

INTEGRATING LOCAL COFFEE POTENTIAL INTO SOCIAL STUDIES USING COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' CREATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of local coffee potential into Social Studies learning through a Community-Based Learning (CBL) approach to enhance students' creativity in junior high schools located in coffee-producing areas of Jember Regency, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, the study was conducted in eight public junior high schools across five coffee-producing subdistricts Sumberbaru, Tanggul, Bangsalsari, Silo, and Ledokombo. Data were collected through classroom and field observations, in-depth interviews with students, Social Studies teachers, and community stakeholders (coffee farmers, coffee communities, creative economy actors), as well as documentation analysis of learning activities and student projects. The findings indicate that integrating local coffee potential into the Grade 8 Social Studies topic of natural resource conservation created meaningful and contextually grounded learning experiences. Students' creativity emerged as a multidimensional learning outcome encompassing imagination as a cognitive dimension, collaboration as a skill-based dimension, and persistence as affective dispositions. Community engagement enabled students to connect textbook concepts with real-world environmental, social, and economic contexts, fostering deeper understanding and sustained learning engagement. This study contributes to Social Studies education by demonstrating that community-based, locally grounded instruction can enhance creativity while maintaining alignment with the formal curriculum, offering practical insights for contextualized learning in rural and agrarian settings.

Keywords: *Community-based learning, local coffee potential, social studies*

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping a generation that is not only competent in academic fields, but also in critical and creative thinking skills needed to face the complexity of global challenges (Isabirye et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2023). In this context, Community-Based Learning (CBL) offers an approach that not only equips students with theoretical knowledge, but also with direct experiences that are relevant to their lives (Johnston, 2023; Nchaga, 2025). This approach emphasizes the active involvement of students with the local community, allowing them to connect theory with real social practice (Feldman, 2020). One interesting example of the application of CBL is the integration of local potential, such as coffee into Social Studies learning. Coffee as a leading commodity with a significant social and economic impact in Indonesia, is an ideal example of utilizing local resources to increase student engagement and creativity (Maulana et al., 2022; Maulana et al., 2025).

Social studies education in Indonesia aims to develop students' critical, creative, and analytical thinking skills, emphasizing the importance of understanding social issues in society (Maulana et al., 2026). Learning based on real experiences, as applied in community-based learning, provides students with the opportunity to develop analytical skills by linking social concepts to real situations in their lives (Saifi et al., 2024). Through the integration of local potential such as coffee in social studies learning, students not only gain an understanding of the social and economic context in society, but are also invited to engage in a learning process based on community empowerment (Mahmoud et al., 2019). This allows students to explore local and global issues simultaneously, which improves their skills in critical thinking and solving complex social problems.

Creativity is one of the key competencies that social studies learning seeks to cultivate in students, as it enables them to respond adaptively to complex social and economic realities (Phinla et al., 2024). Integrating local potential such as coffee into the learning context provides an authentic and meaningful pathway to stimulate this creativity (Maspul, 2024). Students involved in coffee-based projects can be given the opportunity to develop coffee products or design marketing strategies for local coffee products, challenging them to think creatively and innovatively (Carvalho et al., 2016). Through these activities, students not only learn about the economic aspects of coffee production, but also about how to develop products that can add value and benefit the surrounding community. Thus, community-based learning that integrates coffee not only serves to develop social and economic understanding, but also to stimulate creativity that can be applied in everyday life (Suwan & Sithsungnoen, 2025).

In addition to enhancing creativity, CBL can also strengthen students' social skills, including the ability to collaborate, communicate, and solve problems. Students involved in community-based learning, such as that which integrates the potential of coffee, learn to work together with various parties in the community to solve problems together. They also learn to adapt to various social situations that

they may not encounter in traditional learning. Community-based learning allows students to see firsthand how local communities interact and overcome the social and economic problems they face. Thus, CBL that integrates coffee is an effective means of improving students' social skills, which are very important in today's increasingly complex social context (Dikilitaş et al., 2025).

