

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING FOR STUDENT-PRODUCED PSA ON MENTAL HEALTH AND THE SDGS

Hery Supiarza^{1*}; Harry Tjahjodiningrat²; Danendra Alfathadiningrat³

¹⁻²Study Program of Film and Television, Faculty of Arts and Design Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Bandung, Indonesia, 40154

³Sound Design for Visual Media Program, Vancouver Film School, Vancouver, Canada, BC V6B 1B2
¹herysupiarza@upi.edu; ²harrytjahjodiningrat@upi.edu; ³sd110al@vfs.com

Received: 19th June 2025/ Revised: 27th August 2025/ Accepted: 11th September 2025

How to Cite: Supiarza, H., Tjahjodiningrat, H., & Alfathadiningrat, D. (2026). Project-based learning for student-produced PSA on mental health and the SDGs. *Humaniora*, 17(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.21512/humaniorajicas.v17i1.13829>

ABSTRACT

*Public Service Announcements (PSAs) represent a powerful medium for social communication, particularly in addressing complex issues such as mental health. However, limited research explores how students, as members of Generation Z, design PSAs within higher education frameworks that integrate global sustainability agendas. This study investigates how Project-Based Learning (PBL) enables students to conceptualize and produce PSAs on mental health in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using a qualitative participatory approach combined with visual content analysis, this study examines 33 PSAs produced by Communication and Film students at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The findings reveal distinct disciplinary orientations in PSA design. Communication students prioritize clarity and directness through textual and verbal strategies, whereas Film students emphasize symbolic depth and aesthetic experimentation. Two representative PSAs, *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard*, are analyzed in detail to illustrate these differences. The analysis highlights contrasts in narrative structure, cinematography, and sound design across disciplines. The results demonstrate that Communication students ensure accessibility, while Film students enhance emotional resonance, suggesting complementary strengths. Overall, the study contributes to communication research by linking narrative and audiovisual strategies with PSA effectiveness. It also contributes to education by illustrating the role of PBL in fostering collaboration and critical awareness among students. Additionally, the findings support SDG-related scholarship by demonstrating how student-produced media advances mental health literacy as part of sustainable development.*

Keywords: *Project-Based Learning (PBL), Public Service Announcement (PSA), mental health, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), visual analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) represent a vital medium for raising awareness about critical social issues, aiming not only to disseminate information but also to influence public attitudes and behaviors. As a communication strategy, PSAs are designed to be concise, emotionally resonant, and persuasive, which makes them a powerful tool in campaigns addressing public health, safety, and sustainability (Alhabash et al., 2022; Song & A. Bakar, 2025). In the digital era, the relevance of PSAs

increases dramatically, particularly for Generation Z, a cohort that consumes vast amounts of audiovisual content across online platforms and social media. This generation is highly media-literate and accustomed to short, impactful content, yet remains vulnerable to social and mental health challenges amplified by digital environments (Maltby et al., 2024; Marengo et al., 2024; Miconi et al., 2024; Prkno et al., 2025).

Mental health emerges as one of the most pressing global issues in this context. Recognized under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, mental health is understood as integral to overall well-being

and sustainable development (Acuña-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Butler et al., 2022; Ejiohuo et al., 2024; Mejia et al., 2023). Without adequate attention to mental well-being, broader goals of social equity, productivity, and human flourishing remain unattainable. Nevertheless, stigma and lack of awareness continue to pose significant barriers, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where mental health resources are limited (Devkota et al., 2021; Morganstein & Ursano, 2020; Muhorakeye & Biracyaza, 2021). For Generation Z, mental health functions not only as a personal concern but also as a cultural conversation that increasingly manifests through digital content, ranging from advocacy videos to grassroots campaigns. PSAs designed for and by this generation therefore hold strong potential to challenge stigma, foster empathy, and connect global development goals with lived experiences.

Despite this urgency, scholarship on PSAs largely concentrates on professionally produced or government-led campaigns, leaving a gap in understanding how students, as emerging media creators, conceptualize, design, and disseminate PSAs within educational frameworks. The novelty of examining student-generated PSAs lies in their ability to capture the intersection of pedagogy, communication practice, and global citizenship. University students today function not only as learners but also as content producers whose creative outputs circulate beyond the classroom and shape public discourse on urgent issues such as mental health and sustainability (Bulley et al., 2024; Robertson et al., 2022). Understanding how students approach PSA creation therefore provides valuable insight into both educational processes and the cultural role of youth-driven media.

