Inovasi Kurikulum

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Phenomenology of community-based personalized learning for character education

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ABSTRACT

This research stems from the need for a learning model that not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also integrates affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions holistically. This study aims to examine the personalized learning model through the Movement Community in Komunitas Musisi Mengaji (Komuji) to strengthen character education within values- and community-based education. The research employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of community activities, and were then analyzed thematically to explore the meaning of the subjects' learning experiences. The results show that Komuji functions as a personalized, community-based learning space in which character values such as integrity, empathy, responsibility, discipline, and spirituality are internalized through collaborative activities, including mentoring, reflection on values, and social projects. The learning process is reflective, relational, and existential, fostering students' self-awareness and intrinsic motivation for moral behavior. This research contributes to the development of the Community-Based Personalized Character Learning (CBPCL) model, which emphasizes that personalized learning can be achieved collectively through meaningful community interactions and offers practical implications for educators and curriculum developers in designing learning strategies that are contextual, humanistic, and rooted in life values.

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berangkat dari kebutuhan akan model pembelajaran yang tidak hanya menekankan aspek kognitif, tetapi juga mengintegrasikan dimensi afektif, moral, dan spiritual secara holistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji model personalisasi pembelajaran melalui Movement Community di Komunitas Musisi Mengaji (Komuji) sebagai upaya penguatan pendidikan karakter dalam konteks pendidikan berbasis nilai dan komunitas. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi kegiatan komunitas, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik untuk menggali makna pengalaman belajar yang dialami subjek. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Komuji berfungsi sebagai ruang personalisasi pembelajaran berbasis komunitas, di mana nilai-nilai karakter seperti integritas, empati, tanggung jawab, disiplin, dan spiritualitas diinternalisasikan melalui aktivitas kolaboratif seperti mentoring, refleksi nilai, dan proyek sosial. Proses pembelajaran yang terjadi bersifat reflektif, relasional, dan eksistensial, membentuk kesadaran diri serta motivasi intrinsik siswa untuk berperilaku moral. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan model Community-Based Personalized Character Learning (CBPCL) yang menegaskan bahwa personalisasi pembelajaran dapat diwujudkan secara kolektif melalui interaksi komunitas bernilai, sekaligus memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pendidik dan pengembang kurikulum dalam merancang strategi pembelajaran yang kontekstual, humanistik, dan berakar pada nilai-nilai kehidupan.

Kata Kunci: pembelajaran berbasis masyarakat; pembelajaran yang dipersonalisasi; pendidikan karakter

INTRODUCTION

The shift in educational paradigms underscores the need for learning approaches that are personal, contextual, and aligned with each learner's unique potential (Liputo & Kurniadi, 2025). Personalized learning, defined as instruction adapted to students' needs, interests, pace, and learning, has been shown to strengthen engagement and motivation while reducing learning disparities (Amelia et al., 2025; Pratama et al., 2025). Recent scholarship further identifies personalization as a major trend supporting autonomy and motivation in contemporary education (Arnadi et al., 2024). Character education has become a critical agenda amid global moral and ethical challenges, prompting a move from traditional instructional models to holistic frameworks that integrate cognitive, affective, and social dimensions (Maghsudi et al., 2021). Within this context, community-engaged learning emphasizes the role of social interaction and experience in shaping moral development (Chowdhury et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, the Merdeka Belajar policy and the Program Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter illustrate national efforts to integrate academic learning with moral development. Prior research demonstrates that community-based education promotes empathy, collaboration, and civic responsibility (Gusli et al., 2023). Despite these advancements, a gap persists between theoretical ideals and classroom realities. Many schools still employ uniform character education models that overlook individual needs and contexts, and recent studies note the lack of adaptive frameworks in community-based character formation (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025). Previous studies have shown that education in Indonesia uses a civic education approach to shape student character (Damanik et al., 2025).

At the same time, personalized learning research remains heavily focused on cognitive outcomes, with limited integration of affective or value-based dimensions. To address this gap, the present study proposes a conceptual synthesis between personalized learning theory and community-based education. Personalized learning emphasizes adaptation to learner characteristics, while community-based learning positions social and communal settings as authentic learning environments (Manuel, 2024; Merino-Campos, 2025). Integrating these perspectives generates a movement community, an environment where learners internalize values through shared creative and experiential processes. This synthesis underpins the Community-Based Personalized Character Learning (CBPCL) model.

