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Research Article

Project-Based Learning as a Strategy to Improve Students' Creativity in Elementary Social Studies

Rizki Isnaini Basri[1*], Elpisah[2], Muh. Fahreza W[3]

[1] Universitas Patompo, Jl. Inspeksi Kanal No.10, Tombolo, Kec. Rappocini, Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan 90233, Indonesia; e-mail : eriza.eriz89@gmail.com
[2] Universitas Patompo, Jl. Inspeksi Kanal No.10, Tombolo, Kec. Rappocini, Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan 90233, Indonesia; e-mail : elpisah77.amir@unpatompo.ac.id
[3] Universitas Patompo, Jl. Inspeksi Kanal No.10, Tombolo, Kec. Rappocini, Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan 90233, Indonesia; e-mail : mfahreza@unpatompo.ac.id
* Corresponding Author : Rizki Isnaini Basri

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the application of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model to improve students' creativity in Social Studies and to measure its effectiveness in enhancing creative learning outcomes. The research was conducted as a Classroom Action Research (CAR) across two cycles during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, involving 30 fifth-grade students at SD Inpres Barombong 2. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and documentation, while analysis employed descriptive statistics for quantitative data and reduction–triangulation techniques for qualitative data. The creativity indicators examined included fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Findings reveal that the implementation of PjBL significantly enhanced students' creative thinking skills, as evidenced by an overall increase in average scores across all creativity indicators. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the PjBL model was reflected in the improved implementation of its instructional syntax, progressing from the "Moderate" category in the initial cycle to "High" and eventually "Very High" in the subsequent cycle. These outcomes confirm that PjBL promotes active, student-centered, and collaborative learning that fosters creativity in Social Studies. The study concludes that continuous implementation of PjBL is essential for cultivating creativity in elementary classrooms and suggests further research to explore its applicability in different contexts and educational levels.

Keywords: Classroom Action Research; Elementary Education; Project-Based Learning; Social Studies Education; Student Creativity

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1. Introduction

Education serves as a fundamental pillar in shaping the quality of individuals and society, playing a central role in preparing learners with the competencies, skills, and attitudes required to thrive in an increasingly complex global era. In the 21st century, education is strongly associated with the development of the so-called 4C skills—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—which are essential not only for academic success but also for real-world adaptability (MY et al., 2023). Among these competencies, creativity is considered a key skill that enables students to think critically, solve problems innovatively, and generate new ideas relevant to dynamic societal needs (Janah et al., 2023). However, preliminary studies indicate that many Indonesian elementary students still struggle to express

creative ideas, as their learning process is dominated by rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction, which limits opportunities for exploration and innovation (Zubaidah, 2016).

Previous research has explored various approaches to enhance student creativity, among which Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has gained prominence. PjBL emphasizes learner-centered, collaborative, and experiential learning, enabling students to solve real-world problems and develop critical and creative skills simultaneously (Irawan et al., 2023; Elpisah & Bin-Tahir, 2019). Empirical studies confirm its effectiveness in improving creativity and learning outcomes across different subjects, with significant gains in both creativity scores and academic performance (Astuti & Salamah, 2022; Lestari & Halidjah, 2023; Husein et al., 2023). The structured nature of PjBL, involving steps such as formulating driving questions, planning, implementing projects, and evaluating outcomes, provides a systematic pathway for enhancing higher-order thinking (Fatmawati et al., 2022). Nevertheless, most prior studies have focused on science or general subject domains, with limited emphasis on Social Studies at the elementary level.