In the Indonesian context, the role of PSAs is historically dominated by state-led initiatives. A well-known example is the family planning campaigns of the *Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional* (BKKBN), which effectively shape public perceptions of reproductive health through top-down communication models. While these campaigns demonstrate measurable impact, they often lack aesthetic innovation and struggle to engage younger audiences who increasingly demand creative, relatable, and visually compelling content (Kearney et al., 2024; Younes & Hronis, 2023). This limitation highlights the need for alternative forms of PSA production that resonate with contemporary youth, particularly as Indonesia faces a growing Generation Z population that is deeply embedded in digital culture and disproportionately affected by mental health challenges (Lestari et al., 2020; Pratiwi & Perdana, 2019; Wildy Hernanda et al., 2022).

The rise of digital technologies creates an environment in which Indonesian students function not merely as media consumers but also as active producers who experiment with audiovisual storytelling across platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This shift from passive reception to active creation offers higher education a strategic opportunity to

integrate media production into pedagogy, preparing students to think critically while contributing meaningfully to cultural discourse. Within this context, Project-Based Learning (PBL) gains prominence as a pedagogical framework that links theory with practice, fosters collaboration, and encourages engagement with real-world issues through creative projects (Hamdin Serin, 2023; Li et al., 2024; Quinapallo-Quintana & Baldeón-Zambrano, 2024). When applied to PSA production, PBL enables students to develop technical competencies in cinematography, editing, and sound design, while simultaneously cultivating critical awareness of social issues and their relevance to global agendas such as the SDGs.

This intersection of communication, pedagogy, and sustainability creates a compelling research opportunity. While a growing body of literature examines PSAs in health communication and a parallel strand explores Project-Based Learning (PBL) in higher education, few studies bring these perspectives together to investigate how students create PSAs as part of their learning processes. Even less is known about how these practices unfold in Indonesia, where mental health challenges and opportunities for digital creativity are particularly salient. Addressing this gap enables a more nuanced understanding of how educational environments empower students to act as agents of social change by translating classroom projects into culturally resonant media with societal impact.

Building on this context, the present study seeks to address a critical gap in existing scholarship. Although PSAs are widely examined as government- or NGO-driven communication tools, limited attention is given to how students, as emerging media producers, conceptualize and construct PSAs within higher education settings, particularly in Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in integrating visual content analysis with a participatory PBL framework, demonstrating how students acquire technical and collaborative skills while producing socially impactful media aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, this study pursues three objectives: (1) to map the distribution of themes selected by students in designing SDG-related PSAs, with particular attention to mental health; (2) to conduct a comparative analysis of two representative student PSAs, *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard*, focusing on narrative structure, visual symbolism, and sound design; and (3) to evaluate how PBL facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and aligns student creativity with broader sustainable development goals.

These objectives guide the central research question: how does PBL enable students to create PSAs that are both pedagogically meaningful and socially relevant within the SDGs framework? By addressing this question, the study contributes to three domains of scholarship. In communication studies, it advances understanding of how narrative strategies, visual techniques, and sound design shape PSA effectiveness. In educational research, it demonstrates

how PBL fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking through media production. In sustainability discourse, it highlights how youth-driven media projects advance mental health awareness as part of the global development agenda. Collectively, the findings position student-produced PSAs not only as pedagogical outputs but also as cultural artifacts that bridge local experiences and global challenges, affirming the role of higher education in preparing students as learners and social innovators.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative participatory design combined with visual content analysis to investigate how students conceptualize and produce PSA videos aligned with the SDGs, with a particular focus on mental health. The qualitative approach is selected to capture the depth of students' creative processes, decision-making practices, and interpretive strategies during PSA production. The methodological framework is structured to clearly distinguish between (a) PBL activities that function as the pedagogical setting and (b) the research methods used to systematically collect, analyze, and interpret empirical data. This separation ensures that teaching activities serve as the context of inquiry rather than the analytical instrument itself, thereby strengthening methodological rigor and analytical transparency.

