

Early Entrepreneurial Mindsets: A Narrative Review of Project-Based Learning Interventions in Preschool Settings

Hasmawaty^{1*}, Fadhilah Afifah², Abriadi Muhara³

Universitas Negeri Makassar

Corresponding Author: Hasmawaty hasmawaty@unm.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This narrative synthesis (2015–2025) examines Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a pedagogical strategy to cultivate entrepreneurial dispositions in early childhood education. Reviewed studies indicate that developmentally aligned PBL enhances creativity, initiative, collaboration, and problem-solving through authentic, goal-oriented activities. Successful implementation depends on teacher scaffolding quality, institutional support, and resource availability. The literature reveals limited and inconsistent assessment tools for measuring early entrepreneurial mindset, constraining cross-study comparisons. We recommend development of context-sensitive PBL modules, targeted professional development for educators, longitudinal evaluations to assess sustained effects, and creation of valid, reliable instruments for early entrepreneurial competencies. Strengthening these areas will improve evidence quality and inform scalable practices for fostering entrepreneurship from preschool and support national policy alignment efforts.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, entrepreneurship education for young children has begun to attract global attention as it is believed to foster creative, independent, and problem-solving mindsets starting from the preschool years (Ismaiyah et al., 2022; Supriawan et al., 2023). This trend has emerged alongside the transformation of the economic landscape, which demands that the younger generation possess adaptive and innovative skills and the ability to create opportunities (Vernia & Widiyanto, 2023). Various developed countries have integrated elements of an entrepreneurial mindset into early childhood curricula to address 21st-century competency needs (Alstra et al., 2023; Rananda & Nurhafizah, 2022).

Early entrepreneurship can enhance children's ability to take initiative, collaborate, and develop creativity through project-based activities and structured play (Rananda & Nurhafizah, 2022; Supriawan et al., 2023). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the strengthening of entrepreneurial character in early childhood education (PAUD) has begun to be integrated through the Merdeka Curriculum, but its implementation remains inconsistent and lacks a standardized pedagogical model (Rukmana et al., 2023). This underscores the need for a deep understanding of the most effective approaches to fostering an entrepreneurial spirit in children aged 4–6 years (Nadlifah et al., 2023).

The urgency of this issue is further heightened by technological advancements and shifting socio-economic dynamics, which demand that future generations possess critical thinking, creativity, and resilience from an early age (Vernia & Widiyanto, 2023; Wardhani et al., 2023). Early childhood education now focuses not only on academic readiness but also on character development and future competencies (Mustikhatul et al., 2025; Uyun & Diana, 2023). Therefore, a learning approach that integrates authentic experiences, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving is needed, with Project-Based Learning (PBL) as one of the most appropriate methods (Ita et al., 2023; Setiyaningsih & Subrata, 2023).

Although interest in early childhood entrepreneurship education is growing, research specifically examining the effectiveness of PBL in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in preschool children remains very limited (Vernia & Widiyanto, 2023; Wahyanto et al., 2023). Most studies focus on elementary or secondary school levels, so empirical evidence in the context of early childhood education has not been comprehensively documented (Kahar & Putri, 2023; Sari et al., 2023). Additionally, many studies only evaluate aspects of creativity or collaboration, without explicitly linking them to indicators of entrepreneurial competence (Kanzu et al., 2024; Rosidah & Aprilyanti, 2023).

In the literature, there is a contradiction regarding the application of PBL in early childhood (Hatuwe et al., 2023). Some studies indicate that PBL is effective in enhancing creativity and problem-solving skills, but other research highlights challenges such as children's limited self-regulation, teacher readiness, and the scarcity of evaluation instruments appropriate for children's developmental stages (Souisa et al., 2024). This inconsistency in findings indicates the need for a narrative synthesis to elucidate the pedagogical

mechanisms of PBL in the context of early childhood education (Hatuwe et al., 2023).

Furthermore, there has been no comprehensive study integrating child development theory, the concept of an entrepreneurial mindset, and the application of PBL into a single analytical framework (Maryati et al., 2022). Most studies are standalone and do not holistically integrate cognitive, social-emotional, and pedagogical aspects (Sari et al., 2023). Therefore, a Narrative Review is needed to map existing empirical evidence, identify patterns in findings, and formulate more systematic research directions and educational practices (Masripah et al., 2025; Nugroho et al., 2025). The novelty of this study lies in its effort to integrate three domains that are often discussed separately: Project-Based Learning, early childhood education, and early entrepreneurial competencies. Unlike previous studies that mainly examine PBL as a learning model or entrepreneurship as a character-building activity, this review synthesizes how project-based activities can serve as a developmental pathway for fostering creativity, initiative, collaboration, independence, and problem-solving in preschool children.

