confidence (Erikson, 1995; Ribeiro, 2026).

The *petatah-petitih*, when pedagogically translated, function precisely as "scaffolding" that directs children's natural initiative toward positive character development without inhibiting, frightening, or burdening them with abstract concepts beyond their cognitive capacity (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1997). For instance:

a. The first aphorism (*"Den rukun ing sapapada"*) directs social initiative toward collaboration through the *"Giant Block Tower"* project, where children learn cooperation, mutual support during failure, and non-blaming conflict resolution.
b. The sixth aphorism (*"Aja ilok ngijek rarohi ing wong"*) directs social initiative toward positive interaction and social competence through *"Emotion Detective"* role-play, where children learn to read others' expressions and respond empathetically.
c. The eighth aphorism (*"Tepi saliro den adol"*) facilitates prosocial initiative through the *"Tepa Selira Ambassador"* routine, where children are given social roles to observe and assist peers, providing concrete experience that their helping initiative is valued and meaningful.

This finding extends existing literature on culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) by demonstrating that local wisdom, when properly translated, can serve as developmentally appropriate scaffolding for early childhood psychosocial development.

3.2.3 From Abstract Wisdom to Concrete Pedagogy: The Principle of "Concretization Without Simplification"

The conceptual analysis demonstrates that the principle of 'concretization without simplification' serves as the governing mechanism of pedagogical translation. This principle addresses a persistent challenge in character education: how to transmit profound philosophical values to young children without reducing them to trivial slogans. This principle addresses a persistent challenge in character education: how to transmit profound philosophical values to young children without reducing them to trivial slogans or, conversely, overwhelming them with abstract concepts (Lickona, 2004; Narvaez, 2014; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

The Four-Layer Model operationalizes this principle through systematic decomposition. For example, the abstract concept of *tepa selira* (empathy) is not simplified to "be nice to others" but is concretized through multiple entry points:

a. Knowing: Stories like *"The Turtle Who Was Hurt"* that illustrate the impact of words.
b. Feeling: Role-play *"Emotion Detective"* that develops affective empathy through reading facial expressions.
c. Action: The *"Tepa Selira Ambassador"* routine and *"Real Action Tree"* that translate feeling into spontaneous helping behavior.

This approach aligns with Lickona's (2004) holistic character education framework, which emphasizes that effective character education must engage *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action* simultaneously (Arif et al., 2023; Hafizallah, 2024; Martini et al., 2024). The findings demonstrate that Sunan Gunung Jati's aphorisms inherently possess this tripartite structure, making them exceptionally suitable as sources for holistic character education in early childhood.

Furthermore, the expert validation results (Table 3) indicated conceptual alignment that this pedagogical translation maintains cultural authenticity (mean score = 4.00) while achieving operational feasibility (mean score = 3.50). The constructive feedback from validators particularly the recommendations to replace Western theological terms ("Agape," "philanthropy") with culturally resonant alternatives ("compassionate love," "generous sharing") strengthened the model's cultural groundedness without compromising its pedagogical rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2.4 Implications for Islamic Early Childhood Education

In the context of Islamic Early Childhood Education (ECE), this research offers a profound synthesis between local wisdom (*Tepa Selira*) and Islamic ontology. The concept of *"melasa"* (compassion) resonates deeply with the Islamic principle of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* (mercy to all creation) and *Akhlaq karimah* (noble character) (Al-Ghazali, 2010; Al-Attas, 1995). Similarly, *"wedia ing Allah"* (reverential awe of Allah) aligns with the Islamic virtue of *taqwa* manifested through social responsibility. The concept of *"gaguneman sifat kang pinuji"* (speaking with praiseworthy character) directly embodies the Islamic ethics of *Qaulan Sadida* and *Qaulan Layyina* (Nasr, 2002).

This study confirms that integrating local wisdom into Islamic ECE does not dilute Islamic identity; rather, it contextualizes universal Islamic values within the socio-cultural reality of learners (Suryadi & Rosyada, 2023; Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2018). The Four-Layer Model provides Islamic educational administrators with a practical blueprint to actualize the philosophical goals of Islamic education forming humans with authentic *adab* and *mahabbah* through a structured, validated, and developmentally appropriate curriculum management system (Abuzar et al., 2024; Asykur et al., 2025; Rizki & Rijal, 2026).

Moreover, the alignment of *Tepa Selira* values with the Indonesian Early Childhood Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran*) demonstrates that this integration is an organic enhancement of the national curriculum. However, it is imperative to distinguish between the conceptual feasibility established in this study and empirical pedagogical effectiveness. While the expert validation confirms the theoretical soundness and cultural authenticity of the Four-Layer Model, its actual impact on children's moral action and emotional regulation requires empirical testing in real classroom settings. This study provides the interpretive guide and managerial blueprint, addressing the implementation gap identified by Puspitasari et al. (2023), but leaves the empirical measurement of learning outcomes for future experimental or classroom action research.