Figure 1 illustrates three complementary research strategies used to analyze educational interventions: classroom observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), and visual analysis of PSA videos. Each strategy offers a distinct analytical perspective, enabling the examination of pedagogical processes, student reflections, and media outputs. Together, these strategies provide a comprehensive understanding of how the intervention operates and how its educational and communicative impacts emerge.

The research is conducted at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia across two academic courses: Art Education in the Communication Department, involving 22 students, and Media Studies in the Film and Television Department, involving 15 students. In total, 37 undergraduate students participate in the study. All participants belong to Generation Z, a cohort characterized as digitally native and highly accustomed to using audiovisual platforms for communication (Chen & Ha, 2023; Zips & Holendová, 2023). Participation is embedded within regular coursework through a structured PBL model, which provides both the pedagogical framework and the empirical context for data generation.

Classroom observation serves as the first research strategy. A structured observation protocol is applied to document student interactions during brainstorming sessions, group discussions, and production activities (Isnani, 2023). The observations focus on patterns of collaboration, decision-making processes, and the integration of communication-oriented and technical expertise across interdisciplinary teams. This approach enables systematic analysis of how pedagogical design shapes student engagement and creative coordination.

FGDs constitute the second research strategy. Three FGDs are conducted and involve students alongside external stakeholders, including mental health experts and professional filmmakers. The discussions are transcribed and coded to capture participants' rationales for thematic selection, audience targeting, and creative decision-making (Pimpa, 2023). This method provides insight into how students articulate meaning, negotiate perspectives, and align creative choices with social objectives.

Visual analysis of student outputs is conducted using a purposive sampling strategy. PSA videos are selected for in-depth analysis based on thematic relevance (mental health within the SDGs), completeness of production elements, and representativeness across departments. The visual



Figure 1 Educational Intervention Analysis Strategies

analysis employs a coding scheme adapted from Mackie et al. (2020), covering 13 dimensions, including clarity of message, emotional resonance, use of symbols, cinematography, sound design, and call-to-action strategies. Two researchers independently code the videos, and discrepancies are resolved through discussion to enhance reliability.

Qualitative data analysis is carried out using thematic analysis applied to data from classroom observations and FGDs (Braun & Clarke, 2021; adapted for participatory contexts). Codes are inductively derived from student discourse and are subsequently grouped into broader themes such as “message clarity,” “aesthetic experimentation,” and “collaborative negotiation.” Visual data from PSA outputs are triangulated with observation and FGD findings to contextualize students’ creative decisions. This methodological triangulation enhances validity and provides a richer understanding of how pedagogical processes translate into media artifacts (Rahiem, 2021; Riordan et al., 2023).

Ethical considerations are addressed throughout the research process. All participants provide informed consent, and student work is anonymized in reporting. Ethical clearance is obtained in accordance with institutional guidelines for educational research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study involves 20 students from the Communication Department and 11 students from the Film and Television Department. The learning process is guided by the Semester Study Plan (RPS), which ensures that mentoring is structured, monitored, and systematically evaluated throughout 16 sessions. Initially, the project is designed to explore PSA creation based on local wisdom; however, during the early stages of topic selection, students overwhelmingly gravitate toward mental health themes. Approximately 80% of students choose to address mental health issues, reflecting the topic's salience for Generation Z and its alignment with the SDGs.

The first task requires students to present PSA ideas supported by literature reviews. These presentations not only introduce thematic rationales but also stimulate peer discussion, where students collaboratively refine their concepts into feasible production plans. Importantly, students also negotiate technical aspects, such as available equipment and production alternatives, thereby linking theoretical

exploration with practical constraints. While three sessions are required for Communication students to finalize their concepts (given the larger cohort), Film students complete the same process within two sessions.

From these initial assignments, 20 PSA concepts emerge from Communication students, of which six (30%) directly address SDG-related mental health issues. Film students produce 13 concepts, with 10 (76.9%) engaging with SDG themes and three (23.1%) specifically addressing mental health. This distribution illustrates the differing emphases between departments: Communication students often explore broader social themes (family, environment, public space), while Film students concentrate more explicitly on SDGs and mental health.

