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Teaching Values through Literature and Advancing SDG 4: A UNESCO-Based Analysis of Peace, Justice, and Equality in English Literary Works

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.63230/jocsis.2.4.237>

Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: February 21, 2026
Final Revised: May 3, 2026
Accepted: June 8, 2026
First Available Online: July 6, 2026
Publication Date: December 27, 2026

Keywords:

English Literature;
Literature Teaching;
Peace;
UNESCO Core Values;
Values Education.

ABSTRACT

Objective: Investigating the representation of UNESCO core values in selected literary works taught in an English Literature program and explores their contribution to values-based education. **Method:** The research employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through textual analysis of selected literary works, including Julius Caesar, Othello, King Lear, Oedipus, Goblin Market, and When I Was One-and-Twenty. The data were interpreted using UNESCO's framework of core human values. **Results:** The findings reveal that the selected literary works prominently represent the values of peace, justice, and equality. These values are reflected through characters' moral struggles, ethical decisions, social relationships, and responses to power, prejudice, and responsibility. The analysis shows that literary texts provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage critically with social and moral issues while developing empathy, ethical awareness, and respect for diversity. **Novelty:** Providing a novel contribution by examining how English literary works function as pedagogical resources for integrating UNESCO core values particularly peace, justice, and equality into literature teaching in higher education. It demonstrates that literary narratives not only enhance students' literary competence but also foster character development, ethical awareness, and values-based learning. Furthermore, the study extends the discourse on literature education by highlighting its contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly Target 4.7, through promoting global citizenship, respect for human rights, cultural diversity, and a culture of peace.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian education is mandated to cultivate not only students' cognitive abilities but also human virtues such as kindness, honesty, compassion, peace, and non-violence (Dikbud, 2016; Kemendikbud, 2003). National education is defined as education grounded in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, rooted in religious and cultural values, and responsive to societal change (Dikbud, 2016). Its function is to develop learners into faithful, knowledgeable, creative, independent, and responsible citizens who contribute to a dignified national civilization (Kemendikbud, 2003). These aims resonate with Ki Hajar Dewantara's view of education as a cultural endeavor that nurtures students' intellectual, emotional, and moral growth through the principles of *asah*, *asih*, and *asuh* (Dewantara, 1977).

This educational perspective is closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes not only equitable access to education but also the development of learners' values, attitudes, and competencies for sustainable development. Specifically, Target 4.7 highlights the importance of education in fostering global citizenship, respect for human rights, cultural diversity, gender equality, social justice, and a culture of peace. In this context, literature provides a powerful educational medium because literary works encourage learners to critically engage with diverse human experiences, ethical dilemmas, and social issues. Therefore, integrating UNESCO core values through literature teaching represents a

meaningful pedagogical strategy for promoting values-based education while supporting the broader objectives of SDG 4 in higher education.

Within this national and philosophical framework, literature teaching in higher education is expected to address value-related issues rather than limiting itself to formal literary analysis (Doecke et al., 2019; Pulimeno et al., 2020). Research indicates that literary instruction has increasingly been associated with goals such as cultural understanding and personal engagement (Svensson & Karlsson, 2020; Ali Imron & Nugrahani, 2019). Approaches like the Personal Growth Approach and the Dialogic Model explicitly position literature as a medium for value exploration, enabling students to connect texts with their experiences, emotions, and moral reasoning (Yusufova, 2020; Seymour et al., 2020). These perspectives affirm that literature teaching is inherently value-laden and should support value education for all students.

However, there is evidence that this potential is not yet fully realized in practice. A preliminary reflection on literature teaching in the English Department of a Muhammadiyah University in East Java (MUEJ) revealed that explicit value discussions in class were limited. The department offers core literature courses—Introduction to Literature, Prose Appreciation, Poetry Appreciation, and Drama Appreciation—to approximately 200 students from various regions of Indonesia and some ASEAN countries, all of whom are Muslim and generally affiliated with Muhammadiyah or Nahdlatul Ulama (UMSurabaya, 2021). Four lecturers (three active, one inactive) are responsible for these courses. Classroom observations over 16 meetings per class, using lectures, discussions, and presentations, showed that literary works were mainly treated as objects of critical analysis with minimal attention to the values embedded in texts. Students were encouraged to present and discuss their interpretations, and lecturers facilitated interaction and provided feedback, yet value issues rarely emerged explicitly in these activities.

These observations are consistent with broader findings in Indonesian English departments. Basthomi (2003) reported that literature-related theses at Malang State University tended to focus on thematic or theoretical analysis—such as psychoanalysis, feminism, or Marxism—rather than on pedagogical questions of value education. A similar pattern appeared in bachelor theses at MUEJ between 2018 and 2021, which seldom addressed value issues despite literature’s inherently value-bound character (Basthomi, 2003; UMSurabaya, 2021). Such tendencies suggest a gap between the value-oriented nature of literature and the predominantly disciplinary orientation of literature teaching (Towndrow & Kwek, 2017). Scholars argue that literature teaching should foreground affective and ethical dimensions, as the primary goal of literary learning is to appreciate societal values rather than merely acquiring cognitive knowledge about texts (Suwadi, 2021).

