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Implementing a Humanistic Approach in Akidah Akhlak Learning to Cultivate Students' Love of Science at MAN 2 Klaten

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Abstract

Objective: This study describes how an Akidah Akhlak teacher applies a humanistic approach at State Islamic Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri, MAN) 2 Klaten, Indonesia, and interprets how these practices may support the conditions for students' love of science. **Theoretical framework**: The analysis draws on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Rogers' person-centred learning, Freire's dialogical education and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, and treats hubb al-ʿilm as an Islamic educational orientation that overlaps with, but is not identical to, intrinsic motivation. **Literature review**: The literature review examines humanistic Islamic education through Maslow, Rogers, Freire, and self-determination theory, highlighting the relationship between student autonomy, emotional needs, moral learning, and hubb al-ʿilm. Research gap: Earlier studies of humanistic Akidah Akhlak learning have mostly examined primary-level madrasahs and moral outcomes such as courtesy and discipline, leaving field evidence on knowledge-oriented outcomes at the Madrasah Aliyah level limited. **Methods**: A qualitative case study used semi-structured interviews, passive participatory classroom observation and documentation review. Data were analysed with the interactive model of Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, and credibility was supported by source triangulation and member checking. **Results**: Three interrelated strategies emerged: differentiating methods according to class conduciveness; negotiating relational agreements that recognise students' basic needs and autonomy, namely a responsibility-based eating and drinking policy and the absence of homework; and responding to mistakes with mild consequences followed by reflective dialogue on the purpose of seeking knowledge. Together, these practices appear to create a low-threat climate that is conducive to curiosity and to a shift from external towards more internalised motivation. Because the evidence rests mainly on the teacher's account, supported by classroom observation and documents, the study does not claim that students' love of science was measured or has increased. Implications: The three-stage model offered here is a contextual interpretation of one case, and may inform teacher reflection and training in comparable madrasahs. **Novelty**: The study foregrounds hubb al-ʿilm as an affective orientation in humanistic Akidah Akhlak learning at the Madrasah Aliyah level and documents concrete relational agreements that are rarely reported.

Keywords: humanistic approach, love of science, akidah akhlak learning, madrasah aliyah, teacher-student relationship

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education at the Madrasah Aliyah (senior secondary) level positions Akidah Akhlak (Islamic Faith and Ethics) as a strategic vehicle for shaping religious conviction and moral character. Akidah is the foundational belief system that orients a Muslim's thinking and conduct, while akhlak is its concrete expression in daily life. In practice, however, Akidah Akhlak instruction in some madrasahs remains dominated by one-directional lecturing, which places the teacher at the centre of activity and leaves students largely as recipients of religious content. Such a pattern risks boredom, lower participation and shallow internalisation of values, which is why variation in method is often recommended [1].

A broader educational aim is at stake here: cultivating students' love of science (hubb al-ʿilm). Love of science is not merely a cognitive achievement of content mastery. It is an effective orientation that sustains independent, reflective and continuous learning beyond the classroom, and Islamic educational traditions have long treated the love of learning as a humanising vocation of teaching [2]. We argue that when Akidah Akhlak is taught mainly as the memorisation of doctrinal propositions, its potential to nurture this orientation is likely to be under-used. Whether and how humanistic teaching changes this remains an empirical question.

One widely discussed alternative is the humanistic approach, which treats students as whole persons with their own character, psychological needs and backgrounds. It is rooted in humanistic psychology, which emphasises self-actualisation and freedom to learn [3], [4], and it aligns with the wider idea of an education that humanises human beings. Within Islamic education, humanism is not understood as opposed to Islamic values, because human beings are regarded as noble creatures who should be educated with full respect for their innate disposition (fitrah) and potential [5], [6].

Research on humanistic approaches in Akidah Akhlak instruction is not new. Prior studies have examined humanistic values in Akidah Akhlak learning to cultivate courteous behaviour at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (primary) level [7], humanistic education in shaping moderate attitudes in elementary schools [8], the application of Carl Rogers' theory in Islamic Religious Education [9], and the relevance of Maslow's and Rogers' humanistic psychology to Islamic religious instruction [10]–[12]. Taken together, these studies associate humanistic approaches with attitudes, discipline and particular character values, although most are descriptive or conceptual and do not test effects. Research on teacher-student relationships beyond this field adds that relationship quality is linked to students' engagement and achievement [13] and to adjustment and wellbeing across cultural contexts [14]–[16].

