International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism
IJIERM
Published by: The Islamic Education and Multicultural Fondation
P-ISSN :2656-3630 | E-ISSN: 2722-7049

Vol. 8 No. 3, September – December, 2026
Page: 1379 – 1399
Copyright © 2026, is licensed under a CC-BY-NO-SA
DOI: https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v8i3.892

Journal Homepage
https://journal.yaspim.org/index.php/IJIERM/index

TOWARD SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER PEDAGOGY: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON INTEGRATING PLACE-BASED EDUCATION AND LIVING VALUES EDUCATION

M. Irfan Islamy[1], Dadang Sundawa[2], Munawar Rahmat[3], Erlina Wiyanarti[4]
[1,2,3,4] Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia
Email: irfan.islamy87@upi.edu[1]; dadangsundawa@upi.edu[2];
munawarrahmat.pai@upi.edu[3]; erlina_w@upi.edu[4]

Received: 23 August 2026 Accepted: 12 October 2026 Published: 17 October 2026

Abstrak

Krisis global degradasi ekologi dan fragmentasi sosial-moral membutuhkan pergeseran paradigma pendidikan yang menghubungkan kesadaran lingkungan dengan pembentukan karakter. Meskipun Pendidikan Berbasis Tempat (Place-Based Education/PBE) dan Pendidikan Nilai Hidup (Living Values Education/LVE) secara terpisah terbukti efektif, sintesis keduanya masih kurang dieksplorasi. Tinjauan sistematis ini mengevaluasi dinamika operasional, hasil karakter, dan kendala struktural PBE dan LVE. Sesuai pedoman PRISMA 2020, pencarian sistematis dilakukan pada Scopus, Web of Science, dan ERIC hingga Desember 2024. Korpus yang dianalisis mencakup delapan studi empiris primer dan literatur teoretis pendukung. Kualitas metodologis dievaluasi menggunakan Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), sedangkan analisis data menggunakan sintesis tematik kualitatif. Hasil sintesis menunjukkan PBE meningkatkan penyelidikan spasial, pengelolaan sipil, dan pemecahan masalah interdisipliner, namun dibatasi hierarki institusional dan ketidakpastian lingkungan. Sebaliknya, LVE menumbuhkan internalisasi nilai, moderasi agama, dan ketahanan sosial-emosional melalui keteladanan guru, tetapi terkendala generalisasi dan literasi orang tua. Karena literatur meninjau PBE dan LVE secara terpisah, efektivitas empiris dari kerangka terintegrasi PBE–LVE belum diuji secara langsung, sehingga memerlukan validasi empiris lebih lanjut.

Keywords: pendidikan berbasis tempat, pendidikan nilai hidup, pendidikan karakter, pengelolaan lingkungan, sintesis tematik.

Abstract

The converging global crises of ecological degradation and socio-moral fragmentation require an educational paradigm shift connecting environmental awareness with character formation. Although Place-Based Education (PBE) and Living Values Education (LVE) individually show pedagogical efficacy, their synthesis remains under-explored. This systematic review evaluates their operational dynamics, character outcomes, and structural constraints. Following PRISMA

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

2020 guidelines, systematic searches were conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC up to December 2024. The corpus comprises eight primary empirical studies and supporting theoretical literature. Methodological quality was appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), while data were analyzed via qualitative thematic synthesis. Findings indicate that PBE enhances spatial inquiry, civic stewardship, and interdisciplinary problem-solving, but is limited by institutional hierarchies and environmental unpredictability. Conversely, LVE fosters value internalization, religious moderation, and socio-emotional resilience through teacher role-modeling, yet faces generalizability and parental literacy constraints. As existing literature examines PBE and LVE separately, the empirical effectiveness of an integrated PBE–LVE framework remains untested, highlighting a critical need for future empirical validation.

Keywords: place-based education, living values education, character education, environmental stewardship, thematic synthesis.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global landscape is characterized by an unprecedented convergence of ecological degradation and social fragmentations. Anthropogenic climate disruption, catastrophic loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and persistent environmental injustices represent immediate crises threatening global socio-ecological stability (Bongaarts, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). Concurrently, societies worldwide are confronting profound moral and ethical challenges, marked by escalating political polarization, civic disengagement, erosion of social empathy, and hyper-individualism exacerbated by unbridled consumerism and digital alienation (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Yemini et al., 2019). These intersecting phenomena indicate that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a crisis of human ethics, culture, and character refers to a manifestation of a profound disconnect between human value systems and the living systems that sustain life (Orr, 2004; Sterling, 2010). Traditional educational systems, predominantly shaped by neoliberal paradigms, standardized testing mandates, and utilitarian economic goals, have largely failed to address this bi-dimensional crisis. Standard educational practices frequently abstract knowledge from its physical, cultural, and ecological contexts, treating nature as an external commodity to be mastered and managed rather than a community of life to which humanity belongs (Gruenewald, 2003; Sobel, 2004). Moreover, conventional character and values education programs often operate within decontextualized classroom walls, relying on didactic moralizing that fails to connect internal virtues with real-world socio-ecological problems (Lickona, 1992; Tillman, 2000). To cultivate generations capable of navigating and mitigating twenty-first-century challenges, educational systems urgently require a paradigm shift toward an integrated pedagogy

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

that simultaneously anchors learning within local landscapes and cultivates deep, internal moral character, refers to a framework conceptualized as socio-ecological character pedagogy.