Given the limited empirical research on how movement communities foster personalized character learning, this study examines Komunitas Musisi Mengaji (Komuji) Indonesia as a creative and spiritually grounded learning community. The research addresses three questions: 1) What stages and mechanisms structure the movement community–based personalized learning model?; 2) How effective is the model in strengthening core character values?; 3) What supporting and inhibiting factors influence its implementation?. The study aims to conceptualize and analyze a personalized character-learning model rooted in community engagement, offering theoretical and practical contributions to the design of contextual, humanistic, and value-oriented learning strategies aligned with current educational transformation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personalized Learning

Personalized learning emphasizes flexible, learner-centered approaches that accommodate variations in students' abilities, motivations, and sociocultural contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2020). It involves designing learning pathways that align with individual learner profiles to promote autonomy, mastery, and meaningful choice (González-Cutre et al., 2020). Rooted in constructivist and motivational perspectives, personalized learning becomes effective when learners' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and

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relatedness are adequately supported (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Personalized learning in contemporary education supports learner agency, motivation, and equity by adapting learning pathways to students' needs, interests, and contexts (Dumont & Ready, 2023). Personalized learning integrates learner data, motivation, and contextual design to support adaptive and meaningful learning experiences (Lagos-Castillo et al., 2025). In community-based settings such as Komuji, personalization is enacted through authentic, collaborative, and value-oriented activities that foster meaningful participation. Community engagement extends learning beyond the classroom and supports the formation of moral, cultural, and professional identities (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020).

Character Education from a Humanistic Perspective

Recent empirical studies indicate that character education has shifted toward experiential, relational, and community-based approaches that integrate moral reflection within authentic learning contexts (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025). Education is understood not only as knowledge acquisition but also as a process of subjectification and value formation, emphasizing the ethical and humanistic purposes of learning (Biesta, 2021). Within Komuji, character education takes form through structured communal routines and creative projects that cultivate moral habits, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility. Constructivist principles, especially those articulated by Vygotsky and contemporary social constructivists, position knowledge and values as socially constructed through dialogue and shared activity. Komuji embodies this perspective by fostering reflective discussions, collaborative production, and creative expression, enabling students to negotiate meaning within a supportive social environment (Chuang, 2021). These practices enhance moral reasoning, empathy, and self-awareness while strengthening students' agency and self-esteem (Ryan & Deci, 2022). Character education thus becomes an experiential, transformative process rather than a prescriptive instructional model.

Strengthening Character Values through Professional Activities

Sakola Garasi and Komuji integrate professional-simulation activities, such as roles in healthcare, culinary work, engineering, or the arts, to immerse learners in authentic experiential contexts. Research examines the embedding of experiential learning in the curriculum to strengthen ethics and diversity, using community-based projects that reflect a systematic review of project-based environments (Wijnia et al., 2024). Their findings uncover the gradual transformation of moral values through authentic practice, complementing the contextual moral education framework (Caldwell-O'Keefe & Recla, 2020).

In Komuji, entrepreneurial activities such as producing and selling cookies function as moral laboratories that cultivate integrity, diligence, and perseverance. This reflects learning-through-enterprise principles, where economic engagement supports ethical development and social responsibility. Komuji further integrates art and spirituality. The fusion of music and Qur'anic recitation positions artistic practice as a medium for emotional and moral formation (Yang, 2024). Teachers' inner awareness and reflective practice play a central role in transformative and value-oriented learning processes (Covey, 2021). Through these integrative practices, learning becomes intellectually engaging while simultaneously fostering ethical and spiritual growth.

Learning Communities and Social Transformation

Learning communities grounded in moral and spiritual values serve as catalysts for identity formation and social transformation. Building on Wenger's 2020 concept of communities of practice, Komuji provides a participatory environment in which learners develop their personal, social, and moral identities through shared goals and collaboration. Students gain artistic, entrepreneurial, and spiritual competencies while

fostering a sense of community and mutual respect. Community-based learning environments strengthen character formation by embedding moral values in collaborative, socially meaningful activities (Chowdhury et al., 2025). Social ecology is described as "character learning ecology" (Schmid et al., 2022). Within this framework, Komuji exemplifies a transformative learning community that integrates spirituality, creativity, and social engagement (Hunt et al., 2023). Recent reviews indicate that personalized learning in secondary education enhances motivation and self-regulation when learning pathways are adapted to students' needs and contexts (Merino-Campos, 2025).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of Komuji members in implementing a community movement grounded in a personalized learning model for character education. Conducted at Sakola Garasi, an alternative learning space integrating spirituality, art, and entrepreneurship, the research focused on four children aged 7–12 who participated in community projects, including the Children's Cookies Business. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, then analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) following Smith's 2023 theory. Credibility was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. This model advances personalized learning beyond cognitive outcomes, highlighting a holistic, value-driven process grounded in constructivist, phenomenological, and humanistic perspectives. Through this framework, children develop character dispositions essential for ethical citizenship and lifelong learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Main Findings: Dynamics of Personalized Learning in the Komuji Movement Community

The empirical findings indicate that Sakola Garasi implements personalized learning through community-based project activities that integrate learning with real social practices. The Cookies Project functioned as the central learning medium during the observation period and involved children aged 7–12 years. Learning activities were organized around concrete stages, including preparation, production, packaging, selling, and reflection, all conducted using authentic tools and materials. Learner participation was not structured through fixed instructional roles. Instead, children entered activities gradually and flexibly, selecting tasks based on their interests and confidence. Some learners began as observers before engaging directly in production or sales activities, while others moved between creative, technical, and communicative roles throughout the project.