Theoretical discussions further highlight literature’s capacity to foster human values. Literary works invite readers to engage with “various problems of the world” and with “man’s unconquerable mind,” offering renewed insight into language, life, and the significance of everyday experience (Hart et al., 2020; Tiro, 2010). Literature remains relevant in addressing contemporary challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and social injustice related to race, gender, and class (Bump, 2021). Stories can organize human experience, evoke emotion, and serve as the “soul” of a culture, helping readers understand their own and others’ cultures, religions, and languages (Livo, 2003; Burnett et al., 2018; Rowland & Marwaha, 2018). Values are embedded in characters, plots, settings, and narrative voices, and are closely linked to shifts in readers’ philosophical and ideological standpoints (Bakhtin, 1981; Klancher, 2020).

Several scholars explain this through the concepts of poetic and narrative thinking. Poetic thinking emphasizes harmony, receptiveness, and celebration rather than domination, and is often activated through engagement with art and literature (Bohlin, 2005; Trzebiński et al., 2021). Narrative thinking involves understanding people, events, and motives through stories, offering deep insight into life situations and value choices (Prahladaiah, 2021). These forms of thinking illustrate why literary texts can effectively mediate values and why literary teaching is closely related to value formation (Burnett et al., 2018; Rowland & Marwaha, 2018).

Historical and contemporary literary criticism has also treated values as a legitimate focus of analysis. Religious approaches, for instance, examine the role of faith and theology in early modern and later literary works, demonstrating that ethical and spiritual concerns persist across periods despite the prominence of social, economic, and political themes (Ziolkowski, 2021; Blamires, 2020; Walton, 2019; Chakraborty, 2021). Nevertheless, classroom discussions often prioritize political, racial, and post-colonial issues, leaving the complexity of values and aesthetic excellence relatively under-explored (Cox, 2011). Scholars therefore agree that literature teaching inevitably involves values and that more systematic attention should be given to values in relation to lecturers, students, texts, and classroom experiences (Bakhtin, 1981; Hart et al., 2020; Tiro, 2010).

The limited attention to values can be linked to differing value standpoints among lecturers, students, and literary works, and to the perceived sensitivity of issues such as religion in the classroom (Bakhtin, 1981; Basthomi, 2003; Mambu, 2014; UMSurabaya, 2021). Mambu (2014) illustrates how attempts to discuss religious values may encounter student resistance and notes the scarcity of research on value issues in literature teaching, particularly in religion-affiliated universities. This lack of awareness risks neglecting the potential of values-based literature to support the fundamental educational goal of developing the whole person physically, intellectually, and spiritually (Dewantara, 1977; Diknas, 2003).

Against this backdrop, the present study positions core values as an embedded dimension of literature teaching in a Muhammadiyah university context. It responds to growing concern about value aspects in literary education by exploring lecturers' and students' views of core values and tracing how such values may emerge through literary analysis, classroom experiences, and material selection (Bakhtin, 1981; Hart et al., 2020). Muhammadiyah's historical openness to global intellectual currents and its commitment to dialogue and universal humanity provide a conducive context for this exploration (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015). The organization's global orientation and its emphasis on pluralism and cooperation resonate with broader educational discourses on values and human dignity (Ali, 2004; UNESCO, 2002).

In this study, the link between Muhammadiyah's value orientation and UNESCO's framework becomes a central point. Muhammadiyah values, which are already extensively taught through Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadian courses, intersect with UNESCO's eight core values: health and harmony with nature, truth and wisdom, love and compassion, creativity and appreciation for beauty, peace and justice, sustainable human development, national unity and global solidarity, and global religiosity (UNESCO, 2002). These core values are particularly relevant in value-laden higher education institutions, where literature teaching can serve as a strategic site for exploring and embodying them in educational practice (UNESCO, 2002; PP Muhammadiyah, 2015). This study concerns the major problem of how core values can be contained in literary works and possibly revealed during the teaching-learning process. The main research problems are specified into the following

question: How do UNESCO's core values emerge in teaching literature through literary analysis, classroom experiences, and selected materials?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education and values in Dewantara and UNESCO

Education, in Ki Hajar Dewantara's view, is a cultural effort to guide the harmonious growth of children's morality, intellect, and body so that they achieve physical and spiritual well-being as persons and citizens (Dewantara, 1977). Education must attend to individual nature and environmental influences and remain rooted in national identity, arts, religion, and narrative traditions to promote human dignity and neutralize destructive impulses in the human soul (Dewantara, 1977). Dewantara's Trikon conception of the soul, consisting of *cipta* (thought), *rasa* (feeling), and *karsa* (will), underscores that character emerges from the integration of cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions and that all three are essential for forming virtuous and civilized human beings (Dewantara, 1977).