In response to the alienation inherent in modern schooling, two distinct yet potentially complementary pedagogical paradigms have emerged, namely Place-Based Education (PBE) and Living Values Education (LVE). Place-Based Education is an approach that immerses learners in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities, and experiences to form a foundation for multidisciplinary study (Sobel, 2004). Rooted in the educational philosophies of John Dewey and expanded by contemporary environmental educators, PBE emphasizes experiential learning in local natural and built environments (Ardoin et al., 2020; Kudryavtsev et al., 2012). By utilizing the local community and landscape as the primary context for learning, PBE seeks to foster academic achievement, strengthen community ties, enhance environmental literacy, and cultivate a sense of place (Ardoin et al., 2020; Semken et al., 2017). Empirical research indicates that PBE interventions significantly increase student engagement, interdisciplinary problem-solving capacity, and civic stewardship (Hamilton & Marckini-Polk, 2023; Lee & Kothuis, 2022; Wright et al., 2021). Parallelly, Living Values Education offers an international pedagogical framework designed to foster positive character development, emotional resilience, and ethical reflection. Launched under the auspices of UNESCO, LVE provides experiential values-based activities for educators to assist learners in exploring twelve universal primary human values: peace, respect, love, responsibility, happiness, cooperation, honesty, humility, tolerance, simplicity, freedom, and unity (Tillman, 2000; Tillman & Colomina, 2001). Grounded in holistic character education (Lickona, 1992), LVE prioritizes creating a values-based atmosphere where virtues are caught through reflective questioning, emotional regulation exercises, artistic expression, and collaborative dialogue, thereby nurturing the interiority of the learner and promoting moral agency (Ao & Briffett Aktaş, 2022; Hidayatulloh et al., 2023; Zein et al., 2023).

While both PBE and LVE have independently demonstrated significant educational efficacy, their separation in research and practice represents a crucial missed opportunity in social and environmental education scholarship. On one hand, Place-Based Education literature frequently emphasizes external, spatial, and ecological dimensions of learning while leaving the internal moral architecture and affective value development of learners under-theorized (Gruenewald, 2003; Jickling & Wals, 2008). PBE programs often operate on the implicit assumption that outdoor immersion automatically translates into internal moral virtue and lifelong ethical commitment (Ardoin et al., 2020). On the other hand, Living Values Education literature primarily

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

focuses on intra-personal emotional regulation, inter-personal relations, and character formation within classroom contexts, lacking explicit grounding in physical landscapes and ecological systems (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Hidayatulloh et al., 2024).

Although previous systematic reviews have examined PBE impact on environmental literacy or character education's effect on classroom behavior, no systematic review has yet synthesized the empirical and theoretical intersections between PBE and LVE. To address this knowledge gap, the primary objective of this systematic literature review is to synthesize existing empirical and theoretical evidence from PBE and LVE to formulate a conceptual framework for socio-ecological character pedagogy. Rather than testing established intervention effects, this review analyzes how these two distinct approaches can be conceptually and pedagogically integrated. To achieve this objective, the review addresses three guided research questions: first, how PBE interventions contribute to students' spatial, civic, and ecological engagement in reported literature; second, how LVE facilitates internal value internalization, moral agency, and socio-emotional resilience; and third, what structural barriers and theoretical synergies emerge when synthesizing PBE and LVE toward an integrated socio-ecological character pedagogy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To construct a robust theoretical foundation for integrating PBE and LVE, this section synthesizes four intersecting bodies of educational philosophy and learning theory. It is important to clarify that the theoretical literature reviewed in this section serves as the supporting conceptual anchor for the proposed framework, which is structurally distinct from the core empirical study corpus analyzed in the subsequent systematic synthesis. The spatial and ecological dimension begins with David Sobel's place-based learning and David Gruenewald's critical pedagogy of place. Sobel (2004) articulates a developmental model of place-based learning emphasizing that children must first establish an emotional connection with the natural world before attempting to solve ecological problems, progressing from empathy in early childhood to active social and environmental inquiry in adolescence. This establishes that learning is most meaningful when grounded in the immediate, tangible realities of a student's local community. To prevent place-based education from becoming parochial or uncritically nostalgic, Gruenewald (2003) synthesized place-based education with critical pedagogy to propose a critical pedagogy of place. This framework challenges educators to analyze how geographical spaces are shaped by power relations and socio-ecological exploitation through two twin imperatives such as decolonization, which involves unlearning exploitative ways of thinking and recognizing marginalized socio-environmental

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

histories, and reinhabitation, which involves learning to live sustainably within the specific ecological boundaries of a local place.

The internal, character-focused dimension of this theoretical synthesis blends Thomas Lickona's comprehensive character education model with Diane Tillman's experiential living values paradigm. Lickona (1992) established that effective character education must address three interconnected domains such as moral knowing, which encompasses cognitive ethical awareness and moral reasoning; moral feeling, representing affective empathy, conscience, and humility; and moral action, which involves the practical execution of virtue through competence and habit. Building upon this tripartite model, Tillman (2000) extends character education into an experiential methodology through LVE. Tillman posits that values cannot be transmitted through external indoctrination, but must be discovered and internalised within a value-based atmosphere created by caring educators, reflective questioning, and practical social-emotional engagement.

To maintain conceptual clarity within this systematic review, operational criteria were established to define LVE. A study was operationalized under the LVE framework if it explicitly incorporated: (1) an experiential values-based atmosphere prioritizing reflective dialogue and emotional regulation, (2) focus on universal core human values (e.g., peace, respect, responsibility), and (3) alignment with UNESCO/Tillman character education principles. Furthermore, terminological variations in the literature were carefully appraised. For instance, studies examining "life and values education" were included in the synthesis corpus because their underlying pedagogical mechanisms functionally align with Tillman's LVE paradigm, despite slight nomenclature differences.

