

Implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project in Early Childhood Character Development

Said Ashlan^{1✉}

Ubudiyah University, Indonesia¹

e-mail: ash.said01@gmail.com

INFO ARTIKEL

Accepted : 06 29, 2026

Revised : 07 18, 2026

Approved: 07 25, 2026

Keywords:

Pancasila Student Profile;
P5; Early Childhood
Education; Character
Development; Kurikulum
Merdeka; Project-Based
Learning



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ABSTRAK

This study examines the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila, P5) in early childhood character development under Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka. Using a systematic literature review of 25 peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2025, the study synthesizes empirical findings on how early childhood education institutions design, implement, and evaluate P5 activities to cultivate six core character dimensions: faith and piety toward God, global diversity, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. The review shows that successful implementation depends on contextualized, play-based, and locally rooted project themes; teachers acting as facilitators rather than instructors; and structured collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Recurring obstacles include limited teacher understanding of project-based planning and assessment, restricted time and resources, and uneven integration of local cultural values into project themes. The review further identifies an underexplored area in the literature: the differentiated design of P5 specifically for learners aged 0-6, as distinct from primary and secondary applications. By consolidating findings across educational levels and regions, this article offers a novel, age-specific synthesis linking project-based learning, Pancasila values, and developmentally appropriate practice, and provides practical implications for early childhood educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen character formation through experiential and culturally grounded projects.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's education system entered a new phase of curricular reform with the introduction of Kurikulum Merdeka (the Merdeka or "Independent" Curriculum), a policy response to persistent concerns about learning loss, rote-oriented pedagogy, and the gap between academic achievement and character formation (Nurdyansyah et al., 2022). At the heart of this reform is the Pancasila Student Profile (Profil Pelajar Pancasila), a set of six interrelated dispositions faith and piety toward God Almighty and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independent learning, critical



reasoning, and creativity that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology positions as the ultimate outcome of Indonesian education across all levels (Nurhayati et al., 2022). To operationalize these dispositions, the Ministry introduced the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila, commonly abbreviated P5), a co-curricular, project-based mechanism through which schools design thematic activities that immerse learners in real, contextual problems rather than relying solely on subject-based instruction (Susanti et al., 2023).

Although P5 was initially conceived with primary and secondary learners in mind, its principles have been extended into early childhood education (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, PAUD), where character formation is widely regarded as most malleable and foundational (Ruswandi et al., 2024). Developmental psychology and early-childhood pedagogy converge on the view that the years between birth and six are a sensitive period for internalizing values, social norms, and self-regulation skills, making this stage strategically important for instilling the dispositions embedded in the Pancasila Student Profile (Ningsih et al., 2021). Unlike older learners, young children construct understanding primarily through play, sensory exploration, and imitation of significant adults, which means that P5 in PAUD settings must be substantially reimaged rather than simply scaled down from primary-school models (Fitrianingtyas et al., 2023). This reimagining is precisely where much of the current literature remains fragmented: studies tend to describe either the general policy architecture of P5 or its implementation at the primary and secondary levels, while empirical accounts specific to early childhood settings are comparatively recent and dispersed across a wide range of regional and disciplinary journals.

Existing studies offer converging but incomplete evidence about how P5 functions in early childhood contexts. Several accounts describe P5 as a vehicle for embedding local cultural wisdom into character education, arguing that themes rooted in regional traditions traditional games, culinary practices, folklore, or crafts make abstract Pancasila values tangible for young children (Suratmi et al., 2024; Mukhtar et al., 2024). Other studies foreground the integration of religious and spiritual values, showing how P5 themes can be designed to reinforce faith and piety alongside broader civic virtues, particularly in Islamic early childhood institutions (Hasanah et al., 2025; Purwanti et al., 2025). A further cluster of studies emphasizes environmental and social dimensions, documenting how P5 projects cultivate caring attitudes toward nature and cooperative social skills through hands-on, community-oriented activities (Anggana et al., 2025; Algazira et al., 2025). Complementing these thematic studies, evaluative and methodological works have begun to assess the fidelity and outcomes of P5 implementation using structured frameworks such as the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model, revealing that the quality of implementation varies considerably depending on teacher readiness, institutional support, and the depth of stakeholder involvement (Ardiansyah, 2024; Waruwu et al., 2024).

