



Evaluating Project-Based Learning as a Catalyst for Media Literacy Development in Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a method for enhancing media literacy among junior high school students. In an age marked by widespread digital media use and misinformation, fostering students' abilities to access, analyze, and create media responsibly is essential. The research involved a mixed-methods approach with 60 students divided into an experimental group using PBL and a control group following traditional instruction. Quantitative assessments measured improvements in media literacy skills, while qualitative data from interviews and focus groups provided insights into students' and teachers' experiences with PBL. The findings revealed significant improvements in the Experimental Group's media literacy skills, with an average increase of 10.07 points in post-test scores across all assessed dimensions, including accessing, analyzing, and creating media. These improvements were statistically significant compared to the Control Group's modest gains. Qualitative insights underscored themes of increased engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative skills among students exposed to PBL, with teachers noting enhanced student motivation and analytical abilities. These results affirm PBL's potential as an effective educational approach for media literacy, promoting active learning and critical engagement with media content. This study contributes to the broader discourse on media literacy education by demonstrating PBL's role in equipping students with essential skills for informed and critical media interaction. Future research should examine the long-term effects of PBL on media literacy and explore its application in diverse educational settings to maximize its impact.

KEYWORDS

Project-based learning, media literacy, digital media education, educational effectiveness

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital media and technological innovations in education underscores an urgent need to enhance media literacy skills among junior high school students. Media literacy, broadly encompassing the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media across diverse formats, has become an indispensable skill set in an era

marked by information overload and widespread misinformation (Haider & Sundin, 2022; Udoudom et al., 2023). As students increasingly engage with digital media daily, their capacity to critically assess and creatively interact with media influences not only their academic success but also their broader social and civic engagement. Educational frameworks

worldwide now recognize media literacy as essential for preparing students to navigate and contribute thoughtfully to society (Jolls & Johnsen, 2018; Stix & Jolls, 2020). Moreover, scholars highlight that media literacy fosters essential life skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital citizenship, making it a pivotal component of 21st-century education (Kellner & Share, 2007).

Research on educational technology and media literacy indicates that, while digital and media education programs have gained traction, many schools continue to rely on traditional instructional methods that may inadequately address the complexities of media literacy (Buckingham, 2015). Traditional approaches, often characterized by teacher-led discussions and isolated skill instruction, lack the interactive elements that encourage students to critically engage with media content. Consequently, students are frequently passive recipients of information rather than active analyzers and creators. Research emphasizes the importance of shifting towards methods that foster active engagement and critical inquiry, with PBL emerging as a promising alternative. Project-based learning, which emphasizes collaborative, real-world problem-solving, aligns well with the pedagogical requirements of media literacy education. By centering on real-life media scenarios, PBL encourages students to engage actively with media content, fostering skills essential for critical evaluation and content creation (Neo & Neo, 2001; Sukackè et al., 2022). As a growing body of literature underscores the need for more dynamic media literacy education, the current study explores the specific impact of PBL on enhancing media literacy skills among junior high school students (Neo & Neo, 2001; Sukackè et al., 2022).

Despite the recognized importance of media literacy, many educational institutions rely on traditional, passive learning models that fail to adequately prepare students for critical media engagement. This issue is particularly pronounced for junior high school students, who are in a critical developmental phase for acquiring the analytical skills essential to media literacy (Buckingham, 2015). While students often possess basic digital skills for accessing media, research shows that they frequently struggle to analyze and evaluate content

critically, especially when faced with biases, implicit messages, or multiple perspectives (Friesem, 2019; Kozyreva et al., 2020). These gaps in traditional education highlight a key research question: how can educators better prepare junior high school students to navigate the complexities of media literacy in a way that is both interactive and engaging? Project-based learning (PBL) offers a promising approach, combining hands-on activities with collaborative inquiry to encourage deeper engagement with media content and potentially addressing the limitations of conventional media literacy instruction.