RESEARCH METHODS

To ensure methodological transparency, analytical rigor, and replicability, this study executed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) statement (Page et al., 2021). Recognizing the complementary nature of empirical interventions and theoretical frameworks in educational research, this review adopted an integrative systematic review design (Gough & Richardson, 2024). This approach enables the structured identification, appraisal, and thematic synthesis of both empirical research and peer-reviewed theoretical/library-based contributions. The study protocol was developed prior to search execution, defining research questions, explicit eligibility parameters, database search strings, appraisal frameworks, and coding procedures.

Eligibility criteria were structured around the Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, and Context (PICOC) framework (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006) as

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

detailed in Table 1. To address potential inconsistencies regarding literature types, eligibility was refined to include peer-reviewed journal articles and peer-reviewed book chapters that provided empirical data or theoretical models on PBE or LVE. Abstract non-educational philosophies, non-peer-reviewed grey literature, master's theses, conference abstracts, and corporate training studies were strictly excluded.

Table 1. PICOC Eligibility Criteria and Operational Boundaries

PICOC Dimension	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Population	Students (K-12 to higher education), pre-service and in-service teachers, school administrators, community educators.	Corporate, non-educational workplace, or non-academic adult populations.
Intervention	Educational programs, curricula, or pedagogical frameworks integrating PBE, LVE, or related value-based/place-based approaches.	Non-educational outdoor recreation, unguided tourism, abstract moral philosophy without pedagogical application.
Comparison	Standard curricula, traditional classroom setups, pre-intervention baselines, or comparative qualitative settings.	Studies lacking defined pedagogical or contextual comparative boundaries.
Outcome	Spatial inquiry, civic stewardship, value internalization, moral agency, socio-emotional resilience, or integration barriers.	Unrelated academic achievement metrics lacking character or socio-ecological dimensions.
Context & Study Type	Formal and informal education settings globally. Empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods) and peer-reviewed theoretical/library-based studies.	Non-peer-reviewed grey literature, conference proceedings, editorials, opinion pieces, master's theses.
Population	Students (K-12 to higher education), pre-service and in-service teachers, school administrators, community educators.	Corporate, non-educational workplace, or non-academic adult populations.

A comprehensive electronic search was conducted on December 31, 2023, across three major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection, and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). The publication time frame was set between January 2014 and December 2023 to capture the most relevant decade of research. Search queries utilized Boolean operators (AND, OR), truncation symbols, and field tags (Title, Abstract, Keywords). A comprehensive electronic search was conducted on December 31, 2023, across three major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

(WoS) Core Collection, and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). The publication time frame was set between January 2014 and December 2023 to capture the most relevant decade of research. Search queries utilized Boolean operators (AND, OR), truncation symbols, and field tags (Title, Abstract, Keywords).

The remaining 54 full-text articles were independently assessed against the inclusion criteria. A total of 46 full-text articles were excluded with specific documented reasons: (a) absence of explicit PBE or LVE pedagogical framework ($n = 21$), (b) lack of methodological/theoretical rigor or descriptive reporting ($n = 14$), (c) non-educational or purely outdoor recreation context ($n = 7$), and (d) duplicate data published across multiple formats ($n = 4$). Consequently, a final core corpus of 8 primary studies meeting all eligibility standards was selected for qualitative synthesis. Data from the included study corpus were extracted into a pilot-tested matrix capturing: (1) bibliographic details, (2) educational context and geographical setting, (3) research design and sample characteristics (sample size, sampling method, target group), (4) key empirical/conceptual findings, and (5) structural implementation barriers. Methodological quality and risk of bias were systematically appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), version 2018 (Hong et al., 2018). MMAT provides criteria for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs across five core quality dimensions. For peer-reviewed conceptual/library-based studies included in the corpus, methodological rigor was appraised using adapted conceptual appraisal criteria evaluating theoretical coherence, source validity, and logical argumentation. Two reviewers independently evaluated each study, achieving full consensus through deliberative discussion. Quality appraisal scores were used to evaluate evidence strength rather than to exclude studies.

Extracted data were synthesized using the qualitative thematic synthesis approach formulated by Thomas and Harden (2008), executed across three sequential stages. First, extracted text segments regarding educational outcomes, operational mechanisms, and implementation barriers were inductively subjected to free line-by-line coding. Second, these initial codes were organized into hierarchical descriptive themes reflecting Place-Based Education spatial dynamics and Living Values Education internal character outcomes. Finally, these descriptive themes were synthesized to construct higher-order analytical categories representing the integrated socio-ecological character pedagogy framework.

To establish analytical rigor and trustworthiness, five qualitative criteria were embedded throughout the review process. Credibility was achieved by cross-verifying extracted findings against primary source texts and actively analyzing negative or contradictory cases. Transferability was ensured by explicitly documenting primary

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

study contexts, educational levels, geographic settings, and sample demographics within the corpus overview. Dependability and confirmability were maintained through a comprehensive audit trail detailing raw search results, full-text exclusion logs, coding trees, and interpretive decisions. Regarding author positionality and reflexivity, the authors explicitly acknowledge a shared theoretical orientation toward holistic, values-based, and eco-critical education; to mitigate confirmation bias, reviewers actively searched for implementation barriers, institutional constraints, and non-significant outcome reports within the corpus. Finally, regarding research ethics, as a literature review relying exclusively on published secondary data, institutional ethics board review was not required, and all primary sources are fully cited and acknowledged.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results: Overview of the Included Study Corpus

The qualitative synthesis of the primary literature reveals a geographically diverse, methodologically heterogeneous, and demographically varied corpus of research addressing PBE and LVE.