Despite this growing body of work, three interrelated gaps can be identified. First, most syntheses of P5 research aggregate findings across all educational levels without adequately disentangling what is specific to early childhood pedagogy, where developmental appropriateness, play-based learning, and caregiver involvement operate under different logics than in primary or secondary schooling (Nurmala et al., 2025; Muhson et al., 2025). Second, while individual case studies describe particular strategies differentiated learning, traditional games, local culture-based modules there remains limited cross-study synthesis that maps how these strategies relate to one another and to

the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile as a coherent framework, rather than as isolated interventions (Fitriani et al., 2025; Nuriya et al., 2023). Third, the challenges reported across studies, ranging from teachers' limited grasp of project-based assessment to resource and time constraints, are typically discussed within single-site studies, obscuring patterns that might only become visible through comparative analysis (Nurrahman & Maimunah, 2025; Utari & Afendi, 2022; Septiyani et al., 2025).

Theoretically, the rationale for locating character formation within early childhood project-based learning draws on two complementary strands of thought. The first is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective, which frames a child's development as shaped by nested, interacting environments family, classroom, community, and broader culture implying that character education is most effective when it deliberately engages multiple layers of a child's ecology rather than confining values instruction to the classroom alone (Nurdyansyah et al., 2022). P5's explicit encouragement of community-linked, family-involving projects can be read as an operational response to this ecological logic. The second is values-internalization theory, which holds that moral and civic dispositions are not transmitted through direct instruction but gradually internalized through repeated, meaningful, self-directed engagement with value-laden experiences a process well aligned with project-based and play-based pedagogy (Ningsih et al., 2021). Read together, these frameworks suggest that P5's design logic in early childhood settings is theoretically sound, but that its practical realization depends on the extent to which schools can genuinely mobilize family and community participation, and on how well activities are calibrated to young children's cognitive and social capacities rather than adapted wholesale from models designed for older learners.

The Indonesian policy context adds further complexity. Kurikulum Merdeka grants individual schools substantial autonomy in selecting P5 themes and allocating project time, a design choice intended to accommodate regional diversity but which, in practice, produces considerable variation in implementation quality and depth across provinces (Waruwu et al., 2024). Early childhood institutions, which in Indonesia range from well-resourced private kindergartens to modestly funded community-run PAUD centers, are especially exposed to this variation because they typically operate with fewer specialist staff, less structured curriculum-development support, and more constrained facilities than primary schools (Ruswandi et al., 2024). Several studies note that teachers in early childhood settings often receive the same general P5 guidance documents issued for primary and secondary schools, with limited early-childhood-specific elaboration on how to translate the six Pancasila Student Profile dimensions into play-based, non-literate activities appropriate for three- to six-year-olds (Muhson et al., 2025). This mismatch between generic policy guidance and the specialized pedagogical demands of early childhood education constitutes a structural challenge that recurs, in varying forms, throughout the reviewed literature.

This article addresses these gaps by conducting a systematic review of 25 recent, peer-reviewed studies that specifically examine the implementation of P5, with particular attention to early childhood applications, supplemented by closely related studies from adjoining educational levels that illuminate transferable strategies and challenges (Santika & Dafit, 2023; Widyastuti, 2022; Irawati et al., 2022). The novelty of this review lies in three contributions. First, rather than treating P5 as a single undifferentiated policy, the review develops an age-specific synthesis that isolates findings unique to the 0-6 developmental range, distinguishing them from patterns observed at primary and

secondary levels. Second, it organizes the fragmented thematic literature covering local culture, religious values, environmental care, and social skills into a unified framework aligned with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, clarifying how disparate project themes serve overlapping developmental goals (Mardatillah et al., 2025). Third, it consolidates evaluative evidence on implementation challenges and enabling conditions across multiple regions and institutional types, generating practical, transferable recommendations for early childhood educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to design developmentally appropriate P5 activities. In doing so, this review moves beyond descriptive case reporting toward a comparative, theory-informed account of how character education through project-based learning can be most effectively realized during the earliest years of formal education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic literature review design to synthesize empirical and conceptual findings on the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in early childhood character development. A systematic review was selected because the phenomenon under investigation is documented across numerous, dispersed, small-scale qualitative studies published in regional and national journals; a structured synthesis was therefore necessary to identify convergent patterns, divergent findings, and gaps in the literature.

