

Integrating a STEAM-Based Learning Model with *Maja Labo Dahu* Local Wisdom to Enhance Creativity and Character Development in Early Childhood

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Abstract

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a fundamental role in shaping children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral capacities, yet many learning models still separate the development of creativity from character formation. This paper examines the integration of the STEAM learning model with the local wisdom of *Maja Labo Dahu* from the Dana Mbojo community as an innovative and culturally relevant approach to early childhood education. The study aims to analyze how STEAM, with its emphasis on exploration, creativity, and problem-solving, can be aligned with values of honesty, responsibility, respect, and constructive self-awareness embodied in *Maja Labo Dahu*, and how this integration contributes to children's creativity and character development. Using a qualitative descriptive library research method, the study systematically reviews journal articles, books, research reports, and official documents selected purposively based on relevance and academic credibility. Data were analyzed through content analysis to synthesize conceptual linkages among STEAM, cultural values, creativity, and character. The findings indicate that the integration of STEAM with *Maja Labo Dahu* creates a holistic learning environment that enhances children's creative thinking while grounding their actions in ethical and culturally meaningful values. STEAM activities become more contextual when infused with cultural narratives, modeling, habituation, and collaborative learning that reinforce moral awareness and social competence. The study concludes that this integrative model is highly relevant for Indonesian early childhood education, as it bridges global competencies with local cultural identity, enriches pedagogical practices, and provides a theoretical contribution to culturally responsive and ethnopedagogical learning frameworks

Keywords: STEAM, *Maja Labo Dahu*, Education Character, Learning Model

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as the fundamental foundation for the development of children's cognitive, affective, social, moral, and spiritual capacities. Developmental theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, and Erikson

emphasize that educational stimulation during early childhood has long-term implications for personality development, intellectual capacity, and character formation in later stages of life (Hikmawati & Winnuly, 2025). As the challenges of the twenty-first century become increasingly complex, education is required to facilitate the cultivation of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, technological literacy, and integrity-based character (Muzaki & Dawud, 2024). One approach that aligns with these demands is the STEAM model (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), which emphasizes interdisciplinary integration and is oriented toward exploratory processes and creative problem-solving (Mansour et al., 2025).

A growing body of contemporary research demonstrates that the implementation of STEAM in early childhood education significantly contributes to enhancing creativity, design skills, investigative abilities, and children's scientific literacy (Wahyuningsih et al., 2020). Findings from Atiaturrahmaniah et al. (2020), for instance, show that the STEAM approach can foster meaningful and collaborative learning experiences while promoting higher-order thinking skills (Atiaturrahmaniah et al., 2020). Nevertheless, existing studies tend to focus predominantly on cognitive aspects or children's scientific literacy, while the integration of STEAM with character education rooted in local wisdom remains relatively limited, particularly within the Indonesian educational context. (Rasyid et al., 2025).

In the *Dana Mbojo* community (Bima and Dompu), the local wisdom of *Maja Labo Dahu*, philosophically meaning (*Malu dan Takut untuk Berbuat Salah*) plays an essential role in shaping societal moral and ethical conduct (Al-Islami et al., 2024). This value embodies principles of honesty, responsibility, respect, and self-restraint, which align with the core components of national character education (Amiruddin, 2019). Several studies in the Bima region have explored local wisdom, particularly in relation to cultural preservation, ethnopedagogy, and value internalization through folklore (Zuriatin et al., 2025). However, research that specifically integrates the values of *Maja Labo Dahu* into contemporary STEAM-based learning models remains scarce (Mawaddah et al., 2024). This situation indicates a research gap in the development of innovative learning models that not only strengthen academic competencies but also cultivate character grounded in local cultural identity (Anggryani et al., 2025).

Addressing this gap, the present study proposes an integrative model that combines the STEAM approach with the local wisdom of *Maja Labo Dahu*, designed to foster both creativity and character in early childhood (Hakim et al., 2025). The study positions itself as a scholarly contribution that fills a void in the literature concerning the integration of modern pedagogical frameworks with traditional cultural values (Angel Sophia Intan et al., 2025). Theoretically, this research offers a new perspective within the fields of ethnopedagogy and contextual learning model development (Camiring-Picpican et al., 2025). Practically, it is expected to provide guidance for ECE educators in designing innovative and meaningful learning experiences that remain rooted in learners' cultural identity (Shih, 2022).