This study aims to critically examine the development of research on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in early childhood through the Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach. More specifically, this article seeks to identify the pedagogical mechanisms supporting the development of early entrepreneurial mindsets, evaluate the effectiveness of PBL interventions in the early childhood education (PAUD) context, and outline theoretical and practical implications for curriculum development and future research.

Tabel 1. Thematic Literature Matrix

Theme	Key Concepts	Reviewed Studies	Synthesis Result
PBL as authentic learning	Project work, active learning, real-world activity	Kahar & Putri; Sari et al.; Souisa et al.	PBL mendukung pembelajaran konkret dan kolaboratif
Entrepreneurial mindset	Creativity, initiative, independence	Nadlifah et al.; Rukmana et al.; Vernia & Widiyanto	Kewirausahaan anak usia dini dipahami sebagai disposisi awal
Teacher scaffolding	Guidance, mediation, reflection	Maryati et al.; Setyaningsih & Subrata	Guru menentukan kualitas implementasi PBL
Social-emotional competence	Collaboration, communication, responsibility	Rosidah & Aprilyanti; Uyun & Diana	PBL memperkuat keterampilan sosial anak
Assessment limitation	Observation, field notes, lack of instrument	Souisa et al.; Wahyanto et al.	Instrumen pengukuran entrepreneurial mindset masih terbatas

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a narrative review method to synthesize the development of studies on stimulating entrepreneurial spirit in early childhood through Project-Based Learning. This method was chosen because it facilitates the integration of diverse empirical findings, child development theories, and pedagogical practices without being constrained by the limitations of quantitative formats such as meta-analysis. The primary focus of the study is on the application of PBL in the context of early childhood education and its contribution to the formation of an entrepreneurial mindset in children aged 3–6 years.

The literature search was conducted using the SINTA database, which was selected because it provides numerous national publications related to early childhood education, innovative pedagogy, and entrepreneurship education. The search process utilized a combination of keywords in both Indonesian and English, such as early childhood entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial mindset, early childhood education, project-based learning, early childhood entrepreneurship, and PBL preschool. The publication year range was limited to 2015–2025 to ensure that the analyzed literature reflects the latest developments in PBL practices and entrepreneurship education. The reviewed articles included publications in both Indonesian and English, provided they met academic quality standards. The final search was conducted on April 20, 2026.

Article selection criteria were established to ensure the relevance of the analyzed studies to the primary research focus. Eligible articles must be peer-reviewed publications, focus on early childhood, and explicitly discuss the application of PBL related to the development of entrepreneurial competencies. Priority is given to empirical studies involving classroom learning interventions, teacher teaching practices, or mini-enterprise activities in early childhood education (PAUD). Conversely, conference papers, publications without full text, and research that is not relevant to the Indonesian context or does not address PAUD are excluded from the review.

The literature screening process was conducted systematically through three stages. The first stage involved title screening to identify potentially relevant articles. The second stage involved reading abstracts to verify the alignment of the research focus with the study's objectives, particularly regarding indicators of entrepreneurial mindset and the application of PBL. The third stage was an evaluation of full-text articles to assess methodological quality, depth of analysis, and thematic relevance. Although a PRISMA diagram was not used, this process adhered to principles of transparency and accountability in determining which articles were suitable for analysis.

Data extraction was conducted using a structured extraction sheet covering author and year, research context, education level, study design, type of PBL activity, entrepreneurial indicators, teacher role, assessment method, and key findings. This procedure ensured that each reviewed article was analyzed consistently and that the synthesis could be traced from the primary studies to the final themes.

The data were analyzed through thematic narrative synthesis. First, open coding was used to identify recurring concepts such as creativity, initiative, collaboration, independence, teacher scaffolding, contextual support, and assessment limitations. Second, similar codes were grouped into broader themes. Third, the themes were synthesized narratively to explain how PBL contributes to the development of early entrepreneurial mindset in preschool settings.