Sustainability in coffee production is becoming an increasingly important issue, given the environmental impact of this industry. Students involved in CBL that integrates coffee can learn about the sustainability challenges faced by the coffee industry, such as climate change, deforestation, and pesticide (Payne, 2022). Through direct involvement with coffee farmers, students can see how they manage their natural resources and seek sustainable solutions in coffee farming practices. This gives students a deeper understanding of how sustainability can be applied in everyday life and how they, as individuals, can contribute to reducing negative impacts on the environment.

Community-based learning that integrates local potential such as coffee can also have a positive impact on local communities. Students involved in community-based projects can make a real contribution to local economic development through the introduction of coffee products and the promotion of local coffee. This not only increases student engagement in learning, but also helps introduce local products to a wider market. Thus, CBL that integrates coffee is not only beneficial for students, but also for the communities involved in coffee production. This opens up opportunities for students to learn about social responsibility and the positive impact they can have on the surrounding community (Gray & Campbell, 2020).

Through the integration of local potential such as coffee in social studies learning, we can create a more dynamic and relevant learning experience for students. This approach not only improves students' understanding of social and economic concepts but also develops their creative and social skills that can be applied in real life. Thus, community-based learning that integrates coffee can be an effective model for improving the quality of social studies education in Indonesia and creating a younger generation that is more creative, critical, and responsible towards the community and the surrounding environment (Tuan & Elawad, 2022).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a phenomenological design to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers and students in integrating local coffee potential into Social Studies learning through a Community-Based Learning (CBL) approach. Phenomenology was chosen because this study seeks to capture the meaning, perceptions, and consciousness of participants regarding how local community-based learning practices are experienced and how they contribute to the development of students' creativity.

This study was conducted in eight junior high schools spread across several subdistricts in Jember Regency, namely Tanggul, Silo, Ledokombo, Sumberbaru, and Bangsalsari, which generally share the characteristics of rural areas based on

agriculture and plantations, with coffee as the primary commodity. In Tanggul Subdistrict, SMPN 1 Tanggul is located in an agricultural area where the main activities are the cultivation and trade of local coffee, SMPN 5 Tanggul is situated in a highland area serving as a center for coffee production and processing; SMPN 6 Tanggul is located in a rural area near plantations with a focus on coffee production and distribution; and SMPN 7 Tanggul is situated in a buffer zone adjacent to plantations dominated by coffee-farming communities. Outside of Tanggul, SMPN 4 Silo is located in a mountainous region dominated by small-scale coffee farmers; SMPN 1 Ledokombo is situated in a highland area characterized by community-based coffee production; SMPN 1 Sumberbaru is located in an agricultural and plantation area with coffee cultivation and marketing activities; and SMPN 4 Bangsalsari represents a plantation-based rural area with a focus on the coffee SME sector.

The study involved 42 Grade VIII students as primary participants who experienced coffee-based learning and expressed creativity through community projects, supported by 12 Social Studies teachers who acted as facilitators in designing and implementing CBL. Additionally, 8 local smallholder coffee farmers and 5 representatives from coffee farmer communities affiliated with PT Perkebunan Nusantara contributed practical and institutional knowledge on coffee production. The research also included 2 members of the Creative Economy Forum who provided insights into innovation and local economic development, 4 professional baristas who linked production with brewing and consumption culture, and 1 entrepreneur, the owner of Koplak Food, who shared experiences in coffee-based business development.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to capture participants lived experiences in integrating local coffee potential into Social Studies learning through a Community-Based Learning (CBL) approach.

Table 1.
Interview Instrument

Creativity Aspects	Informants	Interview Questions
Imagination (Cognitive)	Students	How did learning Social Studies through local coffee-based activities help you imagine new ideas or possibilities about the environment and your community?
	Teachers	How did you experience changes in students' imaginative thinking when local coffee potential was integrated into Social Studies learning?
	Communities	How did you observe students expressing imagination or creative ideas after engaging with real coffee-related practices in the community?