Study Citation	Geographic Context	Methodology & Design	Sample Size & Demographic	Core Focus
Wright et al. (2021)	United States	Qualitative (Grounded Theory)	Middle school science teachers	Teacher agency and curricular alignment in urban wildlife PBE
Cincera et al. (2019)	Czech Republic	Qualitative (Paired & group interviews)	$N = 47$ students, 7 teachers, 6 local government officials	Multi-stakeholder evaluation of "School for Sustainable Development" PBE
Lee & Kothuis (2022)	Netherlands	Quantitative (Pretest-posttest survey)	Multidisciplinary research students	Student confidence and interdisciplinary flood risk PBE
Hamilton & Marckini-Polk (2023)	United States	Mixed-methods (1-year longitudinal)	$N = 226$ middle school students, 2 experienced teachers	Student autonomy, stewardship, and Great Lakes literacy
Hidayatulloh et al. (2024)	Indonesia	Qualitative (Library research)	Conceptual / theoretical corpus	Mainstreaming LVE for character education and religious virtue

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Hidayatul loh et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Qualitative (Single case study)	Teachers and students at Madania Inclusive School	LVE integration with religious moderation in multicultural settings
Zein et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Mixed-methods (Quantitative-Qualitative evaluative)	$N = 20$ PAUD/early childhood teachers in Bengkalis	LVE training impact on teacher competency and child character
Ao & Briffett Aktaş (2022)	China	Qualitative (In-depth interviews)	$N = 6$ left-behind children, 2 parents, 1 teacher in rural Sichuan	LVE as a psychosocial intervention for vulnerable migrant children

An analysis of geographical distribution demonstrates a clear dichotomy in research traditions. Place-Based Education scholarship is predominantly situated within Western contexts, including the United States, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands. These studies prioritize environmental stewardship, scientific literacy, local ecological hazards, and civic sustainability. Conversely, Living Values Education literature is concentrated within Asian contexts, specifically Indonesia and rural China, reflecting a strong orientation toward socio-emotional resilience, moral character, religious moderation, and community cohesion. Methodologically, the corpus spans qualitative grounded theory and case studies, quantitative pretest-posttest designs, and mixed-methods evaluations. Target populations range from early childhood educators to middle school students, university research cohorts, municipal authorities, and vulnerable populations such as left-behind children (LBC).

Theme 1: Place-Based Education and Civic-Ecological Empowerment

Synthesizing the empirical literature on PBE reveals that grounding learning within local physical, biological, and socio-cultural landscapes significantly enhances student cognitive acquisition, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and civic stewardship capacity. However, the systemic success of PBE interventions is strongly moderated by teacher agency, student decision-making autonomy, and multi-stakeholder governance dynamics.

Pedagogical Agency and Curricular Alignment

Teacher agency emerges as a fundamental prerequisite for effective PBE implementation. Investigating middle school science educators, Wright et al. (2021)

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

demonstrated that teachers possessing high pedagogical agency and tight curricular alignment successfully adapted PBE frameworks centered on local urban wildlife. By utilizing real-world ecological data from student neighborhoods, educators transformed standard science instruction into active civic engagement platforms. Wright et al. (2021) observed that when teachers actively negotiate institutional constraints to align local ecological inquiries with state standards, students perceive classroom knowledge as immediately relevant to their lived environments. This finding aligns with wider educational literature emphasizing that teacher agency is not merely an individual capacity, but an ecologically mediated process shaped by the interaction between teacher beliefs, structural resources, and school leadership (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2026).

Student Autonomy and Environmental Stewardship

The development of environmental stewardship among learners is directly contingent upon the degree of decision-making autonomy granted during PBE interventions. In a one-year mixed-methods evaluation of Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi environmental stewardship programs (MWEEs), Hamilton and Marckini-Polk (2023) observed that middle school students achieved significant gains in Great Lakes literacy and stewardship capacity when provided with autonomous control over project design and community sharing. Student agency served as a vital catalyst: when learners independently identified local ecological issues and formulated action plans, their self-efficacy and sense of environmental responsibility increased exponentially. These results support Sobel's (2004) foundational proposition that place-based learning must transition from adult-led instruction to youth-driven civic inquiry, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation and long-term environmental commitment (Ardoin et al., 2020).

Interdisciplinary Problem-Solving and Cognitive Efficacy

PBE also demonstrates substantial efficacy in enhancing cognitive confidence and interdisciplinary problem-solving regarding complex environmental hazards. Evaluating an intensive, two-week problem-based PBE intervention on flood risk management in the Netherlands, Lee and Kothuis (2022) recorded statistically significant increases in student domain knowledge, self-confidence, and holistic thinking. Immersing students directly within local hydraulic landscapes allowed them to bridge theoretical engineering, ecological science, and public policy. Lee and Kothuis (2022) emphasized that real-world exposure to local vulnerability compels learners to adopt systemic, interdisciplinary approaches, moving beyond isolated textbook solutions to navigate multi-variable socio-ecological challenges.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Multi-Stakeholder Dynamics and School Climate

Beyond individual cognitive and behavioral gains, PBE systematically impacts institutional dynamics and community relationships. In a multi-perspective evaluation of the "School for Sustainable Development" program in the Czech Republic, Cincera et al. (2019) observed that PBE interventions noticeably elevated teacher self-efficacy, student interpersonal skills, and the broader institutional climate. By involving students, educators, and municipal government representatives in collaborative local sustainability projects, PBE created a shared sense of civic ownership. However, Cincera et al. (2019) also uncovered underlying structural tensions: despite positive outcomes, actual student participation was frequently constrained by persistent teacher-dominated decision-making structures, highlighting a gap between democratic pedagogical intentions and classroom operational realities.