In the specific context of SMPN 7 Anggeraja in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, media literacy challenges are particularly significant due to students' high exposure to unverified digital information and social media. Initial observations indicate that, although students have basic competencies in accessing digital media, they often lack the critical skills necessary for assessing information credibility, recognizing media biases, and interpreting implicit messages. The prevalent use of conventional, lecture-based teaching methods further restricts opportunities for students to engage with media in meaningful, experiential ways. As a result, they seldom encounter activities that stimulate critical thinking about media or encourage them to create responsible, informative content. To bridge these gaps, an interactive, hands-on approach like PBL is needed, actively involving students in media literacy tasks and cultivating the analytical abilities required to navigate today's complex media environment.

Recent research advocates for integrating media literacy within project-based frameworks, emphasizing that hands-on, inquiry-driven projects can significantly enhance students' analytical skills (Bangal, 2024). A project-based approach enables students to delve deeply into media-related issues, promoting a comprehensive understanding of media content's structure, intent, and impact (Almakaty et al., 2024). Scholars posit that by participating in media-centered projects, students not only acquire foundational media literacy skills but also develop a critical awareness of how media influences public perception and personal beliefs (Kellner & Share, 2007). Despite these

promising insights, few studies have systematically examined the specific role of PBL in facilitating media literacy development, particularly within junior high school contexts. This lack of targeted research underscores the need to assess PBL's effectiveness in this domain and provides a focal point for the present study.

Empirical evidence from related studies demonstrates that PBL can facilitate meaningful improvements in students' engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes across subjects, including digital and media literacy (Al-Bahadli et al., 2023; Almulla, 2020). Within media literacy education, PBL promotes an interactive learning environment where students explore and address real-world problems, enabling them to view media not only as consumers but as active, critical participants. Further, PBL's collaborative nature aligns with the social dimensions of media literacy, as students work together to create media projects, fostering skills in teamwork, negotiation, and collective problem-solving. Building on findings that underscore PBL's success in other literacy domains, this study posits that PBL may serve as a valuable instructional approach for bridging media literacy gaps, especially in junior high school settings (Barron et al., 2011).

The current literature review reveals consensus on the potential of project-based learning to improve literacy skills, but identifies gaps in understanding its specific application in media literacy for junior high school students. Previous research has primarily explored PBL in broader educational contexts or in digital literacy, but detailed analysis of how PBL contributes to specific aspects of media literacy, such as analyzing media bias, creating media content, and understanding the role of media in society, is limited. Furthermore, little research has examined the challenges junior high school students face in developing media literacy skills and how PBL can mitigate these barriers through purposeful and interactive learning experiences (Mergendoller & Thomas, 2000). These gaps in the literature suggest the need for more focused investigation of the impact of PBL on media literacy, which offers an avenue of research that this study seeks to address.

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of project-based

learning as a pedagogical approach to improving media literacy skills among junior high school students. The hypothesis is that students engaged in project-based learning will demonstrate increased proficiency in accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating media content compared to those receiving traditional instruction. By investigating the specific ways in which PBL fosters critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration in media literacy, this study aims to provide empirical insights that can inform teaching practices and curriculum development in junior high schools. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on junior high school students—a group at a critical developmental stage for cultivating lifelong media literacy skills. Through a detailed investigation of the potential of PBL to foster key media literacy competencies—such as accessing, analyzing, and creating media—this study contributes to the broader discourse on effective media literacy education. These findings are expected to have implications not only for junior high school pedagogy but also for educational policies aimed at equipping students with the critical skills needed in an increasingly media-saturated society. By examining the mechanisms through which PBL influences media literacy, this study seeks to provide actionable insights to educators to meaningfully integrate media literacy into the school curriculum, ultimately preparing students to navigate and positively contribute to the digital world.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to evaluate the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a catalyst for enhancing media literacy among junior high school students, specifically at SMPN 7 Anggeraja in Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi. The methodology section is structured to provide a comprehensive explanation of the research design, population and sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. Each subsection is designed to support a rigorous examination of the research problem, with the goal of ensuring that findings are reliable, valid, and applicable to the educational context under investigation.

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2.1 Research Design

The study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve a holistic understanding of PBL's impact on media literacy. This approach is selected for its ability to provide both measurable outcomes and in-depth insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions (Klassen et al., 2012; Stentz et al., 2012). The quantitative component focuses on assessing changes in students' media literacy skills through pre- and post-intervention testing, allowing for objective analysis of skill development. Meanwhile, the qualitative component uses interviews and focus groups to capture students' and teachers' experiences, thereby offering a nuanced perspective on the effectiveness of PBL (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The mixed-methods design allows for data triangulation, enhancing the study's credibility and providing a comprehensive basis for interpreting the effectiveness of PBL in this educational setting.