Data sources were identified through Google Scholar, Crossref, and the websites of relevant Indonesian and international education journals, using combinations of the keywords "Pancasila Student Profile", "Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila", "P5", "early childhood education", and "character development". The search covered publications from 2021 to 2026 to ensure currency with the ongoing rollout of Kurikulum Merdeka. Inclusion criteria required that articles: (1) be published in a peer-reviewed journal with an active, resolvable Digital Object Identifier (DOI); (2) directly address the design, implementation, or evaluation of P5 or closely related Pancasila-value-based character education initiatives; (3) be published within the last five years; and (4) be accessible in full text through an open-access repository or institutional journal portal. Articles were excluded if they were opinion pieces without empirical or conceptual grounding, duplicated content already captured by an included study, or fell outside the education sector.

The review process followed four sequential stages, illustrated in Figure 1: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. During identification, an initial pool of records was compiled from database and search-engine queries. During screening, titles and abstracts were reviewed to remove duplicates and clearly irrelevant records. During the eligibility stage, full texts of the remaining records were assessed against the inclusion criteria described above. The final set of 25 studies retained for synthesis comprised research conducted in early childhood, elementary, and, where directly relevant to transferable implementation strategies, secondary education settings across multiple regions of Indonesia.

Data extraction followed a structured protocol capturing, for each included study, the author(s) and year of publication, the educational level and regional context, the research focus, the method employed, and the principal findings. Extracted data were then analyzed using thematic synthesis, a qualitative method for identifying and grouping recurring patterns across primary studies. Four analytic themes were inductively

developed and iteratively refined during coding: (1) planning and design of P5 activities, (2) implementation strategies used by teachers and institutions, (3) character outcomes associated with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, and (4) challenges and evaluative evidence concerning implementation quality. These themes structure the presentation of findings in the Results and Discussion section that follows.

Figure 1. Flow of the Literature Review Process

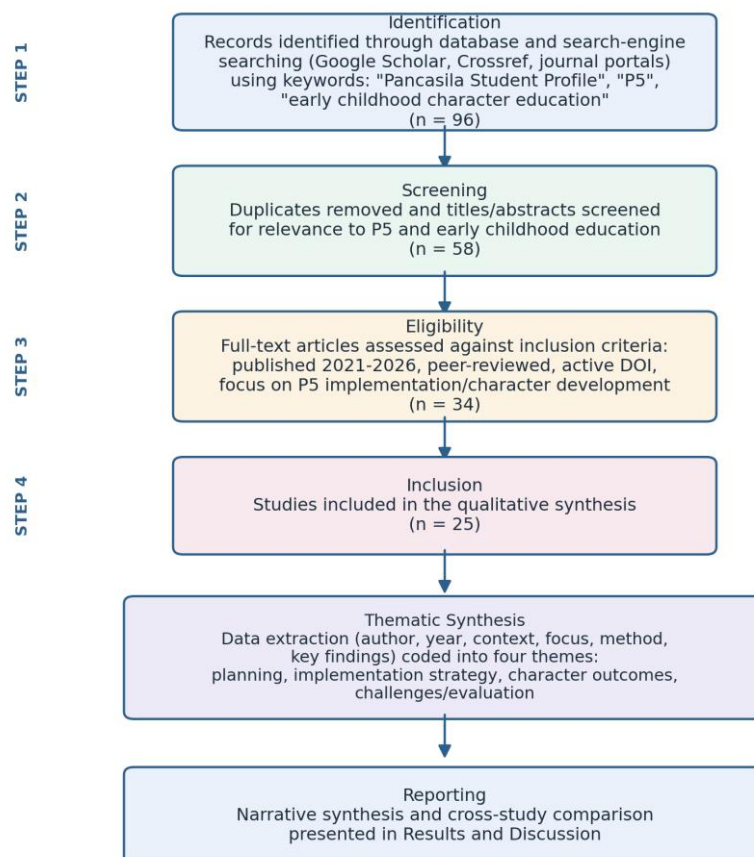


Figure 1. Flow of the literature review process, from identification through thematic synthesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 25 reviewed studies collectively depict the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) as a flexible but demanding pedagogical mechanism whose success in early childhood settings depends heavily on contextual adaptation. Across regions and institutional types, the studies vary in method ranging from single-site qualitative case studies to research-and-development module design and structured programme evaluation yet converge on a shared conclusion: P5 achieves its intended character outcomes only when project themes, teacher facilitation, and family involvement are deliberately aligned around children's developmental realities rather than treated as an administrative extension of primary-school practice. Table 1 summarizes a representative subset of the reviewed literature, illustrating the diversity of contexts, methods, and thematic emphases captured in the full review, before the discussion below

organizes findings around four analytic themes: planning and design, implementation strategy, character outcomes, and challenges with evaluative evidence.