A research gap nevertheless remains. First, studies of Akidah Akhlak instruction, including those with a humanistic orientation, have concentrated on primary-level madrasahs and treat moral character, courtesy or discipline as the main outcome [17]–[19], whereas studies at the Madrasah Aliyah level, where late adolescents have distinct needs for autonomy and recognition, are comparatively few. Second, among the studies reviewed here, none explicitly examines love of science as an affective orientation in relation to humanistic practice; most stop at moral attitudes without addressing students' orientation towards knowledge itself. Third, much existing work is descriptive-normative or library-based, which leaves little field data on how humanistic strategies are practised in everyday classroom interaction, including the implicit agreements between teacher and student. These observations rest on the literature reviewed for this article and do not exclude relevant work that is unpublished or not indexed. The present study responds to the gap by examining love of science not as an incidental by-product of moral formation but as a distinct affective orientation that humanistic classroom practice may help to cultivate, and by grounding the analysis in field-level relational data.

MAN 2 Klaten offers a useful setting for this purpose. Its classes differ markedly, from highly conducive classes to classes that call for a different pedagogical approach, so the

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teacher's strategies are adaptive and contextual. This setting makes it possible to examine the concrete mechanisms through which a humanistic teacher-student relationship may serve as a bridge towards love of science, a question that earlier studies have not substantially addressed.

The study is framed by four complementary perspectives. Maslow's hierarchy of needs [3] and Rogers' person-centred learning [4], [20] guide the reading of basic needs and acceptance in the classroom. Self-determination theory (SDT) [21]–[23] supplies the vocabulary of autonomy, competence and relatedness for interpreting motivation. Freire's dialogical education [24] informs the analysis of how mistakes are handled. Hubb al-ʿilm is treated as an Islamic educational orientation that partly overlaps with intrinsic motivation but also carries a transcendent purpose, as set out in the Literature Review.

The study therefore aims to (1) describe and analyse how an Akidah Akhlak teacher implements a humanistic approach in classroom practice, and (2) interpret how these practices may contribute to the conditions for cultivating students' love of science at MAN 2 Klaten. Its intended contribution is theoretical, in positioning hubb al-ʿilm as an affective orientation worth examining in humanistic Islamic pedagogy at the Madrasah Aliyah level, and practical, in offering a contextual three-stage interpretation on which Akidah Akhlak teachers and teacher trainers may reflect, without assuming that it transfers unchanged to other settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Humanistic Approach in Learning

Humanistic education draws mainly on the psychology of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Maslow [3] proposed that human motivation is organised around a hierarchy of needs, running from physiological and safety needs through love and belonging and esteem to self-actualisation. He also cautioned that this ordering is relative rather than rigid, since a need does not have to be fully satisfied before another emerges. For classroom analysis, the hierarchy is therefore most useful as a sensitising idea: when basic physiological and safety needs are neglected, higher-order engagement with knowledge and growth is harder to sustain. Rogers [4], [20] developed the humanistic orientation into person-centred learning and the idea of "freedom to learn", in which significant learning is more likely when the learner is treated as a whole person and the facilitator offers genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding rather than acting as the final authority.

In Islamic education, humanistic concepts are not interpreted as an anthropocentrism that neglects the divine dimension. They are understood as an effort to humanise people in accordance with their nature and disposition (fitrah) as noble creatures of Allah [5], [6]. Several studies argue that Maslow's and Rogers' theories can be applied in Islamic Religious Education, for example by positioning teachers as mentors who respect each pupil's individuality in the formation of personality and conscience [10], [25], [26]. Sultani et al. [11] and Chailani et al. [12] similarly link the content of Islamic Religious Education to socio-religious phenomena, attitude formation and behavioural change. Habsy et al. [27] add that the effectiveness of humanistic learning depends heavily on a low-threat classroom climate in which students can examine themselves without fear of negative judgement.

The Indonesian context enriches this understanding through Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thought on child-centred education [28], which expresses the teacher's role in the principle ing ngarso sung tulodo, ing madyo mangun karso, tut wuri handayani: the teacher as exemplar at the front, motivator in the middle and supporter from behind. The principle resonates with Freire's [24] distinction between "banking" education, in which learners are treated as containers to be filled, and problem-posing, dialogical education, in which teachers and students investigate reality together as subjects. Freire's account of dialogue assumes a

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horizontal relationship, and it is therefore a demanding standard against which to read teacher-led reflective conversations, as taken up in the Results and Discussion.

