

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING
(PJBL) IN P5 PROJECTS FOR ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS
AMONG NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS AT AN ISLAMIC BOARDING
SCHOOL**

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the perceptions of students toward Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in P5 projects for enhancing writing skills at Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS). It seeks to address key questions about students' experiences, the impact of PjBL on writing development, the challenges encountered, and strategies for improvement. Adopting a convergent parallel mixed methods design, data were collected using an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire involved 84 students from As-Syifa Islamic Boarding School Sagalaherang Subang, while 12 participants, purposefully selected based on English proficiency (basic, intermediate, advanced) and willingness to participate, were interviewed for in-depth insights. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means), while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis involving coding and categorization of emerging themes. Findings reveal that PjBL in P5 projects positively influences students' writing skills through real-world applications, collaborative tasks, and engaging activities. However, challenges such as time constraints, limited vocabulary, and group dynamics were noted. To enhance PjBL outcomes, students proposed extending time for writing tasks, providing immediate feedback, and integrating digital tools for autonomous learning support.

Keywords: *Islamic Boarding School, P5 project, Project-Based Learning, students' perceptions, writing skill*

Introduction

The teaching methodology is a critical factor in achieving learning success, complementing other elements such as teacher competence, student motivation, and learning facilities (Bremner et al., 2022). Innovative, interactive, and learner-centered approaches like Project-Based Learning (PjBL) have gained popularity in modern education (Awan, 2022; Bremner et al., 2022). PjBL is particularly effective in language learning, emphasizing active inquiry and project creation to address real-world challenges (Chen et

al., 2022). This method not only fosters engagement and self-efficacy but also enhances critical thinking and academic achievement (Almulla, 2020), as also confirmed in EFL writing contexts by Cahyono et al. (2024).

In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum institutionalizes PjBL through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), focusing on six dimensions, including collaboration and creativity. However, studies reveal varying outcomes in P5 implementation. For example, Yanzi et al. (2022) observed a product-oriented focus in senior high schools, while Maisyaroh & Supriyanto (2024) reported positive impacts in vocational schools, including competency development and value internalization. These mixed findings highlight the importance of context, readiness, and involvement of all stakeholders in successful implementation.

The relationship between PjBL and writing skills has also been extensively studied. Research shows that PjBL significantly improves students' writing abilities and fosters positive perceptions of learning (Argawati & Suryani, 2020; Hasanah, 2022), a finding supported by meta-analytic evidence in EFL/ESL writing settings (Cahyono et al., 2024) and classroom-based studies in Indonesian contexts (Hidayati & Widiati, 2019; Sa'diyah & Cahyono, 2019). Recent empirical research also confirms that PjBL enhances students' writing performance and engagement in EFL classrooms (Arochman et al., 2024). Nevertheless, challenges such as managing group dynamics, time constraints, and project evaluation persist (Nurkhamidah, 2023). These challenges are also highlighted in recent studies, particularly in relation to collaboration and time management (Atmojo & Hanifah, 2024). In addition, students' internal factors such as writing self-efficacy and learning strategies have been found to influence writing performance (Setyowati et al., 2024; Nadhifah et al., 2023). Furthermore, a recent systematic literature review indicates that PjBL is increasingly recognized as a student-centered and experiential approach to improving writing skills across diverse educational contexts (Rosli et al., 2024). These challenges underline the need for deeper analysis of how PjBL can be effectively implemented to optimize its benefits, particularly in Islamic

Boarding School.

Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS) present a unique context for exploring PjBL implementation due to their distinct characteristics, including intensive schedules and potential limitations in inquiry-based learning. Despite IBS's significant role in Indonesian education, little research has examined students' perceptions of PjBL in this setting. Understanding their experiences, challenges, and suggestions is crucial to tailoring the method to fit their specific needs. Moreover, the study investigating the implementation of PjBL in P5 at Islamic Boarding School is relatively rare. Although previous international studies have widely explored PjBL in general educational settings, limited research has focused on its implementation in Islamic boarding school contexts, particularly in relation to students' writing development and perceptions.

Therefore, this study try to investigate students' perceptions of PjBL in P5 projects for enhancing writing skills at IBS. It aims to answer these questions; 1) How do students perceive the implementation of PjBL in P5 projects at Islamic boarding schools? 2) How does PjBL in P5 projects contribute to the enhancement of students' writing skills? 3) What challenges do students face in implementing PjBL to improve writing skills? 4) What strategies or improvements do students suggest for optimizing PjBL in P5 projects to develop writing skills? The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers, enabling them to refine curriculum implementation and teaching strategies in IBS and similar educational environments.