Table 1 shows that this distribution reveals two important findings. First, students demonstrate strong agency in topic selection, with mental health emerging as the most prominent issue despite initial freedom to choose diverse themes. This resonates with research highlighting Generation Z's heightened concern for mental well-being and their preference for socially impactful creative expression (Kullolli & Trebicka, 2023; Zeng & Abidin, 2021). Second, the variation between departments suggests different disciplinary orientations: Communication students emphasize message clarity across multiple social domains, while Film students prioritize SDG-related narratives, often employing aesthetic or metaphorical approaches.

These findings underscore the relevance of project-based learning (PBL) as a framework that not only fosters collaboration but also allows students to align academic tasks with personal and generational concerns. The convergence on mental health as a theme exemplifies how PBL can surface authentic student interests while situating them within broader global agendas such as the SDGs (Haryono et al., 2024; Llopis-Albert et al., 2024; Yadav, 2023). In this context, PBL functions as both a pedagogical strategy and a reflective space where students negotiate meaning between academic objectives and lived experiences.

Building on the distribution of themes presented earlier, further analysis reveals notable differences between departments in how students engage with the SDGs and mental health. Among the 20 Communication students, only six projects (30%) directly address mental health, while the majority focus on broader social concerns such as family dynamics, public space, and environmental issues. By contrast,

Table 1 Summary of Student Project Results Categorized by Department and Thematic Focus

Department	Total Videos	SDG-Related Videos	Mental Health Focus	Other Themes (Family, Environment, etc.)
Communication (n=20)	20	6 (30%)	6 (30%)	14 (70%)
Film & Television (n=13)	13	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)	3 (23.1%)

Film and Television students produce 13 projects, of which 10 (76.9%) explicitly address SDG-related themes, including three (23.1%) that concentrate on mental health.

This comparison highlights two important tendencies. First, Communication students demonstrate thematic diversity, reflecting the department's orientation toward message clarity across multiple domains of social life. Second, Film students show stronger alignment with the SDGs framework, although their direct engagement with mental health remains limited. Such patterns reinforce earlier research suggesting that disciplinary context shapes how students translate social concerns into media narratives (Squires & Affara, 2024). At the same time, the prominence of mental health as a recurring theme across both groups reflects Generation Z's heightened awareness of psychological well-being as integral to sustainable development (Jamaludin, 2024; Wicka & Wicki, 2024; Akbar et al., 2024; Tam et al., 2024).

Building on the distribution of themes presented earlier, further analysis reveals distinct differences between the two departments in how students approach the SDGs and mental health. Among the 20 Communication students, six projects (30%) directly address mental health, while the remaining 14 focus on broader social concerns such as family dynamics, public space, and environmental issues. By contrast, the 13 projects produced by Film and Television students show a stronger overall orientation toward SDG-related themes, with 10 (76.9%) explicitly linked to the SDGs. Of these, three projects (23.1%) focus specifically on mental health.

This comparison highlights two important tendencies. First, Communication students demonstrate a broader thematic spread, reflecting their department's emphasis on accessible social messaging across diverse domains. Second, Film students display stronger alignment with the SDGs framework, though their direct engagement with mental health is more limited. These patterns confirm earlier findings that disciplinary context influences how students translate social concerns into media narratives (López, 2022).

At the same time, the recurring focus on mental health across both groups underscores its salience for Generation Z, who increasingly identify psychological well-being as integral to sustainable development (Karaba Bäckström et al., 2025; Savić et al., 2024). Within the Project-Based Learning (PBL) framework, this convergence suggests that when given autonomy, students tend to select themes that resonate with their lived experiences while also engaging with global agendas. Such outcomes reinforce the potential of PBL to bridge personal relevance and broader social responsibility, aligning with SDGs-driven educational goals (Kalla et al., 2022; Lozano et al., 2022).

Of the 33 PSA videos produced by students in the Communication and Film and Television Departments, nine specifically address mental health. To analyze these projects in greater depth, a

set of evaluative criteria is applied, including clarity of the main message, alignment with the SDGs, emotional representation, narrative relevance, use of visual metaphors, consistency in aesthetics and tone, cinematography, accuracy of information, strength of narration, supporting music, call-to-action effectiveness, readability of text or subtitles, and adherence to the one-minute format. These criteria provide a systematic basis for assessing both communicative effectiveness and technical quality across student productions.