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the mechanisms for integrating STEAM with the values of *Maja Labo Dahu* and to evaluate its contribution to the development of creativity and character in early childhood

within the *Dana Mbojo* community (Ikhawan & Kartikasari, 2020). The research focuses on variables related to STEAM implementation, the internalization of local cultural values, and the development of children's creativity and character. The study employs a qualitative research design involving observations, document analysis, interviews, and literature reviews to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena (Imaniar et al., 2020).

This study aims to enrich scholarly discourse in the field of early childhood education, particularly regarding the integration of innovative learning models with local wisdom, and to make a substantive contribution to the development of culturally grounded educational theory and practice in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a library research approach with a qualitative-descriptive method to systematically examine concepts, theories, and previous research findings related to the integration of the STEAM learning model with the local wisdom values of *Maja Labo Dahu* in the context of developing creativity and character in early childhood. The data sources consist of reputable national and international journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, research reports, and official documents concerning character education, children's creativity, and literature on the practice of *Maja Labo Dahu* within the Dana Mbojo community. The selection of literature was conducted purposively based on relevance, academic credibility, recency of publication, and the availability of complete texts for in-depth analysis.

Data were analyzed using content analysis, which involved data reduction, thematic categorization, and conceptual synthesis to identify the interconnections among STEAM, *Maja Labo Dahu*, creativity, and children's character development. To ensure validity and reliability, the study applied source triangulation by comparing findings across multiple references and evaluating the quality of each source using the CRAAP criteria (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose). This approach enabled the development of a robust conceptual framework and provided theoretical contributions to the advancement of innovative learning models grounded in local wisdom for early childhood education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Integration of the STEAM Learning Model in the Context of Early Childhood Education

The Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) learning model is an interdisciplinary approach designed to foster critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, and innovation from an early age (Annisa et al., 2025). In the context of Early Childhood Education (ECE), STEAM is not merely understood as the integration of five academic disciplines; rather, it functions as a pedagogical framework that provides children with opportunities to explore phenomena holistically through guided play and project-based learning (Mia Andriyani, 2024). This approach aligns with the developmental characteristics of young children, who learn best through direct interaction with their environment, concrete objects, and meaningful sensorimotor experiences.

The integration of STEAM in ECE is grounded in several essential pedagogical principles. The principle of experiential learning positions direct experience as the core of the learning process, enabling children to experiment, observe, predict, and draw conclusions independently (Mia Andriyani, 2024). The child-centered approach emphasizes that instructional planning must consider the interests, needs, and developmental stages of the child. Additionally, collaborative and inquiry-based learning encourages children to ask questions, engage in discussions, work together, and construct knowledge through systematic exploration (Leung, 2023). The principles of creativity and design thinking provide space for children to design, create, and modify products imaginatively, while contextual learning ensures that STEAM activities are connected to everyday life, local culture, and the child's social environment (Atikah & Biru, 2024).

In practice, STEAM implementation in ECE can be carried out through a variety of activities that stimulate curiosity and experimentation. These include simple science experiments, the use of safe educational technology media, engineering constructions using natural materials or blocks, art activities that allow children to express ideas and emotions, and mathematical games that introduce concepts such as patterns, shapes, size, and measurement (Wahyuningsih et al., 2020). These activities are designed in an integrated manner so that children's learning experiences are not fragmented but instead form a comprehensive, engaging, and meaningful process.

The successful implementation of STEAM in ECE is strongly influenced by the teacher's competence as a facilitator and designer of the learning environment. Teachers must provide a stimulating, safe, and supportive space that encourages children's free exploration (Fitriana et al., 2024). They are also required to pose open-ended questions that stimulate higher-order thinking skills and provide appropriate scaffolding without hindering children's creativity or autonomy (Hakim et al., 2025). Furthermore, teacher-developed project-based learning should remain relevant to children's life experiences and rooted in local culture so that STEAM becomes not merely a technical method but a contextual and value-laden pedagogical process (Fitriana et al., 2024).

Through structured and meaningful integration, STEAM offers significant contributions to preparing children for the demands of 21st-century education and life. This approach strengthens early literacy in science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics, while simultaneously fostering a generation that is creative, innovative, adaptive, and reflective (Muzaki & Dawud, 2024). Moreover, the STEAM learning model provides substantial opportunities for synergy with local wisdom values, enabling early childhood education to develop holistically, remain culturally grounded, and stay responsive to advancements in science and technology.