This study seeks to address that gap by systematically implementing PjBL in elementary Social Studies to improve students' creativity. Specifically, it analyzes how the model enhances creative thinking through indicators such as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, while also assessing its instructional effectiveness. The key contributions of this research are threefold: (1) it provides empirical evidence on the role of PjBL in fostering creativity in elementary Social Studies, (2) it demonstrates the structured implementation of PjBL tailored to young learners' needs, and (3) it highlights practical implications for teachers in designing active, student-centered instruction.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

2.1. Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an innovative instructional approach rooted in constructivist theory, which positions projects at the core of the learning process. This model emphasizes contextual and experiential learning, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges (Rasulova, 2024). Research has consistently shown that PjBL enhances creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving by encouraging students to actively explore authentic problems and produce meaningful outcomes (Zhao, 2024; Haratua et al., 2024). PjBL significantly improves students' creative capacities, while Nayak highlights its relevance within the Education 5.0 framework, where technology integration supports collaborative and personalized learning. Overall, PjBL is not merely a teaching method but a holistic strategy that bridges academic, professional, and technological competencies in the 21st century.

The principles of PjBL further underscore its effectiveness. Central to this model is the use of essential questions and problem-based learning, which stimulate critical thinking and inquiry (Nababan et al., 2023). Projects are designed to provide meaningful connections between theory and practice, thus increasing student motivation (Melinda & Zainil, 2020). Learners are positioned as the main drivers of project planning and implementation, with teachers acting as facilitators (Faturrohman, 2015). Moreover, PjBL emphasizes collaboration and communication, promotes interdisciplinary integration, and culminates in tangible products that demonstrate comprehensive understanding (Vatamaniuk & Dutkevych, 2024). Assessment is holistic, covering both processes and outcomes, and aims to evaluate critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork. These principles ensure that PjBL fosters not only deep conceptual learning but also key competencies needed for real-world challenges.

In practice, PjBL follows a series of structured steps, ranging from defining essential questions and designing project plans to scheduling, implementation, and reflection (Novita et al., 2022). This systematic sequence ensures that students engage in meaningful tasks that encourage responsibility, collaboration, and innovation. Although the model offers many strengths—such as enhancing motivation, promoting 21st-century skills, and creating authentic products—it also presents challenges, including extended time demands, heavier teacher workloads, and difficulties in ensuring equitable student participation (Wahyuni, 2022). Despite these limitations, PjBL remains one of the most relevant and effective approaches for modern education, provided that projects are well designed and supported with adequate resources.

2.2 Creativity

Creativity is a multidimensional phenomenon that reflects the human capacity to generate original and valuable ideas. It emerges from the dynamic interaction between learning, experience, and the synergy of cognitive processes. Ulum describes creativity as the product of both internal and external factors that enable individuals to produce something novel, while Holm-Hadulla defines it as a vital force combining talent, skills, motivation, and environmental influences. Similarly, Likhitska and Yakymenko highlight creativity as an individual's potential to produce unique ideas, which can be nurtured through practice and stimulation. Sagala and Hasibuan (2024) emphasize its role in problem-solving and innovation, whereas Felsman (2024) underscores its importance in personal growth and fulfillment, particularly during adolescence. Overall, creativity is not merely the act of producing new ideas but the ability to transform them into meaningful contributions that benefit both individuals and society.

The characteristics of creativity further illustrate its centrality in human development. Creative individuals are often marked by originality, flexibility, fluency, and the ability to connect unrelated concepts into meaningful patterns (Schuster, 2006; Sriraman, 2009). They exhibit strong curiosity, imagination, perseverance, and openness to new experiences, while also showing courage in taking risks and resilience in the face of failure. These features enable learners to generate innovative ideas, evaluate them critically, and refine them into practical outputs. Such traits are not only cognitive but also attitudinal, reflecting the integration of intellectual capacity, emotional engagement, and social adaptability that drive creative expression in diverse contexts.