2.2 Population and Sampling

The target population for this study includes junior high school students at SMPN 7 in Enrekang Regency. This school was selected due to its high exposure to unverified digital information and the specific media literacy challenges its students face. The sample includes 60 students from Grades 8, chosen through stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness across different academic performance levels and demographics (Etikan, 2016). Stratification by grade level is essential, as students in these grades are at a developmental stage where critical media literacy skills begin to emerge. Additionally, a sample of 10 teachers who have experience with media literacy and PBL is included in the study. Teachers provide insight into instructional practices and the implementation challenges associated with PBL.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is conducted over three phases, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a thorough understanding of the research questions.

2.3.1 Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative data collection

involves pre- and post-tests administered to assess students' media literacy skills. The media literacy assessment tool is adapted from validated frameworks (e.g., Potter's Media Literacy Competency Framework, 2022) and includes sections on accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating media content. These skills are measured using multiple-choice questions, scenario-based tasks, and short-answer questions, which provide a reliable means of assessing student competencies before and after the PBL intervention.

The pre-test is conducted at the beginning of the intervention to establish a baseline for each student's media literacy skills. Following the six-week PBL intervention, a post-test is administered to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Changes in scores from pre- to post-test are analyzed to determine if there are statistically significant improvements in media literacy skills attributable to the PBL approach.

2.3.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data are gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group discussions with students. The interviews with teachers focus on their experiences implementing PBL, the challenges faced, and their perceptions of students' engagement and learning outcomes. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, enabling teachers to share detailed insights while ensuring that key topics are consistently covered (Kvale, 2007).

Student focus groups, consisting of 6–8 participants per group, are conducted at the end of the intervention to capture their experiences and reflections on the PBL activities. Focus groups are selected as they encourage interaction among students, which can reveal shared attitudes and perceptions about the PBL process (Morgan & York, 1997). Discussion prompts focus on students' experiences with accessing, analyzing, and creating media, as well as their feelings about working collaboratively within the PBL framework. All qualitative sessions are audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

2.4 PBL Intervention Design

The PBL intervention is designed to engage students in hands-on media projects that

require them to critically analyze media content, identify bias, and create their own media. The intervention lasts six weeks, with weekly sessions dedicated to specific media literacy tasks that align with PBL principles (Barron et al., 2011).

- 1) *Week 1: Introduction to Media Literacy and PBL Framework.* The first session introduces students to basic media literacy concepts and the PBL framework. Teachers guide discussions on the media's role in society and the importance of critical engagement with digital information.
- 2) *Week 2: Accessing and Evaluating Media Sources.* Students learn to search for reliable information and evaluate the credibility of various media sources. They complete exercises on recognizing credible and non-credible sources, using real-world examples from current media.
- 3) *Week 3: Analyzing Media Content for Bias and Perspective.* This week emphasizes critical analysis, with students working in groups to identify biases and perspectives within media articles and videos. Teachers facilitate group discussions to help students articulate their observations.
- 4) *Week 4: Creating Media Projects.* Students apply their knowledge by creating media content, such as digital posters, videos, or social media posts, on topics relevant to their interests. This activity encourages creativity and reinforces media literacy concepts.
- 5) *Week 5: Peer Review and Collaboration.* Students present their media projects to peers for feedback. The peer review process fosters critical thinking and collaborative skills, as students learn to provide constructive criticism and evaluate each other's work.
- 6) *Week 6: Reflection and Assessment.* The final week is dedicated to reflection, where students discuss their learning experiences and complete the post-test assessment. Teachers lead discussions on the skills acquired and encourage students to reflect on how they might apply media literacy skills in everyday life.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

2.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests are analyzed using paired sample t-tests to determine whether there are statistically significant improvements in students' media literacy skills following the PBL intervention. The analysis focuses on overall improvements as well as specific dimensions of media literacy, including accessing, analyzing, and creating media. Descriptive statistics are also used to present a general overview of students' performance across the assessed dimensions.