Theme 2: Living Values Education, Religious Moderation, and Socio-Emotional Resilience

The synthesis of LVE scholarship underscores its transformative capacity as an internalizing, virtue-based framework that fosters holistic character development, inclusive classroom climates, religious moderation, and socio-emotional resilience across diverse educational tiers.

Mainstreaming Virtue and Conceptual Synthesis

At the theoretical and policy level, LVE offers a flexible architecture capable of harmonizing specific religious moralities with universal human virtues. Analyzing the potential of LVE within contemporary character education, Hidayatulloh et al. (2024) argued that LVE functions as an innovative mainstreaming framework that connects foundational Islamic ethical teachings (*akhlaq*) with universal values such as peace, respect, responsibility, and unity. Hidayatulloh et al. (2024) conceptualized LVE as a holistic approach targeting the ethical, emotional, and social dimensions of learners, providing educators with concrete pedagogical tools to cultivate morally grounded and globally adaptive students equipped to navigate modern pluralistic societies. This conceptual framework reinforces Lickona's (1992) character theory, which asserts that moral education must address moral knowing, feeling, and action simultaneously rather than relying on abstract rote learning.

Religious Moderation and Inclusive Climates via Role Modeling

In empirical application within multicultural and inclusive schooling, LVE demonstrates significant power in fostering social cohesion and religious moderation. In a qualitative case study conducted at Madania Inclusive School in Bogor, Indonesia,

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Hidayatulloh et al. (2023) revealed that integrating LVE principles systematically cultivated an inclusive, empathetic institutional climate. The primary mechanism for value internalisation was continuous teacher role-modeling (*keteladanan*) combined with the daily integration of core values during routine classroom interactions. Hidayatulloh et al. (2023) found that when educators consistently embody respect, tolerance, and active listening, students internalize religious moderation as a lived daily practice rather than a political concept. This empirical finding validates Tillman's (2000) core premise that values cannot be effectively taught through external moralizing; rather, they must be "caught" through experiential immersion in a value-rich educational atmosphere.

Early Childhood Pedagogical Development and Behavioral Impact

The application of LVE in early childhood education yields substantial benefits for both teacher professional competence and child behavioral growth. Evaluating an LVE training intervention among 20 early childhood educators in Bengkalis, Indonesia, Zein et al. (2023) recorded significant improvements in teachers' pedagogical knowledge, values integration skills, and classroom management techniques. More importantly, this educator capacity-building translated directly into positive character development among young children, who exhibited marked increases in cooperative play, empathy, emotional self-regulation, and polite communication. Zein et al. (2023) concluded that structured LVE professional development equips early childhood educators with practical, non-punitive strategies to nurture social-emotional competencies during critical developmental stages (Berkowitz et al., 2017).

Psychosocial Interventions and Socio-Emotional Resilience

Extending LVE into community and psychosocial support settings highlights its utility for vulnerable and traumatized student demographics. Investigating the impact of home- and school-based LVE programs in rural Sichuan, China, Ao and Briffett Aktaş (2022) examined left-behind children (LBC) whose parents had migrated to urban centers for labor. Their qualitative findings demonstrated that LVE served as a critical psychosocial intervention, significantly mitigating emotional distress, feelings of abandonment, and behavioral difficulties among LBC. By providing structured reflective activities, emotional expression outlets, and values-based relationship building, LVE helped left-behind children develop emotional regulation and reinforced supportive networks between remaining guardians and school personnel. Ao and Briffett Aktaş (2022) illustrated that LVE transcends conventional academic instruction, functioning as an affective framework that restores psychological safety and moral dignity in socio-economically marginalized contexts.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Theme 3: Cross-Cutting Structural Barriers and Methodological Gaps

Despite the documented benefits of PBE and LVE, a synthesized analysis of the corpus highlights critical operational barriers, institutional constraints, and methodological limitations that inhibit systemic scaling and rigorous theoretical integration.

Institutional Hierarchies and Control Friction in PBE

A prominent barrier within PBE interventions is the persistence of entrenched institutional hierarchies and bureaucratic friction. As documented by Cincera et al. (2019), student decision-making within community-based PBE projects is frequently circumscribed by dominant teacher control and rigid administrative protocols. Educators often struggle to relinquish pedagogical authority, resulting in PBE projects where students execute adult-designed tasks rather than exercising genuine civic agency. Furthermore, Cincera et al. (2019) identified substantial communication gaps and administrative friction between educational institutions and municipal government authorities, which routinely delayed project approvals and restricted long-term community integration.

External Vulnerabilities and Unpredictability in PBE

PBE implementations are uniquely vulnerable to non-curricular, environmental variables that fall outside standard instructional control. Hamilton and Marckini-Polk (2023) highlighted that place-based stewardship programs are highly susceptible to severe weather events, seasonal fluctuations, and the variable operational capacity of external community partners. When local environmental organizations or municipal partners experience staff turnover or resource shortages, PBE programs suffer from disrupted schedules and compromised learning continuity. These external vulnerabilities underscore that PBE cannot function effectively as an isolated classroom activity; it requires sustained, institutionalized community partnerships and flexible curricular frameworks capable of adapting to real-world contingencies.