Creativity Aspects	Informants	Interview Questions
Collaboration (Skill)	Students	How did you experience working together with classmates, teachers, and community members during coffee-based learning activities?
	Teachers	How did you facilitate and experience collaboration among students and community members within coffee-based Social Studies learning?
	Communities	How did you experience collaborating with students during community-based coffee learning activities, and how did the interaction develop?
Persistence (Affective)	Students	Can you describe a challenging moment during community-based coffee learning activities and how you remained committed to completing the task?
	Teachers	How did you observe students' persistence when facing difficulties in coffee-based Social Studies projects?
	Communities	How did you observe students' perseverance and learning attitudes during field-based coffee learning activities?

Participant observation was carried out during classroom instruction, field visits to coffee plantations, community interactions, and student project presentations to document authentic learning processes and creative expressions. In addition, document analysis was used to examine teaching modules, lesson plans, student project outputs, reflective journals, and visual documentation related to coffee-based learning.

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study applied strategies addressing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing information across different participant groups, data collection methods, and research settings. Member checking was employed by sharing interview summaries and preliminary interpretations with participants to confirm accuracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Overview of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that integrating local coffee potential into Social Studies learning through a Community-Based Learning approach generated meaningful and contextually grounded learning experiences for Grade 8 students in coffee-producing areas of Jember Regency. Drawing on data obtained from classroom and field observations, in-depth interviews with students, Social Studies teachers, and community stakeholders, as well as analysis of learning

documentation and student project artifacts, the study identified consistent patterns of creative development across multiple domains.

Coffee Potential in Jember Regency

The results of the study show that the potential of coffee in Jember Regency not only functions as a leading economic commodity, but also as a social, geographical, and cultural landscape that shapes the lives of the local community. These conditions have a direct impact on the social structure of the community, livelihood patterns, and local economic dynamics, which largely depend on coffee farming activities.

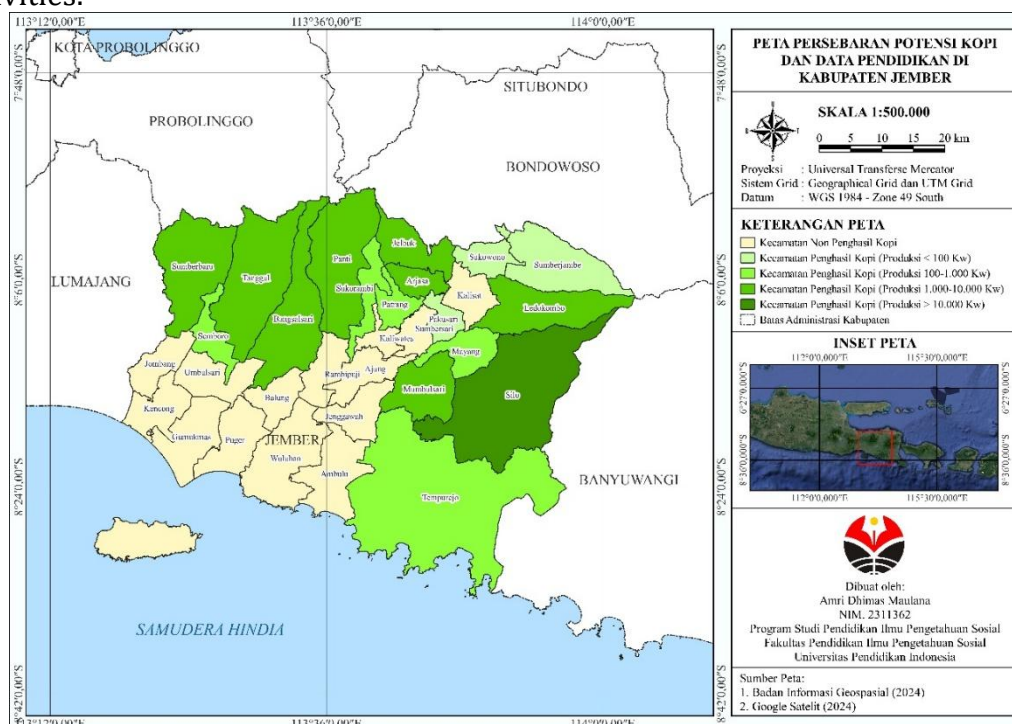


Figure 1.

