

Lived Experiences of Community-Based Learning With Local Coffee Potentials in Social Studies: A Phenomenological Study In Rural Junior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how community-embedded learning grounded in the local coffee ecosystem functions as an experiential space for meaning-making, identity formation, and learner agency among junior high school students in rural Jember, Indonesia. The research specifically aims to explore students' lived experiences in coffee-based CBL activities and to understand how these experiences support curriculum learning on the utilization and conservation of natural resources. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, the study was conducted in three rural schools in Jember Regency (SMPN 1 Sumberbaru, SMPN 6 Tanggul, and SMPN 4 Bangsalsari) and involved students, teachers, farmers, community actors, and creative-economy stakeholders as participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document review, and analyzed using Moustakas' phenomenological steps bracketing, horizontalization, thematic clustering, and essence synthesis. The findings reveal that coffee-based CBL bridges curriculum concepts with students' lived realities by situating learning within authentic socio-economic and environmental contexts. Students reported deeper conceptual understanding, stronger sense of belonging to the agrarian community, emotional engagement, and enhanced local identity awareness. The study also shows that creativity emerged as a reflective and contextual process through students' participation in problem-solving, idea generation, and community interaction, rather than through abstract classroom tasks. Moreover, CBL fostered learner agency, collaborative participation, and socio-cultural awareness as students actively engaged with community knowledge and practices. Overall, the study demonstrates that community-embedde

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community-based learning (CBL) has gained increasing attention as a pedagogical approach that connects classroom instruction with real-world community contexts, enabling students to construct meaningful knowledge through situated learning experiences. In recent years, education researchers have emphasized the role of community engagement and local resource integration in supporting authentic, contextualized, and socially responsible learning processes. Within social studies education, CBL is viewed as a pathway for strengthening civic awareness, social participation, and learner identity formation in relation to their surrounding environment. These developments align with global calls for education that is relevant to local realities and community life (McKinney et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2020.).

Alongside this pedagogical shift, scholars have highlighted the importance of place-based learning, where local cultural, ecological, and economic resources become entry points for interdisciplinary learning. Such approaches recognize the role of community knowledge systems and lived social practices as legitimate sources of curriculum content and learning experiences. In rural contexts, community-embedded learning allows students to engage directly with local livelihoods, traditions, and social structures, fostering deeper connections between schooling and everyday life. This perspective is increasingly reflected in recent educational literature on rural and contextualized pedagogy (Biddle & Hall, 2020; Gruenewald & Smith, 2018). Within the domain of social studies, CBL contributes not only to knowledge acquisition but also to the development of critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity as learners interact with complex social realities. Studies indicate that when students participate in learning activities rooted in community interactions, they are more likely to develop agency, reflective understanding, and socially grounded perspectives on socio-economic phenomena. These outcomes are particularly relevant in contexts where education aims to cultivate social responsibility and community-oriented citizenship. Thus, CBL represents a strategic bridge between curriculum objectives and lived community experience (Fuller, 2019; Warren, 2020).

In Indonesia and other developing regions, rural areas continue to serve as important educational contexts where community livelihoods strongly shape social identity and daily life. Rural schools often operate within socio-economic environments closely tied to agriculture and local resource-based economies, requiring learning approaches that acknowledge these contextual realities. Social studies education in such regions presents opportunities to relate curriculum themes to local community practices and economic activities. This reinforces the relevance of contextualized pedagogy in strengthening learning engagement among rural students (Azimi, Rahman, & Noor, 2019; Suryadi & Tilaar, 2021). The region of Jember, known as one of Indonesia's prominent coffee-producing areas, provides a unique socio-cultural landscape in which community life, identity, and economic activity are deeply connected to local coffee production. Coffee cultivation in rural Jember is not only an economic livelihood but also a cultural practice embedded in intergenerational knowledge and community relations. Engaging students in learning that integrates local coffee potentials therefore offers an authentic opportunity to explore social, economic, and cultural dimensions within social studies learning. This makes the context highly relevant for developing locally grounded educational research (Herlina, 2020; Rahmawati & Supriyanto, 2022).

Integrating local coffee potentials into community-based learning activities allows students to interact with farmers, observe production processes, and understand socio-economic networks surrounding agricultural communities. Through such engagements, learners are exposed to real-world practices that extend beyond textbook representations of economic and social life. These interactions provide space for experiential learning that supports cognitive understanding as well as affective appreciation of community knowledge and livelihood practices. Previous studies have shown that such contextual exposure may stimulate creativity, reflection, and problem-solving skills among students (Pramono & Hadi, 2021; Yin, Lee, & Zhang, 2020). However, despite the growing interest in CBL and place-based learning, much of the existing literature has focused primarily on program implementation, instructional design, or measurable learning outcomes. Many studies emphasize improvement in academic achievement, skills development, or behavioral indicators, while paying relatively limited attention to students' subjective experiences during their engagement with community-based learning environments. As a result, less is known about how students personally experience, interpret, and construct meaning from their participation in locally embedded learning processes. This leaves an important conceptual gap in understanding the learning phenomenon from the perspective of the learners themselves (Brown & Elliott, 2019; Kim, 2021).

In particular, research exploring CBL in rural agricultural contexts has tended to adopt evaluative or descriptive perspectives, focusing on curriculum effectiveness rather than phenomenological accounts of lived learning experience. Studies rarely examine how students articulate their emotions, reflections, and inner meanings while engaging with learning activities rooted in local livelihood practices such as coffee production. The absence of such perspectives limits theoretical insight into how contextual, community-embedded learning shapes students' identity, creativity, and relational understanding of their social worlds. This methodological tendency contributes to the ongoing gap in qualitative, experience-centered inquiry (Adams, 2020; Larson & Miller, 2022). Furthermore, within the field of social studies education, research that explicitly integrates community-based learning with local economic resources such as coffee is still relatively limited, especially in Southeast Asian rural contexts. Much of the existing scholarship on agricultural learning focuses on entrepreneurship, sustainability, or vocational perspectives rather than social-cultural learning experiences. Few studies investigate how such contexts influence students' experiential engagement with social studies concepts such as society, economy, culture, and community interdependence. This highlights the need for deeper exploration of locally grounded learning environments within social studies pedagogy (Huang & Chan, 2019; Setiawan, 2021).