Table 1. Summary of Representative Studies on the Implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project

Author (Year)	Context / Level	Method	Key Findings
Hasanah et al. (2025)	Early childhood, Islamic school	Qualitative case study	Integrating Pancasila and Islamic values through P5 strengthens both religious character and civic dispositions simultaneously.
Suratmi et al. (2024)	Early childhood	Qualitative descriptive	Literacy activities grounded in local culture strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile while building early literacy skills.
Mukhtar et al. (2024)	Early childhood, Kepulauan Riau	R&D / module development	Traditional game modules effectively translate abstract Pancasila values into concrete, playful early-childhood activities.
Anggana et al. (2025)	Kindergarten	Qualitative case study	Environment-themed P5 projects cultivate caring attitudes toward nature alongside cooperation and independence.
Algazira et al. (2025)	Early childhood	Qualitative descriptive	Structured group projects within P5 significantly improve children's social interaction and turn-taking skills.
Fitriani et al. (2025)	Early childhood	Case study	Differentiated learning strategies allow teachers to tailor P5 activities to children's varied developmental readiness.
Ruswandi et al. (2024)	PAUD (early childhood)	Qualitative descriptive	Implementation is strongly shaped by teacher creativity in translating national themes into age-appropriate activities.
Nuriya et al. (2023)	Early/primary transition	Qualitative descriptive	Successful P5 implementation requires collaborative planning among teachers, principals, and parents from the outset.
Ardiansyah (2024)	Multiple levels	CIPP evaluation model	Evaluation using the CIPP model reveals that process and product outcomes lag behind context and input readiness.
Nurdyansyah et al. (2022)	National policy analysis	Conceptual/strategic	Effective P5 planning requires alignment between national policy guidance and localized institutional strategy.
Fitrianingtyas et al. (2023)	PAUD	Qualitative descriptive	Project-based learning in PAUD strengthens perseverance, cooperation, and problem-

			solving in developmentally appropriate ways.
Santika & Dafit (2023)	Elementary school	Qualitative descriptive	P5 serves as an effective vehicle for character education when embedded consistently across the school calendar.

Planning and design of P5 activities in early childhood. Across the reviewed studies, the design phase emerges as the single most decisive factor shaping implementation quality. Studies conducted in Islamic and culturally distinctive early childhood institutions show that project themes gain traction with young children when they are anchored in familiar, sensory-rich experiences rather than abstract moral instruction (Hasanah et al., 2025; Suratmi et al., 2024). Local wisdom-based themes, such as traditional games, regional crafts, and community rituals, appear repeatedly as effective vehicles because they allow children to encounter Pancasila values cooperation, respect, care for the environment through direct manipulation and social interaction rather than verbal explanation (Mukhtar et al., 2024; Waruwu et al., 2024). This pattern aligns with early-childhood pedagogical theory, which holds that concrete, embodied experience precedes abstract moral reasoning in young children's cognitive development. Notably, several studies emphasize that planning is most effective when it involves multiple stakeholders from the outset: teachers, school leaders, and parents jointly negotiating themes that are both nationally aligned and locally meaningful (Nuriya et al., 2023; Widyastuti, 2022). Where planning was conducted solely by teachers without wider institutional or family input, studies reported weaker follow-through and inconsistent thematic coherence across the school year (Nurdyansyah et al., 2022).