Figure 1. Stages of the Personalized Learning Process within the Komuji Community
Source: Author's Documentation, 2025

Decision-making processes were embedded in daily activities. Children participated in discussions regarding ingredient proportions, packaging design, and pricing strategies (See: **Figure 1**). These discussions emerged informally and were documented through observation notes and recordings. Facilitators maintained a supportive presence without prescribing outcomes. Participation patterns evolved. Observational data indicate increased verbal expression, initiative-taking, and physical engagement among learners, suggesting sustained involvement throughout the project.

As explained by Komuji's founder, Egy Fauzy,

> "*We don't want children to know professions only from books. We want them to feel what it's like to work as a chef, entrepreneur, or product designer. Through that, they discover their true interests and the real meaning of learning,*" (Egy Fauzy, Founder of Komuji, Interview, Juni 2025).

The visual arrangement highlights the fluid movement of learners across stages. Observational data confirm that children did not remain confined to a single stage or role. Rather, they transitioned among activities based on their interests, group needs, and situational demands. This visual evidence supports field notes indicating that learning progressed through continuous engagement rather than segmented lessons.

Figure 2 contextualizes personalization as an embedded process within collective activity. By presenting stages as interconnected rather than hierarchical, the image documents how learning emerged through participation, interaction, and experience rather than predefined instructional sequencing.

Figure 2. Cookie Production Activity at Sakola Garasi: Children Measuring Ingredients under Facilitator Guidance
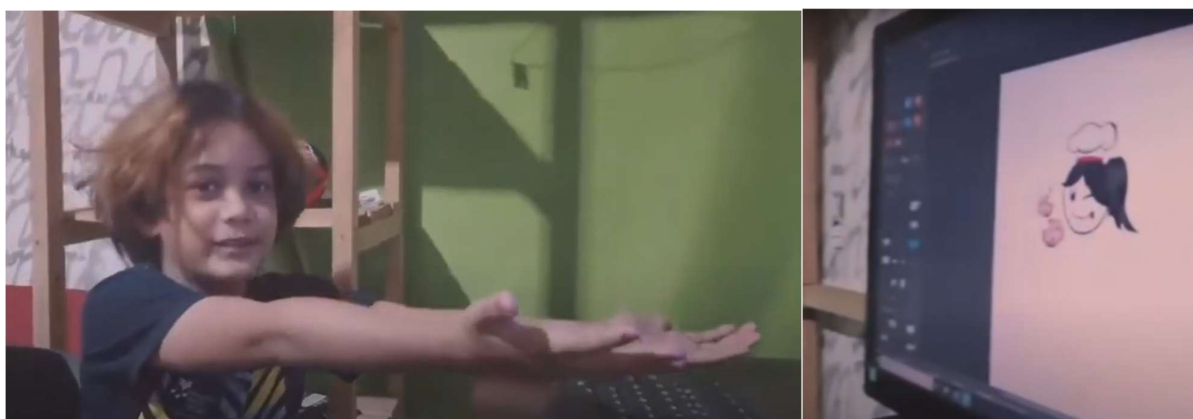*Source: Author's Documentation, 2025*

The photograph documents the embodied nature of learning at Sakola Garasi. Learners are seen actively manipulating materials, observing peers' actions, and adjusting their own movements accordingly. This visual data aligns with observation notes describing learning as a hands-on process involving bodily engagement and sensory experience. Facilitator presence is visible but non-dominant in the image. The facilitator stands nearby, observing rather than directing, allowing learners to manage the task independently. This visual context supports documentation indicating that guidance was provided through proximity and support rather than direct instruction.

Learning Context in the Komuji Movement Community: The Interplay of Spiritual, Artistic, and Entrepreneurial Values

The phenomenological analysis revealed two core dimensions of personalized learning at Sakola Garasi: the existential and the social. The existential dimension refers to how children construct personal meaning through direct engagement and reflection, while the social dimension highlights that learning emerges within collaborative, relational, and value-rich interactions. These dimensions are inseparable, as meaningful learning is shaped by dialogue between the self and the community. For instance, Athalla Rayyan (10 years old) reported feeling like a "real designer" after successfully creating a cookie logo based on his own idea. He said,

> *"I was happy when I drew, and the result was so good that it was used as the logo on the cookies,"* (Interview, 2025).