2.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups are analyzed using thematic analysis, following (Braun & Clarke, 2006) six-step framework. The steps include familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the final report. This approach allows for the identification of recurring themes related to teachers' and students' experiences with PBL, such as increased engagement, improved collaboration, and challenges encountered. Coding is conducted independently by two researchers to ensure inter-coder reliability, and discrepancies are discussed and resolved to maintain consistency.

2.6 Validity and Reliability

To enhance validity and reliability, the study incorporates multiple measures. For quantitative data, reliability is ensured by using a standardized media literacy assessment adapted from validated frameworks. Pre- and post-test instruments are pilot-tested with a similar student population to confirm clarity and appropriateness of the questions. For qualitative data, credibility is enhanced through triangulation of data sources (i.e., interviews and focus groups) and member checking, where participants review transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the recorded information. Furthermore, an audit trail is maintained to

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document all research decisions, allowing for transparency and reproducibility.

2.7 Expected Outcomes

Anticipated findings of this study suggest that project-based learning will lead to significant improvements in students' media literacy skills. To visualize these anticipated outcomes, Table 1 provides a structured overview of the expected impact of project-based learning on various dimensions of media literacy development.

Table 1: Anticipated Impact of Project-Based Learning on Media Literacy Development

Dimension of Media Literacy	Expected Outcome
Accessing Media	Improved skills in locating diverse media types
Analyzing Media	Enhanced critical evaluation of media messages
Creating Media	Increased proficiency in media production
Collaborative Skills	Better teamwork and communication
Engagement	Higher motivation and investment in learning

The thesis of this study posits that project-based learning serves as a transformative educational approach that not only enhances media literacy skills but also prepares students for active participation in an increasingly media-saturated society. By fostering critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, project-based learning equips students with the tools necessary to navigate and contribute positively to the media

landscape.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of project-based learning (PBL) as a catalyst for media literacy development among junior high school students. The findings are organized into two main sections: quantitative results from the pre- and post-intervention assessments and qualitative insights drawn from interviews and focus groups. This structure allows for a comprehensive understanding of how PBL impacted students' media literacy skills, thereby addressing the research questions and hypotheses outlined in the introduction.

3.1 Quantitative Results

The analysis of quantitative data was conducted using pre- and post-intervention assessments of students' media literacy skills. The assessments measured three key dimensions of media literacy: accessing, analyzing, and creating media. This evaluation involved a total of 60 students, divided into an experimental group engaged in PBL and a control group experiencing traditional instruction.

3.1.1 Pre-and Post-Test Scores

Table 2 presents the pre-and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups. The results indicated a statistically significant improvement in the media literacy skills of the experimental group when compared to the control group.

Table 2: Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Media Literacy Skills

Group	Pre-Test Mean Score ($\pm$ SD)	Post-Test Mean Score ($\pm$ SD)	Mean Improvement ($\pm$ SD)	p-value
Experimental	36.73 $\pm$ 2.85	46.80 $\pm$ 3.39	10.07 $\pm$ 0.85	< 0.001
Control	36.57 $\pm$ 2.37	37.93 $\pm$ 2.54	1.20 $\pm$ 0.86	< 0.001

The Experimental Group demonstrated a mean increase of 10.07 points with a standard deviation of 0.85, which was statistically significant with a p-value < 0.001. This result indicates that the implementation of Project-

Based Learning (PBL) had a substantial positive effect on enhancing students' media literacy skills. The Control Group also showed a mean increase of 1.20 points with a standard deviation of 0.86, which was statistically

significant with a p -value < 0.001 . However, this increase was considerably smaller compared to the Experimental Group.

The comparison between the two groups reveals that the increase in the Experimental Group was significantly greater than that in the Control Group, supporting the hypothesis that PBL is effective in improving media literacy skills. A p -value of < 0.001 signifies that the results are highly statistically significant, with less than a 0.1% chance that the observed difference occurred by random chance. Statistical analysis was conducted

using a paired t -test to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group and an independent t -test to compare the improvements between the Experimental and Control Groups.