Akidah Akhlak Learning as a Space for Character Formation

At the Madrasah Aliyah level, Akidah Akhlak aims to instill firm conviction in the concept of tawhid and to nurture good conduct in daily life (akhlak al-karimah). Studies of Akidah Akhlak instruction commonly report that the internalisation of values through exemplification, habituation and the teacher's own conduct is central to its success [18], [29], [30]. Putra [19], in a multi-case study of two state Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Sambas, examined how character education in Akidah Akhlak is planned, implemented and evaluated, with teachers acting as facilitators and motivators. Hasanah et al. [17] describe how teachers at a Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Bogor combine varied methods, media, exemplification and practice to strengthen religious character, and Sari et al. [31] address the instruction of discipline. Sari D. [1] likewise points to the value of method variation in avoiding the dominance of lecturing, in line with proposals for more interactive and participatory methods [30].

These studies, however, concentrate on behavioural and character outcomes such as discipline, courtesy and religiosity, mostly at the primary level, and they do not take students' orientation towards knowledge, or love of learning, as a distinct research aim.

Love of Science (Hubb al-ʿIlm) as an Affective Learning Orientation

From an Islamic educational perspective, love of science (hubb al-ʿilm) is an affective orientation that moves a person to seek, deepen and practise knowledge for its own sake and as part of a purposeful religious life, rather than under external compulsion. Al-Attas [32] frames education in Islam as ta'dib, the instilling of adab, which places knowledge within a moral order and makes the relation between knowledge and character central rather than incidental. Sahin [2] traces this love of learning, in Islamic traditions of higher education, to a conception of education as a transformative and humanising vocation (tarbiyah). The present study applies the concept more modestly, to secondary classroom practice, and does so as an interpretive extension rather than an established application.

In contemporary educational psychology, this orientation is conceptually close to intrinsic motivation as defined in SDT, which holds that the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness within learners' social relationships, including the relationship with the teacher, supports the growth of intrinsic motivation [21], [22]. Intervention research further indicates that teachers can learn autonomy-supportive behaviours, with benefits for students and for classroom climate [33]. Later work argues that need-supportive teaching, as opposed to controlling teaching, is associated with sustained engagement across educational levels and cultural backgrounds [23], [34]. The two constructs should not be equated, however. Intrinsic motivation refers to engagement driven by interest in, and enjoyment of, the activity itself, whereas hubb al-ʿilm, as understood in Islamic education, also includes valuing knowledge as part of worship and self-cultivation. In SDT terms, this value-based dimension is closer to identified or integrated regulation, in which a value of external origin is internalised and experienced as one's own [23]. Hubb al-ʿilm can therefore be read as combining intrinsic interest with an internalised religious valuation of knowledge.

In madrasah contexts, research on cultivating learning interest has focused mainly on literacy and reading interest, such as scheduled literacy programmes [35], on teachers' efforts to raise learning interest [36], on the importance of learning motivation for learning outcomes [37], and, in a conceptual literature review, on motivational ecosystems formed by teacher exemplification and parental support [38]. That review links teacher exemplification in the madrasah to a spiritual dimension, since the teacher is regarded as an heir of the prophets, but it proposes a conceptual model and does not test it empirically. The teacher-student relationship has also been examined historically in Islamic education [39]. Beyond Islamic

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education, meta-analytic evidence indicates that affective teacher-student relationships are associated with students' school engagement and achievement [13], and a synthesis of 119 studies reports a positive average association (r = .31) between person-centred teacher relationships and student outcomes, especially affective and behavioural ones, with wide variation across studies [40], and comparative work shows that relationship quality can be studied across cultural contexts [15]. Although related, these studies concern learning interest, reading interest or motivation in general. They do not address love of science as an affective orientation cultivated through humanistic practice in Akidah Akhlak.

Analytical Framework: Linking Needs, Safety, Autonomy, Relationship and Motivation

The four perspectives are not treated as interchangeable; each is used for a distinct analytical task. Maslow's hierarchy is used to interpret practices that address basic physiological and safety needs, such as the eating and drinking agreement. Rogers' facilitative conditions, namely genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding, are used to interpret the quality of the teacher-student relationship, in particular how a disengaged student is approached. SDT is used to interpret how agreements and flexibility relate to autonomy, how alternative explanations relate to competence and how acceptance relates to relatedness, and to distinguish external from more internalised motivation. Freire's dialogical education is used to examine whether the teacher's responses to mistakes move beyond compliance towards shared reflection. "Psychological safety" is used here in a descriptive sense, as a low-threat classroom climate in which students can err and speak without fear of humiliation [27], and not as a measured construct.