Figure 3. Children Designing the Cookie Logo as Part of the Personalized Learning Process
Source: Author's Documentation, 2025

Figure 3 documents the project's creative phase, focusing on learners engaged in logo design activities. The image shows individual learners working with drawing materials while periodically sharing ideas with peers. Visual elements such as sketches, color choices, and paper placement reflect personal expression within a shared creative space. The photograph captures varying levels of engagement, with some learners deeply focused on drawing while others observe or comment on peers' designs. This diversity of engagement reflects flexible participation patterns documented in field observations, in which learners contributed according to their interests and confidence. The image also illustrates how creative tasks function within the broader learning process. Logo design activities were integrated with production and packaging stages, reinforcing the continuity of learning experiences across different modes of participation.

Meanwhile**,** Sang Hawa (12 years old) highlighted the collaborative aspect,

> *"It's more fun when we work together. Sometimes I help my friend mix the dough, and she helps me wrap it. It feels like real work,"* (Interview, 2025).

Figure 4. Participant Collaboration in Mixing Ingredients and Packaging Products
Source: Author's Documentation, 2025

The **Figure 4** task distribution in practice. Some learners are engaged in mixing ingredients, while others focus on packaging, indicating parallel activity rather than sequential task assignment. This supports observation data describing flexible task coordination among learners. Non-verbal communication is evident in body orientation, eye contact, and hand gestures. These visual cues align with field notes, indicating that much coordination occurred implicitly, without verbal instruction. The photograph thus serves as evidence of spontaneous collaboration during learning activities. The social dimension of learning emerged clearly in Sang Hawa's (12) reflection,

> *"It's more fun when we work together… it feels like real work,"*

This illustrates how shared tasks fostered joy, trust, empathy, and responsibility—values rooted in Indonesian traditions of cooperation. Through learning by doing, children internalize social values while simultaneously developing practical skills.

Integration of Character Values within the Movement Community

The learning experiences emerging from the Cookies Project demonstrate how personalized learning at Sakola Garasi naturally progresses into deeper processes of reflection and character formation. Beyond producing a final product, children's interactions, choices, and emotional responses underpin value-based learning. This shift from action to reflection marks the onset of a transformative phase in which learners begin to connect their activities with broader cultural, social, and moral meanings. At the outset, facilitators introduced the history and varieties of cookies from different countries, using cultural context as an entry point for learning. This approach encouraged children to perceive cookies not merely as economic products but also as representations of cultural identity and social practice. Discussions of ingredients and flavor comparisons activated cognitive processes, including recalling, categorizing, and linking new knowledge to prior experience.

Observations showed increasing reflective awareness; for instance, Athalla (10) connected the concept to his home environment, noting,

> *"Oh, so cookies are like biscuits, but made with butter instead of margarine,"*

According to Sakola Garasi's founder, Mrs. Nur Fitri Djatnika, this method reflects a learning-ecology approach that develops through the interplay of context, experience, and social values. Following the cognitive stage, children engaged in constructivist, hands-on activities. During cooking sessions, they confronted authentic challenges such as runny dough or burnt cookies. Instead of offering direct solutions, facilitators encouraged experimentation and independent problem-solving, allowing children to construct understanding through lived experience.

> "*We want the children to learn how to make decisions and reflect on their outcomes. If their cookies turn out too hard, they know why—that is part of the process of building knowledge,*" *(Nur Fitri Djatnika, Interview, 2025)*

Documents the interview setting with the founder of Sakola Garasi, providing visual context for qualitative data obtained through verbal accounts. The image shows an informal interview environment, reflecting the community-based nature of the learning setting. The seating arrangement and spatial openness indicate a conversational rather than a formal interview dynamic.

Figure 5. Interview with Mrs. Nur Fitri Djatnika, Founder of Sakola Garasi
Source: Author's Documentation, 2025

Figure 5 situates leadership perspectives within the lived learning environment. Rather than occurring in an office setting, the interview took place within the learning space, reinforcing the close connection between leadership vision and daily practice. This visual context strengthens the credibility of the interview data included in the findings. The image also documents the presence of learning artifacts and activity spaces in the background, linking narrative accounts to the observed learning environment. This visual alignment supports triangulation.

Social Values and Character Formation

Analysis of documents, field observations, and parent interviews indicates that Sakola Garasi functions as a living-learning ecosystem in which social values and character are cultivated through everyday

interactions and collective participation. The learning process extends beyond the attainment of cognitive or technical outcomes, encompassing moral and emotional growth that develops as learners engage with peers, facilitators, and real tasks. Learning activities are organized around experiential and creative practices, allowing learners to construct understanding through active making, collaboration, and reflection.

