

# Project-Based Dance Learning In Inclusive Dance Education In Junior High Schools: A Scoping Review

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## Abstract

Inclusive dance education aims to provide equal learning experiences for all students, including those with special needs. Project-based learning is a relevant approach because it emphasizes active engagement, collaboration, and creative processes that can be adapted to students' varying abilities. However, literature reviews that specifically discuss the implementation of this approach in the context of inclusive dance education are still limited. This scoping review aims to map empirical evidence on implementation strategies, pedagogical benefits, and challenges in implementing project-based dance learning in inclusive secondary schools. Literature searches were conducted through the Scopus, Springer, and Google Scholar databases for publications from 2021 to 2025. The findings show that project-based learning can improve movement creativity, collaborative skills, self-confidence, and social participation of students with special needs. The application of this model has also been proven to encourage positive interactions between students and strengthen character traits such as responsibility and independence. However, a number of obstacles were encountered, including limited facilities, the need to adapt instructions and communication for students with disabilities, and the low level of preparedness among teachers in designing truly inclusive dance projects. This study provides a conceptual and practical foundation for educators, policymakers, and researchers to develop project-based dance learning designs that are more responsive to the diversity of students' abilities.

**Keywords:** Dance Education, Inclusive Education, Project-Based Learning , Scoping Review



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## Introduction

Inclusive education places all students, including those with special needs, in an equal and mutually empowering learning environment (Akbar et al., 2024; Azka Salsabila et al., 2025) . In the context of the arts, particularly dance education, an inclusive approach opens up space for every student to express themselves through movement experiences that value diversity in abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. Dance as a medium of bodily expression (Mateu et al., 2021; Shen, 2023) has the potential to build empathy, nonverbal communication, collaboration, and acceptance of differences. Therefore, inclusive dance education focuses not only on mastering technique, but also on creating a safe space for all students to participate actively and meaningfully (Cook, 2025; Dinold & Zitomer, 2015) .

In line with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes differentiated, collaborative, and experience-based learning, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has become an increasingly relevant approach in arts education (Ayudia et al., 2023; Nasser et al., 2024; B. A. Wijaya et al., 2024) . This model encourages students to engage in authentic projects that require exploration

of ideas, problem solving, collaboration, and independent or group creation of work. In dance education, PjBL can be implemented through the process of choreography creation, performance projects, movement exploration, or dance work documentation (Bagus et al., 2025; Osmond et al., 2022). Various studies show that this approach can enhance movement creativity, emotional engagement, project responsibility, and students' ability to work together.

However, the implementation of PjBL in inclusive dance education faces its own challenges. Students with special needs require tailored instruction, sensory support, the use of alternative communication media, and assistance in the collaborative process. The success of learning is also greatly influenced by the readiness of teachers, both in understanding the diverse needs of students and in designing dance projects that are truly inclusive. Previous research on inclusive dance education has generally focused on differentiated learning strategies, movement technique adaptations, and disability-friendly communication. However, studies that specifically explore the integration of PjBL in inclusive dance learning at the secondary school level are still very limited and tend to be scattered across various research contexts.

A preliminary literature search indicates that there are no comprehensive studies mapping how dance projects are designed in inclusive environments, how students with special needs participate in projects, and how this affects the development of creativity, character, and social competence. Therefore, there is a significant research gap regarding the application of PjBL in inclusive dance education, especially at the secondary school level, which has different socio-emotional and academic development dynamics from other levels.

To bridge this gap, research is needed that not only summarizes existing research findings, but also systematically identifies the scope, strategies, adjustments, benefits, and challenges of implementing PjBL in the context of inclusive dance education. A scoping review was chosen because this method allows researchers to map empirical evidence broadly, identify patterns in findings, and discover areas of research that remain under-explored. This approach is suitable when the research topic is still fragmented, varies in design and context, and is not yet sufficiently consolidated to conduct a systematic review.

Therefore, this study aims to map empirical evidence on the implementation of project-based dance education in inclusive dance education in secondary schools. This study focuses on implementation strategies, forms of adaptation used, reported pedagogical benefits, and challenges encountered in practice. The results of this scoping review are expected to contribute theoretically by mapping the scope of existing research, as well as practically to teachers, schools, and policymakers in developing dance education designs that are more responsive to the needs of students in inclusive education systems.