UNESCO shares this holistic understanding of education and warns that contemporary schooling often overemphasizes knowledge and technical skills at the expense of values (UNESCO, 2002; Chien & Liao, 2021; Miller, 2021; Morris, 2022). In response to materialism and instrumental views of education, UNESCO urges governments to design curricula and pedagogy that intentionally nurture moral and spiritual development so that learners become "complete persons" rather than merely skilled workers (UNESCO, 2002). The proposed holistic education approach assumes that human beings are multidimensional and therefore require learning experiences that engage body, mind, and spirit in an integrated way (UNESCO, 2002; Chien & Liao, 2021).

In this perspective, it is neither possible nor desirable to separate education from values. Scholars argue that teaching always involves value transmission, whether intentionally planned or conveyed implicitly through classroom interaction and institutional culture (Halstead & Taylor, 1996; Cubukcu, 2014). Narvaez, cited in Cubukcu (2014), notes that lecturers must choose between leaving values to the covert curriculum or addressing them explicitly in formal instruction. If institutions expect students to internalize values compatible with their vision and mission, then value issues need to be discussed deliberately in class (Halstead & Taylor, 1996; UNESCO, 2002).

Debates and models of values education

Explicit value teaching remains controversial in plural and multicultural societies, where prescribing particular values as "the right ones" may be perceived as problematic or oppressive (Levinson, 2019; Edling & Simmie, 2020). Studies show that many higher education lecturers either avoid teaching values altogether or rely mainly on implicit value messages embedded in subject content, while some students object to value discussions and insist that education should focus on efficient transfer of facts free from moral imposition (Sika, 2012; Pailliolet, as cited in Sika, 2012; Levinson, 2019). Sandin (2012) similarly found that university students and lecturers often resist explicitly integrating values into the curriculum because of modernist assumptions that knowledge and research, rather than values, provide neutral grounds for judgment.

At the same time, a substantial body of literature supports the inclusion of values in teaching. Halstead and Taylor (1996) contend that it is unrealistic to deliver knowledge without at least implicitly conveying values. Morrison (2002) goes further, insisting that values should be taught explicitly and systematically through well-designed strategies rather

than left to chance. She emphasizes that different possibilities and strategies for value education matter greatly because, without them, students may internalize values uncritically or in distorted ways (Morrison, 2002). Halstead and Taylor (1996) agree that if value issues are not addressed consciously and coherently, students may misunderstand or misapply the values embedded in educational practices. Taken together, these arguments suggest that education—and literary education in particular—is inherently value-laden whether or not this is acknowledged by lecturers (Halstead & Taylor, 1996; Morrison, 2002; Cubukcu, 2014).

Straughan (2012) identifies four models of values education: value transmission, value neutrality, value clarification, and values across the curriculum. Value transmission and value neutrality rely largely on implicit or less conscious approaches, while value clarification and values across the curriculum represent more explicit and reflective strategies (Straughan, 2012). In value transmission, lecturers inevitably pass on values through their behavior, language, and expectations, even when these are not planned as learning outcomes; here the hidden curriculum plays a central role (Straughan, 2012; Margolis, 2001). In value neutrality, lecturers present controversial issues for discussion but avoid expressing their own value positions, aiming to facilitate debate rather than prescribe particular norms (Straughan, 2012).

Value clarification focuses on helping students become aware of and reflect on their existing values, emphasizing the process of valuing rather than the transmission of fixed content (Straughan, 2012). Strategies include discussions, games, and role-play to enable students to articulate, examine, and possibly revise their value commitments (Straughan, 2012). The “values across the curriculum” model combines elements of transmission and clarification, recognizing that all subjects—including literature—have moral dimensions while also encouraging explicit reflection and dialogue on value issues (Straughan, 2012). This combined model assumes that moral dimensions are part of human nature, but also that students need conscious guidance to recognize and develop their values (Rokeach, 1973; Straughan, 2012).

Rokeach’s theory of values provides a useful underpinning for more conscious approaches. He argues that values differ from attitudes in their stability and centrality and are often taught in a relatively absolute, dogmatic manner (Rokeach, 1973). Successful value learning, even when somewhat dogmatic, can result in deeply internalized and enduring value orientations, which in turn shape attitudes and behaviors (Rokeach, 1973). In contrast, Hofstede and Inglehart emphasize that many values operate at a largely unconscious level as part of the taken-for-granted cultural environment; individuals may not be fully aware of the value systems that influence their judgments (Hofstede et al., 2010; Inglehart, 2008). This distinction helps explain why explicit value programs are more common in earlier educational levels, whereas higher education often relies on implicit, hidden curricula (Margolis, 2001; Al-Hooli & Shammari, 2009).

Despite these different approaches, there is broad consensus that values should be a concern of the curriculum and not left entirely outside formal planning (Al-Hooli & Shammari, 2009; Barsky, 2019; Taylor & Richards, 2018). Teaching—particularly literature teaching—inevitably reflects values in classroom rituals, instructional methods, assessment practices, and curriculum design (Barahate, 2014). For this reason, literature classes are well placed to highlight value issues and to foster students’ capacity for ethical judgment and reflection on human experience (Beach et al., 2011; Cox, 2011).