The findings indicate that values such as cooperation, responsibility, perseverance, and honesty were consistently observed across data sources. These values were observed in learners' willingness to share roles, take responsibility for tasks, persist through challenges, and act fairly during collaborative activities. Parent interviews further confirmed that changes in children's behavior were noticed beyond the learning space, particularly in increased independence, social awareness, and accountability. Importantly, these character values were not introduced through explicit moral instruction but developed through authentic social experiences embedded in the learning process.

Humanistic and Creative Personalization

The findings on social and moral value formation at Sakola Garasi demonstrate how personalized learning becomes deeply humanized through lived experience. As children internalize social values, they begin to express individuality and creativity in personally meaningful ways. This shift reflects a form of humanistic and creative personalization in which learning emerges from self-awareness, imagination, and relational engagement. From a phenomenological perspective, Sakola Garasi provides a space where children experience the interconnectedness of self, environment, and values. Activities such as the cookie business function as opportunities for self-discovery rather than as tasks to be completed. Through doing, interpreting, and reflecting, children begin to understand their own agency, echoing facilitator Egy Fauji's vision for Sakola Garasi as a place where children "discover themselves and recognize their potential."

Figure 6. Children's Reflection Notes: Handwritten Records of Experiences and Values Learned During the Cookie Project (Observation by Aqeela)
Source: Author's Documentation, 2025

During the observation, Aqeela was frequently observed collaborating with peers to divide tasks and generate creative ideas, such as designing colorful cookie toppings (see **Figure 6**). This illustrates that personalized learning at Sakola Garasi does not imply individualization. Rather, it is fundamentally relational, emphasizing connection, cooperation, and shared meaning-making. At the end of the Cookies Project, facilitators invited each child to write a personal reflection in a relaxed setting after the sales and evaluation sessions. Responding to a simple prompt—*"Write what you felt and learned from this activity"*—the children produced handwritten notes that were spontaneous, unpolished, and expressive. The collected reflection sheets, documented visually, show variation in handwriting styles, layout, and the use of visual elements such as drawings and symbols. Some reflections consist of short phrases or keywords. In contrast, others combine text with images, suggesting that learners were encouraged to express their experiences freely rather than adhere to a structured format. The presence of smiling faces, decorative borders, and colorful markers further conveys the emotional tone of the learning experience and provides visual evidence of affective engagement beyond verbal expression.

Analysis of the reflective writings indicates that learning was experienced as an active and emotionally engaging process during the cooking and selling activities at Sakola Garasi. Children frequently expressed feelings of joy, pride, excitement, and satisfaction, particularly when completing tasks, collaborating with peers, and interacting with customers. These emotional responses appeared to strengthen learners' engagement and initiative, supporting sustained participation throughout the activity. At the same time, character values such as cooperation, honesty, patience, and responsibility emerged naturally as children navigated real situations, including sharing roles, addressing production challenges, resolving minor conflicts, and negotiating prices. Reflective writing played a crucial role in deepening meaning and self-awareness, enabling learners to revisit experiences, recognize personal strengths and mistakes, and articulate moral insights. Within the broader context of this study, these reflections demonstrate that learning at Sakola Garasi extends beyond the acquisition of practical skills, cultivating holistic awareness of learning across cognitive, affective, moral, and social dimensions. In line with phenomenological perspectives, learning is revealed here as a lived experience that shapes the whole person, not merely the mastery of tasks.

Discussion

Reframing Personalized Learning: From Individual Customization to Communal Meaning-Making

This study demonstrates that personalized learning, as practiced within the Komuji Movement Community, cannot be adequately explained through the dominant framework of individual customization. Rather than focusing on differentiated content, individualized pacing, or adaptive instruction, personalization emerges from learners' participation in socially meaningful, experientially grounded shared activities. Learning becomes personal not because it is individually segmented, but because it is embedded in collective practice. This finding challenges mainstream interpretations of personalized learning that emphasize technical efficiency and instructional optimization. Such approaches often frame personalization as a managerial response to learner diversity. In contrast, the Komuji context reveals that personalization is rooted in meaning-making processes arising from genuine engagement, responsibility, and contribution within a community.

Personalization in this setting is not limited to adjusting instruction; it encompasses experiential meaning-making aligned with vision-led, learner-driven education (Sakti, 2023). This perspective aligns with research emphasizing that personalization should foster self-awareness and self-determination (Dumont & Ready, 2023; Du Plooy et al., 2024). Learning is experienced as part of life, not as a detached instructional intervention. From a theoretical perspective, this interpretation aligns with Dumont's view that

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personalized learning should be understood as a process of developing learner agency and subjectivity, rather than merely adapting instructional inputs. Personalization, in this sense, is closely linked to learners' sense of relevance, ownership, and recognition within their social environment. By reframing personalized learning as communal meaning-making, this study extends the existing literature beyond individualistic paradigms. It suggests that personalization can be socially grounded and collectively constructed without losing its personal significance for learners.