The literature analysis was conducted using a thematic narrative synthesis approach, which allows for the identification of patterns, trends, and pedagogical mechanisms across various studies. Each article was examined to extract data related to PBL design, the teacher's role, project activities, entrepreneurial indicators, and documented learning outcomes. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the interconnections between child development theory, teaching practices, and the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset.

Key themes were developed by grouping findings based on conceptual similarities and the focus of the studies. For example, some studies highlight creativity as a key indicator of entrepreneurship, while others emphasize collaboration, problem-solving, or independence as outcomes of PBL implementation. Through narrative synthesis, these themes are integrated to elaborate on the role of PBL as an effective pedagogical approach for stimulating an entrepreneurial spirit in early childhood.

This analytical approach enables the study to yield a comprehensive understanding of PBL's effectiveness within the early childhood education context, while identifying unresolved research gaps. By synthesizing empirical findings and pedagogical theory, this narrative review makes a significant contribution to curriculum development, teaching practices, and the direction of future research in early childhood entrepreneurship education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A review of the literature reveals that the implementation of Project-Based Learning in early childhood settings is consistently associated with increased creativity and problem-solving skills. Intervention studies show that when children are engaged in meaningful projects – such as setting up a mini-market, producing simple items, or organizing a small exhibition – they tend to generate original ideas, test various solutions, and demonstrate perseverance in completing tasks. This pattern of findings reinforces the concept that authentic experiences and real-world goals in PBL stimulate productive exploration during the preschool developmental phase (Fyffe et al., 2022; Sudaryanto et al., 2025).

The second finding confirms the crucial role of teachers as facilitators and mediators in PBL; the quality of scaffolding determines the extent to which children internalize entrepreneurial competencies. Interventions that provide step-by-step guidance, motivating feedback, and opportunities for simple reflection result in more tangible behavioral changes compared to interventions with minimal direction. Therefore, children's autonomy in projects must be

balanced with a pedagogical structure sensitive to the zone of proximal development to optimize learning outcomes (Kumar, 2021; Norouzi et al., 2023).

Collaboration and communication are crucial elements that strengthen the development of essential social-emotional competencies for entrepreneurship. Group project activities encourage children to negotiate, divide roles, and resolve minor conflicts, thereby honing their early collaboration and leadership skills. Collaborative experiences in PBL not only enhance social skills but also facilitate the transformation of ideas into shared products or activities—the very essence of micro-entrepreneurship practices (Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2024; Tian et al., 2023).

Independence and initiative are consistent themes across numerous studies, particularly when children are empowered to make simple choices within projects. Children who participate in decision-making—such as selecting materials, determining work steps, or presenting results—demonstrate increased self-confidence and a drive to act independently. However, some studies emphasize that immature self-regulation at the preschool age may limit the success of such initiatives if teacher guidance and classroom frameworks are insufficient (Ghazali et al., 2024; Sung et al., 2023).

Crucial findings regarding evaluation and measurement reveal methodological gaps in the existing literature. Most research relies on qualitative approaches, such as observation, field notes, and teacher interviews, while valid and reliable quantitative instruments to measure early entrepreneurial mindsets remain scarce. The lack of uniformity in indicators and assessment methods makes it difficult to compare studies, necessitating the development of an evaluation framework that is sensitive to children's developmental characteristics and capable of capturing small yet meaningful changes in their attitudes and behaviors (Magaji et al., 2022; Ostermeier et al., 2023).

Local contextual elements, such as parental support, curriculum policies, and the availability of facilities, consistently influence the success of PBL implementation. Research in settings with family support and adaptive school policies reports better outcomes than in rigid or resource-constrained contexts. In Indonesia, variations in teacher competence and the diversity of early childhood education practices are key factors in the sustainability and impact of interventions; therefore, adapting PBL designs to be sensitive to local culture and resources is essential (Aisyah & Novita, 2025; Sadaruddin et al., 2025).

The enhancement of creativity and problem-solving skills in young children through PBL can be explained by the integration of constructivist theory with a play-based learning approach. PBL provides a goal-oriented framework that enriches play experiences, thereby training children to plan, execute, and reflect on their activities. Theoretically, this process facilitates the development of early executive functions and simple metacognition as the foundation for future entrepreneurial behavior, making PBL a robust pedagogical approach grounded in developmental theory. This finding indicates that PBL functions as a bridge between children's developmental need for concrete experiences and the formation of entrepreneurial dispositions.