Implementation strategies. The reviewed literature converges on the finding that teachers' role shifts substantially under P5, from primary knowledge-transmitters to facilitators of exploration and reflection (Fitrianingtyas et al., 2023; Ningsih et al., 2021). This shift proves demanding for many educators, particularly those trained under more traditional, teacher-centered models associated with earlier curricula. Differentiated learning emerges as a recurrent strategy for managing the wide developmental variance typical of early childhood classrooms; by adjusting task complexity, group composition, and pacing, teachers were able to keep P5 activities accessible to children at different developmental stages within the same classroom (Fitriani et al., 2025). Several studies also document the use of thematic, multi-day project cycles, culminating in a public showcase or community event, as a strategy for sustaining children's engagement and for making learning visible to families (Anggana et al., 2025; Algazira et al., 2025). Community and family involvement recurs as both a strategy and an outcome: projects that actively invited parents to contribute materials, skills, or storytelling not only enriched the activities but also reinforced value transmission at home, suggesting that P5's effectiveness is partly contingent on extending the project beyond the classroom (Purwanti et al., 2025; Mukhtar et al., 2024).

Character outcomes aligned with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. Synthesizing findings across studies reveals uneven attention to the six target dimensions. Mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and independence receive the most consistent empirical support, appearing as observable outcomes in group-based projects, traditional games, and collaborative craft activities across nearly all reviewed studies (Algazira et al., 2025; Mukhtar et al., 2024; Nurhayati et al., 2022). Faith and piety toward God, alongside noble character, are prominently addressed in studies situated within

religious early-childhood institutions, where P5 themes are deliberately fused with religious instruction (Hasanah et al., 2025; Purwanti et al., 2025). Environmental caring, though not one of the original six dimensions in isolation, is frequently folded into discussions of noble character and global diversity through nature-based and sustainability-themed projects (Anggana et al., 2025). By contrast, critical reasoning and creativity are less consistently documented as measurable outcomes, appearing mainly as secondary observations rather than as the explicit focus of assessment, which suggests these two dimensions may be harder to operationalize and observe in very young children using the informal, observation-based assessment tools typically available in PAUD settings (Muhson et al., 2025; Ardiansyah, 2024). Global diversity, similarly, appears underrepresented in early childhood contexts relative to primary and secondary studies, plausibly because themes involving cross-cultural comparison require a level of abstraction that exceeds most preschoolers' cognitive reach without substantial scaffolding (Nurmala et al., 2025).

Comparing early childhood implementation with primary and secondary contexts. Placing the early-childhood-focused studies alongside those situated in primary and secondary schools clarifies what is genuinely distinctive about P5 at the youngest level. In primary and secondary settings, P5 projects more frequently culminate in tangible products, written reflections, or formal presentations, and assessment tends to rely on structured rubrics tied to observable performance indicators (Muhson et al., 2025; Nurmala et al., 2025; Susanti et al., 2023). In early childhood settings, by contrast, outcomes are necessarily assessed through informal observation, anecdotal records, and portfolio documentation of play behavior, since young children cannot yet produce the written or verbal reflections that older students can (Fitrianingtyas et al., 2023). This difference has two implications documented across the literature. First, it means that early childhood P5 assessment is inherently more subjective and dependent on individual teachers' observational skill, which several studies flag as a source of inconsistency in how character development is documented and reported to parents (Nurrahman & Maimunah, 2025). Second, it means that comparative claims about the relative effectiveness of P5 across educational levels should be made cautiously, since the evidentiary basis—observation-based versus product-based—differs qualitatively rather than merely in degree. Nonetheless, a consistent finding across levels is that project themes anchored in learners' immediate social and cultural environment outperform generic, top-down themes in generating sustained engagement, suggesting that contextualization is a transferable principle even as its specific implementation must be age-differentiated (Nuriya et al., 2023; Widyastuti, 2022).

Family and community as an extended learning environment. A recurring but sometimes understated finding across the reviewed studies is the extent to which P5's success in early childhood settings depends on treating the family and surrounding community as an extension of the learning environment rather than a passive audience for finished projects. Studies describing locally themed projects report that when parents contributed materials, participated in storytelling, or attended culminating events, children demonstrated greater enthusiasm and more consistent value-related behavior beyond the classroom, such as continuing cooperative play or environmentally caring habits at home (Mukhtar et al., 2024; Anggana et al., 2025). This pattern lends empirical support to the ecological framing introduced earlier: character formation appears to consolidate most effectively when values encountered at school are echoed, however informally, within the child's home environment. Conversely, studies conducted in

settings with minimal parental engagement report that gains observed during project activities were harder to sustain once the project concluded, hinting that character outcomes attributed to P5 may be partly contingent on the surrounding ecosystem of reinforcement rather than the school-based activity alone (Purwanti et al., 2025). This finding carries a practical implication rarely made explicit in the primary literature: strengthening family engagement mechanisms may be as important to P5's long-term impact as refining the project activities themselves.