Methodological Constraints in PBE Research

From a research methodology perspective, the synthesized PBE literature exhibits notable gaps that weaken its causal assertions. In their quantitative evaluation of flood-risk PBE, Lee and Kothuis (2022) explicitly noted the absence of untreated control groups undergoing traditional instruction, making it difficult to isolate the precise effect size of the PBE intervention relative to standard curricula. Furthermore, the PBE literature is dominated by short-term, cross-sectional evaluations. There is a critical lack of longitudinal path analysis evaluating whether gains in local environmental knowledge

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

and short-term stewardship behaviors translate into sustained, lifelong environmental citizenship or career choices in sustainability domains (Lee & Kothuis, 2022).

Sample Generalizability, Single-Case Risks, and Literacy Barriers in LVE

The Living Values Education corpus exhibits a distinct set of methodological and operational constraints. A major limitation is the heavy reliance on conceptual-theoretical models (Hidayatulloh et al., 2024) or single-case study designs conducted within specialized, highly-resourced private institutions (Hidayatulloh et al., 2023). Findings from specialized settings like Madania Bogor cannot be readily generalized to resource-constrained public schools or homogeneous rural environments. Furthermore, empirical LVE evaluations frequently suffer from restricted sample sizes, such as the 20 teachers evaluated by Zein et al. (2023), which limits statistical power and broader demographic generalizability.

Finally, the systemic implementation of LVE is severely hindered by low levels of values literacy among parents and educators. Ao and Briffett Aktaş (2022) identified that limited parental understanding of LVE methodologies created a significant disconnect between values reinforced at school and behaviors modeled at home. When parents or guardians lack training in positive value reinforcement, children experience contradictory moral messages, eroding the long-term efficacy of school-based character interventions. Synthesizing these cross-cutting limitations highlights the urgent necessity for an integrated framework that bridges PBE's contextual inquiry with LVE's internal values orientation, supported by rigorous, longitudinal, mixed-methods research designs.

2. Discussion: Triangulation with Global Literature

The systematic synthesis of PBE and LVE offers profound insights into the dual necessity of external spatial inquiry and internal ethical internalisation in contemporary social and environmental education. By critically triangulating our findings with broader global scholarship across environmental citizenship, moral philosophy, and critical pedagogy, this discussion elucidates how the convergence of PBE and LVE resolves longstanding theoretical blind spots in both fields.

Environmental Citizenship and the Need for Affective Grounding

A central tension within global environmental education literature concerns the disconnect between cognitive environmental knowledge, technical scientific skills, and sustained civic action (Ardoin et al., 2020; Wals & Jickling, 2002). PBE interventions, as demonstrated by Lee and Kothuis (2022) in flood risk management and Hamilton and Marckini-Polk (2023) in Great Lakes literacy, effectively elevate domain knowledge,

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

spatial awareness, and short-term problem-solving confidence. However, broader environmental literature warns that purely technical or scientific approaches to local environmental issues risk reducing environmentalism to managerial problem-solving, detached from deeper ethical commitments or moral philosophy (Dobson, 2003; Jickling & Wals, 2008). Andrew Dobson's (2003) theory of *ecological citizenship* posits that true sustainable behavior cannot rely merely on economic incentives or technical knowledge; it requires an internalised sense of non-contractual duty, justice, and moral obligation toward present and future generations, as well as non-human life.

Here in lies the essential contribution of LVE. While PBE provides the physical, socio-ecological arena for inquiry, LVE supplies the affective interiority and moral compass necessary for authentic ecological citizenship. As shown in the synthesized LVE literature, programs that emphasize universal human values foster deep character internalisation and socio-emotional resilience (Ao & Briffett Aktaş, 2022; Hidayatulloh et al., 2024). Triangulating these findings with Martha Nussbaum's (2011) *capabilities approach* and Nel Noddings' (2013) *ethics of care*, values-based education expands the learner's circle of compassion. When integrated with PBE, LVE transforms abstract virtues like "respect" and "responsibility" from interpersonal human interactions into socio-ecological imperatives, grounding moral obligation within the tangible, living systems of the local landscape.

Critical Pedagogy, Structural Barriers, and Pedagogical Subjectification

The synthesized findings regarding PBE highlight recurring structural obstacles, notably the suppression of student autonomy by dominant teacher control and rigid institutional hierarchies (Cincera et al., 2019). This empirical reality aligns directly with critical educational theory. Paulo Freire (2024) and David Gruenewald (2003) argued that conventional educational systems operate via a "banking" model that treats learners as passive recipients of adult knowledge, suppressing critical consciousness and democratic agency. When PBE is implemented within restrictive, top-down institutional frameworks, it devolves into a superficial instructional strategy where students perform adult-scripted tasks rather than engaging in genuine community transformation (Cincera et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2021).

To understand why student autonomy is critical for stewardship, we can turn to Gert Biesta's (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2026) framework of educational domains: *qualification* (acquiring knowledge/skills), *socialization* (internalizing cultural norms), and *subjectification* (becoming an autonomous, responsible agent). Standard schooling heavily prioritizes qualification and socialization at the expense of subjectification. The empirical PBE evidence synthesized in this review confirms that high student autonomy in local

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

projects is the precise mechanism that triggers subjectification, transforming passive learners into self-directed civic actors (Hamilton & Marckini-Polk, 2023). However, subjectification without a grounded moral framework carries the risk of aimless or individualistic action. By combining PBE's autonomous spatial inquiry with LVE's reflective value clarification, educators create a protected space for ethical subjectification, where students learn to exercise freedom responsibly within their communities.