Given these gaps, a phenomenological approach offers a powerful lens to examine how students experience and make meaning of community-based learning processes situated within local coffee contexts. Phenomenology prioritizes the subjective, lived experiences of individuals, acknowledging that learning is not only cognitive but also emotional, relational, and interpretive in nature. Through this approach, researchers are able to capture the essence of students' interactions, perceptions, and reflections as they participate in authentic, community-linked learning activities. Such inquiry enables a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed within experiential learning environments (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2020). Phenomenological inquiry is particularly relevant in settings where learning involves direct engagement with local culture, livelihood activities, and social interactions, as these elements shape students' embodied and contextual learning experiences. By exploring students' narratives and reflections, the research can reveal how community-based learning influences their creative thinking, social awareness, and emotional connection to their community. This perspective complements outcome-based research by illuminating the inner processes through which learning is experienced and internalized. Consequently, phenomenology strengthens theoretical insight into the human dimension of education (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

In the context of rural junior high schools in Jember, phenomenological exploration of students' lived experiences in CBL activities involving local coffee potentials provides an opportunity to understand how rural learners engage with their socio-economic landscape through education. Such investigation allows researchers to identify how students perceive, value, and interpret learning that connects school knowledge with real-life community practices. The findings may reveal how localized learning experiences shape students' sense of belonging, identity, and creativity in relation to their environment. This contributes to broader discussions on equity and relevance in rural education (Azizah & Mahmud, 2022; N. Nasir & Hand, 2021). Moreover, understanding students' lived experiences in this context carries important implications for curriculum design and instructional practice in social studies education. Insights into how learners internalize and respond to community-embedded learning can inform the development of pedagogical strategies that are more responsive to local culture, livelihood structures, and community knowledge. Such findings may support the strengthening of school-community partnerships as meaningful learning ecosystems. At the same time, they contribute to theoretical advancement in contextualized and community-based pedagogy (Anderson & Brown, 2020; Nasir, 2020).

From a policy and innovation perspective, this research also aligns with current educational priorities promoting context-sensitive, culturally relevant, and community-responsive learning approaches. In developing regions, education systems increasingly recognize the value of integrating local wisdom, economic potential, and community participation into learning processes. Empirical evidence grounded in students' lived experiences can therefore provide valuable insights for supporting sustainable, locally relevant educational practices in rural schools. This strengthens both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of social studies education (OECD, 2020; Surahman & Mukminan., 2017). Despite the growing body of literature on community-based learning (CBL), existing studies have predominantly conceptualized CBL as an instructional strategy oriented toward program implementation, civic engagement outcomes, or

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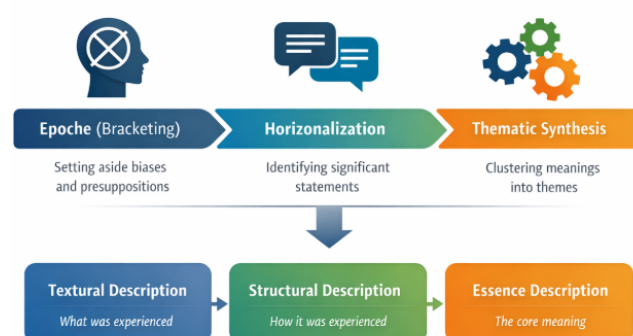
measurable learning achievements. Much of this scholarship emphasizes curricular alignment, pedagogical effectiveness, or competency development, while offering limited insight into how learners subjectively experience community-embedded learning processes. In particular, research on CBL within rural and agrarian contexts has largely adopted evaluative or outcome-driven perspectives, marginalizing the phenomenological dimension of learning as lived experience. Consequently, there remains an under-theorized gap regarding how community-based learning operates as a socio-cultural and experiential space through which students construct meaning, negotiate identity, enact creativity, and develop learner agency—especially when learning is situated within local livelihood ecosystems such as agriculture-based communities. This gap is further accentuated in social studies education, where empirical inquiries rarely explore how locally grounded economic resources function not merely as learning content, but as formative contexts shaping students' cognitive, emotional, and relational engagement with knowledge.

Addressing this gap, the present study offers a novel contribution by conceptualizing coffee-based Community-Based Learning as a lived, socio-material learning experience that integrates curriculum knowledge with students' everyday rural realities. Drawing on a phenomenological approach, this research foregrounds students' lived experiences as the primary analytical lens to illuminate how engagement with local coffee ecosystems mediates processes of meaning-making, identity formation, creativity, and learner agency in social studies learning. The novelty of this study lies in repositioning CBL beyond a pedagogical technique toward an experiential learning ecology, where community practices, local economic activities, and cultural knowledge co-constitute the learning process. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to explore and articulate the essence of students' lived experiences in coffee-based community learning environments within rural junior high schools, thereby advancing theoretical understanding of community-embedded learning in social studies and contributing empirically grounded insights for the development of context-responsive, culturally relevant, and socially meaningful pedagogy in rural education settings.

2. METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of students participating in community-based learning activities that integrate local coffee potentials within social studies education in rural junior high schools. Phenomenology was employed because the focus of the inquiry lies not in measuring instructional outcomes, but in uncovering how students interpret, feel, and construct meaning from their engagement with authentic, community-embedded learning processes. Guided by a transcendental phenomenological orientation inspired by Moustakas (1994), the study emphasized *epoche*, horizontalization, and thematic synthesis to arrive at textural, structural, and essence descriptions of students' experiential realities.

Figure 1. Analytical Steps in Phenomenological Analysis



As depicted in Figure 1, the phenomenological analysis was specifically oriented toward capturing students' lived experiences of community-based learning situated within local coffee potentials in rural social studies contexts. The process commenced with *epoche*, enabling the researcher to suspend preconceived interpretations of community-based learning and agrarian education in order to foreground students' firsthand accounts of engaging with coffee-farming environments, community actors, and everyday socio-economic practices. Through *horizontalization*, students' narratives, observations, and reflections were

examined as equally significant expressions of experience, revealing how interactions with coffee plantations, farmers, and local economic activities were perceived, felt, and interpreted within social studies learning. These experiential meanings were then integrated through *thematic synthesis*, generating coherent themes that illuminated how coffee-based community learning shaped students' understanding of social and economic life, emotional engagement, sense of belonging, creativity, and learner agency. This analytic progression culminated in the construction of *textural descriptions* that captured what students experienced during coffee-oriented community learning activities, *structural descriptions* that explained how these experiences unfolded within rural school–community contexts, and an *essence description* that articulated the core meaning of community-based learning as a lived, contextually grounded, and socially meaningful learning experience in rural junior high schools.

Research Context and Setting

This study was conducted in three rural junior high schools located in the Tanggul District of Jember Regency, namely SMPN 1 Sumberbaru, SMPN 6 Tanggul, and SMPN 4 Bangsalsari. These schools are situated in peripheral areas that lie adjacent to extensive coffee plantation zones, where the majority of community livelihoods are closely connected to agricultural and smallholder coffee-farming activities. The geographical setting creates a learning environment in which students' daily lives are intertwined with local coffee-based socio-economic practices, community traditions, and rural cultural identity. This unique contextual condition provides strong relevance for the implementation of community-based learning, as students' learning experiences naturally intersect with community knowledge, local resources, and real-life economic activities.