Through project activities, children do not merely complete tasks but also practice planning, testing ideas, negotiating meaning, and reflecting on simple outcomes.

The teacher's role as a facilitator underscores the urgency of developing professional competencies focused on scaffolding techniques, project design, and the assessment of non-cognitive development. Practically, teachers must be trained to balance children's freedom of exploration with a framework that supports step-by-step learning; without adequate teacher competence, the implementation of PBL risks becoming unstructured and yielding inconsistent outcomes. Thus, training programs and practical resources are absolutely necessary to improve the quality of implementation. This condition is consistent with the concept of the zone of proximal development, in which children require adult mediation to perform tasks that exceed their current independent ability.

A priority for future research is the development of valid evaluation instruments that are age-appropriate. The creation of standardized observation rubrics, behavior scales tailored to developmental stages, and participatory assessment tools involving teachers and parents can enrich the empirical evidence. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are needed to measure the long-term impact of PBL in early childhood on subsequent educational levels and its contribution to long-term entrepreneurial thinking. Future instruments should include observable behavioral indicators such as the ability to propose ideas, make simple choices, persist in completing tasks, cooperate with peers, communicate project results, and respond to challenges.

Implications for curriculum and policy require the inclusion of clear yet adaptive entrepreneurship objectives in early childhood education (PAUD) curriculum documents. A curriculum equipped with project examples, scaffolding guidelines, and evaluation rubrics will help teachers translate abstract goals into concrete classroom practices. Additionally, involving the community and parents as learning partners can enrich project resources and relevance, making interventions more sustainable and contextually appropriate.

In practical terms, this synthesis recommends the development of resource-efficient PBL modules, the provision of teacher training focused on scaffolding and non-cognitive assessment, and the creation of reliable evaluation instruments for the early entrepreneurial mindset. Future research plans must include controlled intervention studies, the development of age-sensitive measurement tools, and cross-cultural research to ensure the generalizability of results. Through a combination of professional support, robust evaluation tools, and adequate policies, PBL has strong potential to foster an entrepreneurial spirit from an early age.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that Project-Based Learning has great potential to foster an entrepreneurial spirit in young children through real-world, collaborative, and problem-solving focused learning experiences. Various studies indicate that children's creativity, initiative, collaboration skills, and

self-confidence increase when they are engaged in meaningful projects appropriate to their developmental stage. Therefore, PBL is an appropriate pedagogical approach for laying the foundation for an entrepreneurial mindset starting in preschool.

A synthesis of the literature further confirms that the success of PBL is largely determined by the quality of the teacher's role as a facilitator. Teachers who are competent in providing appropriate scaffolding, creating a learning environment that encourages exploration, and facilitating simple reflection have proven to be more effective in helping children absorb entrepreneurial values. This indicates that pedagogical interventions do not merely depend on project design but also on the teacher's professional ability to manage the learning dynamics of young children.

This study reveals the limitations of the evaluation instruments used to measure the development of early entrepreneurial mindsets. Inconsistencies in indicators and assessment methods highlight the need to develop measurement tools that are more valid, reliable, and sensitive to the characteristics of children's development. Furthermore, local contextual factors such as family support, school policies, and resource availability also influence the success of PBL implementation, making context-based adaptation essential.

Based on these findings, practical recommendations include the development of concise, context-appropriate PBL modules that are easy for early childhood education (PAUD) teachers to implement. Teacher training that emphasizes scaffolding strategies, project design, and the assessment of non-cognitive development is a top priority. Furthermore, the participation of parents and the community can enrich project experiences and enhance the alignment of learning with children's needs.

This review has several limitations. First, it relies on a narrative review design, so the synthesis is interpretive and does not provide statistical effect estimates. Second, the reviewed studies vary in design, context, and assessment methods, which limits direct comparison across findings. Third, the availability of studies specifically linking PBL, PAUD, and early entrepreneurial mindset remains limited. These limitations indicate the need for more rigorous empirical studies, standardized assessment tools, and longitudinal research.

For future research, a longitudinal study is recommended to measure the long-term impact of PBL on children's entrepreneurial development in subsequent educational levels. The development of more comprehensive evaluation tools and cross-cultural research are also essential to broaden the generalizability of the results. Through the strengthening of empirical data, the enhancement of teacher competencies, and supportive policies, PBL has the potential to become a powerful approach for shaping a creative, independent, and innovative generation capable of creating opportunities from an early age.

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