Core values in literature teaching

As part of language education, literature occupies an established curricular position because of its cultural, aesthetic, and human significance, yet the value dimension is often underdeveloped (Beach et al., 2011; Cox, 2011). Research shows a recurrent gap between official curricular rhetoric and classroom practice. Işıklı and Tarakçıoğlu (2017) found that English lecturers perceive the official curriculum as emphasizing literary tools and status while obscuring deeper human concerns that should be central to literary study. Sidhu and Fook (2010) similarly reported that a large portion of class time was devoted to literary elements and character study, whereas discussions of moral values occupied only a small fraction of instruction. These findings suggest that literature's potential for value education is not fully realized in practice (Cox, 2011; Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017).

Theoretically, literary texts invite readers to evaluate language, signs, and reality in ways that can transform both individuals and societies (Widdowson, 1984; Hart et al., 2020). Literature offers opportunities for readers to reconsider the relationship between text and world, thereby developing new perspectives on life and human relationships (Widdowson, 1984; Hart et al., 2020). Empirical and conceptual studies show that literature teaching can foster intercultural and global awareness, empathy, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and various forms of literacy (Karasik & Pomortseva, 2015; Pardede, 2019; Sosiowati, 2007). When taught meaningfully and enjoyably, literature is more likely to have a lasting impact on learners' linguistic and cultural development (Collie & Stephen, 1987; Díaz-Pérez et al., 2013). Such outcomes respond directly to global challenges that demand flexibility, cultural adaptability, and global awareness (Wagner, 2008; Díaz-Pérez et al., 2013; Karasik & Pomortseva, 2015).

Rosenblatt's transactional theory offers a particularly strong rationale for integrating values into literature teaching. She argues that meaning arises from a transaction between text and reader in which the reader's emotions, thoughts, memories, and background knowledge all play a part (Rosenblatt, 1988). Literary reading thus provides not only information but also lived-through experience, enabling readers to "live through" situations and value conflicts in ways that extend their understanding of themselves and others (Bellour, 2012; Bohlin, 2005; Rosenblatt, 1988). Close reading, in this view, involves careful attention to both textual features and personal responses; it encourages readers to compare their own values with those represented in works from different times and contexts (Rosenblatt, 1988). Bakhtin's notion of the open, context-dependent nature of discourse reinforces this, suggesting that new contexts can always generate new meanings and value perspectives (Bakhtin, 1981).

From a curricular standpoint, these theories and findings align with the graduate competency standards of the participating English Department, which explicitly emphasize religious devotion, human values, civic responsibility, respect for diversity, social sensitivity, rule-abiding behavior, academic ethics, responsibility, independence, entrepreneurship, and the development of students' attitudes and values based on local wisdom and noble character (DIKNAS, 2003; PP Muhammadiyah, 2015). Literature courses – Introduction to Literature, Prose Appreciation, Poetry Appreciation, and Drama Appreciation – are positioned as intensive reading subjects that involve engaging with poems, short stories, novels, plays, and films through analysis, interpretation, and critical thinking (Beach et al., 2011). While current course goals highlight literary competence and active learning, they do not explicitly articulate how literature should be used as a vehicle for value exploration, leaving much to individual lecturers' discretion (Sidhu & Fook, 2010; Cox, 2011).

Theoretical framework for core values in literary teaching

Building on these theoretical, legal, and institutional foundations, the present study conceptualizes core values as embedded in literary teaching rather than as external add-ons (Dewantara, 1977; DIKNAS, 2003; UNESCO, 2002; PP Muhammadiyah, 2015). It responds to the limited attention to value aspects in literature teaching in English departments, especially within Muhammadiyah universities, and to the scarcity of research that examines how core values emerge in literary analysis, classroom experiences, and material selection (Mambu, 2014; UMSurabaya, 2021; Beach et al., 2011). Drawing on Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy, the National Education Law, Muhammadiyah's educational vision, and UNESCO's holistic framework, the study investigates lecturers' and students' views of values in literature teaching and traces how core values can be discerned in the practices of literature classrooms (Dewantara, 1977; DIKNAS, 2003; PP Muhammadiyah, 2015; UNESCO, 2002).

The study uses these foundations to guide its data collection and analysis, examining how core values appear in literary analysis tasks, classroom interaction, and material selection, and how lecturers and students understand and negotiate value issues in literary learning (Halstead & Taylor, 1996; Morrison, 2002; Barsky, 2019). The expected outcome is to inform curricular reform that is more explicitly value-oriented and to support character development for both students and lecturers through literature teaching (Al-Hooli & Shammari, 2009; Taylor & Richards, 2018; Barahate, 2014).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

The study adopted a qualitative case study design to investigate lecturers' and students' views of values and core values in literature teaching and to trace how these values emerge through literary analysis, classroom experience, and selected materials. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in depth exploration of issues in their real-life context using multiple data sources such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Duff, 2008). Case study methodology was considered appropriate as it focuses on bounded systems, addresses "how" and "why" questions, and requires triangulation of various forms of evidence over time (Yin, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Duff, 2008). The study followed Yin's main stages – developing a theoretical framework, selecting cases, conducting fieldwork, and integrating findings – while tailoring them to the context of core values in literature teaching.