Internalization of *Maja Labo Dahu* Local Wisdom Values in the Learning Process

The local wisdom of *Maja Labo Dahu*, originating from the traditions and culture of the Bima community, represents a philosophical foundation emphasizing honesty, moral responsibility, constructive shame, and personal integrity (Umar et al., 2025). This expression functions not only as an ethical

principle in social life but can also be recontextualized as a basis for character education, particularly at the early childhood education level (Idrus et al., 2022). Within modern pedagogical frameworks, these values serve as the foundation for integrating moral, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions as essential components of children's holistic development.

The term *Maja* refers to moral awareness to act virtuously and avoid reprehensible behavior, while *Labo Dahu* embodies a constructive sense of shame when one commits wrongdoing or violates social norms (Anwar Hasnun, 2020). Together, these values shape an ethical orientation that guides individuals to act with dignity, maintain harmonious social relations, and strengthen cultural identity (Amiruddin, 2019). In the educational context, such values are not merely conveyed through direct instruction but are internalized through habituation, teacher modeling, and contextually meaningful learning experiences.

The internalization of *Maja Labo Dahu* in early childhood learning is carried out through pedagogical approaches that highlight direct experience and social interaction (Tasrif & Komariah, 2021). Teachers act as behavioral models who demonstrate honesty, responsibility, respect, and cooperative attitudes in everyday classroom activities (Hikmawati & Winnuly, 2025). Modeling serves as a primary method because young children learn predominantly through observation and imitation, making teachers' behavior significantly influential in shaping children's character.

Learning activities are designed to create reflective moments, such as discussing the consequences of good and bad actions, understanding the importance of apologizing, and recognizing the rights and feelings of peers (Mia Andriyani, 2024). Through role-playing, local folktales, and simple discussions, the values of *Maja Labo Dahu* are conveyed in narratives that are accessible and meaningful to children. Culturally rooted storytelling becomes an effective tool in strengthening children's understanding of abstract moral concepts while simultaneously fostering appreciation for their cultural identity (Zuriatin et al., 2025).

Internalization is also reinforced through collaboratively established classroom rules. Children are guided to understand that honesty, responsibility, and constructive shame for inappropriate behavior are essential values to uphold. Simple routines such as tidying up toys, not taking others' belongings, waiting patiently for their turn, and asking permission before using something become concrete opportunities for children to practice these values. Teachers provide positive reinforcement when children demonstrate behaviors aligned with *Maja Labo Dahu*, thereby nurturing intrinsic motivation (Angel Sophia Intan et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the integration of these cultural values involves collaboration with families and the wider community. Local wisdom can only be optimally internalized when consistently practiced both at home and at school. Teachers communicate with parents about simple home-based practices such as encouraging children to greet others, apologize appropriately, speak truthfully, or assist with household tasks. Family involvement expands the sphere of value internalization and ensures the continuity of character education beyond the school environment (Atiaturrahmaniah et al., 2020).

Contextualizing *Maja Labo Dahu* in early childhood learning contributes significantly to character development. The value of honesty fosters personal integrity from an early age, constructive shame cultivates self-regulation and moral awareness, while respect nurtures children's social competence and empathy (Shih, 2022). Together, these values form a strong foundation for prosocial behavior that influences children's readiness for subsequent educational stages and their participation in society.

The internalization of *Maja Labo Dahu* also strengthens children's cultural identity. Through habituation, storytelling, and daily practices rooted in local traditions, children develop a sense of identity and pride in their cultural heritage. Character education grounded in local wisdom not only shapes positive behavior but also connects children with the values of their ancestors, producing a generation that is ethical, culturally rooted, and socially aware (Zuriatin et al., 2025).

Through planned and consistent integration, the values of *Maja Labo Dahu* become an essential instrument in shaping the character of young children. Internalization carried out through modeling, habituation, meaningful learning experiences, and family/community support ensures that this local wisdom remains relevant within modern educational contexts. This approach makes a substantial contribution to character formation while simultaneously preserving *Dana Mbojo's* cultural heritage.

