

STRENGTHENING STUDENT CHARACTER THROUGH PBL: CHALLENGES IN PANCASILA PROFILE IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the implementation of project-based learning in strengthening students' character and identify the challenges faced in the context of the Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5) at SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang. The research approach used is qualitative with mixed methods through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Data were collected from teachers, students, and parents to thoroughly understand the dynamics of project-based learning implementation in the two primary schools. The results show that project-based learning can strengthen students' character in the aspects of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, independence, and leadership. Students become more active, confident, and show increased critical thinking skills. However, the implementation of project-based learning also faces a number of challenges, including limited teacher training, lack of infrastructure, variations in student readiness, and minimal parental and community involvement. These challenges impacted the effectiveness and consistency of the character project implementation. The discussion highlighted that the project-based learning model is effective as an integrative learning tool between academic and character values. Mentoring strategies and cross-party collaboration are needed to ensure the sustainability and expansion of impact. In conclusion, project-based learning has potential as a strategic pedagogical approach in contextualised and applicable character education in Indonesian primary schools.

Keywords: Project-based learning, character strengthening, Pancasila Student Profile, primary education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi pembelajaran berbasis proyek dalam memperkuat karakter siswa dan mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi dalam konteks Proyek Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) di SDN 156 Pasirkaliki dan SDN Leuwidulang. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan metode campuran melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi. Data dikumpulkan dari guru, siswa, dan orang tua siswa untuk memahami secara menyeluruh dinamika pelaksanaan pembelajaran berbasis proyek di kedua sekolah dasar tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis proyek mampu memperkuat karakter siswa dalam aspek kedisiplinan, tanggung jawab, kerja sama, kemandirian, dan kepemimpinan. Siswa menjadi lebih aktif, percaya diri, dan menunjukkan peningkatan kemampuan berpikir kritis. Namun demikian, implementasi pembelajaran berbasis proyek juga menghadapi sejumlah tantangan, antara lain terbatasnya pelatihan guru, kurangnya sarana dan prasarana, variasi kesiapan siswa, serta minimnya keterlibatan

orang tua dan masyarakat. Tantangan-tantangan ini berdampak pada efektivitas dan konsistensi implementasi proyek karakter. Diskusi ini menyoroti bahwa model pembelajaran berbasis proyek efektif sebagai alat pembelajaran integratif antara nilai akademik dan karakter. Strategi pendampingan dan kolaborasi lintas pihak diperlukan untuk memastikan keberlanjutan dan perluasan dampak. Kesimpulannya, pembelajaran berbasis proyek memiliki potensi sebagai pendekatan pedagogis yang strategis dalam pendidikan karakter yang kontekstual dan dapat diterapkan di sekolah dasar di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Pembelajaran berbasis proyek, penguatan karakter, Profil Siswa Pancasila, pendidikan dasar

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly deep and complex era of globalization, character education has become one of the main issues faced in the context of education in Indonesia. The development of students' character must be a top priority for educational institutions, especially at the primary level. Through the Character Education Strengthening Policy (PPK) launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, it is hoped that students will be able to develop positive values within themselves, including ethics, aesthetics, literacy, and so on (Basaran et al., 2021). Global challenges that affect social, cultural, and moral aspects require the education system to focus not only on academic achievement but also on building strong, resilient, and adaptive character. One innovative approach introduced in the Merdeka Curriculum is project-based learning (PjBL). This approach provides students with the opportunity to not only learn from textbooks but also gain valuable practical experience through direct involvement in meaningful activities. These activities are believed to help students understand the relevance of character values in daily life and prepare them to face future challenges (Albar & Southcott, 2021; Zain & Andi, 2020). Thus, a learning environment that supports holistic character development has become an urgent need, as well as encouraging collaboration and cooperation among students within the community context (Kafele, 2021). However, the benefits of this learning method cannot be separated from the challenges in its implementation. The post-pandemic conditions that limit direct social interaction are one of the factors affecting the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (Zakiyyah et al., 2024). Additionally, parental involvement and the community environment are also important factors that contribute to the success of such learning projects (Alyadani et al., 2024; Divecha & Brackett, 2020). In this context, it is important to delve deeper into the concept of character development, how projects are implemented, and the challenges faced in elementary schools as the subject of this study.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how character building can be achieved through project-based learning and to provide useful recommendations for educators and stakeholders in the world of education (Bandur, 2012). The urgency of this study lies in the importance of providing adaptive, contextual, and relevant learning strategies that incorporate national values in elementary education. Amidst various global and local educational challenges, project-based character education has become the

answer to the need for meaningful and comprehensive learning. This study also responds to the lack of empirical studies that specifically discuss the implementation of PjBL in the context of Pancasila Student Profiles in public elementary schools, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas such as SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang.