Setting, participants, and researcher role

The research was conducted at a Muhammadiyah University in East Java (pseudonym: MUEJ), a value-oriented Islamic institution with approximately 7,000 Muslim students and lecturers and a strong emphasis on moral and religious formation. The English Department, accredited B, offers core literature courses (Introduction to Literature, Prose Appreciation, Drama Appreciation, Poetry Appreciation) and several elective literature subjects, and explicitly prioritizes morality, intellectuality, synergy, and entrepreneurship in its vision (UMSurabaya, 2015). Data collection took place during the second semester of the 2019/2020 academic year across about 14 meetings per course, covering literary analysis activities, interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

Participants consisted of three purposively selected literature lecturers (Mulya, Sita, Prawira – pseudonyms) who met criteria related to academic qualification, literary background, and functional rank, and several groups of students: a main group of 31

students in drama and poetry classes and smaller sub-groups selected through criterion and maximum-variation sampling for interviews and focused observation (Glesne, 2016). Lecturers and students were chosen to ensure relevant experience with literary teaching and value issues. The researcher, herself a literature lecturer at the institution, acted as a participant-observer with close collegial relations to the lecturers, facilitating access and extended engagement while also briefing lecturers on how to foreground value aspects in literary analysis and classroom interaction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Procedures and data collection

Data collection procedures were organized around two main research questions: lecturers' and students' views of including UNESCO core values in literature teaching, and the emergence of those core values through texts, classroom experiences, and material selection. For views, lecturers completed two questionnaires on their understanding of core values and their preferred UNESCO values for teaching, followed by semi structured interviews focusing on the place of core values and religious values in literature teaching (Halstead & Taylor, 1996). Students likewise responded to questionnaires on core values and were interviewed about their expectations and experiences of value integration in literature learning.

To explore the emergence of UNESCO's eight core values in practice, lecturers guided students through structured literary analysis tasks. Students were introduced to UNESCO's core values, divided into eight groups, assigned literary texts, and asked to identify value manifestations related to a specific core value in themes, characters, conflicts, and settings; their findings were compiled in analysis tables, presented in class, and later re examined by the researcher (UNESCO, 2002). Classroom experiences related to values were documented through lecturer field notes on students' behavior, while interviews with lecturers probed value considerations in text selection and teaching strategies. Multiple data sources lecturers and students, their writings, institutional documents, classroom observations, and field notes were used to enable triangulation and to strengthen credibility (Duff, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis

Data analysis combined transcription, thematic coding, and inductive case analysis. Spoken data from interviews and classroom interactions were transcribed using a broad version of Prior's approach, focusing on the content of value-related themes while recognising interviews as social practices where meaning is co constructed (Prior, 2010; Talmy, 2010). Values were then identified in two steps: initial marking of phrases or episodes indicating specific values, followed by thematic analysis of emerging patterns in relation to the research questions and UNESCO's core values (UNESCO, 2002). Validity was enhanced through triangulation, negative case analysis, clarification of bias, and thick description in line with Glesne (2006) and Talmy (2010).

An inductive approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to build categories from the data, comparing how each lecturer understood and enacted value-related aspects of literary texts and classroom practice. After open coding, axial coding was applied to relate categories to central phenomena, causal conditions, contextual factors, strategies, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Frequencies and depth of references to UNESCO core values in classroom events and students' work were considered when describing each case. Together, these procedures produced a contextualized, multi perspective account of how lecturers and

students understand and enact core values in literature teaching at MUEJ (Yin, 2003; Duff, 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Emergence of UNESCO core values in literature teaching (expanded quotations)

This chapter shows how UNESCO's eight core values emerge in literature classes through students' literary analysis, classroom experiences, and lecturers' material selection. The analysis draws not only on categorizations but also on direct quotations from texts, students, and lecturers to illustrate how values are actually articulated and negotiated in practice.

Core values in students' literary analysis

Students' term papers reveal that they are able to connect specific textual details with UNESCO's value clusters when explicitly guided to do so. For health and harmony with nature, one group working on Wordsworth's "Daffodils" concludes that the poem teaches "Holistic Health" because "people have to enjoy and be happy in every situation and condition. The people will be able to continue to adapt to the environment wherever he is and ignore anything that will disturb them at work" (HHN/HH/Daff-WW). They justify this interpretation by citing the closing stanza:

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in a pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils." (Daffodils)

In their commentary, students explain that the "inward eye" and "bliss of solitude" show how nature continues to heal the speaker mentally even when he is alone and troubled, which they link directly to emotional resilience and inner harmony.[1]

In drama, students see "respect for life" and psychological health in characters' speeches and transformations. When analyzing King Lear, they highlight Lear's late self-recognition:

"Pray do not mock:
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less,
And to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind." (King Lear, Act 4, Scene 7)

Students argue that this admission of frailty and limited mental capacity marks a shift from arrogant power to humble acceptance, which they interpret as an important step toward wisdom and reconciliation (HHN/PF/KL-WS). For them, this scene embodies the value of acknowledging human limitation and honoring life even in weakness.