Taken together, the framework proposes a plausible sequence and not a causal chain. Attention to basic needs and safety may widen students' psychological space; supportive relationships may sustain autonomy and relatedness; and reflective dialogue may help students attach personal and religious value to learning, which is the condition under which hubb al-ʿilm may be nurtured.

Research Position and Gap

The three streams of scholarship outlined above (humanistic education, Akidah Akhlak instruction, and love of science and intrinsic motivation) are each well developed, but they are only rarely combined in a single analytical framework. Muzaini and Ichsan [7], for instance, examined humanistic values in Akidah Akhlak instruction at a Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and attended to values such as politeness, democracy and solidarity, not to orientation towards knowledge. Theoretical work on Rogers and Maslow in Islamic Religious Education [10], [41] remains largely conceptual and offers little field evidence of how humanistic principles are translated into classroom mechanisms.

This study addresses the gap in three ways. First, it focuses on the Madrasah Aliyah level, which differs from most earlier studies concentrated on the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and provides data on humanistic practice with late adolescents who have distinct needs for autonomy and recognition. Second, it examines love of science as an affective orientation that is distinct from moral quality, discipline or courtesy. Third, it reports detailed field data on concrete teacher-student relational agreements, such as the responsibility-based eating and drinking policy and the absence of homework, which have rarely been described in the literature on humanistic strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach with a single case study design. A case study is suited to examining in depth how a phenomenon, here the application of a humanistic

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approach, unfolds in its natural setting, namely the Akidah Akhlak classrooms of MAN 2 Klaten [42]. It allows the meaning, process and dynamics of teacher-student relationships, which numerical data cannot capture, to be documented [43]. Because a single case supports analytical rather than statistical generalisation [44], the findings are offered as a contextual interpretation and not as a basis for estimating effects or prevalence.

This research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Klaten, Central Java, Indonesia, from September 1 to 11, 2026. The study focused on the implementation of a humanistic approach by teachers in Akidah Akhlak learning. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives and their involvement in the learning process. This study involved six informants, consisting of one Akidah Akhlak teacher as the primary informant and five students as supporting informants. The students were selected from Class X(E7 and Class XI (F12) to provide perspectives on the implementation of the humanistic approach during classroom learning. Classroom observations were also conducted in both classes to examine the teachers' teaching practices, classroom interactions, and students' responses during the learning process. The primary data consisted of interview transcripts and classroom observation notes, while the secondary data included lesson planning documents, namely the syllabus and lesson plans, as well as documents related to classroom learning activities.

Data were collected through three techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six informants, consisting of one Akidah Akhlak teacher and five selected students. The interview with the teacher aimed to explore the learning planning process and the humanistic strategies used during teaching, while the interviews with students focused on their experiences, perceptions, and responses to the implementation of the humanistic approach in Akidah Akhlak learning. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian, which was the language used by the informant during the data collection process. The interview data were documented in their original language. Selected statements presented in this English-language article were translated into English by the researcher, with attention to preserving their original meanings and contextual accuracy. The translated statements were reviewed against the available original interview records to minimize changes in meaning during the translation process. Subsequently, passive participant classroom observations were conducted in three sessions with Class X E7 and Class XI F12. An observation guide was used to systematically record classroom interactions, the teacher's teaching methods, classroom management, and how students responded during the lessons. These observations helped provide additional insights into the humanistic strategies reported by the teacher in real classroom situations. Finally, lesson plans and classroom activity notes were reviewed to cross-check the interview and observation data.

The data were analyzed manually by the researcher following the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [45]. During data condensation, the interview transcripts and observation records were read repeatedly to identify information relevant to the research objectives. Relevant data were then assigned descriptive codes and grouped into categories based on similarities in meaning. These categories were subsequently organized into broader themes reflecting the implementation of the humanistic approach in Akidah Akhlak learning. The coded data were organized into thematic displays to facilitate comparisons across informants and data sources. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified by comparing the emerging findings with interview data, classroom observations, and relevant documents. No specialized qualitative data analysis software was used.