Learning as an Existential–Social Experience

The findings indicate that learning within the Komuji Movement Community functions as an existential experience in which learners encounter themselves through action, decision-making, and reflection. Learning situations require learners to confront challenges and evaluate their own capacities, thereby making learning a space for negotiating identity, self-worth, and personal meaning. These existential processes, however, are inseparable from social interaction. Learners interpret their experiences through dialogue, collaboration, and shared responsibility, confirming Freire's view that learning and consciousness emerge dialogically rather than in isolation. Character development thus arises from lived and embodied experiences in which meaning and values are formed through real social engagement. At Sakola Garasi, this relational learning process was evident in children's growing confidence, patience, and perseverance. Even learners who were initially shy gradually felt comfortable selling their products publicly and interacting with others. These changes reflect the development of self-esteem through authentic participation and align with research indicating that personalization strengthens intrinsic motivation and perceived competence as learners construct personal meaning from their activities (Dumont & Ready, 2023).

Social interaction was also central as children negotiated design and production decisions, with facilitators allowing dialogue and collaboration to unfold naturally. This practice mirrors Freire's dialogical pedagogy and García and Li's transformative approach, in which facilitators act as co-learners who foster reflection, empathy, and social awareness (Wei, 2024). Overall, the learning experience at Sakola Garasi represents a movement-based educational practice that grows from lived experience and contributes back to community life. Children are positioned not as passive recipients but as meaning-makers who develop reflective, creative, and socially responsible identities. Empirical evidence shows that personalized learning supports learner agency and equity when aligned with contextual and human-centered pedagogical designs (Dumont & Ready, 2023). The interplay between existential reflection and social engagement highlights that personalized learning is not an internal psychological process alone. Personal meaning is constructed relationally, through participation in collective life.

Character Formation as Lived Moral Practice

Character formation in the Komuji Movement Community is not transmitted through explicit moral instruction but emerges through lived moral practice. Learners encounter values such as responsibility, honesty, perseverance, and cooperation within everyday activities that demand ethical judgment and accountability. The phenomenological analysis revealed two core dimensions of personalized learning at Sakola Garasi: the existential and the social. The existential dimension refers to how children construct personal meaning through direct engagement and reflection, while the social dimension highlights that learning emerges within collaborative, relational, and value-rich interactions. These dimensions are inseparable, as meaningful learning is shaped by dialogue between the self and the community.

Character is thus shaped through experience rather than prescription. This approach reflects an understanding of morality as embodied and situational, consistent with phenomenological perspectives on ethical development. Values are internalized not through abstract explanation but through repeated engagement in meaningful situations where actions have social consequences. Reflection plays a central role in this process. Through reflective dialogue, learners interpret their actions, recognize moral implications, and integrate values into their personal understanding. This resonates with Kolb's conception of experiential learning, in which reflection transforms experience into learning. The findings contribute to the discourse on character education by demonstrating that ethical development is more effectively fostered through experiential and reflective practice within community settings than through formal moral instruction alone.

Relational Agency and the Social Construction of the Learner

The study reveals that learner agency within the Komuji Movement Community is relationally constructed rather than individually possessed. Agency develops as learners participate in shared practices, negotiate roles, and contribute to collective goals. Learners become agents through engagement with others, not through isolated self-direction. This conception challenges dominant views that equate agency with autonomy detached from social context. In the Komuji environment, agency is inseparable from responsibility toward others and commitment to communal outcomes. Learners exercise agency by responding to collective needs and sustaining shared activities. After examining the experiential and personalized learning dimensions, this section demonstrates how Sakola Garasi operates as a living ecosystem for cultivating social values and character. The focus extends beyond learning outcomes to the moral and emotional growth that emerges from interaction and collective participation. Experiential and creative learning practices enable learners to construct knowledge through active making, reflection, and collaboration, forming a foundation for creative pedagogy.

Document analysis, observations, and parent interviews indicate that Sakola Garasi nurtures cooperation, responsibility, perseverance, and honesty through authentic social experiences rather than verbal instruction. A notable example is when Vieri Riyadh Reeisya Herdian (12) declined to sell burnt cookies, reflecting intrinsic moral awareness. Recent character education research emphasizes moral identity formation through experiential, relational, and virtue-oriented learning environments (Ahmad et al., 2025). From a phenomenological standpoint, morality becomes embodied in lived practice rather than abstract cognition. Social recognition plays a crucial role in reinforcing agency. Feedback and acknowledgment from peers and facilitators strengthen learners' sense of competence and responsibility. Agency thus emerges through relational validation rather than individual assertion. By foregrounding relational agency, this study extends the understanding of personalized learning as a process that supports agency through participation and social embeddedness, rather than through individualized learning pathways alone.