The novelty of this study lies in its approach, which not only describes the implementation of Project-Based Learning but also analyzes its impact on character formation in students within the framework of Pancasila values. Through case studies of two elementary schools with different social characteristics, this research reveals the dynamics of learning project implementation in a real environment and identifies supporting and inhibiting factors that have not been widely addressed in previous studies. Additionally, an important contribution of this research is the development of an adaptive learning model that can serve as a reference for other elementary schools in implementing effective PjBL for character strengthening. The objectives of this study are to explore and analyze the strengthening of student character through the Project-Based Learning approach in the context of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project at SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how learning projects can be used as a tool to develop student character in both schools. The main focus of this study is how the implementation of Project-Based Learning can improve student character in accordance with Pancasila values, as well as how the challenges faced by teachers and students can be overcome creatively and collaboratively. Additionally, this study aims to assess the outcomes and impacts of project-based learning on student character, particularly in fostering a sense of cooperation, discipline, and responsibility.

Several previous studies have shown that this approach yields positive results. Hamzah et al. (2022) in their study emphasized that the Pancasila Student Profile project plays an important role in strengthening character education. The implementation of project-based learning activities not only improves students' academic knowledge but also facilitates them in internalizing the character values expected in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. This study provides empirical evidence that project-based activities can produce more meaningful learning experiences, creating students who can behave and act under Pancasila values. In addition, Kurniawaty et al. (2022) highlight the importance of strategies implemented by teachers in realizing the Pancasila student profile in elementary school environments. Using a qualitative approach, the study explored various methods that educators can apply in shaping students' character. The results showed that teachers act as facilitators in the learning process, encouraging students to actively engage in projects that are not only academic but also social. This provides a strong foundation for the position of this study, which focuses on the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in strengthening students' character in the two elementary schools studied.

Suleman (2024) also argues that communication skills are increasingly important for students in the modern era. He links experience-based learning methods as a strategy to improve these skills with Project-Based Learning. By prioritizing direct experience in learning, students not only learn conventionally but also learn to collaborate,

communicate, and think critically in completing projects. This study provides an important foundation for understanding how these aspects are integrated into the Pancasila Student Profile Project context, as well as the challenges that may arise in its implementation. Several other literature reviews also reinforce the argument that character building through Project-Based Learning is a multidimensional strategic approach. On the one hand, existing research confirms that character education is not only the responsibility of schools but also involves the role of parents and the community. On the other hand, challenges faced, such as a lack of understanding of the curriculum and its implementation in the field, need serious attention.

In this context, SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang offer adaptive learning models that can bridge various gaps in the basic education environment. Research by Argadinata & Benty (2023) confirms that Project-Based Learning allows students to learn while actively participating in a social environment that creates a more immersive educational experience. Project-based education not only encourages students to learn theory but also provides them with opportunities to apply the knowledge they have learned in real-world contexts. This is particularly important in the context of character development, as students are encouraged to reflect on the values they learn, such as cooperation, responsibility, and integrity (Fariq et al., 2022). Komala et al. (2023) in their systematic review explain that Project-Based Learning can improve student motivation and performance in the teaching and learning process. The study showed a significant increase in students' understanding of the material when they were involved in projects designed according to local needs. Thus, the implementation of Project-Based Learning can be seen as an effective tool in character building, as students are not only directed to learn academically but also to internalize moral and ethical values through active and problem-based learning experiences. An article by Hastuti (2021) supports this finding by showing that Project-Based Learning creates a collaborative and participatory learning environment, where students can learn from one another and develop interpersonal skills that are important in supporting character development.