Credibility was supported by source and technique triangulation, comparing the teacher's account with classroom observations and documents. Member checking was also used, by re-confirming interpretative results in conversation with the key informant, to increase the congruence between the researchers' construction of meaning and the informant's lived experience. Member checking is better understood as a way of enriching and testing interpretation than as proof of validity [46]. Member checking was conducted after the initial

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analysis of the interview data. The researcher reconfirmed selected interview interpretations with the informants to ensure that the findings accurately reflected their experiences and intended meanings. Feedback obtained during this process was used to clarify and refine the interpretation of the data.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the participating school before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from the teacher prior to participation in the study. The confidentiality of the informant's identity was maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. Furthermore, permission for the use and publication of classroom photographs (Figures 2 and 3) was obtained from the relevant parties. The photographs were used solely to illustrate the classroom settings and learning activities observed during the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings under the two research foci: how the teacher implements a humanistic approach in the classroom, and how these practices may contribute to the conditions for cultivating students' love of science. Each theme is analysed in relation to the theoretical framework and prior research. Three kinds of material are kept apart throughout: the teacher's statements, which are reported as such; observations and documents, which are reported where they are available; and the authors' interpretation, which is signalled by interpretive wording. The evidence base is the teacher's account, cross-checked against classroom observation and documentation. No student-level data are reported, which limits what can be said about any change in students' orientation towards knowledge.

Meaning-Making and Planning: Humanism as a Willingness to Enter the Student's World

The first finding concerns the teacher's stance. The teacher framed humanism less as a theory than as a willingness to enter the students' world. According to the teacher, students differ in behaviour, character and manner of speaking, and it is impossible to build learning engagement without immersing oneself in their world and teaching "on their own terms". This construal positions students as subjects and partners, not as objects of instruction, and it is consistent with the unconditional positive regard and person-centred teaching described by Rogers [4]. The teacher's account was gathered through semi-structured interviews (Figure 1) and cross-checked against classroom observation.

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Figure 1. Semi-structured interview with the Akidah Akhlak teacher

Source: Authors' field documentation, MAN 2 Klaten

The classroom photographs illustrate two different classroom settings observed during the study, namely Class X E7 and Class XI F12, respectively. According to the field notes, the learning atmosphere in both classes was generally conducive, as reflected in the calm classroom environment, mutual respect among students, and their enthusiasm for participating in the teaching and learning activities. Figure 2 shows students seated in rows facing the front of the classroom, while the teacher stands near the whiteboard. In contrast, Figure 3 shows students seated in small clusters of desks as the teacher provides instructions regarding group assignments for a presentation scheduled for the following week. Thus, Figure 3 documents the teacher's preparation and organisation of a group activity rather than confirming that students were already engaged in collaborative work at the time the photograph was taken. These photographs serve to illustrate the classroom arrangements and learning environments observed during the study.



Figure 2. Classroom learning activities in Grade XI F12 at MAN 2 Klaten

Source: Authors' field documentation, MAN 2 Klaten

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Figure 3. The teacher distributing group assignments for the following week's presentation in Grade X E7 at MAN 2 Klaten

Source: Authors' field documentation, MAN 2 Klaten

The finding is in line with Habsy et al. [27], who identify a low-threat climate as important for successful humanistic learning. According to the teacher's account, such a climate at MAN 2 Klaten is not left to arise naturally but is shaped by deliberate planning decisions that take into account the psychological state of the class as a social unit, not merely a collection of individuals. In SDT terms, differentiation may be read as a form of competence support, since it adapts the way content is presented to what each class can engage with [22], although the present data do not show how students experienced it.

Relational Strategy: Agreements, Flexibility and Recognition of Students' Basic Needs

The second finding concerns relational practices that create comfort through mutual agreements set at the beginning of teaching. One of the most prevalent is the teacher's permission for students to eat and drink in class on two conditions: (1) the rule of "Darsih Puber" (entering clean, leaving clean), and (2) the students' obligation to maintain classroom order and complete the assigned tasks. According to the teacher, the policy arose from observing students' physiological needs. It is consistent with Maslow's [3] proposition that higher-order concerns, such as concentration and the desire to learn, are difficult to sustain while lower-order needs go unmet. Because the policy is conditional and responsibility-based, it can be read not only as meeting a physiological need but also as extending trust to students, which links Maslow's lens to Rogers' emphasis on acceptance [4].

A second practice is the teacher's policy of never assigning homework, on the grounds that students already receive homework in other subjects and that their workload should not become heavy. The teacher explained that this flexibility leaves students happy and, in the teacher's perception, less tense in Akidah Akhlak than in other subjects. The perception of reduced tension is the teacher's report and was not tested with students. Interpreted through SDT [22], [23], the policy can be read as reducing external pressure and as giving students psychological space in which to approach the subject as an opportunity and not as a burden. At the same time, autonomy support in SDT concerns volition and choice, not only the absence of demands. Because the policy removes an obligation instead of offering a choice, it represents a partial form of autonomy support, and its motivational value probably depends on whether students use the freed space to engage with the material voluntarily. The present data leave this question open.