Moral Philosophy, Virtue Ethics, and Community-Based Modeling

The LVE findings demonstrate that value internalisation relies heavily on teacher role-modeling (*keteladanan*), reflective dialogical practices, and safe, inclusive educational atmospheres (Hidayatulloh et al., 2023; Zein et al., 2023). This finding strongly reinforces Aristotelian *virtue ethics* and Albert Bandura's (Woodruff & Cashman, 1993) *social learning theory*. Aristotle asserted that moral virtue (*ethike*) is acquired not through theoretical instruction, but through habitual practice and the observation of virtuous exemplars within a community setting (*polis*). Berkowitz et al. (2017) similarly emphasize that effective character education requires a comprehensive, positive school climate where adults consistently model the virtues they seek to cultivate.

However, classical virtue ethics often suffers from abstract decontextualisation when restricted to standard classroom environments. Virtue requires a practical domain of application, a modern *polis*. Synthesizing LVE with PBE provides this exact domain. The local community and natural ecosystem serve as the contextual stage where values like honesty, cooperation, and humility are tested, practiced, and refined through real-world socio-ecological challenges. Thus, triangulation confirms a bi-directional theoretical synergy: PBE prevents LVE from degenerating into decontextualized moralizing, while LVE prevents PBE from devolving into unreflective environmental mechanics.

Practical and Policy Implications

Implications for Teacher Professional Development (PD) and Teacher Education

Teacher capacity and agency represent the ultimate leverage points for sustainable educational reform (Biesta et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2021). Pre-service teacher education programs must dismantle traditional silos that separate environmental science methods from character and social education. Teacher training institutions should integrate that train educators to utilize local environments as primary instructional laboratories while cultivating values-based classroom climates (Zein et al., 2023). For in-service educators, professional development must move away from short, transmission-based workshops toward immersive, long-term "Place-Value Institutes." These programs should provide

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

teachers with experiential training in local ecological field techniques, non-authoritarian facilitation skills that foster student autonomy, and practical strategies for integrating universal values across subjects (Zein et al., 2023). Furthermore, PD initiatives must support teacher action research, empowering educators to continuously evaluate and adapt their specific school contexts (Wright et al., 2021).

Implications for Curriculum Designers and Educational Policy Makers

National and regional curriculum policy makers must address the rigid, hyper-standardized, test-driven paradigms that currently constrain pedagogical (Gruenewald, 2003; Yemini et al., 2019). Educational policy should explicitly recognize local place-based inquiry and character internalisation as core national educational priorities (Hidayatulloh et al., 2024). Curriculum designers should transition from overcrowded, fragmented subject mandates toward flexible, interdisciplinary curricular frameworks. Curricula should allocate dedicated, flexible instructional blocks for out-of-classroom community inquiries, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and civic stewardship initiatives (Hamilton & Marckini-Polk, 2023; Lee & Kothuis, 2022). Furthermore, national assessment systems must evolve beyond standardized multiple-choice testing to evaluate holistic competencies. Policy makers should integrate authentic performance-based assessments such as cumulative stewardship portfolios, community project defense panels, and self-reflective character logs, that capture both cognitive spatial mastery and socio-emotional character development.

Implications for School Leaders and Administrative Stakeholders

School principals, administrators, and district leaders play a crucial role in establishing institutional environments conducive to implementation (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Cincera et al., 2019). School leaders must foster a values-rich, inclusive institutional culture where teachers and staff actively model core virtues in daily interactions (Hidayatulloh et al., 2023). Administrators must also adopt distributed leadership models that encourage teacher agency and support youth-led decision-making, deliberately dismantling rigid adult-controlled hierarchies (Cincera et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2021). Administrators should formalize multi-stakeholder partnerships with local municipal governments, environmental NGOs, indigenous community leaders, and local businesses (Cincera et al., 2019; Hamilton & Marckini-Polk, 2023). By establishing formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and community advisory boards, school leaders can secure long-term access to local sites, expert mentorship, and municipal resources, shielding PBE and LVE programs from external disruptions and operational unpredictability. Finally, school leaders must actively engage parents and guardians through workshops on living values literacy, ensuring that value reinforcement occurs

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

harmoniously across home, school, and community environments (Ao & Briffett Aktaş, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Addressing twenty-first-century socio-ecological challenges requires moving beyond fragmented educational paradigms that treat technical environmental science and moral character education as separate disciplines. Rather than offering definitive empirical proof, this systematic literature review proposes a plausible conceptual framework synthesizing Place-Based Education (PBE) and Living Values Education (LVE) toward a unified socio-ecological character pedagogy. Within this proposed synthesis, PBE offers the physical, cultural, and ecological grounding necessary for real-world spatial inquiry, while LVE supplies the affective interiority, moral compass, and socio-emotional resilience required for character formation. Conceptually, environmental stewardship is reframed as an external manifestation of personal virtue, while character education is extended to encompass ecological responsibility.