3.1.2 Analysis of Components of Media Literacy

Further analysis focused on specific components of media literacy, including accessing, analyzing, and creating media. Table 3 shows the improvements in each component as assessed through the pre-and post-tests:

Table 3: Scores by Component of Media Literacy

Component	Experimental Group (Pre-Test)	Experimental Group (Post-Test)	Control Group (Pre-Test)	Control Group (Post-Test)
Accessing	12.4	16.3	12.2	13.1
Analyzing	14.1	17.2	13.9	14.3
Creating	10.8	13.7	10.6	10.8

The results in Table 3 highlight significant improvements in media literacy components for the Experimental Group, which received the Project-Based Learning (PBL) intervention, compared to the Control Group. In the Accessing component, the Experimental Group's average score increased substantially from 12.4 in the pre-test to 16.3 in the post-test, whereas the Control Group showed only a modest increase from 12.2 to 13.1. For the Analyzing component, the Experimental Group's average score rose from 14.1 to 17.2, while the Control Group experienced a smaller gain, moving from 13.9 to 14.3. In the Creating component, the Experimental Group improved from an average of 10.8 to 13.7, while the Control Group's score remained relatively unchanged, with a slight increase from 10.6 to 10.8. These results indicate that the PBL intervention effectively enhanced students' media literacy skills across all components—Accessing, Analyzing, and Creating—demonstrating a more pronounced impact than traditional teaching methods used in the Control Group.

3.2 Qualitative Insights

Qualitative data were collected through

semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students and teachers, providing deeper insights into the experiences of participants engaged in project-based learning.

3.2.1 Student Perspectives

Students showed a high level of enthusiasm for the Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach, frequently expressing that it allowed them to engage with media in a deeper, more personalized way. A central theme in their feedback was increased motivation and active involvement in the learning process. One student remarked, "Working on projects helped me understand media better because I could explore topics I was interested in and create something myself." This statement aligns with findings by Anthonysamy et al. (2020); Kahne et al. (2012), who emphasize that student engagement is crucial for effective media literacy education, as active participation fosters better understanding and retention. (Harper, 2016) further supports this view, indicating that an innovative, flexible learning environment enhances students' skills by encouraging them to take ownership of their learning, a principle fundamental to PBL. Moreover, research by (Stix & Jolls, 2020)

highlights that media literacy, being cross-disciplinary, benefits from approaches like PBL that make learning relevant and meaningful, enabling students to critically analyze media in ways that extend beyond traditional instruction.

3.2.2 Teacher Observations

Teachers observed that the PBL approach fostered a collaborative and critical environment where students actively engaged with media content. One teacher noted, "Students were more invested in their projects, and they showed a remarkable ability to analyze media messages. It was exciting to see them actively discussing their findings." This observation reflects the conclusions of (Neo & Neo, 2001; Rohde, 2015), who stress the importance of collaborative learning in enhancing critical thinking. Similarly, (Todd, 2021) supports the idea that educational spaces that encourage inquiry and reflection are essential for developing critical literacy skills, as they allow students to transition from passive to active learners. According to Busayo (2011) foundational literacy skills are reinforced when students are given opportunities to engage with learning materials collaboratively, an environment that PBL naturally supports. This aligns with the insights of (Scheepers et al., 2011), who highlights the value of interdisciplinary collaboration in fostering critical skills, suggesting that PBL's emphasis on group work is particularly effective for media literacy, as it not only builds critical analysis but also improves interpersonal skills necessary for broader academic success.

3.2.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed three primary themes: increased engagement, enhanced critical thinking, and improved collaborative skills. These themes demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of PBL in promoting media literacy.

- 1) *Increased Engagement.* Students reported higher levels of interest and motivation when working on media projects, which contrasts with their experiences in traditional lecture-based classes.
- 2) *Enhanced Critical Thinking.* Participants noted that PBL encouraged them to evaluate media content critically,

reflecting an improvement in their analytical skills.

- 3) *Improved Collaborative Skills.* The collaborative nature of PBL facilitated teamwork and communication among students, essential skills in media literacy.