The Contribution of Integrating STEAM and *Maja Labo Dahu* to the Development of Early Childhood Creativity and Character

The integration of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) learning model with the cultural values of *Maja Labo Dahu* offers a holistic and contextual educational approach for early childhood. STEAM emphasizes the development of cognitive abilities, creativity, critical thinking, scientific exploration, and innovative problem-solving, while *Maja Labo Dahu* instills moral, ethical, and social values that shape children's character sustainably (Tasrif & Komariah, 2021). The synergy between these two approaches creates a learning environment that not only stimulates intellectual and creative growth but also nurtures ethical, social, and emotional behavior.

This integration significantly contributes to the development of children's creativity. STEAM activities implemented within the framework of *Maja Labo Dahu* values enable children to develop imagination, design abilities, and innovation while still considering moral and social aspects (Anwar Hasnun, 2020). For example, in a simple project using recycled materials, children are encouraged to explore various solutions (design thinking), test hypotheses, and express creative ideas (Mawaddah et al., 2024). The values of responsibility and honesty embedded in *Maja Labo Dahu* are applied through habits such as maintaining the quality of their work, sharing tasks, and appreciating their peers' contributions, allowing creativity to grow within an ethical and collaborative framework.

The impact of this integration on developing children's morality and discipline is also profound. Children learn to recognize the consequences of their actions, differentiate between right and wrong, and internalize a constructive sense of shame as part of self-control. This process involves reflective activities,

moral dialogue, and the application of values in daily life, whether through play, collaborative projects, or social interactions (Fitriana et al., 2024). Discipline emerges naturally as children understand that rules and moral values are not merely formal obligations, but reflections of personal integrity and healthy social relationships.

The integration of STEAM and *Maja Labo Dahu* also strengthens children's courage and resilience in facing challenges. Scientific experiments, simple engineering tasks, artistic activities, and mathematical games require children to try, fail, and try again. The moral foundation of *Maja Labo Dahu* guides children to learn from mistakes with a sense of responsibility and respect for the learning process (Rasyid et al., 2025). This helps shape resilient, adaptive, and confident individuals who uphold ethical and moral norms.

Moreover, this integration supports the development of children's social-emotional competencies. Children learn to collaborate in group projects, communicate effectively, share ideas, and manage conflicts constructively. The values of *Maja Labo Dahu* emphasize respect, awareness of how actions affect others, and empathy, enabling children to become not only cognitively capable but also socially positive, responsible, and caring toward their environment (Idrus et al., 2022). This fosters prosocial behavior that strengthens group harmony and builds healthy interpersonal relationships.

The integration of STEAM and *Maja Labo Dahu* also contributes to the development of moral and ethical creativity. Children learn to make creative decisions by considering their moral and social consequences. For instance, during art projects or scientific activities, they are trained to think critically about the choice of materials, procedures, and the impact on peers and the environment (Anwar Hasnun, 2020). This develops individuals who are not only innovative but also responsible and reflective.

This approach fosters cultural awareness from an early age. By applying local values within the context of STEAM activities, children learn to appreciate and understand their cultural identity. This establishes a strong foundation for character development rooted in local wisdom while preparing children to navigate global challenges. Thus, integrating STEAM with *Maja Labo Dahu* equips children with academic and creative abilities while cultivating holistic character: honesty, discipline, responsibility, courage, creativity, and strong social awareness.

The combination of STEAM and *Maja Labo Dahu* creates a comprehensive and contextual learning experience. Children gain opportunities to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills while strengthening moral, ethical, and cultural character. This integrated approach prepares young generations to be adaptive, innovative, and virtuous, capable of facing future educational and social challenges, and grounded in strong cultural identity and moral awareness.

CONCLUSION

The integration of the STEAM learning model with the local wisdom of *Maja Labo Dahu* offers a meaningful and contextually grounded contribution to early childhood education, demonstrating that cognitive and creative development can be strengthened without detaching children from their cultural and moral foundations. This study shows that a pedagogical framework combining

exploratory, interdisciplinary learning with culturally embedded values is not only feasible but also essential for shaping young learners who are innovative, ethically responsible, and socially aware. By situating STEAM within the moral principles of honesty, responsibility, respect, and constructive self-awareness, the model provides educators with a holistic approach that enriches both intellectual growth and character formation. The relevance of this integration becomes increasingly significant as Indonesia navigates 21st-century educational demands while striving to preserve local identity. Thus, this research underscores the importance of developing learning models that bridge global competencies and local values, offering a foundation for further scholarly exploration and practical implementation in culturally diverse educational settings.

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