## **Methods**

This study uses a scoping review design to map empirical evidence on the implementation of project-based dance learning in inclusive dance education at the junior high school level. The scoping review method was chosen because the research topic is still broad, diverse in approach, and has not been comprehensively studied, thus requiring a thorough mapping of the available empirical evidence (Peters et al., 2020). This study follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines to ensure that the data search and selection process is transparent and replicable.

### **a. Search Strategy**

Literature searches were conducted in the Scopus, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar databases for the period 2021–2025. Keywords were used in English and Boolean operator combinations as follows:

Table 1.  
Example Search Strings (ERIC, Springer, Google Scholar)

No.	Combination of Search Terms
1	<i>"dance education" AND "inclusive education" AND "middle school"</i>
2	<i>"project-based learning" AND "dance" AND "inclusive classroom"</i>
3	<i>"special needs" AND "dance project"</i>
4	<i>"arts education" AND "project-based learning" AND "inclusion"</i>

Keywords are adjusted to the characteristics of each database using variations of synonymous terms.

#### b. Study Selection

The selection of studies was based on inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance to the research topic. The target population included educators and students in dance education at the junior high school level in the context of inclusive learning. Included studies were those conducted between 2021 and 2025 that applied Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the dance learning process, both in formal education and inclusive school programs. Meanwhile, articles that did not use PjBL, were not at the junior high school level, did not focus on dance education, or did not involve an inclusive context were excluded from the analysis process.

Table 2.  
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
This article is an empirical study (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed).	Not related to dance education or not applying a project-based approach.
Focuses on the implementation of project-based dance learning or dance projects.	Not in the context of inclusive education.
It is in the context of inclusive education or involves students with special needs.	Not implemented at the junior high school level.
It is conducted at the junior high school level (SMP or equivalent).	Theoretical reviews, opinions, or non-empirical articles.
It is published between 2021 and 2025.	Full text not available.

#### c. Selection Process

All articles found through the initial search were compiled and checked for duplication. Next, screening was conducted based on the title and abstract, followed by full-text selection to determine eligibility according to the inclusion-exclusion criteria.

The selection stages followed this flow: Identification - Screening - Eligibility - Inclusion.

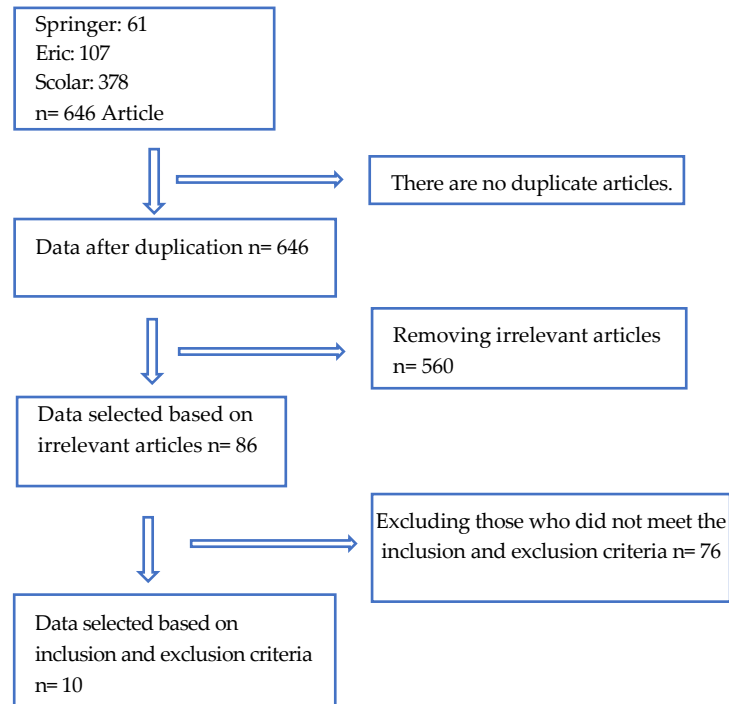


Figure 1.  
PRISMA-ScR Diagram

**d. Data Extraction**

Each article that passed the selection was analyzed using an extraction format designed to capture important aspects, including: author and year, population/sample, PjBL concepts/indicators, inclusive dance education context, research methods, main findings, and research gaps. The extraction format is shown in Table 3.