Map of Coffee Potential Distribution in Jember Regency
Source: (Badan Informasi Geospasial, 2024; Google Satelit, 2024)

The map of coffee potential distribution in Jember Regency shows that of the total 31 subdistricts, 16 subdistricts are coffee-producing areas with varying levels of production, ranging from low to very high. These coffee-producing areas are generally concentrated in hilly and mountainous regions with agroclimatic conditions conducive to coffee cultivation, particularly in the western, northern, and eastern parts of Jember Regency. This distribution confirms that coffee is one of the region's leading commodities, closely linked to the geographical conditions, natural environment, and socio-economic structure of the local community. The color variations on the map represent the level of coffee production, ranging from non-producing subdistricts to subdistricts with very high production, which spatially

intersect with rural areas and mountainous agroecological zones. This map shows a clear relationship between geographical conditions, coffee-based natural resource potential, and the distribution of educational units, thereby strengthening the research argument that schools in these areas have a relevant local context for integrating coffee potential into social studies learning.

The five subdistricts, namely Sumberbaru, Tanggul, Bangsalsari, Silo, and Ledokombo, as research locations are reinforced by field findings that show that these areas have a strong connection between coffee potential, community activities, and the school education context. Observations and interviews revealed that in these five subdistricts, coffee is not only an economic commodity but also part of the social life and local identity of the community, where most of the students' parents work as coffee farmers or are involved in the production and distribution chain. In addition, the existence of an active coffee farmer community, direct access to coffee plantations, and the school's openness to local potential-based learning make these five subdistricts an authentic learning space for integrating natural resource conservation material into 8th grade social studies lessons.

Integration of Local Coffee Potential into Social Studies Learning

The findings indicate that the integration of local coffee potential into Social Studies learning on the topic of natural resource conservation in Grade 8 during the odd semester was implemented through contextual and experiential instructional strategies. Classroom observations showed that teachers explicitly connected curriculum content on environmental preservation with real examples from local coffee cultivation, such as soil conservation, water management, and sustainable land use in coffee-growing areas.

Table 2.

Textbook for Social Studies Class VIII SMP / MTs
(Theme 1: Geographical Conditions and Natural Resource Conservation)

No.	Chapter	Sub-Chapter Heading
1.	Indonesia's Natural Diversity	a. Geographical Processes Affecting Indonesia's Natural Diversity b. Geographical Processes Affecting Socio-Cultural Diversity
2.	Utilization of Natural Resources	a. Indonesia's Natural Resource Potential b. Utilization of Indonesia's Natural Resources
3.	Human Resources	a. The Quality of Indonesia's Human Resources b. Improving the Quality of Indonesia's Human Resources
4.	The Role of Social Institutions in the Utilization of Natural and Human Resources	a. Definition of Social Institutions b. The Role of Social Institutions in the Utilization of Natural Resources c. Social Institutions play a role in the Utilization of Human Resources?

Source: Adapted from Social Studies Textbook VII SMP/ MTs from Center for Curriculum and Bookkeeping, Balitbang, Kemdikbud

Interview data from Social Studies teachers across several schools indicate a consistent reliance on the official Grade VIII Social Studies textbook as the primary instructional reference, particularly in teaching topics related to geographical conditions and natural resource conservation. Teachers emphasized that the textbook, issued by the Ministry of Education, provides a structured framework that ensures alignment with curriculum standards, especially in chapters addressing Indonesia's natural diversity, geographical processes, and the utilization of natural resources.