Under truth and wisdom, students focus on critical thinking and misjudgment. In King Lear, they emphasize that the king "endures a traumatic experience but emerges as a man 'more sinned against than sinning' and as one who has attained true insight" (TW/CTHT/KL-WS). They connect this to his earlier error in disinheriting Cordelia,

pointing out that reliance on flattery instead of character leads to disaster. The quotation “Let the great gods / That keep this dreadful pudder o’er our heads / Find out their enemies now” is read as an appeal to a higher moral order that exposes falsehood and punishes injustice.

Students also see peace and justice in speeches where characters reflect on oppression and the legitimacy of resistance. Commenting on Cassius’s lines in *Julius Caesar*:

“Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.” (*Julius Caesar*, Act 1, Scene 3)

They note that Cassius understands both the psychological burden of “worldly bars” and the dangerous claim that the oppressed “never lack power” to end their own lives or challenge tyranny (HHN/PF/JS-WS). They argue that this passage invites reflection on human dignity, the limits of power, and the ethics of political violence, which they connect to UNESCO’s themes of peace, justice, and human rights.[2][1]

Overall, these quotations and student commentaries indicate that when prompted, students can read classical texts through a value lens, grounding their interpretations in textual evidence while relating them to contemporary concerns (Hart et al., 2020; Rosenblatt, 1988).

Core values in classroom experiences

Lecturer interviews provide rich evidence of how core values are enacted in classroom relationships and responses to student behavior. When recalling an alleged plagiarism incident, Mulya describes his approach in detail:

“I remember asking one student accused of copying other students’ work. But then I found out that it happened out of misunderstanding. I asked her to see me and explained what happened. I found she just misunderstood and didn’t mean to cheat. The point is always to keep positive thinking and communicate before make any judgment. I believe that’s what education is all about. Well, perhaps I learned from them.” (Interview, April 3, 2019)

He goes on to state simply: “Because I care about my students.” These statements illustrate values of compassion, fairness, and respect for students’ dignity. Rather than immediately punishing, he practices due process, empathy, and “positive thinking,” which aligns with UNESCO’s emphasis on justice, care, and non-discrimination in education.

Mulya also articulates a clear philosophy of shared authority and student agency:

“It would be great to have students engaged in a classroom communication in which they can freely move across the room, ask questions, respond and comment. And as the class progress, we’re even aware of the time. And as we check the watch, we just find that there’s one-minute left, and we must hurry up and tidy up our stuffs, but then they still want to continues because they are in the peak of discussion, and it’s too bad that the time is up. Such thing cannot be

set up. It happens as a result of giving the students trust and ‘privilege’ to have authority of the class.” (Interview, April 3, 2019)

He adds that the lecturer “just guide the young people to where they need to go” and warns against “spoon-feeding too much to them... they don’t know how to do things on their own.” Here, the values of trust, collaboration, self-esteem, and future orientation are not abstract; they are expressed through the concrete goal of a class where students “own” the discussion and time passes unnoticed because engagement is high.

Sita uses a different but complementary metaphor to stress students’ responsibility and the long-term horizon of value education:

“I cannot ‘force-feed’ information to my students. Like a coach of a football team, once the game starts, the coach’s job is done. Players are on their own to win the game. Much the same is true with students. There is nothing that the lecture can do once the students leave the classroom. Lecturers are done and can only hope that the lessons, resources, information, and values they helped them to attain will allow them to learn, win, and survive in the future.” (Interview, March 6, 2019)

This quote explicitly frames values alongside “lessons, resources, information” as tools students will need to “win, and survive in the future,” which resonates with UNESCO’s view of education for sustainable human development and lifelong learning.

Prawira, meanwhile, emphasizes the link between literary study and social responsibility. He insists that students “have to feel that what they learn from literary works is not only what happen to whom, where, when and why, but also how they may help solve the problem in the future” (Interview, April 10, 2019). By shifting attention from narrative facts to “how they may help solve the problem,” he foregrounds values of caring, problem solving, and future-oriented citizenship key aspects of core values such as peace, justice, and sustainable development.

Together, these quotations show that lecturers are not only aware of values but also consciously articulate and model them: care in handling misconduct, trust and shared authority in classroom management, and explicit linking of literature to life, responsibility, and the future.