A thematic summary of the relational strategies, their theoretical function and the basis of each in the data is presented in Table 1.

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Table 1. Humanistic Relational Strategies and Their Theoretical Function

Strategy	Practice description	Theoretical function (interpretive)	Basis in the data
Eating and drinking agreement ("Darsih Puber")	The teacher reported allowing students to eat and drink in class under agreed conditions of cleanliness and responsibility. .	Attention to physiological needs as a precondition for learning readiness [3]; trust extended to students [4].	Teacher's account
No homework	The teacher does not assign homework, in consideration of the workload students already carry from other subjects.	Reduced external pressure and partial autonomy support [22], [23].	Teacher's account
Personal approach when a student loses focus	The teacher approaches and gently questions a disengaged student instead of issuing an immediate reprimand.	Acceptance and unconditional positive regard [4]; relatedness [22].	Teacher's account (interview)
Method adaptation by class character	The teacher reported adapting instructional methods to the characteristics and classroom conditions of each class.	Differentiation as competence support [22]; low-threat classroom climate [27].	Teacher's account; classroom photographs (Figures 2 and 3)

Source: Processed from interview and observation results, 2026. Theoretical functions are the authors' interpretations

The practices presented in Table 1 were primarily identified from the Akidah Akhlak teacher's interview and were examined in relation to the available classroom observation records and teaching documents. However, not all reported practices were directly observed during the research period. In particular, the personal approach used to address students who became distracted was identified through the teacher's account. Therefore, this practice is presented as a teacher-reported strategy rather than a directly verified classroom observation. This distinction is maintained to ensure that the interpretation of the findings remains consistent with the available empirical evidence.

From Consequence to Existential Dialogue: Handling Student Mistakes

The third finding concerns how the teacher responds when students make mistakes, for example when they do not finish their work, joke excessively (gojek) in class or fail to grasp the material. The handling is two-layered. The first layer consists of mild consequences intended as deterrents, such as asking the student to stand at the front of the class or excluding the student from a particular activity. The second layer, which distinguishes the practice from purely behaviourist discipline, is a personalised conversation in which the teacher calmly asks students what their purpose is in attending school, in studying at a boarding school and in studying further. The teacher then proposes that the purpose is not education in itself but self-improvement, so that students become "sought after" wherever they go, because good self-quality makes a person sought after "wherever he goes".

Read critically, the first layer alone would represent compliance-oriented discipline, and consequences such as standing at the front may carry an element of public exposure that sits uneasily with a low-threat climate. The second layer shifts the register: a mistake becomes an occasion to question the meaning and purpose of learning, a move towards the dialogical education that Freire [24] describes as reflecting on reality together with the learner. The subject matter of Akidah Akhlak suits this move, because questions of meaning, life purpose and self-quality as a servant of Allah belong to its substance. Two qualifications are needed. First, in the reported exchange the teacher supplies the answer (self-improvement and becoming "sought after") instead of eliciting it, which makes the dialogue closer to guided, teacher-led reflection than to the symmetrical, problem-posing dialogue that Freire envisaged.

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Second, the data do not show how students responded, so the effect of the dialogue on their motivation remains an interpretation and not an observed outcome.

Earlier Akidah Akhlak studies at the primary level describe character formation mainly through planned methods, media, exemplification and practice [17], [19]. The practice reported here is distinguished by a relational and dialogical moment that links a student's mistake to a larger account of why knowledge is sought. This suggests a complementary mechanism, although the studies are not directly comparable because they differ in level, design and focus.

From Comfort to Love of Science: Interpreting a Possible Mechanism

The three findings above (method adaptation, relational agreements and reflective dialogue) need to be related to the second research question: how a humanistic approach may contribute to students' love of science. This question must be answered with restraint. The evidence consists of the teacher's account, classroom observation and documents. It includes neither students' own voices nor any measure of change in their orientation towards knowledge. The data therefore support the interpretation that the teacher's practices create conditions conducive to curiosity and motivation. They do not establish that students' love of science has increased, or that the practices caused any such change. With this limit in mind, a plausible sequence can be traced, as shown in Figure 4, and the evidential status of each step is summarised in Table 2.