Imagination as a Cognitive Outcome of Coffee-Based Social Studies Learning

The findings indicate that imagination emerged as a prominent cognitive outcome when local coffee potential was integrated into Social Studies learning through Community-Based Learning. Classroom and field observations revealed that students were able to move beyond rote understanding of environmental conservation concepts by actively imagining connections between geographical conditions, coffee cultivation practices, and the sustainability of local livelihoods. During learning activities, students demonstrated imaginative thinking by proposing ideas about environmentally friendly coffee farming, visualizing the long-term impact of land degradation on coffee production, and creatively representing these ideas through posters, concept maps, and multimedia projects. These observations indicate that students' imagination was significantly stimulated through direct engagement with real-world contexts rather than abstract instructional materials.

Collaboration as a Skill Developed Through Community Engagement

The findings demonstrate that collaboration emerged as a key skill developed through the implementation of community-based, coffee-oriented Social Studies learning. Observational data from classroom and field activities revealed that students frequently engaged in structured group work that required shared decision-making, task distribution, and collective problem-solving. During visits to coffee plantations and interactions with community members, students worked collaboratively to gather information, document observations, and discuss environmental and economic issues related to coffee production. These collaborative activities fostered active participation and mutual reliance among students, shifting learning dynamics from individual task completion toward collective knowledge construction. Interview data from Grade 8 students indicate that coffee-based learning required them not only to work with peers but also to engage directly with farmers and community members, encouraging them to coordinate questions, share responsibilities, and build understanding through group interaction.

Persistence as an Affective Dimension of Creative Learning

The findings indicate that persistence emerged as a significant affective outcome of coffee-based Social Studies learning implemented through a Community-Based Learning approach. Observational data revealed that students were frequently required to engage in extended learning processes that involved field observations, data collection, group discussions, and project completion related to local coffee contexts. Throughout these activities, students encountered various challenges, such as limited prior knowledge, environmental conditions during field visits, and the complexity of synthesizing information from multiple sources. Despite these challenges, students demonstrated increasing levels of perseverance by continuing to participate actively, revising their work, and completing assigned tasks within their groups.

Interview data indicate that persistence emerged as a significant affective dimension of students' learning experiences within coffee-based Community-Based Learning activities. Grade 8 students reported initially facing difficulties in understanding farming practices and environmental concepts during field observations; however, a sense of responsibility toward their group motivated them to remain engaged and complete their tasks despite these challenges. Teachers observed that students gradually developed stronger commitment and perseverance, particularly when learning activities were connected to real-life issues within their own communities, making them more willing to engage with complex tasks. This pattern was further supported by community stakeholders, including representatives from PTPN, who noted that students became increasingly focused, resilient, and consistent in their participation, even when activities required repeated effort in field settings.

DISCUSSION***Curriculum Relevance and Local Context Integration***

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating local coffee potential into Social Studies learning strengthens curriculum relevance by bridging formal curriculum objectives with students' lived experiences. Social Studies curricula are increasingly expected to move beyond abstract content delivery toward contextual and place-responsive learning that reflects students' socio-environmental realities. Previous studies emphasize that curriculum relevance is achieved when learning materials resonate with learners' cultural, economic, and ecological contexts (Beane, 2020; Gruenewald & Smith, 2018). In this study, coffee an integral part of the local economy and daily life in Jember served as a meaningful entry point for curriculum content, enabling students to perceive Social Studies as knowledge that is directly connected to their surroundings rather than distant national narratives.

Importantly, the findings indicate that the integration of local coffee potential did not replace or undermine the official Social Studies textbook but functioned as contextual enrichment aligned with curriculum standards. This aligns with recent curriculum studies arguing that localized content can coexist with standardized

curricula when used as pedagogical mediation rather than alternative content (Deng, 2018; Priestley et al., 2021). Teachers in this study continued to rely on the official textbook as the primary reference while contextualizing key concepts such as natural resource conservation and human environment interaction through coffee-related examples. This approach addresses a common concern among educators that local content integration may conflict with curriculum compliance (Ylimaki & Brunderman, 2022).