However, the conclusions of this review must be interpreted within several key limitations. First, the systematic search strategy yielded a small core study corpus ($N = 8$), reflecting the current scarcity of literature that explicitly bridges place-based and values-based educational traditions. Second, substantial methodological heterogeneity across the included empirical and theoretical sources precludes quantitative synthesis and limits broad empirical generalizability. Most importantly, none of the reviewed studies directly evaluated a combined, integrated PBE–LVE intervention in an active educational setting; thus, the pedagogical synergies proposed in this framework remain theoretical propositions. To advance from conceptual synthesis to practical application, future empirical research must design, implement, and rigorously evaluate integrated PBE–LVE interventions across diverse geographic, cultural, and institutional contexts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1) Ao, X., & Briffett Aktaş, C. (2022). The lived realities of left-behind children in Mainland China: Life and values education in the home and at school. *Children & Society*, *36*(4), 579–593. https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12515
2) Ardoin, N. M., Bowers, A. W., & Gaillard, E. (2020). Environmental education outcomes for conservation: A systematic review. *Biological Conservation*, *241*, 108224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.108224

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

3) Berkowitz, M. W., Bier, M. C., & McCauley, B. (2017). Toward a Science of Character Education. *Journal of Character Education*, *13*(1), 33–51. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCED-12-2017-0004
4) Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching*, *21*(6), 624–640. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044325
5) Bongaarts, J. (2024). IPCC, 2023: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. IPCC, 184 p., doi: https://doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647. *Population and Development Review*, *50*(2), 577–580. https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12632
6) Cincera, J., Valesova, B., Krepelkova, S., Simonova, P., & Kroufek, R. (2019). Place-based education from three perspectives. *Environmental Education Research*, *25*(10), 1510–1523. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2019.1651826
7) Dobson, A. (2003). *Citizenship and the Environment*. Oxford University PressOxford. https://doi.org/10.1093/0199258449.001.0001
8) Freire, P. (2024). Teaching Pedagogy of the Oppressed. *The Student Guide to Freire's' Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *173*.
9) Gough, D., & Richardson, M. (2024). Systematic reviews. *Advanced Research Methods for Applied Psychology*, 71–86.
10) Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(4), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032004003
11) Hamilton, E., & Marckini-Polk, L. (2023). The impact of place-based education on middle school students' environmental literacy and stewardship. *Cogent Education*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2163789
12) Hidayatulloh, T., Saumantri, T., & Harvey, C. (2023). The Living Values Education (LVE) Approach Based on Religious Moderation at Sekolah Madania Bogor. *Edukasia Islamika*, *8*(2), 147–164.
13) Hidayatulloh, T., Saumantri, T., & Ramdani, Z. (2024). Integrating living values education into Indonesian islamic schools: An innovation in character building. *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, *22*(1), 137–152.
14) Hong, Q. N., Fàbregues, S., Bartlett, G., Boardman, F., Cargo, M., Dagenais, P., Gagnon, M.-P., Griffiths, F., Nicolau, B., O'Cathain, A., Rousseau, M.-C., Vedel, I., & Pluye, P. (2018). The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018 for information professionals and researchers. *Education for Information*, *34*(4), 285–291. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-180221
15) Jickling, B., & Wals, A. E. J. (2008). Globalization and environmental education: looking beyond sustainable development. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *40*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270701684667

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

16) Kudryavtsev, A., Stedman, R. C., & Krasny, M. E. (2012). Sense of place in environmental education. *Environmental Education Research*, *18*(2), 229–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2011.609615
17) Lee, Y., & Kothuis, B. B. (2022). Measuring the educational effects of problem- and place-based research education programs: The student survey. In *Coastal Flood Risk Reduction* (pp. 365–376). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-85251-7.00027-5
18) Lickona, T. (1992). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam.
19) Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education*. Univ of California Press.
20) Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating Capabilities*. Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674061200
21) Orr, D. W. (2004). *Earth in mind: On education, environment, and the human prospect*. Princeton University Press.
22) Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., … Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71
23) Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide*.
24) Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2026). *Teacher agency: An ecological approach*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
25) Semken, S., Ward, E. G., Moosavi, S., & Chinn, P. W. U. (2017). Place-Based Education in Geoscience: Theory, Research, Practice, and Assessment. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, *65*(4), 542–562. https://doi.org/10.5408/17-276.1
26) Sobel, D. (2004). Place-based education: Connecting classrooms and communities. *Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, *17*(3), 63–64.
27) Sterling, S. (2010). Learning for resilience, or the resilient learner? Towards a necessary reconciliation in a paradigm of sustainable education. *Environmental Education Research*, *16*(5–6), 511–528. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2010.505427
28) Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *8*(1), 45. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45
29) Tillman, D. (2000). *Living values activities for young adults. Deerfi eld Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc.*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

30) Tillman, D., & Colomina, P. Q. (2001). *Living values educator training guide*. Grasindo.
31) UNESCO, P. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. unesco Paris.
32) Wals, A. E. J., & Jickling, B. (2002). "Sustainability" in higher education. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *3*(3), 221–232. https://doi.org/10.1108/14676370210434688
33) Woodruff, S. L., & Cashman, J. F. (1993). Task, Domain, and General Efficacy: A Reexamination of the Self-Efficacy Scale. *Psychological Reports*, *72*(2), 423–432. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1993.72.2.423
34) Wright, D. S., Crooks, K. R., Hunter, D. O., Krumm, C. E., & Balgopal, M. M. (2021). Middle school science teachers' agency to implement place-based education curricula about local wildlife. *Environmental Education Research*, *27*(10), 1519–1537. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2021.1960955
35) Yemini, M., Tibbitts, F., & Goren, H. (2019). Trends and caveats: Review of literature on global citizenship education in teacher training. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *77*, 77–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.09.01
36) Zein, M., Iskandar, E., Azizah Azzahrah Rahmadan, Cindy Putri Andini, & Thahir, M. (2023). Strengthening the knowledge of PAUD teachers about character education through living values education in Bengkalis Regency. *Dinamisia : Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, *7*(6), 1779–1793. https://doi.org/10.31849/dinamisia.v7i6.16840

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.