Table 1. Research Context and School Characteristics

School	Geographic Characteristics	Community Context	Relevance to Coffee-Based CBL
SMPN 1 Sumberbaru	Adjacent to smallholder coffee plantations and hilly rural settlement zones	Majority of parents work as coffee farmers or plantation laborers	Strong exposure to daily coffee-based livelihood practices that support authentic field-based learning
SMPN 6 Tanggul	Located near mixed coffee–agroforestry areas	Strong school–community interaction with farmer groups and local cooperatives	High potential for student participation in community observation and learning activities
SMPN 7 Bangsalsari	Directly bordering plantation working zones and rural hamlets	Community identity strongly shaped by coffee production culture	Provides contextual exposure for social, economic, and cultural learning themes

Within this rural educational landscape, the three schools share similar structural and socio-cultural characteristics, including limited learning resources, strong community ties, and a schooling environment that remains deeply embedded in agrarian life. Despite being categorized as schools in remote or semi-isolated areas, they serve as important educational centers that mediate interactions between formal schooling and local community contexts. Teachers and students in these schools frequently interact with coffee farmers, local cooperatives, and plantation environments, making coffee-based community activities not only familiar but also meaningful as potential learning resources. These conditions position the schools as a strategic site for exploring how community-embedded learning experiences shape students' meaning-making processes in social studies education.

The rural and peripheral nature of these schools presents both opportunities and challenges for pedagogical innovation. On one hand, the proximity to coffee plantations enables the integration of local livelihood practices into classroom learning through experiential, contextual, and participatory learning activities. On the other hand, limited infrastructure and instructional facilities require teachers to rely more heavily on locally available resources and community engagement rather than technologically driven instructional approaches. This contextual reality strengthens the relevance of adopting a phenomenological

lens, as it allows the study to capture how students experience, interpret, and internalize learning processes that emerge from their interactions with community-based environments and local socio-economic realities. Thus, the three schools collectively represent a meaningful context for examining the essence of students' lived experiences within coffee-oriented community-based learning settings in rural Jember.

Participants and Data Collection Procedures

The participants in this study consisted of students, teachers, and community member (coffee farmer, owner coffeeshop, and chairman of the Jember creative economy forum) who had directly participated in community-based learning activities involving local coffee potentials in social studies classes. A criterion-based purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure that only students with authentic and relevant learning experiences were included, particularly those who had engaged in field exploration, community interaction, and contextual learning activities related to coffee-farming communities. The final sample comprised 24 participants, representing students from different class levels across the three schools, with variation in gender, learning engagement, and background of parental livelihoods in the coffee-farming sector. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from both students and school authorities, while confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the study.

Data were collected through a combination of in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document/artefact review, enabling the researcher to obtain rich, layered, and experience-based accounts of students' involvement in coffee-oriented community learning environments. The interviews focused on students' reflections, emotions, interpretations, and meaning-making processes while engaging in CBL activities, and were conducted individually with each participant for approximately 45–60 minutes per session.

Table 2. Interview Question Framework

Informants	Focus Area	Core Question
3 Social Studies Teachers	Implementation of community-based learning	How did you design and facilitate learning activities that integrate local coffee potentials into social studies instruction?
	Observation of student learning experiences	What kinds of learning behaviours, interactions, or responses did you observe when students participated in coffee-based community learning activities?
	Perceived pedagogical meaning and outcomes	How did these learning activities influence students' understanding, awareness, or creativity in relation to their social and community environment?
	Personal learning experience	Can you describe your experience when participating in learning activities connected to the coffee-farming community?
16 Students in 8 th Grade	Emotions and meaning-making	What did you feel and learn during these activities, and which moments were most meaningful to you?
	Cognitive and social reflection	How did interacting with the community or learning outside the classroom change the way you think about social and economic life in your environment?
	Role in school–community engagement	How were you involved in the school learning activities related to coffee farming and local community knowledge?
5 Community Member	Observation of student participation	What did you observe about students' attitudes, curiosity, or participation during activities conducted in the plantation or community environment?

Community meaning and perceived benefit	What meaning or benefits do you see from these learning activities for the community and for the students?
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Participant observation was carried out during selected CBL learning activities, including visits to plantation environments, interactions with coffee farmers, and classroom reflection sessions, allowing the researcher to capture contextual behaviours, engagement patterns, and learning interactions in natural settings. In addition, relevant learning artefacts such as student worksheets, field notes, photographs, and teacher documentation were reviewed to support data triangulation and contextual interpretation of students' lived learning experiences.

To strengthen methodological rigor, data collection followed an iterative process in which emerging insights from initial interviews informed subsequent questioning and field engagement. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and later transcribed verbatim, while observational data were documented through detailed field notes and reflexive memos. The combination of multiple data sources allowed for convergence of perspectives, ensuring that students' experiential narratives were not only expressed verbally but also situated within their actual learning contexts and interactions with the surrounding coffee-farming communities. This integrative procedure supported the development of rich, thick descriptions that aligned with the phenomenological intent of capturing the essence of students' lived experiences within community-embedded learning environments.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using a phenomenological thematic analysis procedure guided by the transcendental phenomenology framework of Moustakas. The analysis began with epoche or bracketing, in which the researcher consciously suspended personal assumptions and prior interpretations related to community-based learning and the coffee-based rural context to ensure openness toward participants' lived experiences. All interview transcripts, observational notes, and learning artefacts were then subjected to horizontalization, where significant statements and meaning units were identified and treated with equal value before being clustered into emerging thematic categories. These meaning units were further synthesized into textural descriptions (what the participants experienced) and structural descriptions (how the experiences occurred within the learning and community environment), which were subsequently integrated to formulate the essence of the phenomenon. Throughout the analytic process, iterative comparison, reflexive memoing, and triangulation across data sources were employed to enhance interpretive rigor and ensure that the findings authentically represented the depth and richness of students' lived experiences in coffee-oriented community-based learning settings.