Methods

This study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design to examine students' perceptions of PjBL in P5 for enhancing writing skills at an Islamic boarding school. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately before being compared for alignment or divergence (Creswell, 2021). Quantitative data were gathered using an online survey questionnaire with 12 closed-ended and four open-ended questions, covering perceptions, challenges, suggestions, and overall experiences with PjBL. The

survey involved 84 ninth-grade students who participated in P5 projects integrating social studies, Indonesian, and English, culminating in a narrative writing task. The questionnaire design was informed by prior literature and validated by three experts. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 purposefully selected participants, representing different English proficiency levels.

Quantitative data were analyzed using basic statistical methods (percentages, frequencies, and means), while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Open-ended responses and interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes, which were then compared with the quantitative findings to interpret the overall results comprehensively. Ethical considerations were upheld by anonymizing participants using pseudonyms (S1–S12) and ensuring confidentiality. The integrated approach aimed to provide a robust understanding of students' perceptions, challenges, and suggestions for improving PjBL in the P5 context.

Findings and Discussions

The familiarity and understanding of PjBL in P5

To ensure students' familiarity and understanding of PjBL in P5, the researcher examined whether the teacher clearly explained the concept and procedures of PjBL. Using a Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree), the results show that the majority of participants (88%) agreed that PjBL in P5 was clearly explained by the teacher. This indicates that the implementation of PjBL in the Islamic boarding school context was well introduced and understood by students.

This finding suggests that clear teacher instruction plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of PjBL. When students understand the objectives and procedures of project-based activities, they are more likely to participate actively and meaningfully. This result also supports the idea that instructional clarity is a key prerequisite for effective student-centered learning.

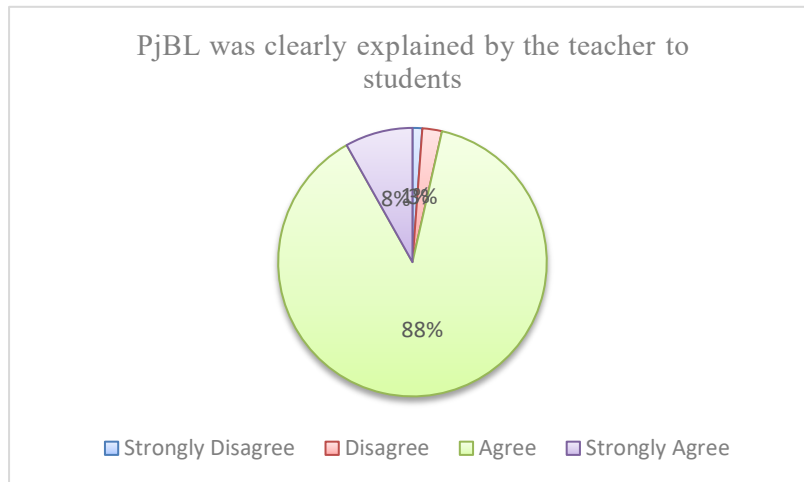


Figure 1: Teacher explanation toward PjBL

The Perceptions of Students toward the PjBL Implementation in P5 for Enhancing Writing Skill

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in P5 aims to enhance students’ writing skills through meaningful and collaborative learning activities. The findings from the Likert-scale survey indicate that students have a highly positive perception of PjBL implementation.

Items	SD		D		A		SA	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
PjBL projects helped me improve my writing skills			2	2.4	52	61.85	30	35.75
I had enough opportunities to practice writing during PjBL	1	1.2	3	3.6	53	63.05	27	32.15
PjBL motivated			1	1.2	50	59.5	33	39.3

me to actively participate in class								
PjBL projects provided real-world contexts to improve my writing skills	1	1.2	2	2.4	54	64.3	27	32.1
The assessment methods in PjBL helped me develop my writing skills	1	1.2	1	1.2	52	62.45	30	35.15

Table 1: Students' Perceptions of the Implementation of PjBL in P5 for Enhancing Writing Skill