Furthermore, the integration of local coffee potential enhances curriculum relevance by legitimizing community knowledge as part of formal schooling. Recent studies highlight the importance of recognizing local communities as curricular resources that enrich academic content and promote educational equity, particularly in rural and agrarian contexts (Zipin et al., 2018). In this study, farmers, coffee communities, and local entrepreneurs functioned as co-educators, reinforcing curriculum content through authentic practices. This finding contributes to curriculum discourse by demonstrating that relevance is not achieved by simplifying content, but by situating disciplinary knowledge within meaningful local contexts that reflect students' identities and lived realities.

Implications for Environmental Education in Social Studies

The findings of this study have significant implications for environmental education within Social Studies, particularly in positioning environmental learning as an experiential and community-based process. Traditional environmental education in Social Studies often relies on conceptual explanations detached from students' immediate surroundings, which can limit students' engagement and long-term environmental awareness (Gough et al., 2020; Stevenson et al., 2022). This contextual approach aligns with contemporary perspectives that advocate for place-based and socio-ecological environmental education, where learners develop environmental understanding through direct interaction with local ecosystems and livelihoods (Ardoin, 2018; Gruenewald, 2019). Observations and interview data in this study revealed that students developed deeper awareness of soil conservation, water management, and sustainable land use through engagement with coffee farming practices. Such experiences support research suggesting that environmental literacy is strengthened when students connect ecological concepts with real-world practices and local knowledge systems (Chawla & Derr, 2023; Monroe et al., 2019).

Creativity as a Multidimensional Learning Outcome in Community-Based Learning

This study conceptualizes creativity as a multidimensional learning outcome that emerges from the dynamic interaction between cognitive, affective, and skill-based domains within Community-Based Social Studies learning. Rather than treating creativity solely as an individual cognitive ability, the findings suggest that creativity develops through students' engagement with meaningful local contexts,

social interactions, and sustained learning processes. In the context of coffee-based learning, creativity was shaped by students lived experiences as members of coffee-producing communities, where environmental, economic, and social realities intersect. This supports contemporary perspectives that view creativity as a situated and socially mediated process rather than a purely mental trait (Craft, 2018; Glăveanu, 2020).

From a cognitive perspective, imagination played a central role in enabling students to reinterpret Social Studies concepts through local coffee contexts. Students were encouraged to imagine relationships between natural resource conservation, community livelihoods, and environmental sustainability based on direct observation and interaction. Such imaginative engagement differs from conventional textbook-based learning, where creativity is often limited to abstract idea generation. Instead, imagination in this study was grounded in real-world experiences, allowing students to construct meaning by linking disciplinary knowledge with their immediate environment. This finding aligns with research emphasizing that creativity flourishes when learners are provided with authentic contexts that stimulate sense-making and future-oriented thinking (Beghetto, 2019; Glăveanu, 2020).

At the skills level, collaboration emerged as a crucial dimension of creativity development. Community-Based Learning expanded the learning space beyond the classroom, positioning peers, teachers, and community members as co-constructors of knowledge. Through collaborative interactions with farmers, coffee communities, and local entrepreneurs, students practiced communication, negotiation, and shared problem-solving. These social processes enabled creativity to manifest collectively, rather than individually, reflecting the growing recognition that creative learning in social studies is inherently relational and dialogic (Priestley et al., 2021; Sawyer, 2017). Collaboration thus functioned not merely as a learning strategy, but as a creative competence essential for navigating complex social and environmental issues.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating local coffee potential into Social Studies learning through a Community-Based Learning approach effectively fosters students' creativity as a multidimensional learning outcome encompassing imagination, collaboration, persistence, and discipline. By situating curriculum content within students lived environmental and socio-economic contexts, particularly in coffee-producing communities, learning becomes more meaningful and relevant without departing from the formal curriculum and textbook structure. The findings demonstrate that creativity develops through sustained engagement with authentic community practices, where students actively construct understanding, collaborate with peers and community members, and persist in addressing real-world challenges related to natural resource conservation. Overall, this study highlights the value of locally grounded, community-based instruction in

strengthening creativity, environmental awareness, and the relevance of Social Studies education in rural and agrarian contexts.

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