Trustworthiness and Research Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, the research design incorporated multiple validation strategies aligned with qualitative and phenomenological inquiry standards. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation across interviews, participant observations, and learning artefacts, as well as member checking, in which selected participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of transcript excerpts and emerging interpretations. Dependability was maintained by establishing an audit trail that documented methodological decisions, analytic steps, reflective memos, and revisions throughout the research process. Confirmability was enhanced through continuous reflexive practice and the use of bracketing, enabling the researcher to minimize personal bias and ensure that interpretations were grounded in participants' experiential narratives rather than prior assumptions. Meanwhile, transferability was supported by providing rich, thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and learning environments, allowing readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to similar rural, community-embedded educational settings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Integrating Local Coffee Potentials into Social Studies Learning Content

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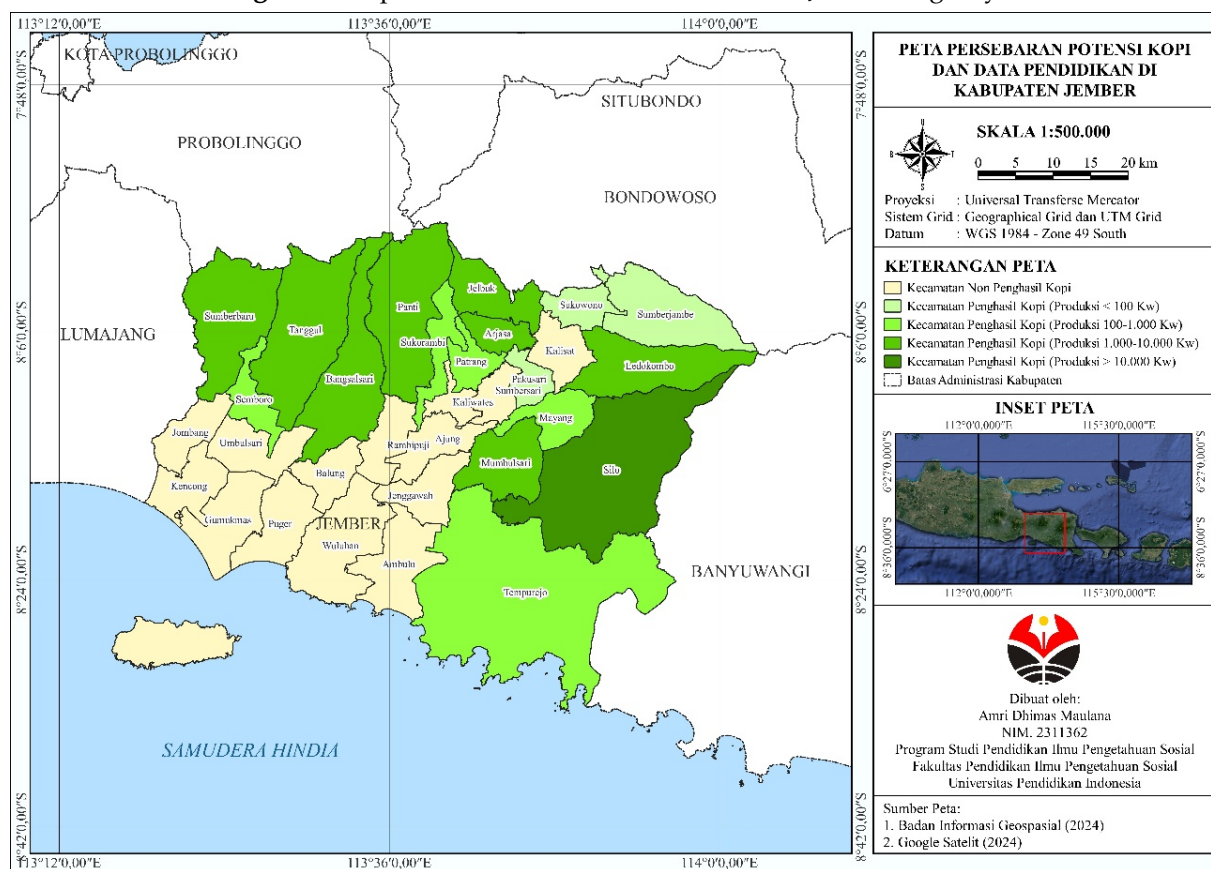
The findings also reveal that the integration of local coffee potentials into social studies learning functions not only as a contextual learning activity, but also as a curricular extension of the Grade VIII topic on the Utilization and Conservation of Natural Resources. Teachers intentionally positioned coffee as an example of a locally relevant natural resource that reflects the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural characteristics of the Jember region, allowing students to understand curriculum concepts through a resource that is directly connected to their daily lives. Through this approach, students explored issues related to resource utilization, sustainable plantation practices, environmental preservation, and community livelihood systems, which enabled them to relate textbook material to the realities of local agricultural production. As a result, the integration of coffee-based content served as a meaningful pedagogical bridge between national curriculum objectives and place-based learning grounded in community contexts.

Table 4. 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 VIII SMP / MTs from Center for Curriculum and Bookkeeping, Balitbang, Kemdikbud

Students' reflections further indicate that learning about coffee as a local natural resource helped them recognize the importance of sustainable management, conservation awareness, and responsible economic practice within their own environment. By examining plantation activities, soil management, crop maintenance, and community efforts to maintain productivity, students were able to connect the concept of "pemanfaatan dan pelestarian sumber daya alam" with real situations that they observe in their surroundings. This experience also enhanced students' appreciation of coffee as one of Jember's leading regional commodities, reinforcing their understanding that natural resources are not merely physical objects, but are closely linked to identity, culture, economy, and community resilience. In this way, the integration of coffee into social studies content strengthened both conceptual understanding and local contextual awareness, positioning social studies as a subject that meaningfully connects classroom knowledge with the lived realities of rural life.

Figure 1. Map of Coffee Potential Distribution in Jember Regency

The map illustrates the spatial distribution of coffee-producing areas in Jember Regency, showing variations in production intensity across sub-districts based on geographic, ecological, and plantation characteristics. Out of the 31 districts in Jember, the map identifies 16 districts as active coffee-producing regions, which are visually distinguished by different shades of green to indicate production capacity ranges. These coffee-producing areas are generally concentrated along the northern and eastern highland corridors of the regency, particularly in regions that are geographically adjacent to the Raung and Argopuro volcanic mountain systems, where the elevation, soil fertility, and climatic conditions are highly suitable for coffee cultivation.

Within this spatial pattern, the sub-districts of Sumberbaru, Tanggul, and Bangsalsari which also serve as the research locations in this study are positioned as strategic and high-potential coffee-producing zones. These areas are highlighted as among the best-performing local coffee producers, supported by a combination of smallholder plantation systems, community-based agro-economy networks, and long-standing cultural traditions of coffee cultivation. The proximity of schools in these regions to plantation environments reinforces the relevance of integrating coffee-based learning contexts into social studies education, as students live within communities whose livelihoods, identity, and social relations are strongly shaped by agricultural production systems. This spatial condition strengthens the authenticity of community-based learning experiences, enabling learning activities to take place within real socio-economic landscapes rather than simulated or hypothetical contexts.

Experiencing Learning Through Coffee-Based Community Contexts

Students' initial engagement in community-based learning activities situated within local coffee-farming environments was experienced as a meaningful shift from conventional classroom-centered instruction toward learning that was directly connected to their everyday social reality. Many students described feelings of curiosity, excitement, and emotional closeness when encountering learning

experiences that allowed them to observe plantation sites, interact with farmers, and witness the real processes of coffee production rather than only reading about them in textbooks. These experiences enabled students to perceive social studies learning as something “alive” and relevant to their lives, as learning unfolded in spaces that were physically and culturally familiar to them. For several participants, the movement from classroom settings to field-based learning sites represented not only a spatial transition, but also a transformation in how they engaged with knowledge, as they began to see community practices as legitimate learning resources rather than merely background elements of daily life.