Table 3.  
Data Extraction

Author (Year)	Population	Concept/Indicator	Method	Context	Key Findings	Research Gap
Anderson & Matthews (2024)	Students with special needs (various exceptionalities)	Dance/movement intervention, inclusion, therapeutic outcomes	Critical review	General inclusive education (non-specific school level)	Dance intervention is effective for regulating emotions, communication, and social participation of students with special needs.	Not specific to junior high school, not focused on dance PjBL.
Dwidarti et al.	Elementary school	Multimedia-based dance	Quantitative	Elementary school	Multimedia increases	Does not discuss

(2025)	students	learning, visual learning, motivation			interest and understanding of movement.	inclusion or PjBL.
Gusti et al. (2024)	Junior high school students	PjBL, dance learning achievements	Quasi-experiment	SMP Negeri 3 Abiansemal	PjBL improves dance learning achievement.	Not in inclusive classes, has not discussed special needs.
Khasanah et al. (2025)	High school students	PjBL, collaborative skills, teamwork	Quantitative	High school	PjBL improves collaborative skills.	Not relevant to dance, junior high school, or inclusion.
Murwati & Syefriani (2024)	Deaf junior high school students	Sign language, dance instructions, accessibility	Qualitative	SMP/SLB	Sign language facilitates understanding of movement and instructions	Does not implement PjBL, only instructional methods
Olvhøj et al. (2025)	Adults with intellectual disabilities	Inclusive movement, body expression, participation	Mixed-method	Community/inclusive arts (non-school)	Participants are able to dance according to their capacity; inclusion increases	Not in a school setting and not in junior high school
Puspitaloka et al. (2024)	Junior high school students	PjBL, collaboration, movement exploration	Qualitative	Junior high school	PjBL improves collaboration and movement creativity	No specific adaptations for special needs/inclusion
Silviana Putri et al. (2024)	Junior high school students	PjBL, dance creation, kangsreng stimulus	Qualitative descriptive	SMPN 62 Bandung	PjBL is effective for the creative dance process	Not in an inclusive classroom, adaptations have not been discussed
Wijaya et al. (2023)	Deaf children	Metaphoric activities, dance learning,	Qualitative	Special needs school	Metaphoric activities facilitate understanding	Does not use PjBL in the learning structure

		communication			ng of movement	
Yulizar Nada Pratiwi et al. (2025)	Deaf children in special needs schools	PjBL, dance creation, independence	Case Study	Tamansari Special School	PjBL improves participation and understanding of movement	Has not been tested in inclusive junior high schools, still limited to special needs schools

### e. Analyzed Data

The data were analyzed thematically by identifying recurring patterns across the included studies and then grouping themes related to the implementation of PjBL in inclusive dance education. This process was followed by synthesizing various important aspects, including reported benefits, implementation strategies, obstacles encountered, and remaining research gaps. All analyses were descriptive in nature without assessing the methodological quality of each study, in line with the characteristics of a scoping review that focuses on mapping the scope of knowledge rather than on rigor or critical appraisal.

## Results and Discussions

### 1. Results

This scoping review identified ten articles that met the inclusion criteria, with research covering dance learning, the application of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), inclusive education, and the development of collaborative skills and movement creativity. Of all the studies, three directly examined the application of PjBL in dance learning at the junior high school level (Gusti et al., 2024; Puspitaloka et al., 2024; Silviana Putri et al., 2024). These three studies show that PjBL can improve collaboration, choreographic creativity, and student motivation. However, the implementation still focuses on regular classes without considering the diverse needs of students in an inclusive context.

In other research groups discussing dance education for students with special needs (Murwati & Syefriani, 2024; S. J. Wijaya et al., 2023; Yulizar Nada Pratiwi et al., 2025), learning emphasizes the use of sign language, adaptive communication approaches, and mentoring strategies in understanding dance movements. Although several studies integrate dance projects, their application has not been developed within a systematic PjBL framework. Overseas studies (Anderson & Mathews, 2024; Olvhøj et al., 2025) highlight the opportunities and challenges of inclusive dance activities, but they are outside the context of secondary schools and do not develop learning project designs.