Based on these criteria, two PSAs are selected as representative case studies: *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard*. These works are chosen not only because they exemplify the diversity of approaches taken by students but also because they reflect contrasting emphases between the Communication and Film cohorts. While *Nomophobia* illustrates the risks of smartphone dependency, *They Just Want to Be Heard* highlights the importance of empathy and communication in addressing youth mental health.

The decision to focus on these two PSAs allows for a more structured analysis that balances technical production elements with their broader communicative and social functions. This approach also situates student work within the SDGs framework, demonstrating how PBL encourages both individual creativity and collective responsibility in tackling issues that resonate with Generation Z audiences (Omelianenko & Artyukhova, 2024). In doing so, the analysis connects micro-level production choices with macro-level educational and social objectives.

The comparative analysis of *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard* highlights how different cinematographic strategies influence the effectiveness of message delivery in SDG-oriented PSAs. While both address themes relevant to Generation Z, they demonstrate contrasting levels of success in balancing character focus with contextual framing. These differences underscore the role of visual storytelling choices in shaping audience engagement and message interpretation.

In *Nomophobia*, the narrative centers on a child's dependency on a mobile phone, symbolized by scenes in which the protagonist ignores prayer times. Although the video effectively underscores the dangers of technological addiction, the cinematography tends to confine the visual field to the main character. The framing is narrow and often neglects the broader social and spatial context in which the character exists. As Tseng et al. (2024) argue, limited framing can diminish a scene's interpretive potential by failing to capture environmental cues that enrich audience understanding. Consequently, while *Nomophobia* conveys its intended message, it does so with reduced emotional depth and narrative complexity.

By contrast, *They Just Want to Be Heard* employs wider framing and more deliberate spatial composition to situate the protagonist's struggles within a recognizable social environment. For instance, the scene depicting a female student walking

alone through the campus gate successfully integrates character expression with contextual surroundings, creating a layered representation of isolation and vulnerability. Research in media psychology affirms that such contextual framing enhances audience empathy by embedding individual suffering within a relatable setting (Iyer et al., 2014; Troncoso et al., 2023).

The symbolic use of lighting further distinguishes *They Just Want to Be Heard*. The birthday scene, in which the protagonist holds a cake with a single candle in a darkened room, embodies the paradox of celebration and absence. The candle, conventionally associated with festivity, here signifies solitude and neglect. The contrast between light and darkness provides a powerful metaphor for the coexistence of hope and alienation. Visual metaphors of this kind are shown to heighten message salience in health-related PSAs by evoking stronger emotional responses (Mishra et al., 2025).

Narratively, this scene functions as the emotional climax, corresponding to the conflict stage of a three-act PSA structure: introduction, conflict, and resolution. The subsequent resolution—marked by the protagonist's eventual connection with her peers—aligns with the conventions of PSA storytelling, where calls for empathy and support follow moments of crisis. This structural clarity ensures that the visual symbolism is not merely aesthetic but also narratively functional.

Taken together, the comparison illustrates that cinematography and narrative structure are not merely technical considerations but essential determinants of communicative effectiveness in PSAs. *Nomophobia* demonstrates the risks of narrow framing that isolates characters from their social context. At the same time, *They Just Want to Be Heard* exemplifies how the thoughtful use of framing, lighting, and narrative symbolism translates complex issues such as mental health into accessible, emotionally resonant messages. Within the PBL framework, these outcomes demonstrate how interdisciplinary collaboration enables students to experiment with cinematic language while grounding their work in the broader goals of the SDGs (Ritchie-Dunham et al., 2023).

The comparative analysis of *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard* demonstrates how student-created PSAs reflect both the challenges and opportunities of integrating Project-Based Learning (PBL) into media education. While both projects are created within the same pedagogical framework, they differ significantly in their use of narrative symbolism, cinematography, and emotional resonance, thereby illustrating how disciplinary orientations shape creative outcomes.