The interview results indicate that students experienced a meaningful shift from classroom-based instruction to authentic learning when engaging with coffee-based community environments. One student expressed that learning in the plantation provided a sense of realism and relevance to the lesson:

“Learning in the coffee plantation made me feel that the lesson was real. I was not only listening to explanations, but I could see how people work, how they depend on coffee, and how life in the community is connected to it.” (Interview, Student-S3)

“In the plantation, students were more active than they usually are in class. They asked questions, observed details, and tried to relate what they saw to the concepts in the textbook.” (Interview, Teacher-T2)

“When the students came here, they saw how we harvest, sort, and process coffee. They understood that what they read in books is something we live every day.” (Interview, Farmer-F1)

Students also reflected that participating in activities outside the classroom provided opportunities for embodied and sensory learning, where they could see, touch, and directly experience the environment that had long shaped their family and community livelihoods. This sense-rich exposure fostered stronger emotional connection and personal involvement in the learning process, making them feel that they were not only “studying about society” but actively engaging within it. Some students expressed that the experience helped them recognize the value of local knowledge and community labor, leading to greater appreciation of the economic and social roles played by coffee-farming communities in their region. Through these early encounters with community-embedded learning, students began to position themselves not only as learners within school structures, but also as participants situated within a broader network of community life and local identity.

Meaning-Making and Cognitive Understanding of Social and Economic Life

Through their participation in coffee-based community learning activities, students developed a deeper cognitive understanding of the social and economic dynamics surrounding their local environment. Many participants explained that interacting directly with farmers, observing production processes, and listening to community narratives helped them connect abstract social studies concepts—such as economic activities, division of labor, production systems, and community interdependence—with the lived realities they encountered in the plantation setting. Rather than perceiving these concepts as distant or theoretical, students began to recognize how social, cultural, and economic structures operate in real life, particularly within the context of rural coffee-farming communities. This experiential engagement allowed them to construct meaning through authentic connections between school knowledge and community practice. The interview findings show that students developed deeper cognitive understanding by relating social studies concepts to real socio-economic systems. A student reflected:

“Before, economic activities were only examples in the book. But after talking to farmers and traders, I realized that every process - planting, harvesting, selling - is part of a real economic system in our community.” (Interview, Student-S1)

“They asked how farmers, collectors, and shop owners work together. I told them that coffee is not produced by one person, it is a chain of people helping each other.” (Interview, Farmer-F3)

“Students began to explain economic interdependence using examples from the plantation. Their explanations were no longer abstract - they were grounded in real community life.” (Interview, Teacher-

T1)

Students also described how these learning experiences encouraged them to reflect on the broader implications of economic life in their community, including issues of livelihood sustainability, inter-household cooperation, and the vulnerability of farmers to market fluctuations and climate conditions. Such reflections supported the emergence of more critical and empathetic perspectives, as students started to understand that economic activity is not merely a technical or financial process, but also a social reality that shapes identity, family relationships, and community resilience. For several participants, the learning process prompted new awareness of the complexity and value of community labor, leading them to view their environment not only as a physical place but as a dynamic socio-economic system. Through this meaning-making process, students demonstrated a shift from surface-level understanding toward more contextual, relational, and reflective comprehension of social and economic life in their rural setting.

Emotional Engagement, Identity, and Sense of Belonging to the Community

Students' participation in coffee-based community learning activities fostered strong emotional engagement and a deepened sense of identity connected to their local environment and community life. Many participants expressed feelings of pride, appreciation, and emotional closeness when recognizing that the agricultural activities carried out by farmers—including their own parents and relatives—were positioned as meaningful learning resources rather than being seen merely as routine livelihood practices. This recognition encouraged students to view their community not as a marginal or peripheral space, but as a site of valuable knowledge, experience, and cultural identity that contributes to their personal and educational development. For some students, the learning experiences also strengthened their emotional attachment to their rural setting, creating a renewed awareness that their community and environment hold important social, cultural, and economic significance.

The interviews reveal that learning in the coffee-farming environment strengthened students' emotional attachment to their community. One student expressed a sense of pride and belonging:

"I used to think that living in a plantation village was ordinary. But after this learning activity, I feel proud that our area produces coffee that many people appreciate." (Interview, Student-S4)

"Some students said they now respect their parents more because they finally saw how hard the work in the plantation is." (Interview, Teacher-T3)

"This learning experience does not only teach knowledge, it strengthens students' awareness that their cultural and economic identity is rooted in the coffee ecosystem." (Interview, Creative Economy Leader-CE1)

At the same time, students described how participating in community-embedded learning helped them develop empathy and respect toward the work, struggles, and contributions of coffee-farming communities. By witnessing the effort, collaboration, and shared responsibility involved in plantation activities, students reported gaining a deeper appreciation of the human dimension of labor and interdependence within their community. These emotional reflections contributed to a growing sense of belonging and social connectedness, as students began to see themselves not only as learners within a school structure, but also as members of a collective community identity shaped by shared livelihoods and local heritage. Through this process, emotional engagement became an integral pathway through which students internalized meaning, belonging, and identity formation within the broader context of their lived rural experiences.

Creativity, Idea Generation, and Problem-Solving in Learning Activities

Students' engagement in coffee-based community learning activities stimulated the emergence of creative thinking, idea generation, and problem-solving processes as they interacted with real-life situations in the plantation and community environment. Several participants described how observing production activities, listening to farmers' experiences, and engaging in reflective discussions encouraged them to think beyond textbook explanations and to explore new ways of

understanding social, economic, and environmental issues related to coffee production. These experiences provided space for students to formulate ideas, propose simple improvements, or imagine alternative practices that could benefit both learning activities and community life. In this context, creativity was not expressed merely through artistic output, but through the capacity to reinterpret reality, identify challenges, and generate context-based reflections and ideas.

The interview results suggest that authentic learning contexts stimulated students' creativity and idea-generation processes. A coffee-shop owner noted the emergence of entrepreneurial imagination:

"Students were curious about branding, packaging, and how coffee can be marketed differently. Some even proposed designing a student-based local coffee label." (Interview, Coffee Shop Owner-CS2)

"After seeing the process, I started thinking about how farmers could reduce waste and how coffee shells might be used for other products." (Interview, Student-S2)

"Students were not only repeating information — they were generating ideas from what they observed and discussed with the community." (Interview, Teacher-T4)

Students also reported that collaborative interactions during CBL activities, such as group discussions, field observations, and dialogue with community members supported the development of shared problem-solving abilities. Working together in authentic learning environments encouraged them to exchange perspectives, negotiate meanings, and construct ideas collectively, thereby strengthening both cognitive and social dimensions of creativity. Some students reflected that these activities helped them gain confidence in expressing their opinions and producing ideas grounded in real community experiences rather than hypothetical classroom scenarios. Through these processes, creativity became embedded within the experiential nature of community-based learning, functioning as a pathway through which students connected knowledge, reflection, collaboration, and innovation within their rural social context.