Education as Cultural and Moral Embedding

Learning at Sakola Garasi is a process of cultural and moral embedding, in which learners are immersed in a community that embodies values such as uniqueness, diversity, equality, and brotherhood. These values are not taught explicitly but are experienced through everyday interaction and shared practice. Such value formation occurs through habituation and participation in community life. Learners internalize norms by observing, practicing, and negotiating them within real social contexts. This aligns with qualitative and phenomenological perspectives that view education as a process of socialization and subject formation. The five core values of Komuji Uniqueness, Difference, Equality, Diversity, and Brotherhood

are internalized through participation and emotional involvement. This supports the view that moral meaning is constructed through lived experience. Education serves not only as a means of qualification but also as a site of socialization and subjectification, highlighting its ethical and humanistic dimensions (Agnevia et al., 2025).

Community-based and collaborative learning practices promote empathy and social character by positioning learners as co-participants in meaningful, socially situated activities (Wei, 2024). Overall, Sakola Garasi functions as a holistic moral ecosystem in which values are not merely taught but lived. This aligns with UNESCO's view of the 21st-century educational paradigm, which emphasizes empathy, social reflection, and the integration of moral and emotional learning. This embedded approach contrasts with curriculum-based moral education, which often separates values from lived experience. In the Komuji context, values are inseparable from learning activities, making moral education continuous and meaningful. Consistent with UNESCO's emphasis on education for empathy and social responsibility, the findings suggest that community-based personalized learning environments provide a strong foundation for ethical and cultural development.

Humanistic and Creative Learning as Transformative Practice

The findings also highlight the importance of humanistic and creative learning as a transformative educational practice. Creative activities function as spaces for learners to explore identity, emotion, and meaning beyond purely cognitive engagement. Creativity supports expression, reflection, and personal interpretation of experience. Humanistic learning integrates cognitive, affective, social, and moral dimensions into a coherent developmental process. Learners are engaged as whole persons rather than as recipients of skills or content. This holistic engagement deepens learning and supports personal growth. Transformative learning emphasizes reflection, meaning-making, and value formation as central processes in adult and community-based education (Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023). Artistic and spiritual practices in education contribute to moral formation and holistic character development through reflective and expressive learning experiences.

Creative expression also enables learners to articulate experiences symbolically, supporting reflective understanding. Through creative processes, learners reconstruct meaning and develop insight into themselves and their relationships with others. Overall, this study positions personalized learning as a humanizing process. By grounding learning in lived experience, relational engagement, and creative practice, education becomes a pathway for holistic development rather than mere qualification. Conducted in a relaxed atmosphere after the sales and evaluation sessions, the children responded to a simple prompt: *"Write what you felt and learned from this activity."* The resulting handwritten notes, spontaneous, unpolished, and expressive, offered an authentic view of how children made meaning of the experience. In general, the reflections revealed three main patterns:

1. Learning as an active and emotional experience: Children expressed joy, pride, and excitement during the cooking and selling process. These emotions fostered deeper engagement, aligning with affective engagement principles in social constructivism.
2. Character values emerging from real experiences: Values such as cooperation, honesty, and responsibility surfaced naturally as children navigated small dilemmas, sharing roles, solving production problems, or negotiating prices, rather than being delivered through explicit instruction.
3. Reflection deepening meaning and self-awareness: Writing reflections helped children revisit their experiences and identify personal insights. This aligns with phenomenological pedagogy, where reflection is viewed not as a concluding step but as an essential process of educational consciousness

Within the broader context of this research, these reflections demonstrate that learning at Sakola Garasi extends far beyond the acquisition of practical skills. Instead, it cultivates holistic learning awareness across the cognitive, affective, moral, and social dimensions. The children did not simply learn to bake cookies; they discovered aspects of themselves, their values, and the meaning embedded in the process. This represents the core of educational phenomenology, which understands learning as a lived experience that shapes the whole human person.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The preceding analysis of humanistic and creative personalization at Sakola Garasi provides a basis for situating the study within broader research on personalized and community-based learning. Overall, the findings reaffirm that personalization is most effective when embedded in authentic social contexts that cultivate moral awareness, empathy, and responsibility. Personalized learning is increasingly understood as a collaborative process in which learners actively co-construct knowledge through social interaction and shared regulation (Dumont & Ready, 2023). Motivation in community learning contexts is strengthened when educational activities foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby promoting deeper engagement and character development (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Community-based learning environments provide authentic sociocultural contexts that support the internalization of moral and character values through participation and shared practices. Sakola Garasi offers a form of experiential moral personalization that develops organically through shared activity and reflective interaction rather than structured doctrinal instruction. Research has evaluated experiential learning-based moral teaching strategies, such as real-life simulations and personal reflection, which support the personalization of values (Alghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2021). This study demonstrated improvements in students' moral understanding through contextualized practices, consistent with research on integrating values into daily routines (Cui et al., 2024).