A number of factors influence the development of creativity, ranging from individual attributes to environmental and situational conditions. Supportive contexts—such as parental encouragement, conducive school environments, and opportunities for self-initiative—stimulate creative thinking (Budiarso et al., 2023). Conversely, lack of risk-taking, social pressures, limited exploration, and unsupportive learning cultures often inhibit creativity. To measure this construct, scholars distinguish between cognitive indicators (fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, and evaluative judgment) and non-cognitive indicators (curiosity, courage, self-appreciation, and openness to diversity) (Lubis, 2018; Subur, 2016). In educational practice, these indicators provide a framework to assess both creative processes and products, ensuring that creativity is recognized not only as an innate talent but also as a skill that can be cultivated through structured learning experiences.

2.3 Social Studies Education

Social Studies education (IPS) is an interdisciplinary learning process that integrates history, geography, economics, sociology, and anthropology to help students understand the relationship between humans and their environment holistically. It aims not only to transmit knowledge but also to

foster social values such as justice, democracy, and responsibility, thereby shaping students into active and responsible members of society (Andira et al., 2024). Within the framework of sustainable education, Iwegbu and Ossai (2011) emphasize that a well-designed Social Studies curriculum must align with contemporary societal challenges and promote sustainable national development. Neumann (2011) further highlights that Social Studies cultivates social awareness and active participation, preparing students to become critical and socially responsible citizens.

The objectives of Social Studies education revolve around equipping learners with comprehensive social understanding, humanistic values, and the ability to interact effectively within multicultural and dynamic communities. According to Andira et al. (2024), the integrative approach of Social Studies builds students' character through the promotion of justice, democracy, and social responsibility. In addition, Iwegbu and Ossai (2011) underline its role in fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills to address modern social challenges. Neumann (2011) also stresses the importance of nurturing social consciousness, ensuring that students develop not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills such as collaboration, respect for diversity, and socially grounded decision-making. This positions Social Studies as a crucial subject for cultivating civic responsibility and positive societal contributions.

Despite its potential, Social Studies education faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness. Limited resources—such as appropriate teaching materials, technology, and relevant media—often restrict the contextualization of lessons (Andira et al., 2024). Traditional teacher-centered pedagogies and rote memorization practices further prevent students from engaging in critical inquiry and reflective problem-solving (Iwegbu & Ossai, 2011). Moreover, the lack of teacher training in innovative methods, including project-based or case-based learning, hampers the development of active and contextualized classroom practices. Student heterogeneity in terms of abilities and socio-cultural backgrounds also requires inclusive strategies to ensure equal learning opportunities (Neumann, 2011). These challenges underscore the need for curricular reform, pedagogical innovation, and resource enrichment to make Social Studies learning meaningful, relevant, and transformative for students.

3. Proposed Method

3.1. Research Location and Duration

This study was conducted at UPT SPF SD Inpres Barombong 2, located at Jl. Sahareng Dg. Sese No. 31, Komp. Bayang, Tanjung Merdeka. The school was selected due to its student characteristics and learning conditions, which are relevant to the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in enhancing creativity in Social Studies. The research took place during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year and was carried out over four stages: preparation, implementation of Cycle I, implementation of Cycle II, and data analysis and reporting.

3.2. Research Design and Setting

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), which is widely used to improve the quality of classroom instruction through iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kurniawan, 2017; Arikunto et al., 2021). CAR was deemed appropriate as the research sought to progressively enhance student creativity through the structured application of PjBL. The subjects were 21 fifth-grade students (Class V-A). Two variables were investigated: (1) the application of PjBL, operationalized through key stages such as defining essential questions, project planning, scheduling, monitoring, evaluation, and reflection; and (2) student creativity, assessed through indicators of fluency, flexibility, originality, and

elaboration, alongside non-cognitive traits such as curiosity, imagination, openness to diversity, and risk-taking.

3.3. Research Procedure

The study was organized into two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning phase, learning scenarios and project tasks were designed. During the acting stage, PjBL was implemented in the classroom, where students collaborated in groups and presented project outcomes. Observation focused on student participation, engagement, and creativity indicators. Reflection was then used to analyze findings from each cycle and to plan improvements for the subsequent one.