Learner Agency, Participation, and Collaborative Interaction

Students' involvement in coffee-based community learning activities contributed to the development of a stronger sense of learner agency, as they experienced opportunities to participate actively rather than remain passive recipients of classroom instruction. Many participants described how being engaged in field observations, group explorations, and direct dialogue with farmers encouraged them to take initiative, ask questions, and position themselves as active contributors to the learning process. These experiences challenged the traditional hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, replacing it with a more participatory and interactional learning dynamic in which students felt responsible for constructing meaning through their own engagement and inquiry. Through such participation, students began to perceive learning as a collaborative process that unfolds through interaction with peers, teachers, and community members. The findings indicate that students developed stronger learner agency through active participation in community settings. A teacher explained:

"In the plantation, students took initiative - they decided who would ask questions, who would record answers, and who would document observations." (Interview, Teacher-T5)

"We worked as a team. Each of us had a role, and we supported each other - it felt different from group work in the classroom." (Interview, Student-S5)

"Their participation in the coffee ecosystem shows that learning is not limited to school - students are beginning to recognize themselves as contributors to the local community." (Interview, Creative Economy Leader-CE1)

In addition, students reflected that collaborative interactions during community-based learning strengthened their ability to communicate, coordinate, and share perspectives in ways that are rarely experienced in conventional classroom settings. Working together in authentic learning environments required them to negotiate roles, support one another, and adapt to real-life situations encountered in the plantation and community context. These collaborative engagements fostered a sense of mutual responsibility and shared purpose, reinforcing the social dimension of learning and providing

opportunities for students to learn from one another's insights and reflections. Overall, the emergence of learner agency and collaborative interaction illustrates how CBL environments create transformative spaces in which students experience themselves not only as learners within formal schooling, but as active social participants within a broader community learning ecosystem.

Challenges, Tensions, and Reflective Struggles During CBL Experiences

Alongside the meaningful and engaging aspects of community-based learning, students also encountered a range of challenges and tensions that shaped the way they experienced and interpreted the learning process. Some participants reported feelings of uncertainty or hesitation when interacting with community members, particularly during the early stages of field activities, as they were not accustomed to learning beyond the classroom or communicating directly with adults in work settings. Others described practical difficulties such as environmental discomfort, time limitations, and the physical demands of moving through plantation areas, which occasionally made the learning process tiring or overwhelming. These challenges required students to adjust their expectations and gradually develop confidence and adaptive strategies as they navigated unfamiliar learning environments. The interview results reveal that students also experienced tension and adaptation challenges during CBL activities. One student explained:

"At first I was nervous to speak to the farmers because I was afraid my questions were wrong, but over time I became more confident." (Interview, Student-S6)

"In the beginning, they were quiet and shy. After a while, they started asking questions and interacting more comfortably." (Interview, Farmer-F2)

"The difficulties students faced in connecting experience with theory actually pushed them to reflect more deeply." (Interview, Teacher-T2)

At the reflective level, students also experienced internal struggles related to interpreting and connecting their field experiences with academic concepts in social studies. A number of participants expressed that, at certain moments, they felt unsure about how to translate real-life observations into meaningful understanding or school-based tasks, particularly when learning themes involved complex socio-economic processes. However, these tensions ultimately contributed to deeper reflection, as students learned to relate experience, discussion, and conceptual explanation through ongoing dialogue with teachers and peers. Through this process, challenges were not merely obstacles but became integral components of the learning experience, fostering resilience, critical awareness, and a more mature understanding of how knowledge is constructed within community-embedded learning contexts.

The Core Meaning of Students' Lived Experiences in Coffee-Based Community Learning

The essence of students' lived experiences in coffee-based community learning reflects a transformative process in which learning becomes deeply rooted in the social, economic, and cultural life of their rural community. Through direct engagement with coffee-farming environments, students experienced a shift from abstract, classroom-centered instruction toward learning that is embodied, contextual, and meaningfully connected to their everyday reality. This engagement fostered emotional attachment, pride, and a strengthened sense of identity and belonging, as students came to recognize the value of local knowledge, community labor, and the interdependent relationships that sustain their environment. At the same time, the learning process stimulated creativity, reflective awareness, and learner agency, enabling students to generate ideas, collaborate with others, and reframe community practices as authentic sources of knowledge. Even when confronted with challenges and uncertainties, students' reflective struggles contributed to deeper understanding and personal growth, revealing that learning within community-embedded contexts is not merely an instructional activity, but a holistic experience that integrates cognition, emotion, social interaction, and identity formation within the lived realities of rural life.

Discussion

Community-Embedded Learning as a Bridge Between Curriculum Knowledge and Lived Reality

The findings of this study demonstrate that coffee-based community-embedded learning operates as a powerful bridge between formal curriculum objectives in Social Studies and the lived realities of rural students. Community-Based Learning (CBL) situates learning “with and within” communities, enabling students to connect disciplinary concepts to real socio-economic practices rather than treating knowledge as abstract content. Recent reviews underline that CBL and community-based experiential learning strengthen students’ ability to apply academic concepts in authentic contexts and foster deeper understanding of social relations, livelihoods, and civic life (Kalas & Raisinghani, 2019). In the context of this study, students’ direct engagement with the coffee ecosystem in Jember allowed them to reinterpret textbook notions of natural resources, economic activity, and community interdependence as phenomena they observe, experience, and discuss within their own local environment.

This bridging function becomes particularly salient when viewed through the lens of the Grade VIII topic on Utilization and Conservation of Natural Resources. Integrating coffee as a locally significant natural resource into Social Studies content makes curricular themes on resource use, sustainability, and environmental stewardship tangible and contextually grounded. Studies on environmental and local-wisdom-based education show that when natural resources are taught through locally embedded examples, students develop stronger awareness of conservation issues and a more nuanced appreciation of how resource management is tied to community survival and identity (Hernawan, Darmawan, & Ali, 2021). In the Jember case, coffee plantations provide a living laboratory in which students can examine how soil, climate, farming practices, and market conditions shape the long-term sustainability of a key regional commodity, thereby turning a national curriculum topic into a lived socio-ecological inquiry.

The shift from classroom-centered teaching to experiential, place-based learning is central to this bridging process. Place-based education research consistently shows that using the local environment and community as the starting point for instruction helps students connect factual knowledge to real-world challenges, particularly in rural and resource-dependent contexts (Fu & Komatsu, 2024). Experiential learning theorists similarly argue that learning becomes transformative when students cycle through concrete experience, reflective observation, conceptualization, and active experimentation in authentic settings (Bartels, 2023). By engaging students in field visits, observations, and dialogue with coffee farmers and coffee-related entrepreneurs, the coffee-based CBL design in this study moves Social Studies beyond recitation and toward embodied encounters with the social and environmental processes that the curriculum seeks to explain.