First, attention to basic needs and autonomy (the eating and drinking agreement and the absence of homework) appears to lower an initial psychological barrier to learning, so that, according to the teacher, students enter the Akidah Akhlak classroom with less burden than in other classes. Second, an accepting relationship and a personal approach when a student begins to lose focus may build the sense of safety in which curiosity can develop, since students are more likely to ask questions and explore ideas when they do not fear humiliation, although the present data do not document students' questioning behaviour. Third, reflective dialogue that links a mistake to the purpose of seeking knowledge may act as a point of motivational reframing, in which the reason for learning shifts from fear of punishment and the pursuit of grades towards self-improvement understood as part of worship and personal development.

Table 2. Evidential Status of the Main Interpretations

Interpretation	Basis in the data	Evidential status
Differentiated methods express humanistic respect for students	Teacher's account of adapting methods by class conduciveness; photographs of two classroom arrangements (Figures 2 and 3)	Practice reported; students' experience not examined
The eating and drinking agreement and the absence of homework lower initial barriers and support autonomy	Teacher's account of the policies and of students' reduced tension	Practices reported; reduced tension is the teacher's perception; autonomy support is the authors' interpretation
Mild consequences followed by reflective dialogue may reframe motivation	Teacher's account of two-layered handling of mistakes	Practice reported; students' responses not documented; motivational reframing is an interpretation
The practices create conditions conducive to *hubb al-ʿilm*	Inference across the three themes	Plausible but not measured; no causal claim is made

Source: Authors' analysis

This sequence is consistent with the SDT proposition that intrinsic motivation flourishes when autonomy, competence and relatedness are jointly supported [22], [23]. In the case

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studied, flexibility and agreements may support autonomy; the teacher's personal approach, which offers alternative ways of understanding the material to students who struggle, may support competence; and the warm relationship built consistently may support relatedness. Comparable relationship-based mechanisms have been discussed in research on the quality of teacher-student relationships, engagement and adjustment [13], [15]. Because SDT distinguishes intrinsic motivation from internalised extrinsic motivation, the reframing described in the third stage is better read as movement towards identified or integrated regulation, in which learning is valued as worship and self-improvement [23], than as evidence of intrinsic enjoyment. This is where the Islamic notion of hubb al-ʿilm adds something to SDT: the valuation of knowledge is anchored in a transcendent purpose [2].