3.4. Data Collection Techniques

Three instruments were employed to gather data. First, structured observation sheets were used to record student engagement, collaboration, and creative outputs during project activities. Second, questionnaires administered before and after the intervention measured changes in creativity based on fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Third, documentation—including lesson plans, photographs, and videos—captured evidence of the teaching and learning process, complementing the observational and survey data.

3.5. Data Analysis.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were applied. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, and mode) to illustrate changes in creativity across cycles. Qualitative data from observations and documentation were processed through data reduction, interpretation, and triangulation to ensure validity and reliability. Triangulation across instruments (observations, surveys, and documentation) enhanced the robustness of findings by confirming results from multiple perspectives.

3.6. Indicators of Success

The effectiveness of PjBL was measured by increases in student creativity, with success categorized into five levels: Very Creative (81–100%), Creative (61–80%), Fairly Creative (41–60%), Less Creative (21–40%), and Not Creative (0–20%) (Molina et al., 2021). Students were expected to achieve at least the "Creative" category by demonstrating improvements in fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Result

This study aims to implement the Project-Based Learning model as an effort to improve student creativity in social studies at the UPT SPF SD Inpres Barombong 2. The implementation process is carried out through two learning cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Each cycle is designed to provide meaningful learning experiences through collaborative projects that are relevant to students' lives. The main focus of this model is to improve student creativity in completing assignments independently or in groups. The following description outlines the stages and results of the implementation of this learning model in each cycle.

Implementation of the Project-Based Learning Model in Cycle I

The first cycle of the Project-Based Learning model was implemented as the initial stage to integrate the project-based learning approach into the Social Studies subject. At this stage, researchers designed and implemented learning scenarios that encouraged students to actively engage in contextual

project activities. The first cycle implementation process followed the stages of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Each of these stages was carried out systematically to determine the initial effectiveness of the applied learning model and to identify aspects that needed improvement in the next cycle.

The results of the recapitulation of the total score and percentage of each indicator are presented in Table 1. below:

Table 1. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Each Student Creativity Indicator in Cycle I.

No	Student Creativity Indicators	Cycle I	
		Total Score	Percentage
1	Fluency/Smoothness (Fluency)	507	68%
2	Flexibility	497	66%
3	Novelty	489	65%
4	Elaboration	505	67%

Source: Data Analysis Results (2025)

The score recapitulation results show that fluency and detail indicators are two prominent aspects, with aggregate scores of 507 and 505 points, respectively (around 67–68%). This reflects that students are quite capable of generating ideas fluently and presenting them in the form of detailed projects. In contrast, the indicators of novelty and flexibility show relatively lower scores (65% and 66%), indicating that students still tend to be conventional in formulating ideas and are not flexible enough in adjusting their approach to project completion. These findings provide the basis for strengthening learning strategies that emphasize the exploration of creative ideas.

After summarizing the scores and analyzing each indicator, the next step was to categorize the students' overall creativity levels. This grouping used the guidelines from Molina et al. (2021), which divides creativity levels into five categories based on score ranges: Very Creative, Creative, Moderately Creative, Less Creative, and Not Creative. The results of grouping students based on creativity categories can be seen in Table 2.below:

Table 2. Distribution of Student Creativity Categories in Cycle I.

No	Category	Value Range	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Very Creative	81-100	0	0%
2	Creative	61-80	0	0%
3	Quite Creative	41-60	29	96.67%
4	Lack of creativity	21-40	1	3.33%
5	Not Creative	0-20	0	0%
	Total		30	100%

Source: Data Analysis Results (2025)

Table 2. shows that the majority of students (96.67%) were in the "Quite Creative" category, while only one student (3.33%) was classified as "Less Creative." No students fell into the "Creative" or "Very Creative" categories. This indicates that although students have demonstrated potential for creative thinking, this capacity has not yet fully developed. Therefore, interventions that focus more on stimulating novel ideas, flexibility of thought, and creating exploratory spaces need to be strengthened in the next cycle.