Furthermore, one study (Khasanah et al., 2025) highlights the effectiveness of PjBL in developing collaboration among high school students, while another study (Dwidarti et al., 2025) highlights multimedia learning in elementary school dance education. Both contribute to the general understanding of the effectiveness of PjBL and creative learning, but do not specifically examine the application of PjBL in inclusive dance education in junior high schools.

Overall, the results of the literature mapping show that although PjBL has been proven to increase creativity, collaboration, independence, and student participation in dance learning, there have been no studies that comprehensively develop or evaluate PjBL models that are responsive to the needs of students with special needs in junior high schools. Thus, there is a research gap related to pedagogical design, project adaptation, instructional accessibility, and collaborative strategies in the context of project-based inclusive dance learning.

## Discussions

The results of the scoping review indicate that the implementation of PjBL in dance education has strong potential to enhance students' learning experiences, particularly in terms of movement creativity, collaboration, and active engagement. In the context of junior high school, several studies examining PjBL (Gusti et al., 2024; Puspitaloka et al., 2024; Silviana Putri et al., 2024) confirm that dance projects provide adequate space for students to explore, create, and build collective responsibility through choreography or simple performances. These findings are in line with the characteristics of early adolescent development, which requires collaborative and expressive activities to strengthen identity formation and self-understanding.

However, dance education in an inclusive context requires instructional adaptation, flexibility in task design, and communication strategies that are sensitive to the needs of students with special needs. Studies focusing on deaf students or learners with learning disabilities (Murwati & Syefriani, 2024; S. J. Wijaya et al., 2023; Yulizar Nada Pratiwi et al., 2025) show that instructional modifications, the use of sign language, movement visualization, and a step-by-step exercise structure greatly facilitate student participation. However, these studies have not fully integrated a project-based approach, so there is still a gap between inclusive dance learning practices and systematic PjBL design.

International studies (Anderson & Mathews, 2024; Olvhøj et al., 2025) provide important insights into the importance of safe spaces, acceptance of diverse physical abilities, and facilitator support in inclusive dance activities. Although not conducted in secondary schools, these findings indicate that the success of inclusive dance activities is greatly influenced by the design of movement experiences that allow space for individual expression. This reinforces the idea that PjBL has the potential to be a suitable approach for inclusive dance education because it can adjust the roles, tasks, and contributions of each student in a dance project.

The research gaps that emerged from this mapping cover several aspects. First, there is no PjBL dance model specifically designed for inclusive junior high school classes, including project task adaptations, instruction adjustments, and the use of media that supports the diversity of student needs. Second, there are no studies that highlight how the dynamics of collaboration between students with special needs and regular students in dance projects can be managed pedagogically. Finally, evaluations of the impact of PjBL on socio-emotional aspects, such as self-confidence, empathy, and acceptance of differences, are still very limited.

Thus, the results of this scoping review confirm the need for further research to develop an inclusive, adaptive, and contextual project-based dance learning model for junior high schools. These findings provide a strong basis for the development of learning designs or intervention models that are more responsive to the needs of students in an inclusive dance education ecosystem.

## Conclusion

This preliminary review shows that project-based dance learning has great potential to support the success of inclusive dance education at the junior high school level. From the ten studies analyzed, it appears that the implementation of Project-Based Learning opens up wider opportunities for participation for students with diverse abilities through movement exploration, team collaboration, and choreography creation activities. This model not only enhances students' creativity, teamwork skills, and self-confidence, but also facilitates fairer social interaction between students with special needs and their peers.

Although the benefits are consistent, the findings also show that the implementation of PjBL in inclusive classrooms is not yet fully structured. Most studies have not integrated the principles of differentiation, instructional adaptation, and communication strategies that are essential for the needs of students with disabilities in project design. Other challenges arise from limitations in teacher competence, availability of facilities, and a lack of guidance on project-based learning models explicitly designed for inclusive contexts.

Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of developing PjBL models that are more responsive and adaptive to student diversity, including in terms of task design, creative process guidance, and inclusive project assessment. These findings can serve as a basis for teachers, curriculum developers, and researchers to design dance learning that is not only creative and collaborative, but also truly guarantees full access and participation for all students.

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