From a phenomenological perspective, this bridging is not only cognitive but also rooted in students’ lived experience and meaning-making processes. Qualitative phenomenological studies on learning emphasize that learners construct meaning through the way they *experience* and *interpret* educational situations, rather than merely through exposure to content (Osborne, Merchant, Knight, Sim, & Wright, 2022). In the present study, students’ narratives reveal that the coffee plantation and surrounding community function as spaces where they see, feel, and reflect on how natural resources are utilized and conserved in everyday life, transforming the topic from a distant object of study into part of their own biographical horizon. This resonates with community-based phenomenological work showing that CBL settings invite learners to negotiate their understanding of social reality through interaction and reflection with community partners (Pradana, Darmawan, Anggraeni, Syaura, & Shariffuddin, 2025). Thus, phenomenological meaning-making provides a conceptual lens for understanding how curriculum knowledge becomes woven into students’ lived rural experiences.

The discussion also positions the community not merely as a “resource provider,” but as a co-constructed space of knowledge production in Social Studies. Land-based and community-as-context research underscores that when communities become both the context and content of learning, students begin to recognize local practices and livelihoods as legitimate sources of disciplinary

knowledge (Sucipto & Fatihin, 2024). Recent work on integrating community assets and place-based learning further shows that such approaches require deliberate collaboration among schools, local actors, and community institutions to create learning experiences that are simultaneously curricular, relational, and situated (Kizys, Lotter, Perez, Gilreath, & Limberg, 2025). In the coffee-based CBL model examined here, farmers, coffee shop owners, and creative economy actors participate as knowledge partners who help students understand how natural resources are embedded in economic networks, cultural practices, and local development trajectories.

Finally, the Jember case contributes to broader debates on rural and natural-resource-based education by illustrating how a specific commodity coffee can anchor a coherent bridge between curriculum knowledge and community reality. Studies in rural and geoeeducation contexts show that leveraging local natural resources and landscapes in teaching enhances environmental literacy, strengthens students' connection to place, and supports sustainable rural development goals (Gavari-starkie, Lucini-baquero, & Pastrana-huguet, 2025). In this study, integrating coffee into the Grade VIII curriculum allows students to see their region not only as a backdrop for learning but as an active site where questions of utilization, conservation, equity, and sustainability are contested and negotiated. In doing so, coffee-based community learning repositions Social Studies as a discipline that helps rural learners interpret and participate in the socio-ecological realities of their own lives, rather than simply mastering decontextualized content.

Identity, Belonging, and Learner Agency in Rural Community-Based Learning Contexts

The findings of this study indicate that coffee-based Community-Based Learning (CBL) plays a significant role in shaping students' local identity awareness and sense of belonging as rural learners. By engaging with coffee plantations, farmers, and local economic actors, students began to see their community not as a marginal space, but as a meaningful site of knowledge, culture, and livelihoods. This resonates with place-based and rural education research showing that when local environments are explicitly integrated into learning, students develop stronger place attachment and recognition of their community as a legitimate context for education (Shi & Ma, 2025). In the Jember context, positioning coffee as a proud regional commodity allowed students to reinterpret their rural background as an asset rather than a limitation, thereby affirming their identities as members of an agrarian community.

From a sociocultural perspective, identity in education is constructed through participation in meaningful practices rather than through static personal traits (Zulkefli, 2025). In this study, students' identities as rural youths were negotiated and strengthened as they took part in activities such as interviewing farmers, observing coffee processing, and discussing community challenges with teachers and local actors. Similar to recent work on student identity formation in sociocultural learning environments, the Jember case shows that identity emerges through engagement in culturally and materially grounded practices that connect students' histories, family livelihoods, and community narratives to school-based learning (Nguyen & Le, 2025). Coffee-based CBL thus provided a space where students' "being from a coffee village" transformed from a background condition into a central element of who they are as learners in Social Studies.

The study also highlights how CBL fosters a sense of belonging that goes beyond emotional comfort to include recognition, pride, and shared responsibility for the community. Research on rural students' belonging underscores that connection to place and community is a critical protective factor for engagement and long-term educational commitment, especially for students from marginalized rural backgrounds (Yang, Islem, & McNamee, 2025). In the Jember case, students' narratives of pride in their parents' work, appreciation of local coffee as a valued product, and recognition of their village as "important" illustrate how CBL can deepen belonging through participation in community narratives of value and contribution. This aligns with emerging literature suggesting that place-based programs that honor local culture and livelihoods can strengthen rural youths' sense of identity and belonging while countering deficit narratives about rural life (Malmborg, Hamilton, & Seiferth, 2025).

At the same time, coffee-based CBL nurtured emotional engagement and social responsibility,

as students came to view their community not only as a source of economic activity, but as a shared space that requires care and ethical commitment. Studies on community-engaged and CBL models show that when students work alongside community members, they are more likely to develop empathy, civic-mindedness, and a sense of moral responsibility toward local issues (Pradana et al., 2025). In this study, students' reflections on farmers' struggles, price instability, and environmental conditions around plantations mirror this pattern, suggesting that their emotional responses respect, concern, and gratitude are foundational to the development of socially responsible identities. Viewed this way, emotional engagement in CBL is not incidental; it acts as a catalyst for students to position themselves as participants in, and potential contributors to, the wellbeing of their agrarian community.

The findings further show that learner agency in rural contexts is co-constructed through field participation, interaction with coffee actors, and collaborative classroom work. Contemporary research on learner agency emphasizes its socially distributed and relational nature, arguing that agency is enacted when learners perceive themselves as capable of initiating actions within supportive social and material environments (Mairitsch, Sulis, Mercer, & Bauer, 2023). In the Jember case, students assumed roles as interviewers, observers, and idea-generators during field activities, and their agency was reinforced through dialogic exchanges with farmers, coffee-shop owners, and creative economy leaders who treated them as legitimate interlocutors. This dynamic illustrates that agency in rural CBL is not merely a matter of individual motivation, but emerges from students' participation in community practices where their voices and initiatives are recognized.

Moreover, the combination of collaboration and initiative in coffee-based CBL reflects a socio-cultural model of learning in which participation and identity formation are inseparable. Socio-cultural learning theorists argue that learners become certain kinds of people through repeated participation in shared practices, communities of inquiry, and collaborative problem-solving (Nithideechaiwarachok, Chano, & Wu, 2024). In this study, students' collaborative work dividing roles during fieldwork, jointly interpreting observations, and co-constructing ideas for coffee product development or local branding contributed to identities as active, creative participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This aligns with recent work on community-based and culturally relevant programs, which suggests that when rural and Indigenous learners are engaged in locally meaningful projects, they are more likely to experience themselves as agents capable of shaping their communities and futures (Chenoweth, Cotter, Straley, & Lanphier, 2025).