As shown in Table 1, 61.85% of students agreed and 35.75% strongly agreed that PjBL projects helped improve their writing skills, resulting in a total of 97.6% positive responses. Similarly, 63.05% agreed and 32.15% strongly agreed that they had sufficient opportunities to practice writing, indicating that PjBL provides extensive writing exposure. In terms of participation, 59.5% agreed and 39.3% strongly agreed that PjBL motivated them to actively participate in class. Furthermore, 64.3% agreed and 32.1% strongly agreed that PjBL provided real-world contexts for writing, while 62.45% agreed and 35.15% strongly agreed that assessment methods in PjBL supported their writing development.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of PjBL in improving writing skills in EFL contexts (Cahyono

et al., 2024; Arochman et al., 2024). This finding is also consistent with recent research, such as Gustiani et al (2021), who found that PjBL significantly enhanced students' writing abilities by engaging them in real-world projects that encouraged active participation. The hands-on nature of PjBL allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical context, fostering deeper learning and retention of writing skills. As Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2020) argue, when students engage in PjBL, they not only develop their academic skills but also become more confident in their abilities to communicate effectively in writing. Moreover, the high percentage of positive responses indicates that PjBL is not only effective in enhancing writing performance but also in creating an engaging learning environment.

The effectiveness of PjBL in this study can be explained by several factors. First, PjBL provides authentic and meaningful tasks that allow students to apply language in real-life contexts, making learning more relevant and purposeful. Second, collaborative learning enables students to exchange ideas, receive peer feedback, and develop their writing through social interaction. Third, the student-centered nature of PjBL encourages active participation and learner autonomy, which are essential for developing writing proficiency. These elements help explain why students reported positive perceptions and improved writing outcomes.

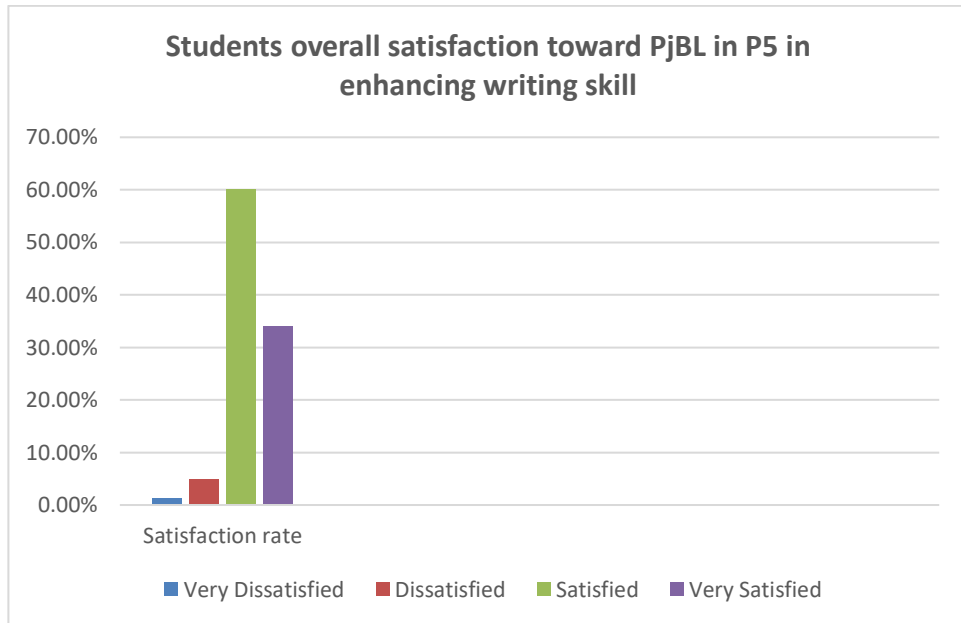


Figure 2: Students' Satisfactory Rate

In addition, students' satisfaction with the implementation of PjBL was notably high. As illustrated in Figure 2, 60.15% of students reported being satisfied and 33.95% very satisfied, resulting in a total of 94.1% satisfaction. Meanwhile, only 6% expressed dissatisfaction. This suggests that PjBL successfully meets students' expectations and supports their learning needs. High satisfaction levels further reinforce the effectiveness of PjBL in promoting positive learning experiences.

Students also reported that PjBL motivated them to actively participate in class, with 98.8% of respondents indicating that the approach encouraged them to engage more fully. This reflects the findings of Kurt and Baran (2022), who highlighted that project-based learning increases student motivation by making learning more relevant and interactive. By collaborating with peers and applying their skills in real-world scenarios, students gain a sense of accomplishment that is often not achieved through traditional learning methods.

Challenges in Implementing PjBL for Writing Skills

Despite the overall positive perceptions, several challenges were identified in implementing PjBL for writing skills, as presented in Table 2. The data show that students experienced varying levels of difficulty during the learning process.