Core values in material selection and framework

Lecturers’ comments on text selection further demonstrate a value-conscious orientation. They describe preferring works like *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Oedipus* precisely because these texts expose students to “various problems of the world” and to “man’s unconquerable mind with its humanizing influence and the revelation of the significance of everyday life,” echoing the idea that literature should serve as a resource for value exploration as well as aesthetic appreciation (Hart et al., 2020; Widdowson, 1984).

At the same time, lecturers acknowledge constraints: official syllabi emphasize literary competence, time is limited, and not all colleagues feel comfortable addressing sensitive value issues. Some echo broader concerns noted in the literature that explicit value talk can feel risky in diverse classrooms and that many teachers rely instead on the hidden curriculum (Levinson, 2019; Edling & Simmie, 2020; Margolis, 2001). These tensions help explain why, despite strong implicit value content, the integration of UNESCO’s core values is still uneven.

Framed by Ki Hajar Dewantara's holistic conception of education, the Indonesian National Education System Law, Muhammadiyah's value-laden mission, and UNESCO's eight core values, the study uses these quotations to argue that literature teaching at MUEJ already embodies many core values in practice but would benefit from more explicit, systematic planning so that such values are not left to chance (Dewantara, 1977; Diknas, 2003; PP Muhammadiyah, 2015; UNESCO, 2002).

Discussion

Emergence of core values in literature teaching

Core values in literary works

The findings show that students were able to identify all eight UNESCO core values in the drama and poetry texts used in class, confirming literature's potential as a medium for integrated value education. For health and harmony with nature, students related images of nature, bodily fragility, and emotional recovery to "holistic health," "respect for life," and psychological balance. This resonates with UNESCO's emphasis on respect for natural and cultural heritage and on educating citizens who are responsible toward the environment and future generations (UNESCO, 2008; Angelstam et al., 2019). It also aligns with research that links spiritual well-being, longevity, and quality of life, showing that human health depends not only on physical fitness but also on inner, spiritual, and ecological harmony (Zimmer et al., 2016; World Health Organization, 2015).

In the cluster truth and wisdom, students recognized the importance of critical and holistic thinking, enlightenment, and intellectual integrity in the narrative arcs of tragic heroes and in the interpretive work required of readers. Their comments that characters "emerge with true insight" after misjudgment echo contemporary scholarship on practical wisdom as a key resource for living together in religiously and culturally diverse societies (Ding & Yu, 2022; Huda et al., 2020). Discussions of misinterpretation, manipulation, and self-deception in the plays correspond to Huda's argument that wisdom and virtue have "great didactic and ethical significance" in the post-COVID-19 era, where ethical discernment is needed to navigate complex information and moral dilemmas (Huda et al., 2020).

The cluster love and compassion appeared in students' attention to loyalty, self-sacrifice, honesty, and empathy in relationships. They described themes such as "love for one's self," "appreciation of one's self-worth," "giving without expecting anything in return," and "compassion for the less fortunate" as central to key scenes. This interpretation echoes discussions of love and compassion in value education and religious education, which stress the need for concrete pedagogical strategies habituation, exemplary behavior, and reflective learning—to internalize these values (Sukiman et al., 2021). The students' emphasis on honesty, self-discipline, and courage to speak the truth indicates that literary texts can function as prompts for self-evaluation and moral imagination when teaching intentionally invites such reflection (Huda, 2020).

Regarding creativity and appreciation for beauty, students highlighted imagination, intuitive insight, and aesthetic experience in the use of imagery, symbolism, and narrative structure. They linked "novel ideas," "new inventions," and "aesthetic powers" to the capacity of literature to generate new perspectives and to foster gratitude for the "beauty and interrelationships of all creation." These observations correspond to scholarship arguing that creativity involves both originality and quality and that judgments of creativity are influenced by perceptual fluency and context (Christensen et al., 2020). They also fit with

work in technical and professional communication showing that aesthetic appreciation of form can deepen engagement and ethical awareness (Hardesty & Hollinger, 2020).[2][1]

For peace and justice, students interpreted conflicts over power, oppression, and unfair treatment through values such as human rights, equality, non-violence, and social responsibility. Their readings support broader international discourses that treat education as a key site for forming future leaders who understand ethics, responsibility, and accountability and who can foster both economic value and social justice (Rasche & Waddock, 2021). The Berlin conference's conclusion that education can both fuel and transform violent narratives underscores the need to address issues of power, privilege, and oppression in curriculum content and pedagogy (Servaes, 2010).

In the cluster sustainable human development, students associated simplicity of lifestyle, ecological concern, and economic justice with characters' choices and consequences. This aligns with literature emphasizing that sustainable development requires not only policy but also value change at the level of attitudes, consumption habits, and organizational culture (Baer, 2003; Chams & García-Blandón, 2019; Yumashev et al., 2020). Through literary narratives, students encountered the social and personal impacts of greed, injustice, or short-sighted leadership, which can support the internalization of sustainability values.