The successes in Cycle I are as follows: 1.)The implementation of PjBL syntax has been carried out comprehensively, although in the moderate category, indicating that teachers are able to facilitate project-based learning, although not yet fully optimal. 2.) Students' active participation in learning activities increased, as seen from their involvement in group discussions,

project planning, and the preparation of visual products in the form of maps. 3.) The majority of students (96.67%) were in the fairly creative category, with the highest achievements in the fluency (68%) and detail (67%) indicators, indicating great potential for development in the next cycle.

The deficiencies that need to be corrected in this cycle are as follows: 1.) Some PjBL syntax is still not optimal, especially in Project Planning and Project Implementation & Monitoring, due to time constraints and teacher readiness in guiding the group process. 2.) The indicators of novelty (65%) and flexibility (66%) are still low, indicating that students are still lacking in producing varied and innovative creative ideas. 3.) Student reflection is still descriptive in nature, not yet leading to a deep understanding of the learning process and the development of critical thinking. 4.) The use of media and aids is still limited, so that students are not fully interested and motivated visually or interactively in understanding the material on geographical location and natural conditions.

The recommendations for improvement for cycle II are as follows: 1.) Teachers need to strengthen learning planning and the use of interesting visual/digital aids (interactive maps, videos, or animations). 2.) Group mentoring needs to be improved, with a mentoring rotation system and regular provision of formative feedback. 3.) Learning reflection can be directed more deeply through trigger questions and students' daily journals so that they are more aware of the learning process they are undergoing.

Implementation of the Project-Based Learning Model in Cycle II

In Cycle II, the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model focused on improving various weaknesses identified in the previous cycle, particularly in project planning, activity implementation, and strengthening student creativity indicators. Learning activities were carried out over four meetings, maintaining the topic of "Geographical Location and Natural Conditions of Indonesia" as the main context of the project. Teachers played a more active role as facilitators, providing a wider variety of learning media and providing structured feedback at each stage of the project. Furthermore, students demonstrated a higher level of participation in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project. The project results produced in this cycle also appeared more creative, informative, and reflected an improvement in the quality of students' critical and collaborative thinking. These comprehensive improvements aimed to optimize the effectiveness of the PjBL syntax implementation and encourage the development of student creativity to the fullest.

Assessment of student creativity in the application of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in social studies subjects is carried out by referring to four main indicators, namely: (1) fluency, (2) flexibility, (3) novelty, and (4) elaboration. Each indicator is measured through data triangulation which includes the results of direct observations during the learning process, student perception questionnaires, and assessment of project products that are worked on collaboratively.

The results of the recapitulation of the total score and percentage of each indicator are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Each Student Creativity Indicator in Cycle II.

No	Student Creativity Indicators	Cycle II	
		Total Score	Percentage
1	Fluency/Smoothness (Fluency)	635	84.80%
2	Flexibility	631	83.67%
3	Novelty	646	86.13%
4	Elaboration	642	85.60%

Source: Data Analysis Results (2025)

Based on Table 3, the results of the score recapitulation show that all indicators of student creativity in Cycle II experienced a significant increase compared to Cycle I. The novelty indicator recorded the highest score with an aggregate value of 646 points (86.13%), followed by elaboration of 642 points (85.60%), fluency of 635 points (84.80%), and flexibility of 635 points (83.67%).

This achievement reflects that students are not only able to generate many ideas (fluency), but also able to develop ideas flexibly and organize them into original and detailed work. The significant increase in the novelty indicator indicates that the learning strategies implemented in Cycle II successfully encouraged students to think more innovatively and creatively in responding to project challenges. This contrasts with the results of Cycle I, where the novelty and flexibility indicators were the lowest.