Items	SD		D		A		SA	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
I faced challenges in expressing myself during PjBL projects	15	17,9	32	38,1	23	27,4	14	16,7
Time management was a challenge during PjBL projects			16	29,5	57	62,3	15	18,3
A lack of vocabulary affected my ability to write during the project	8	9,5	13	15,4	48	57,1	15	17,8
Group dynamics (e.g., working with others) hindered effective writing practice	13	15,5	38	45,2	21	25	12	14,3

Table 2: The students challenge

Regarding self-expression, 17.9% of students strongly disagreed and 38.1% disagreed that they faced difficulties, while 27.4% agreed and 16.7% strongly agreed. This indicates that although many students did not perceive

self-expression as a major issue, a considerable proportion still struggled with articulating their ideas in writing.

Time management emerged as a more significant challenge. A total of 62.3% of students agreed and 18.3% strongly agreed that managing time during PjBL projects was difficult, indicating that the workload and time constraints posed challenges for most students. This finding is consistent with previous research that identifies time limitation as a common issue in project-based learning environments (Atmojo & Hanifah, 2024). Zhao and Lee (2021) note that time constraints are a common issue in project-based learning, especially in environments with a busy academic schedule, such as Islamic boarding schools.

Vocabulary limitation was also a prominent issue. While 9.5% strongly disagreed and 15.4% disagreed, a majority of students (57.1% agreed and 17.8% strongly agreed) reported that lack of vocabulary affected their writing performance. This suggests that linguistic competence remains a critical factor influencing the success of PjBL in writing contexts. This aligns with Vongpumivitch and O'Neill (2023), who identified vocabulary as a significant barrier to writing proficiency, suggesting that students need more comprehensive vocabulary instruction to fully benefit from project-based learning.

In terms of group dynamics, 15.5% strongly disagreed and 45.2% disagreed that group work hindered their writing, while 25% agreed and 14.3% strongly agreed. This distribution indicates that although collaboration was beneficial for many students, it still posed challenges for some, particularly in terms of participation and coordination. As Johnson et al. (2020) observed, while collaboration can enhance learning outcomes, it also requires effective group management and clear communication to ensure all members are equally involved.

Qualitative findings further reveal additional challenges, including difficulties in generating ideas, writing anxiety, and limited access to learning resources. These findings indicate that students require not only cognitive

support but also emotional and environmental support to fully benefit from PjBL.

Suggestions for Optimizing PjBL in P5

Based on students' responses, several strategies can be proposed to optimize the implementation of PjBL in enhancing writing skills. One of the key suggestions is extending the time allocated for writing tasks. Providing sufficient time allows students to plan, draft, and revise their work more effectively, which can lead to improved writing quality. This suggestion is supported by Gordon and McKown (2022), who emphasize that extended timelines in PjBL projects lead to better quality work, as students have more time to revise and refine their writing.

Another important suggestion is the provision of immediate and continuous feedback. Students expressed the need for teachers to provide feedback during the writing process rather than after final submission. This aligns with Parker et al. (2021), who argue that real-time feedback during PjBL activities can improve students' writing skills by addressing issues as they arise, preventing the accumulation of errors.

In addition, students recommended the integration of digital tools to support autonomous learning. Digital platforms can assist students by providing instant feedback, vocabulary support, and writing guidance, enabling them to develop their skills independently. This suggestion reflects the growing trend of integrating technology into PjBL, as Zhu et al. (2023) note that digital platforms can provide students with personalized feedback, enabling them to improve their writing skills independently.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that teachers play a crucial role in facilitating effective PjBL implementation. Teachers should design meaningful and context-based projects, provide clear instructions, and ensure effective group collaboration. Furthermore, teachers need to support students' vocabulary development and provide emotional encouragement to reduce anxiety during the writing process. By addressing these aspects, PjBL can be implemented more effectively to enhance students' writing skills.

Conclusion

This study shows that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the P5 projects at the Islamic boarding school has a positive influence on students' writing skills. The majority of students reported improvements in their writing through real-world applications, collaboration, and engaging projects. Despite these benefits, challenges such as time constraints, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in group work affected the overall success of PjBL in enhancing writing skills.

To address these challenges, future research should explore larger, more diverse samples to better understand how PjBL impacts students in different contexts. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in evaluating the long-term effects of PjBL on writing skills, as well as identifying the factors that sustain improvement over time. Additionally, further investigation into group dynamics and strategies for managing collaborative work could provide insights into how to optimize teamwork during PjBL projects.

Finally, future studies should focus on the role of teachers in providing real-time feedback and guidance throughout the writing process, as this aspect was highlighted as a key area for improvement. Exploring the use of digital tools for autonomous feedback, as suggested by students, could also enhance the PjBL experience. By addressing these areas, future research can help refine PjBL to better support writing development and offer practical solutions to existing challenges.

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