National unity and global solidarity were identified in themes of collective identity, democratic participation, and responsible citizenship. Students' focus on "freedom of thought and expression," "equal access to opportunities," and "active and responsible citizenship" echoes research on the need to cultivate unity and diversity together, especially in societies facing polarization and global interdependence (Killeen & Kiware, 2020; Chunqiu, 2019; Nehez & Blossing, 2022). The literary texts provided a relatively safe space to explore tensions among loyalty, dissent, and common good.

Finally, global spirituality was seen in references to transcendence, divine justice, and the search for meaning. Students' attention to "a spiritual vision," "a sense of the divine in all life," and "faith in the Sacred Source" fits with broader attempts to clarify the concepts of spirituality, religion, and faith as overlapping but distinct, each contributing to human well-being and ethical orientation (Chirico, 2021; Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). The discussion that spirituality involves connectedness with self, others, nature, and the transcendent, while religion is more tied to institutionalized belief and practice, supports a holistic view of education that addresses body, mind, and spirit (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Ramdane & Souad, 2017).

Taken together, these interpretations suggest that students, when guided, can discern UNESCO's core values in canonical works and relate them to contemporary issues, confirming the feasibility of a value-oriented approach to literature teaching (UNESCO, 2002; Dewantara, 1977).

Core values in classroom experiences

Beyond textual analysis, classroom experiences also functioned as a site for value formation. Group reading, analysis, and discussion required students to negotiate differences, practice turn-taking, and "learn to disagree without being disagreeable," which corresponds to values of respect, cooperation, and democratic participation. This supports Stevens and Bean's (2007) argument that discussion-based literature teaching can raise awareness of power, privilege, and oppression, and McDaniel's (2004) call for engaging young people in critical issues such as war, race, class, and social justice.

Lecturers' narratives showed that they used classroom incidents such as suspected plagiarism, conflict in groups, or emotional reactions to texts as opportunities to model fairness, empathy, and reflective judgment rather than relying solely on punitive measures. This approach is consistent with value-education models that emphasize implicit and explicit valuing processes within everyday "teaching rituals," from opening greetings to closing reflections (Straughan, 2012; Barahate, 2014). It also indicates that values are not only discussed but embodied in lecturer-student relationships.

The lecturers reported that students' engagement with sensitive issues (e.g., racial prejudice, violence, family conflict) sometimes led to shock and self-recognition. Students "began to make the connection that they were doing the same things as the characters in literary works, just in a different way," which in turn motivated them to develop "zero tolerance for racism and hatred" and to become more conscious of their verbal and non-verbal behavior. This aligns with earlier studies showing that controversial literary materials, when carefully mediated, can catalyze valuing processes and character growth (Busching & Slesinger, 2002; Intrator, 2003; Schein, 2008).

The findings also demonstrate that integrating UNESCO core values into literature teaching contributes to the broader objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly Target 4.7, which emphasizes education for sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, cultural diversity, gender equality, and a culture of peace. The themes of peace, justice, and equality identified in the literary works provide meaningful opportunities for students to critically reflect on ethical issues, appreciate diverse perspectives, and develop empathy and social responsibility. Rather than functioning solely as aesthetic texts, literary works become educational resources that foster values-based learning and holistic personal development. These findings reinforce the role of literature education in preparing learners to become responsible, ethical, and globally minded citizens capable of contributing to more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study concludes that UNESCO core values, particularly peace, justice, and equality, are meaningfully represented in selected English literary works. Through characters, conflicts, and moral dilemmas, the texts encourage students to reflect on ethical behavior, fairness, human dignity, responsibility, and respect for others. **Implication:** The findings imply that literature teaching can function not only as a medium for developing literary competence but also as an effective approach to values-based education. By integrating UNESCO core values into literature instruction, educators can foster students' ethical awareness, empathy, social responsibility, and holistic character development. Furthermore, this pedagogical approach contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly Target 4.7, by promoting education for sustainable development, global citizenship, respect for human rights, cultural diversity, gender equality, and a culture of peace. Therefore, literature education has the potential to prepare students not only as competent readers of literary texts but also as responsible, ethical, and globally minded citizens who can contribute to more inclusive and sustainable societies. **Limitation:** This study is limited to selected literary works taught in one English Literature program and focuses mainly on the representation of UNESCO core values in the texts and classroom context. **Future Research:** Future studies may examine broader literary texts, different educational contexts, or students' long-term responses to values-based

literature teaching. Further research may also explore practical teaching models for integrating UNESCO core values more systematically into literature courses.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Masulah contributed to the conceptualization of the study, and research design. **Fabiola Dharmawanti Kurnia** contributed to the methodology development, and data collection. **Ali Mustofa** contributed to the data analysis, literature review, and drafting of the manuscript. The author has reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of this article for submission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors state that no financial or personal conflicts of interest exist that may have affected the content or findings of this research.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI OR DIGITAL TOOLS IN WRITING

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or other digital writing assistants were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All stages of the research process, including data analysis, interpretation, and manuscript writing, were conducted solely by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the content presented in this article.

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