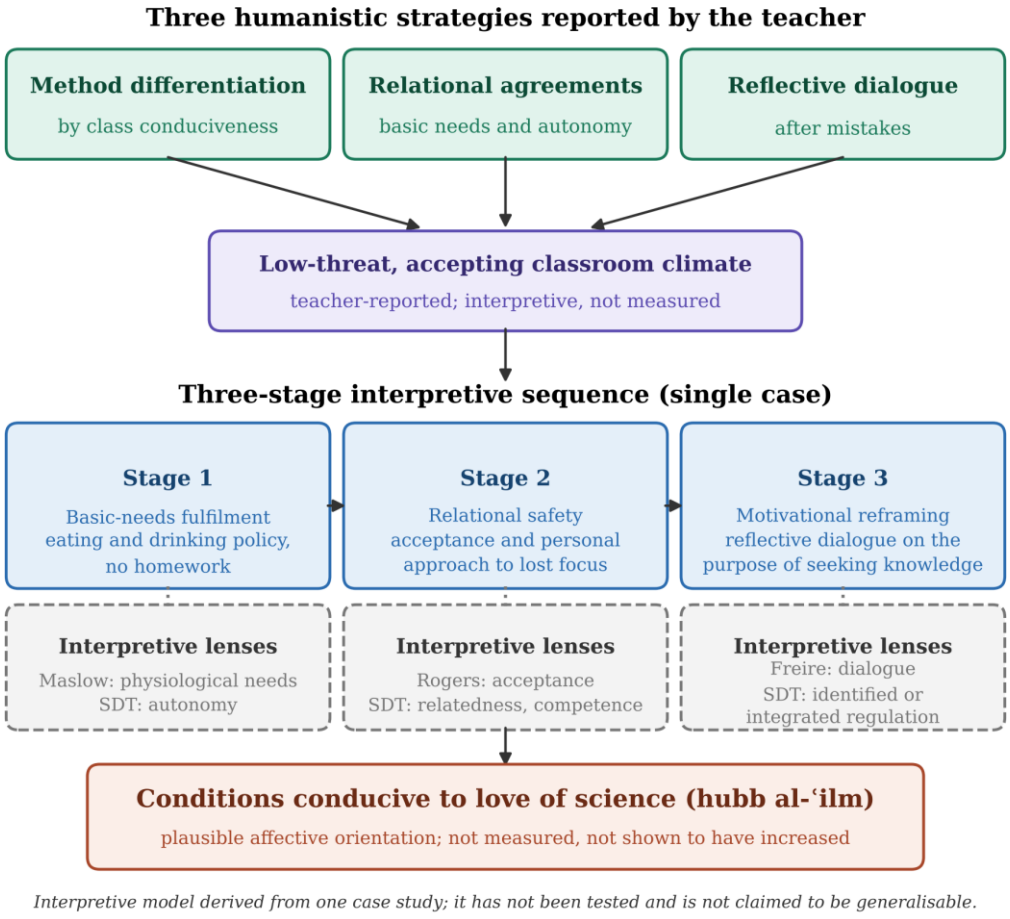


Figure 4. Interpretive Three-Stage Model from Humanistic Strategies towards Conditions for Love of Science

Source: Authors' interpretation of the case study findings. The model is contextual, untested and not claimed to be generalisable

Figure 4 summarises the sequence as a three-stage interpretive model. It is derived from a single case, rests on the teacher's account supported by observation and documentation, and should not be read as a proven or generalisable model of effective practice. The study's contribution lies here. Earlier research on humanistic values in Akidah Akhlak at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level examined values such as democracy, solidarity and politeness [7]. The case reported here suggests that, with late adolescents, whose developmental characteristics are often described as placing greater emphasis on the recognition of independence, a humanistic orientation may be directed towards a more specific orientation, namely love of science, which earlier studies centred on moral character, courtesy and

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discipline have not substantially explored. This is best taken as a hypothesis for further inquiry. The case suggests that the intended outcome of a humanistic approach may depend on the educational level, the students' developmental characteristics and the way the teacher puts humanistic aims into relational practice, but a single-case design cannot separate these factors.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the case enriches the discussion of Islamic educational humanism by suggesting a three-stage interpretation: fulfilment of basic needs, building of relational safety, and motivational reframing through reflective dialogue. Together, these stages may be conducive to love of science and not merely to moral compliance in a value-laden subject such as Akidah Akhlak. The interpretation brings Western humanistic and motivational psychology (Maslow, Rogers, Deci and Ryan) into conversation with the Islamic view of seeking knowledge as worship, and thereby gives an Indonesian and Islamic contextual colouring to theories that are often applied generically. It is offered as a contextual interpretation of one case, not as a model proven to be effective or generalisable.

Practically, the case points to three considerations for Akidah Akhlak teachers at the Madrasah Aliyah level: (1) classroom agreements that explicitly address students' needs may be preferable to unilateral rules; (2) differentiating methods according to the character of the class may be preferable to uniformity; and (3) moments of student error may be used for reflective dialogue about the purpose of learning and not only for enforcing rules. These considerations may inform teacher development policy and training modules on contextually Islamic humanistic practice in madrasahs, provided that they are adapted to local conditions and examined further.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to describe how an Akidah Akhlak teacher at MAN 2 Klaten applies a humanistic approach and to interpret how these practices may support students' love of science. Three interrelated strategies were identified: adapting the teaching method to the character and conduciveness of each class; building relationships through agreements and flexibility that explicitly consider students' basic needs and autonomy, such as the responsibility-based eating and drinking policy and the absence of homework; and handling students' mistakes in two layers, with a mild consequence followed by reflective dialogue about the purpose of seeking knowledge. These practices appear to create a low-threat, accepting climate that is conducive to curiosity and to a shift from external towards more internalised motivation, in a sequence that moves from basic-needs fulfilment through relational safety to motivational reframing. The study contributes by positioning hubb al-ʿilm as an affective orientation worth examining in humanistic Islamic pedagogy at the Madrasah Aliyah level and by documenting concrete relational agreements. The evidence, however, does not show that students' love of science has increased, and the three-stage model remains a contextual interpretation that has not been tested. The study is limited to one madrasah and relies mainly on one teacher's account, supported by classroom observation and documents, so generalisation should be made with caution. Future research could include students' perspectives through interviews or reflective journals, lengthen the period of observation, involve several teachers and madrasahs, and compare the development of love of science across other religious subjects. Mixed-methods or longitudinal designs could then examine whether, and how, students' orientation towards knowledge changes, and could test the consistency of the three-stage interpretation proposed here.

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Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the conceptualisation, data collection, analysis and writing of this manuscript, and approved the final version for submission.

ConflictoOf Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Generative artificial intelligence tools were used to support language refinement and manuscript preparation. The authors independently verified the content, reviewed all revisions, and accept full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final published version.

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