These findings extend existing research by showing that in rural agrarian settings, CBL not only supports cognitive understanding of social and economic life but simultaneously cultivates identity, belonging, emotional engagement, and learner agency in ways that are deeply rooted in local livelihoods. While prior studies have documented how place-based and community-engaged learning can enhance belonging and civic engagement (O'Connor, 2022), the present study adds nuance by illustrating how a specific commodity-based ecosystem coffee in Jember functions as a socio-material arena where rural students learn to see themselves as knowledgeable, connected, and responsible actors within their own community. This underscores the importance of designing Social Studies pedagogy that not only transmits curriculum content but also intentionally leverages community contexts as spaces of identity work and agency formation, particularly for rural learners whose life worlds are often underrepresented in formal education.

Creativity as an Emergent Outcome of Experience-Based Social Studies Learning

The findings of this study suggest that students' creative thinking emerged organically from their reflection on field-based experiences within the coffee ecosystem, rather than from abstract classroom tasks. In coffee-based Community-Based Learning (CBL), students did not merely receive information about natural resources and economic systems; they engaged in observing, questioning, and reinterpreting real practices in plantations, processing sites, and local coffee shops. Recent studies on experiential and contextual teaching in Social Studies and related subjects show that authentic, experience-rich environments promote higher-order thinking and creativity by placing students in situations where they must interpret complex, real-world phenomena rather than reproduce

decontextualized content (Sembiring & Yusnaldi, 2025). In the Jember context, students' reflections on farmers' work, price fluctuations, and environmental challenges provided fertile ground for creative insight, as they were required to make sense of lived socio-economic realities rather than hypothetical scenarios.

Creativity also emerged through problem-solving processes related to the local coffee economy, particularly when students were invited to think about challenges and opportunities faced by rural actors. During field interactions, students asked how farmers could cope with unstable prices, how waste products such as coffee husks might be reused, and how local products could reach wider markets. This aligns with recent work showing that when learners are exposed to authentic economic and entrepreneurial problems, they begin to exercise creative reasoning and situational judgment that go beyond textbook economic literacy (Mansyur, 2025). Entrepreneurship and economic education research likewise highlights that engaging students with real micro-enterprise contexts helps them integrate economic concepts with creative opportunity recognition and local problem-solving (Naskar, 2025). In this study, coffee-based CBL functioned as a living case whereby students encountered concrete rural economic issues and experimented with ways of thinking through them creatively.

Beyond problem analysis, students demonstrated creativity through branding ideas, product innovation, and value-adding concepts linked to local coffee. Interview data revealed that some students proposed designing youth-branded coffee packaging, creating school-level coffee products, or developing derivative products from coffee by-products. Such findings resonate with recent studies on instructional designs that intentionally cultivate creativity and divergent thinking, which stress that project-based and product-oriented tasks in authentic contexts can substantially enhance students' creative capacities (Rabia, Genc, & Azizah, 2024). In rural settings, integrating local commodities into learning has been shown to stimulate entrepreneurial imagination and contextual innovation, especially when students see their community's economic assets as a canvas for experimentation rather than a fixed structure (Darojat, Sudrajat, Ningtyas, & Kustandi, 2025). Here, coffee served not only as content but as a medium through which students could envision new possibilities for local economic participation.

Crucially, creativity in this study is better understood as a reflective-contextual process than as a discrete product or outcome. Phenomenologically oriented research on creativity in education emphasizes that creative insight often arises from cycles of experience, reflection, and reinterpretation rather than from isolated "creative tasks" (Horvath & Raptis, 2025). In the coffee-based CBL setting, students' creativity developed as they moved between experiential encounters in the field, reflective classroom dialogue, and interpretive sense-making about what those experiences meant for their community and for themselves. This aligns with contemporary views that creativity is situated and relational—emerging from learners' interactions with material environments, social actors, and cultural tools in authentic learning spaces (Firmansyah, Putri, & Wiyono, 2025). Thus, creativity here is less about producing a final "innovative product" and more about cultivating a way of seeing and thinking that is responsive to the lived realities of rural community life.

Finally, the Jember case contributes to ongoing conversations about creativity in authentic learning environments, entrepreneurship, and local economic literacy by demonstrating that Social Studies can function as a platform for creative engagement with real community economies. While much research on creative thinking has focused on STEM or arts education, recent reviews argue for expanding the lens to include socio-economic and community-based contexts where creativity is intertwined with civic, ethical, and economic decision-making (Pratama & Mahardiani, 2025). This study extends that agenda by showing how a natural resource based CBL design in Social Studies supports students in developing creative ways of understanding and potentially intervening in local economic practices. In doing so, it underscores that creative thinking in Social Studies emerges most powerfully when students work with real situations, real people, and real constraints, rather than through abstract tasks disconnected from the rhythms of their everyday rural lives.

The findings of this study position community-based learning grounded in local coffee

potentials as a lived, relational, and socio-material learning ecology that fundamentally redefines how social studies learning is experienced in rural junior high schools. Rather than functioning as a procedural instructional approach, coffee-based CBL operates as an experiential space in which curriculum knowledge, community practices, and students' everyday realities are meaningfully intertwined, enabling learners to construct understanding through embodied engagement, emotional connection, and reflective interaction with their socio-economic environment. From a phenomenological perspective, students' lived experiences reveal that identity formation, contextual creativity, and learner agency emerge not as isolated outcomes, but as interrelated processes mediated by sustained participation in community life. Theoretically, this study extends experiential and place-based learning frameworks by demonstrating how locally grounded economic ecosystems can serve as generative sites of meaning-making and identity work, thereby challenging instrumental and outcome-oriented conceptions of community-based learning. In doing so, the study contributes to social studies education theory by offering a human-centered and context-responsive understanding of learning that foregrounds lived experience as a central analytical lens, particularly within underrepresented rural and agrarian educational contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that community-based learning grounded in the local coffee ecosystem serves as a transformative pedagogical space that bridges curriculum knowledge with students' lived social, economic, and cultural realities in rural Jember. Students' engagement with coffee-farming communities enabled them to construct meaning through authentic experience, strengthening their understanding of natural resource utilization and community economic systems while simultaneously fostering identity, belonging, emotional involvement, creativity, and learner agency. The findings demonstrate that learning becomes more meaningful when communities function not merely as external learning resources, but as co-constructed environments in which knowledge, reflection, and participation are situated in everyday life practices. In this sense, Social Studies education in rural contexts has the potential to evolve from classroom-centered instruction toward community-embedded learning experiences that affirm local culture, empower students as active participants in their socio-economic environment, and cultivate reflective awareness of sustainability and social responsibility.

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