Although Project-Based Learning offers great potential for strengthening students' character, significant challenges in its implementation must still be considered. According to (Prayitno & Supanto, 2022), these challenges often stem from internal and external factors that influence the successful implementation of Project-Based Learning. One of the main challenges is the lack of training and understanding of teachers regarding the Project-Based Learning methodology. Many teachers are still stuck in traditional teaching methods, which reduces the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in a dynamic learning context. Research by Ginting et al. (2020) also highlights the importance of adequate infrastructure and resource support for students in carrying out these projects. Without the necessary technology and materials, students and teachers will face obstacles in carrying out learning activities optimally. In addition, parental commitment and involvement greatly influence students' attitudes toward the projects they undertake (Gustia & Irwansyah, 2022). Lack of support from the school environment can limit

students' active participation. Therefore, for Project-Based Learning to be successful, educators need to design effective training programs for teachers and create strong collaboration with parents and the surrounding community. Only in this way can the challenges involved in the implementation of Project-Based Learning be overcome and character building in students be optimally achieved. By analyzing and synthesizing various aspects related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning, this study is expected to provide a meaningful scientific contribution to the development of character education in Indonesia, while offering an adaptive and relevant learning practice model to be applied in primary education institutions.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with mixed methods that integrate in-depth interviews and participatory observation as the main data collection techniques. This approach was chosen because it provides a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the complexity of project-based learning implementation in strengthening students' character. The use of qualitative methods allows for in-depth exploration of phenomena that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative approaches alone (Iswadi et al., 2023). The main focus of this study is to explore the implementation practices of project-based learning in strengthening the character of elementary school students, as well as to identify the challenges faced by teachers and students during the process, and to analyze its impact on the development of students' character.

The research subjects are SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang, which were selected based on the diversity of student characteristics, strong cultural background, and unique local potential. This selection allows the study to examine how the local context influences the implementation of project-based learning and its impact on the formation of students' character. The research subjects include teachers, students, parents, and other school members. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with teachers and students from several classes in each school, as well as observations of some project-based learning sessions. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques. Data from interviews and observations were analyzed to identify key themes related to implementation strategies, challenges, and the impact of project-based learning on student character. The researcher interpreted the meaning behind these practices to uncover the character values fostered through learning activities. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a meaningful contribution to strengthening character education at the elementary school level, particularly within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In a study conducted at SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang, a project-based learning model was implemented that explicitly integrated character values following the Pancasila Student Profile. The research shows that this model can create a holistic

learning situation, where students not only master academic material, but also internalise moral values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. In this application, the teacher functions as a facilitator who accompanies the students' exploration process of contextual problems in the surrounding environment. Classroom observations reveal that students are consistently involved in every stage of the project, from planning, implementation, to evaluation of work results, so that many character values are formed naturally through direct experience(Ratnawati et al., 2024; Solissa et al., 2024)

Table 1. Observations of Project-Based Learning and Student Character Improvement

ASPECTS OBSERVED	INDICATORS	OBSERVATION FINDINGS AT SDN 156 PASIRKALIKI	OBSERVATION FINDINGS AT SDN LEUWIDULANG
SOCIAL INTERACTION	- Quality of communication between students - Ability to express opinions	Students are actively involved in group discussions and dare to convey ideas verbally.	Students were more enthusiastic in informal discussions and showed confidence in their opinions.
COLLABORATION	- Division of roles within the group - Ability to co-operate	Students' roles in the group were fairly evenly distributed and coordination went well.	Collaboration is seen in the balanced division of tasks and mutual assistance between students.
LEADERSHIP	- Initiative in leading discussions - Group decision-making	Some students showed courage in leading the discussion and encouraging collective decisions.	Student leadership emerges in the democratic sharing of responsibilities and decision-making.
EMPATHY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	- Response to friends' opinions - Concern for shared outcomes	There was a sense of caring for friends and a collective consciousness in maintaining the success of the group project.	Students' empathy grows from the awareness of helping each other and completing tasks together with a high sense of responsibility.
REFLECTION AND SELF- EVALUATION	- Ability to correct mistakes - Awareness of improvement	Students are getting used to reflecting after the project and communicating improvements that can be made in the future.	Reflection sessions encourage students to realise shortcomings and correct them in follow-up projects constructively.

The formative evaluations conducted during the project cycles indicate a continuous process of student character growth, particularly in areas of social interaction, leadership, empathy, responsibility, and critical thinking. At various stages of project implementation, students demonstrated increased involvement, willingness to contribute, and responsiveness to both success and failure, showing that the learning process itself has become a reflective and value-based journey. This aligns with the intended objectives of the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes the development of character traits such as *gotong royong* (cooperation), independence, integrity, and creative thinking. Moreover, students from both SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang exhibited observable improvements in teamwork and leadership dynamics. Students who were previously passive began taking initiative, while dominant students learned to listen and respect peer contributions, showing that democratic collaboration was being internalized. The willingness of students to assume different group roles and to resolve conflicts constructively is a clear indicator that project-based learning has helped foster an inclusive, student-centered atmosphere.