Nomophobia, produced primarily by Communication students, focuses on the theme of mobile phone dependency. The video relies heavily on close framing of the main character and repetitive imagery of phone usage, symbolizing how technological addiction isolates individuals from social

and spiritual responsibilities. However, the limited use of spatial context reduces narrative depth, making the message direct but visually constrained. This outcome reflects the Communication Department's pedagogical emphasis on message clarity and accessibility, even if at the expense of cinematic sophistication. As Cohn and Foulsham (2020) note, narrow framing can weaken audience immersion by limiting contextual cues, as seen in *Nomophobia*.

By contrast, *They Just Want to Be Heard*, created by Film and Television students, employs wider framing, lighting symbolism, and more deliberate spatial composition. The birthday candle scene exemplifies how minimal light in a darkened setting symbolizes both loneliness and fragile hope, aligning the narrative with SDG 3 on mental health and well-being (Cinar & Bilodeau, 2022; Costa Júnior, 2021). Here, the candle serves as a visual metaphor for the character's emotional struggle and resilience, echoing Yung's (2021) observation that symbolic contrasts heighten PSA effectiveness. The eventual resolution—where the protagonist receives support from peers—provides an emotionally powerful closure consistent with PSA conventions that encourage empathy and collective responsibility (Lazard et al., 2016).

When viewed comparatively, these two works underscore how PBL fosters different forms of learning across disciplines. Communication students demonstrate strength in delivering clear, audience-friendly messages but are limited in aesthetic experimentation. Film students, conversely, emphasize cinematic techniques that enrich emotional impact but occasionally risk obscuring message clarity. This complementarity illustrates the pedagogical value of interdisciplinary collaboration: students collectively develop an awareness that effective PSA production requires both strategic clarity and creative symbolism.

Moreover, the convergence of both projects on mental health themes reflects Generation Z's heightened concern for psychological well-being and recognition of its importance within the broader SDG framework. Within the PBL context, this indicates that when given autonomy, students select issues that resonate with their lived experiences while simultaneously addressing global challenges (Chahine Chahine, 2023). Thus, the scene-level analyses of *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard* not only highlight differences in creative execution but also reveal how PBL equips students with the capacity to translate personal concerns into socially impactful media aligned with sustainable development agendas.

The two PSA projects, *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard*, reveal how students apply different narrative and audiovisual strategies to communicate social concerns. Both PSAs illustrate how PBL facilitates creativity, collaboration, and thematic exploration, yet differences in execution highlight the strengths and limitations of each approach. Taken together, these contrasts demonstrate how varied disciplinary perspectives contribute to a more holistic understanding of effective PSA design

within an educational setting.



Figure 2 PSAs *Nomophobia*

Figure 2 above is a screenshot from the *Nomophobia* video. The opening scene depicts a child waking up and immediately turning to a gadget. While this clearly introduces the theme of technological dependency, weaknesses emerge in the visual concept and the logic of the location. Positioning the child on a bed within a space resembling a place of worship introduces narrative dissonance, which distracts from the intended message. The plain background, minimal set design, and static framing reduce the emotional intensity of the story. Although the PSA successfully conveys the concept of “nomophobia” as a mental health disorder linked to gadget addiction, the visuals lack symbolic depth and fail to sustain audience engagement. This confirms earlier observations that PSAs relying on overly literal visual strategies risk flattening narrative impact.



Figure 3 PSAs *They Just Want to Be Heard*

Figure 3 above shows a scene from the PSA *They Just Want to Be Heard*. In contrast, *They Just Want to Be Heard* integrates visual symbolism to strengthen its narrative. The candlelit birthday scene conveys solitude and emotional neglect while simultaneously signaling fragile hope. The candle functions as a symbolic contrast between resilience and despair, aligning with findings that symbolic imagery enhances audience empathy and message retention (Yeremenko et al., 2021). By situating the

protagonist's struggles in relatable settings, such as a student's dorm room or campus gate, the PSA balances intimacy with contextual realism, thereby producing greater emotional resonance.