Scientific Contributions to Theory and Practice

Building on the preceding analysis and comparison with prior studies, this research contributes both theoretically and practically to the discourse on personalized learning, especially within community-based and character-oriented contexts. The findings extend current theories by introducing a model that integrates personal, social, and spiritual dimensions of learning, positioning personalization not merely as instructional variation but as a transformative process of human formation:

This study proposes the CBPCL model, which synthesizes three core principles.

1. Personalization: Learning is designed according to each learner's potential, interests, and pace to build agency and self-awareness;
2. Community: Learning is understood as a social process rooted in collaboration, empathy, and mutual support;
3. Spirituality and Values: Moral reflection and meaning-making are embedded throughout the learning process.

Through this synthesis, the CBPCL model enhances contemporary personalized learning theory by adding a phenomenological and relational lens, aligning with humanistic and transformative educational paradigms. In practice, this study provides empirical guidance for designing contextual and community-engaged learning strategies applicable across educational settings (Kosim, 2020). Key practices include:

1. Value-Based Mentoring: Facilitators act as moral exemplars who cultivate honesty, empathy, and responsibility through lived practice;
2. Community Project Learning: Learners engage with local issues through authentic problem-solving that builds social awareness;
3. Spiritual and Existential Reflection: Journaling or dialogical activities help learners construct meaning and recognize their role in the broader human community.

The findings situate humanistic and creative personalization at Sakola Garasi within the broader literature on personalized and community-based learning, while also extending it conceptually. Consistent with prior studies, the results reaffirm that personalized learning is most effective when embedded in authentic social contexts that foster moral awareness, empathy, and responsibility. In this study, personalization functions not merely as an instructional strategy but as a relational and experiential process shaped through shared activity and social interaction. Previous research emphasizes personalized learning as a collaborative process in which learners co-construct knowledge through dialogue and cooperation rather than individualized isolation. The learning practices at Sakola Garasi support this view, demonstrating that learner agency and engagement emerge through collective participation in socially meaningful activities. Motivation theory further supports this interpretation, as sustained engagement has been observed in contexts in which autonomy, competence, and relatedness are simultaneously supported. Beyond confirming earlier findings, this study reframes personalized learning as a holistic process of human formation that integrates personal agency, social responsibility, and moral meaning.

Overall, personalized learning at Sakola Garasi is positioned as a humanizing educational process that connects intellectual development with moral depth and meaningful participation in shared life. These findings respond directly to the issues raised in the Introduction and contribute to ongoing discussions on how education can cultivate both competence and character through contextual and community-engaged learning. The CBPCL model proposed in this study synthesizes these dimensions by conceptualizing personalization as simultaneously personal, communal, and value-oriented. Learning is personalized by attending to learners' potential and agency, socially grounded in collaboration and empathy, and morally sustained through reflective engagement with values and meaning. By integrating phenomenological and relational perspectives, this model extends contemporary personalized learning theory beyond instructional variation toward a more holistic understanding of learning as ethical and social practice. Overall, this study positions personalized learning as a humanizing educational process that integrates intellectual development with moral depth, empathy, and meaningful participation in shared life. By situating personalization within community practice and experiential learning, the findings directly address the issues raised in the Introduction and contribute to ongoing debates on how education can nurture both competence and character in socially responsible ways.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that Sakola Garasi serves as a living model of community-based, personalized character education, in which learning emerges through real experiences, reflection, and social collaboration. Character, in this context, is not taught verbally but is lived and experienced, formed through the interplay of emotion, cognition, and action. Through its holistic, phenomenological approach, Sakola Garasi integrates the moral, affective, and social dimensions of learning, enabling children to develop their identity and moral consciousness within a supportive community. This process exemplifies the transition from didactic moral instruction to transformative experiential formation, in which children cultivate values such as honesty, cooperation, and empathy through everyday interactions. Theoretically, the study advances the concept of CBPCL, positioning personalization as a social and ethical process rooted in community and spirituality. In practice, it offers an alternative pedagogical framework applicable to both formal and informal settings, emphasizing mentoring, collaborative projects, and reflective practice. In

essence, Sakola Garasi redefines learning as a humanizing encounter, a process of becoming fully human through relationships, reflection, and creativity. It stands as evidence that character education in the 21st century must transcend instruction, integrating knowledge, values, empathy, and social responsibility as inseparable elements of education for a sustainable and compassionate future.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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