Overall, these results provide evidence that the Project-Based Learning model, when implemented systematically and sustainably, can strengthen all aspects of students' creativity in a balanced manner. These findings provide the basis for maintaining the project-based learning approach in social studies and expanding its integration into other relevant themes within the Independent Curriculum. The results of student groupings based on creativity categories can be seen in Table 4. below:

Table 4. Distribution of Student Creativity Categories in Cycle II.

No	Category	Value Range	Number of Students	Percentage
1	Very Creative	81-100		90%
2	Creative	61-80	3	10%
3	Quite Creative	41-60	0	0%
4	Lack of creativity	21-40	0	0%
5	Not Creative	0-20	0	0%
Total			30	100%

Source: Data Analysis Results (2025)

Table 4. shows that the majority of students in Cycle II were in the "Very Creative" category, as many as 27 students (90%), while the remaining 3 students (10%) were in the "Creative" category. There were no students in the "Quite Creative," "Less Creative," or "Not Creative" categories. This indicates that the interventions carried out in Cycle II, particularly in the aspects of learning planning, project mentoring, and strengthening creativity indicators, have had a very positive impact on the development of students' creative thinking skills.

This increase in creativity levels indicates that students are not only able to generate new ideas but also can develop and present their ideas in an original, flexible, and detailed manner. Thus, the implementation of the Project-Based Learning model in Cycle II proved effective in encouraging idea exploration, collaboration among students, and improving the overall quality of project products. These findings support the importance of implementing project-based learning sustainably in strengthening the character and creative thinking competencies of elementary school students.

The implementation of Cycle II showed very satisfactory results both in terms of the implementation of the Project-Based Learning model syntax and the development of student creativity. All PjBL syntax has been implemented with the category "High" to "Very High", indicating that teachers have been able to facilitate the project-based learning process more optimally. This improvement is also in line with the increasing active involvement of students at each stage of the project, from designing, implementing, to evaluating the learning products they produce.

In terms of student creativity categories, while in Cycle I the majority of students were still in the "Quite Creative" category, in Cycle II, 90% of

students were in the "Very Creative" category, with the remaining 10% in the "Creative" category. This reflects that improvements in media use, project assistance, and varied learning approaches have successfully developed students' critical thinking skills and originality more effectively.

Thus, it can be concluded that the intervention carried out in Cycle II proved successful in improving the weaknesses that occurred in Cycle I. Learning with the PjBL model not only increased student participation but also provided a space for exploration and reflection that encouraged the growth of creativity as a whole. This cycle can be used as a reference for a good practice model for project-based social studies learning at the elementary school level.

4.2. Discussion

The findings indicate that implementing the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model has a significant positive impact on enhancing students' creativity in Social Studies. This is evidenced by consistent gains across all creativity indicators from Cycle I to Cycle II. In Cycle I, most students were still categorized as "Fairly Creative," with scores clustered around 45–55 out of a maximum of 100. Novelty and flexibility emerged as the lowest indicators, suggesting that students initially struggled to generate innovative ideas and to respond flexibly to project challenges.

Following improvements in lesson planning, teacher scaffolding, and the selection of learning media and activities in Cycle II, there was a marked increase in outcomes. All students achieved scores above 78, with 90% classified as "Highly Creative" and the remaining 10% as "Creative." This demonstrates that a systematic and reflective application of PjBL can create a learning environment that optimally fosters idea exploration. Notably, the novelty indicator reached the highest percentage (86.13%), followed by elaboration (85.60%), fluency (84.80%), and flexibility (83.67%). In other words, a project-based approach not only increases the number of ideas students produce but also strengthens their ability to develop ideas in original and detailed ways.

This enhanced effectiveness is also supported by observations of PjBL implementation fidelity for both teachers and students. During Cycle II, all PjBL syntax components were carried out effectively, improving from the "Moderate" category to "High" and "Very High." The teacher successfully facilitated project formulation, planning, implementation, and evaluation more consistently and meaningfully. At the same time, students' engagement at each project stage became more active and enthusiastic. These results underscore that PjBL's success depends not only on task design but also on implementation quality and students' emotional involvement in learning.