Challenges and evaluative evidence. A consistent set of implementation challenges surfaces across the reviewed literature. Teachers frequently report limited understanding of project-based planning and, particularly, of how to assess character development in ways that go beyond conventional academic testing (Nurrahman & Maimunah, 2025; Septiyani et al., 2025). Time constraints are widely cited, as P5 activities compete with an already dense curricular schedule, and early childhood teachers in particular describe difficulty balancing free play, foundational literacy and numeracy activities, and structured project time within a short school day (Utari & Afendi, 2022). Resource limitations, including access to materials for local-culture-based projects and adequate outdoor or communal space, are more acute in under-resourced regional institutions than in urban or well-funded schools, contributing to disparities in implementation quality (Ruswandi et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2023). Evaluative studies using structured frameworks such as CIPP corroborate these patterns quantitatively, finding that while contextual and input conditions policy clarity, teacher motivation are often rated favorably, process and product indicators, such as consistency of implementation and measurable shifts in student character, lag behind, pointing to an implementation gap between policy intention and classroom practice (Ardiansyah, 2024; Waruwu et al., 2024). Taken together, these findings suggest that strengthening P5 in early childhood settings requires not only creative thematic design but also sustained investment in teacher professional development, streamlined assessment tools appropriate for young children, and equitable resource distribution across regions (Mardatillah et al., 2025; Irawati et al., 2022).

Implications for teacher preparation and policy. The cumulative pattern across the reviewed studies points toward a set of practical implications that extend beyond any single institution. Pre-service and in-service teacher training programs for early childhood educators appear to under-address project-based facilitation skills and observational assessment techniques specific to character development, leaving many teachers to develop these competencies through trial and error once already in the classroom (Septiyani et al., 2025; Utari & Afendi, 2022). Embedding structured, early-childhood-specific P5 modules within teacher education curricula, rather than relying on generic ministerial guidance shared across all educational levels, could narrow the implementation gap identified in several evaluative studies (Ardiansyah, 2024). At the policy level, the studies collectively suggest that resource allocation formulas and supervisory support should account for the additional material and staffing demands that meaningful, locally grounded P5 projects place on early childhood institutions, particularly those operating in under-resourced regions (Ruswandi et al., 2024; Waruwu et al., 2024). Finally, the comparatively thin evidence base for critical reasoning, creativity, and global diversity outcomes in early childhood P5 activities suggests a concrete direction for both practice and future inquiry: developing age-appropriate activities and observation instruments capable of capturing these dimensions with the

same clarity currently achieved for cooperation and independence (Nurmala et al., 2025; Mardatillah et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This This systematic review of 25 recent studies demonstrates that the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) can serve as an effective and developmentally appropriate mechanism for character formation in early childhood education when its implementation is grounded in play-based learning, local culture, and collaborative planning among teachers, school leaders, and families. Mutual cooperation, independence, and faith-related dispositions emerge as the most consistently documented outcomes, whereas critical reasoning, creativity, and global diversity remain comparatively underdeveloped in current classroom practice and assessment. Persistent challenges, including limited teacher preparedness for project-based assessment, time constraints, and uneven resource distribution, continue to create a gap between policy design and classroom implementation. Nevertheless, by synthesizing findings specifically related to children aged 0–6 years and organizing them within a unified framework aligned with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, this review provides an age-specific perspective that has been largely absent from previous studies.

This study is limited by its reliance on a systematic review of existing literature without incorporating primary empirical evidence from early childhood education settings. Consequently, the findings represent a synthesis of current research and may not fully capture variations in P5 implementation across different regional and institutional contexts in Indonesia. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ longitudinal and mixed-method approaches capable of tracking children's character development over time while developing observation-based assessment instruments that are appropriate for early childhood learners. Comparative studies involving diverse educational settings would also provide deeper insights into the factors influencing successful P5 implementation and support more equitable and effective character education practices across Indonesia's early childhood education landscape.

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