Sound design further differentiates the two PSAs. In *They Just Want to Be Heard*, the use of two sound logos establishes audiovisual identity, but their extended duration delays the narrative's entry. For PSAs constrained to one minute, conciseness is critical, and reducing sound logos to a single identifier strengthens audience immersion (Kemp et al., 2024). Within the story itself, foley sounds—such as matches striking, a doorknob turning, and paper rustling—carry symbolic meaning beyond realism. The match signals a pivotal emotional transition; the doorknob signifies entry into a new social connection; and the rustling paper suggests reflection or decision-making. Foley thus serves not only to increase realism but also to reinforce narrative symbolism (Zhu et al., 2023).

By comparison, *Nomophobia* relies on direct verbal narration and minimal sonic variation, which simplifies message delivery but limits emotional layering. Research shows that PSAs that integrate auditory symbolism are more effective at fostering empathy and behavioral reflection than those that rely solely on literal narration. This contrast highlights how sound design functions as a critical component of emotional engagement rather than a purely supportive element.

The narrative strategies of both PSAs also illustrate how students engage with imaginative storytelling. While *Nomophobia* adopts a straightforward and literal style, *They Just Want to Be Heard* employs an imaginary narrative, a fictionalized but emotionally grounded representation of loneliness and social neglect. This approach aligns with a growing trend in PSA production that favors narrative dramatization over factual exposition, as imaginative storytelling evokes stronger emotional identification and reduces audience resistance (Ecker et al., 2020).

From a PBL perspective, these outcomes highlight important learning gains. Communication students prioritize clarity and accessibility, consistent with their disciplinary focus, while Film students emphasize cinematic experimentation and symbolic depth. When integrated, these approaches demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary PBL: it enables students to experiment with multiple forms of storytelling, balance message clarity with aesthetic richness, and align their projects with SDG priorities—particularly SDG 3, which emphasizes mental health and well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates how PBL empowers students to translate complex social concerns into audiovisual narratives that contribute both pedagogically and socially. Through the production of PSAs, students actively engage with real-world issues

while applying theoretical knowledge in creative practice. In this way, PBL functions not only as a teaching strategy but also as a platform for socially relevant media production.

By analyzing two representative PSAs, *Nomophobia* and *They Just Want to Be Heard*, the research highlights how disciplinary orientations shape creative outcomes: Communication students prioritize clarity and accessibility. In contrast, Film students emphasize aesthetic symbolism and emotional depth. Their integration reveals the pedagogical value of interdisciplinary collaboration, where clarity of message and cinematic richness combine to produce more impactful communication artifacts.

Beyond pedagogy, the findings contribute to communication studies by showing how narrative structure, sound design, and symbolism amplify the persuasive power of PSAs; to educational research by demonstrating the effectiveness of PBL in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and social awareness; and to SDG scholarship by illustrating how youth-driven media production advances mental health advocacy within the framework of sustainable development. These intersecting contributions position student-created PSAs as meaningful sites of knowledge production rather than merely instructional outputs. Together, they underscore the significance of aligning pedagogical innovation with global agendas, affirming that sustainable development is not only a matter of policy but also of communication and culture.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis focuses on a relatively small number of PSA case studies drawn from a single institutional context, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or cultural environments. Second, the evaluation emphasizes qualitative interpretation of narrative, visual, and sound elements, without incorporating audience reception data that could further validate communicative effectiveness. Future research can address these limitations by examining a larger and more diverse sample of student-produced PSAs, incorporating mixed methods approaches such as audience surveys or experimental testing, and exploring longitudinal impacts of PBL on students' creative competencies and social engagement. Such extensions would strengthen understanding of how PBL-supported media production contributes to both learning outcomes and broader SDG-oriented

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to the Community Research Institute at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, which provided funding for this research in 2024.

Author Contributions: Conceived and designed the analysis, H. S., H. T., and D. A.; Collected the data, H. S., H. T., and D. A.; Contributed data or analysis tools, H. S., H. T., and D. A.; Performed the analysis, H. S., H. T., and D. A.; Wrote the paper, H. S., H. T., and D.

A.; Other contribution, H. S., H. T., and D. A.

Data Availability Statement:

- The data that support the findings will be available in [LPPM Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia] at [<https://litabmas.upi.edu/account/>] following a [6 month] embargo from the date of publication to allow for commercialization of research findings.
- Non-digital data supporting this study are curated at [LPPM Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia].

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