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data underscores three central benefits of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in advancing media literacy: increased engagement, enhanced critical thinking, and improved collaborative skills. First, students reported heightened interest and motivation in media-related projects, contrasting markedly with traditional lecture-based methods, a finding supported by (Caverly, 2013) who noted that interactive, technology-driven tasks tend to elevate student engagement. Secondly, PBL facilitated the development of critical thinking, as students were encouraged to scrutinize media messages closely and consider underlying biases and perspectives. This aligns with the conclusions of (Neo & Neo, 2001; Todd, 2021), who argue that inquiry-based learning environments cultivate analytical skills that are foundational to media literacy. Lastly, the inherently collaborative nature of PBL fostered teamwork and communication, critical competencies for media literacy in a digital era (Scheepers et al., 2011). By engaging in group projects, students developed essential interpersonal skills, reinforcing the value of peer collaboration in enhancing both individual and collective understanding of complex media concepts (Scheepers et al., 2011; Stix & Jolls, 2020). Together, these themes highlight the comprehensive impact of PBL in equipping students with the skills necessary to navigate and critically engage with media in a contemporary context.

The findings of this study underscore the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing media literacy skills among junior high school students, with notable improvements in both quantitative scores and qualitative feedback. Quantitative analysis revealed significant gains in media literacy components—accessing, analyzing, and creating media—within the Experimental Group compared to the Control Group, as evidenced by substantial increases in post-test

scores across all components (p -value < 0.001). These results validate the hypothesis that PBL fosters meaningful skill development beyond that achieved through traditional instruction. By providing students with opportunities for hands-on engagement, PBL empowers them to actively access and critically evaluate diverse media, supporting the idea that interactive learning environments elevate learning outcomes (Harper, 2016; Stix & Jolls, 2020). This quantitative evidence suggests that PBL's structured yet flexible approach addresses key educational goals, aligning with Sukackè et al. (2022) and Harper's (2016) perspectives on the value of active, self-directed learning in media literacy education.

Qualitative insights further illuminate the benefits of PBL, with recurring themes of increased engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration emerging from student and teacher feedback. Students consistently reported heightened interest and personal investment in media projects, contrasting with the passivity often experienced in lecture-based classes (Caverly, 2013). Teachers also observed that PBL facilitated critical engagement with media, as students actively analyzed content, questioning biases and underlying messages, which aligns with Todd's (2021) advocacy for inquiry-based learning. Additionally, the collaborative nature of PBL strengthened students' interpersonal skills, reinforcing Scheepers' et al. (2011) findings on the value of teamwork in developing critical literacy competencies. These qualitative findings complement the quantitative results, suggesting that PBL effectively addresses both cognitive and social dimensions of media literacy, preparing students for critical engagement in a media-rich society (Jolls & Johnsen, 2018; Stix & Jolls, 2020).

The findings of this study align with existing literature on project-based learning and media literacy. Studies by Crowley (2014); Meo et al. (2024); Ridwan Abd Tholib Zain et al., (2023) have emphasized the effectiveness of experiential learning approaches, such as PBL, in enhancing students' critical thinking and engagement. This study contributes to that body of research by specifically linking PBL to improved media literacy skills among junior high school students.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the significant impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) on enhancing media literacy skills among junior high school students, with both quantitative and qualitative findings underscoring its effectiveness. Quantitatively, the Experimental Group showed substantial improvements in media literacy components—accessing, analyzing, and creating media—compared to the Control Group, with a statistically significant mean increase of 10.07 points in overall media literacy scores ($p < 0.001$). Qualitative insights further revealed that students experienced higher engagement, enhanced critical thinking, and improved collaboration through PBL. Teachers observed students developing a deeper understanding of media content and actively questioning biases, reflecting the critical analytical skills fostered by PBL.

The primary contribution of this study is its demonstration of PBL as an effective instructional approach for media literacy education, addressing both cognitive and social dimensions of learning. By integrating media literacy into active, project-based tasks, educators can prepare students to navigate and critically engage with the complexities of media in today's digital age. Future research could explore the long-term effects of PBL on media literacy, particularly across varied educational settings and demographics. Additionally, investigating PBL's effectiveness in fostering digital citizenship and social responsibility in media engagement could expand understanding of its broader societal impacts. Overall, this study contributes valuable insights into the role of PBL in equipping students with essential skills for informed and responsible media consumption.

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