In addition to direct behavioral changes, there were also significant shifts in students' self-perception and motivation. Interviews with students revealed a sense of personal growth, pride in contribution, and newfound confidence in expressing opinions. These qualitative findings highlight the importance of experiential learning, where students internalize values through action rather than instruction. This impact is reinforced by the use of reflection tools, such as journals and group discussion summaries, which allowed students to articulate their learning, evaluate their actions, and plan for future improvement. The impact is not only seen in character development but also in the way students engage with knowledge. Projects that involved elements of local culture, such as traditional art or community-based environmental activities, helped root students' understanding in real-life contexts, thereby reinforcing their sense of identity and cultural pride. This integration of local values into educational content resonates with the idea that national values are best taught through contextualized, relatable experiences, making them more meaningful and lasting (Bagley, 1939).

Teachers also reported a positive shift in classroom culture, moving from teacher-centered instruction to facilitator-driven exploration. This transformation gave space for autonomous learning, where students were empowered to find solutions, share resources, and guide group progress. Such changes reflect the core principle of the Pancasila Student Profile, which seeks to produce learners who are not just academically capable but socially and morally responsible citizens. Quantitative assessment tools, including rubrics for collaboration, leadership, honesty, and discipline, revealed a measurable increase in these traits post-implementation. For example, collaboration scores increased by up to 30%, and indicators of student initiative and group accountability showed consistent improvements throughout the project phases (Harpina, 2024). Notably, the inclusion of digital tools helped expand the reach and documentation of learning, making it easier for teachers to assess and monitor each student's development. Students also became more

technologically literate, using digital platforms for research, communication, and presentation skills that are highly relevant in the 21st-century learning landscape.

Crucially, this learning model has bridged the gap between academic learning and real-life character application. Students were not merely learning about values—they were living them, in environments where teamwork, discipline, and initiative directly influenced project outcomes. This embodied learning method helped ensure that character education was not abstract or ceremonial, but instead practical and actionable. Students applied Pancasila values in solving group problems, managing time, respecting diversity, and completing responsibilities. The role of teachers as mentors was essential in guiding this transformation. Teachers who received targeted training were more effective in facilitating meaningful discussions, offering constructive feedback, and ensuring that project activities remained aligned with both curricular goals and character objectives (Chen et al., 2022). Furthermore, ongoing support from school leadership, in the form of allocated time and resources, allowed teachers to focus on innovative instructional strategies that support holistic development.

In conclusion, the implementation of project-based learning within the Pancasila Student Profile framework has proven to be a powerful approach to student character development. Through active participation, reflective practice, and collaborative engagement, students not only improved academically but also emerged as empathetic, responsible, and civic-minded individuals. While challenges remain—such as the need for better infrastructure, teacher training, and community involvement—the positive results observed from these case studies provide strong justification for the wider adoption and refinement of project-based learning models in Indonesian schools. With continued commitment and collaborative effort, this approach can become a cornerstone of national character education, producing generations of learners who embody the values of Pancasila in both thought and action.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research shows that project-based learning at SDN 156 Pasirkaliki and SDN Leuwidulang is able to strengthen students' character significantly. Through active involvement in the learning process, students show improvement in the aspects of discipline, responsibility, self-confidence, as well as critical and collaborative thinking skills. The values of Pancasila are internalised through direct experience in completing projects that are relevant to everyday life, so that students' characters are formed not only conceptually but also through meaningful practice. However, the implementation of this model faces various challenges such as limited teacher training, lack of resources, variations in student readiness, and resistance from family and social environments that are not fully supportive. The findings show that the project-based learning approach is clearly able to answer the challenges of character education at the primary school level. The implementation of strategies that emphasise active participation, teamwork, and value integration through hands-on practice has proven effective in shaping students' character holistically. However, this effectiveness requires systemic support in the form

of continuous training for educators, provision of adequate facilities and involvement of the school community. Limitations in terms of implementation time and disparities between schools are important notes for policy development and further research so that this model can be applied sustainably and more widely in various educational contexts.

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