The effectiveness observed here aligns with prior evidence. Islawati and Samsuddin (2024) showed that PjBL significantly improves multiple dimensions of student creativity. Likewise, Setiawan and Afiani (2023) reported that PjBL in Social Studies provides space for students to cultivate creativity through meaningful projects. These findings are consistent with the present study, which positions projects as a vehicle for integrating ideas, collaborative skills, and personal reflection within the learning process.

In sum, Project-Based Learning is effective for developing students' creative potential in Social Studies. PjBL not only enhances creative thinking but also reinforces 21st-century competencies such as collaboration, problem-solving, and personal responsibility. These results provide strong justification for recommending sustained and adaptive implementation of PjBL in the elementary curriculum, particularly in Social Studies, which is rich in real-life contexts and civic values.

5. Comparison

The present study contributes to the growing body of research on the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in enhancing student creativity, particularly in the context of elementary Social Studies. Previous studies have generally emphasized the benefits of PjBL for improving learning outcomes and fostering critical thinking, but with varying degrees of emphasis on creativity. For example, Islawati and Samsuddin (2024) reported significant improvements in creativity dimensions through PjBL in science classes, while Setiawan and Afiani (2023) highlighted its potential in Social Studies for providing meaningful learning opportunities. These findings resonate with the results of this study, yet our contribution lies in demonstrating not only the improvement of creativity but also a systematic shift across all creativity indicators within two iterative action cycles.

Compared with prior works, this study offers a more measurable and structured analysis of creativity development. Whereas earlier research often focused on general outcomes such as "student engagement" or "learning motivation," this study assessed creativity using four widely accepted indicators: fluency, flexibility, novelty, and elaboration. The consistent increase across these dimensions—from "Fairly Creative" in Cycle I to "Highly Creative" and "Very Creative" in Cycle II—provides more robust evidence of PjBL's impact. Furthermore, the study highlights novelty as the most improved dimension, addressing a gap in earlier studies where originality was less explicitly examined.

Another contribution is methodological. While previous works have employed either experimental or quasi-experimental designs, this study applies Classroom Action Research (CAR), enabling iterative reflection and improvement across cycles. This approach ensures not only statistical improvements but also practical refinements in teaching practice, including the integration of digital media, structured scaffolding, and reflective activities. Thus, the findings extend the state-of-the-art by illustrating how PjBL, when implemented systematically in Social Studies, can transform student creativity into measurable and sustainable outcomes.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrated that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has a significant and positive effect on enhancing students' creativity in Social Studies at the elementary level. The findings showed a consistent increase across all creativity indicators—fluency, flexibility, novelty, and elaboration—between Cycle I and Cycle II. Initially, most students were categorized as "Fairly Creative," but after systematic improvements in planning, facilitation, and media integration, 90% reached the "Highly Creative" level and 10% the "Creative" level in Cycle II. These results confirm that PjBL is effective in fostering student engagement, collaborative learning, and creative problem-solving. The synthesis of findings indicates that the structured application of PjBL aligns well with the research objectives of improving creativity and supports the argument that project-based approaches create meaningful, student-centered learning experiences. The significant improvement in the novelty indicator further demonstrates PjBL's role in encouraging originality and innovative thinking, which are critical skills in 21st-century education.

The implications of this study highlight the importance of continuous integration of PjBL into Social Studies instruction, as it not only enhances creativity but also cultivates essential competencies such as collaboration, critical thinking, and personal responsibility. This contributes to the broader discourse on effective pedagogical strategies for developing 21st-century skills among elementary students. However, this study has certain limitations, including its small sample size, the single-school context, and its

reliance on classroom action research design, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should expand to different educational levels, larger samples, and diverse contexts, while also exploring digital or hybrid adaptations of PjBL. Such studies would provide further insights into the scalability and sustainability of project-based approaches for creativity development.

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