3.2.5 Contributions to Curriculum Management Scholarship

While the preceding discussion has emphasized pedagogical dimensions, this study significantly contributes to curriculum management scholarship in Islamic ECE by demonstrating how *Tepa Selira* values transform decision-making across the four managerial functions. At the planning level, *Tepa Selira* integration requires that institutional vision-mission statements and daily lesson plans (RPPH) explicitly articulate value-based objectives alongside cognitive targets, shifting planning from a compliance-driven exercise to a value-articulation process. At the organizing level, the framework mandates specific resource allocation: designated physical spaces (Peace Corner, Nature Corner), teacher role differentiation (facilitator, model, appreciator), and material

development. This reorganizes the institutional structure around value internalization. At the implementing level, the framework specifies a repertoire of instructional strategies and positions the school culture itself as a curricular vehicle, consistent with the "hidden curriculum" literature. At the evaluating level, the framework requires authentic, multi-modal assessment (anecdotal records, portfolios) aligned with Lickona's tripartite moral structure, moving evaluation beyond cognitive testing toward the documentation of value internalization. Furthermore, from a governance perspective, this model implies the need for periodic curriculum review cycles involving teachers, parents, and cultural stakeholders, ensuring that the framework remains responsive to contextual dynamics.

4. CONCLUSION

This study was initiated by the recognition that the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC), structured around the Panca Cinta (Kementerian Agama RI, 2025), remains constrained in Early Childhood Education by the absence of culturally grounded managerial resources... Most significantly, the study produced the Four-Layer Conceptual Transformation Model, which systematically bridges cultural wisdom and curriculum management practice through (1) Cultural-Philosophical Foundation, (2) Academic-Theoretical Validation, (3) Pedagogical Translation, and (4) Curriculum Management Operationalization across planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating functions.

The conclusions drawn from these findings extend beyond the immediate results. First, the study demonstrates that local wisdom, when subjected to rigorous ethnopragmatic analysis and pedagogical translation, can serve as a robust axiological foundation for contemporary character education thereby challenging the persistent dichotomy between "traditional" cultural values and "modern" educational frameworks. Second, the principle of "concretization without simplification" emerges as a critical mechanism for transmitting profound philosophical values to young children: values are rendered accessible through developmentally appropriate experiences (storytelling, role-play, collaborative projects, and routines) without diluting their philosophical depth. Third, the expert validation confirms that the integration of *Tepa Selira* into the LBC does not dilute Islamic educational identity; rather, it contextualizes universal Islamic values *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin*, *akhlaq karimah*, and *mahabbah* within the socio-cultural reality of learners, thereby strengthening both cultural authenticity and pedagogical effectiveness. Fourth, the study establishes that curriculum management in Islamic ECE cannot remain merely technocratic; it must be reflective, transformative, and deeply rooted in the cultural-epistemological foundation of the community it serves.

Looking forward, the findings of this study open several promising avenues for further development and application. From a research development perspective, future studies should employ empirical designs such as Research and Development (R&D) or Classroom Action Research of the Four-Layer Model in diverse ECE settings and measure its impact on children's prosocial behavior, emotional regulation, and peer relationships. Child-centered or participatory research methods should be incorporated to capture the voices and lived experiences of children as they interpret and enact *Tepa Selira* values. Additionally, comparative studies with other regional wisdom traditions across the Indonesian archipelago (e.g., Sundanese *wawacan*, Javanese *paribasa*, Bugis *pappaseng*) would enrich the generalizability of the model and contribute to a nationally contextualized Love-Based Curriculum. The integration of additional theoretical perspectives, such as Moll et al.'s (1992) *funds of knowledge* theory or Gay's (2010) *culturally responsive pedagogy*, could further strengthen the analytical framework.

From an application prospect perspective, the conceptual framework developed in this study provides a ready-to-adapt interpretive guide for ECE practitioners in Cirebon and beyond. Teachers can directly translate abstract cultural values into daily, developmentally appropriate activities such as "Peace Corners," "Emotion Detectives," "Tepa Selira Ambassadors," and "Real Action Trees" without requiring a complete overhaul of the existing national curriculum. For curriculum developers and policymakers, the study offers a blueprint for designing operational guidebooks, modules, and concrete learning media (illustrated storybooks, emotion cards, animated videos) that adapt Sunan Gunung Jati's aphorisms into formats that are engaging and appropriate for young children. The Ministry of Religious Affairs may consider replicating this interdisciplinary research model in other regions to support the agenda of contextualizing the Love-Based Curriculum

across Indonesia's diverse cultural landscapes. Finally, for local government and the Cirebon community, the revitalization of *petatah-petitih* within formal education contributes to the active preservation of Nusantara's oral heritage, ensuring the intergenerational transmission of empathy, politeness, and social harmony in the digital age. Through these combined efforts, the *Tepa Selira* values that have sustained Cirebonese society for over five centuries can continue to inspire and nurture future generations rooted in local wisdom, oriented toward love, and responsive to the challenges of the contemporary world.

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