

## **The Relationship Between Social Studies Education and Environmental Education: Implications for Elementary School Students' Environmental Awareness**

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### **Abstract**

With its abundant natural resources, Indonesia is facing serious environmental degradation challenges that are becoming increasingly alarming. The damage is caused by several factors, one of which is the lack of awareness of Indonesian society due to inadequate environmental education. This research can go in-depth on several aspects that influence students' perceptions and responses to environmental issues, focusing on the contribution of social studies education and environmental education. This study aims to examine the extent to which environmental materials are integrated into the social studies curriculum at various levels of education. Also, the role of social studies teachers is to convey information and motivate students to think ethically about environmental issues. The type of research method used is a literature study, data analysis techniques using literature studies, namely data collection of various kinds of material content contained in the library, such as newspapers, books, magazines, manuscripts, documents, and so on that are relevant. The results of this study discuss the integrity of environmental education and social studies learning, then indicators of the achievement of the success of both education in increasing students' environmental awareness, as well as the values of environmental awareness in social studies learning. Based on the study results, there is a positive correlation between environmental education and social studies education on the environmental awareness of elementary school students. In this context, it is recommended that environmental education and social studies be better integrated into the elementary school curriculum, emphasizing practical and applicable approaches.

**Keywords:** environmental education; environmental awareness; social studies

### **Abstrak**

Dengan sumber daya alam yang melimpah, Indonesia menghadapi tantangan serius berupa degradasi lingkungan yang semakin mengkhawatirkan. Kerusakan ini disebabkan oleh berbagai faktor, salah satunya adalah kurangnya kesadaran masyarakat Indonesia akibat pendidikan lingkungan yang belum memadai. Penelitian ini mendalami beberapa aspek yang memengaruhi persepsi dan respons siswa terhadap isu-isu lingkungan, dengan fokus pada kontribusi pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS) dan pendidikan lingkungan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji sejauh mana materi lingkungan diintegrasikan ke dalam kurikulum IPS pada berbagai jenjang pendidikan. Selain itu, juga ditelaah peran guru IPS dalam menyampaikan informasi dan memotivasi siswa untuk berpikir secara etis terhadap permasalahan lingkungan. Jenis metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka, dengan teknik analisis data berupa pengumpulan berbagai jenis konten materi dari pustaka, seperti surat kabar, buku, majalah, naskah, dokumen, dan sumber lain yang relevan. Hasil penelitian ini membahas keterpaduan antara pendidikan lingkungan dan pembelajaran IPS, indikator keberhasilan keduanya dalam meningkatkan kesadaran lingkungan siswa, serta nilai-nilai kesadaran lingkungan dalam pembelajaran IPS. Berdasarkan hasil studi, ditemukan adanya korelasi positif antara pendidikan lingkungan dan pendidikan IPS terhadap kesadaran lingkungan siswa sekolah dasar. Dalam konteks ini, disarankan agar pendidikan lingkungan dan IPS lebih diintegrasikan ke dalam kurikulum sekolah dasar dengan penekanan pada pendekatan yang praktis dan aplikatif.

**Kata kunci:** pendidikan lingkungan; kesadaran lingkungan; ilmu pengetahuan sosial.

## Introduction

The environment is a medium in which living beings reside and seek sustenance, and it has a reciprocal relationship with the existence of the living organisms that inhabit it, especially humans. Environmental issues are certainly not new. With its abundant natural wealth, Indonesia faces serious challenges related to increasingly alarming environmental degradation. Several factors and human activities have significantly contributed to environmental degradation in various country regions (Rumanta et al., 2019).

Deforestation is one of the main environmental issues in Indonesia. Logging for agricultural, plantation, and industrial purposes has led to habitat loss and threatened biodiversity. Water and soil pollution are also serious problems. Poorly managed industrial and domestic waste has resulted in the pollution of rivers and seas, damaging aquatic ecosystems and threatening public health. Indonesia is witnessing increasingly extreme climate changes, including rising temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, and extreme weather. However, lacking public understanding of climate change and its links to human activities may hinder mitigation and adaptation efforts (Nafisah et al., 2020).

Environmental degradation in Indonesia reflects the serious challenges stemming from the population's lack of awareness of environmental ethics. Communities with low awareness of environmental ethics may not fully understand the destructive impact of their actions on environmental sustainability. Minimal awareness of the importance of nature conservation and responsibility for natural resources can lead to an indifferent attitude toward ecological issues (Ismail, 2020).

The lack of environmental awareness among the Indonesian public is closely related to shortcomings in environmental education. Inadequate environmental education lies at the root of the issue, leading to a lack of understanding and appreciation for environmental matters within society. An education curriculum that does not comprehensively integrate environmental topics may result in students being less exposed to sustainability and environmental ethics concepts. Teaching unengaging or insufficiently interactive methods may fail to convey the urgency of environmental preservation. Additionally, the lack of teacher training on environmental issues can limit their ability to deliver relevant information and inspire students (Sya'ban, 2018).

Environmental damage caused by human activities is a compelling issue to discuss across all sectors, including higher education. Efforts to promote environmentally conscious character development in higher education are essential, considering the substantial benefits it offers students. As agents of change, university students must understand that the environment around them is far from ideal. A critical and sensitive attitude toward environmental conditions must be nurtured through classroom learning. According to (Kresnawati, 2014), education that addresses environmental issues should be integrated into every subject. This aims to instil knowledge, attitudes, skills, and environmental awareness, fostering a wise and responsible attitude toward the environment among students.

Education plays a fundamental role in developing students' character and fostering a continuous concern for the surrounding natural environment. (Sapriya, 2017) asserts that to respond to various ecological crises, students need to be supported in developing attitudes and concerns as a form of human responsibility for sustainable life. According to (Afandi, 2013), environmental education is an effort to conserve the environment through formal school instruction. Environmental education is not a standalone subject; it can be integrated into various subjects.

This perspective indicates that environmental education in this context will be directed toward Social Studies subjects at the junior high school level to foster responsibility for the environment wherever students are. Social Studies, as a form of global education, plays a central role and is responsible for shaping students' worldviews and increasing global awareness, including environmental issues. Social studies teaches historical and geographical facts and serves as a platform for developing a deeper understanding of the complex interactions among individuals, society, and the environment.

Social Studies education and environmental education play a significant role in shaping students' ethical awareness of environmental issues in Indonesia (Suryani et al., 2022). This research can delve into various aspects that influence students' perceptions and responses to environmental issues, focusing on the contribution of Social Studies and environmental education. Therefore, this study aims to examine the extent to which environmental content is integrated into the Social Studies curriculum across educational levels and to explore the role of Social Studies teachers in delivering information and motivating students to think ethically about environmental issues.

## **Literature review**

### **Social Studies Education**

*"According to (Wesley,1950), "The social studies are social sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes in school. The social studies consist of geography, history, economics, sociology, civics, and various combinations of these subjects."*

*Based on these views, Social Studies encompasses a variety of topics, such as history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, and politics, to develop students' knowledge and understanding of social dynamics and human interactions. Social Studies education in higher education is a selection of disciplines from the social sciences and humanities, as well as fundamental human activities that are organized scientifically and psychologically for educational purposes (Numan Somantri, 2001)*

*Social Studies education aims to equip students with broad knowledge of various societal structures, political systems, geography, and economic processes. In addition, this subject also encourages the development of analytical skills, critical thinking, and an understanding of social values. Through Social Studies Education, students are expected to expand their social insight, understand their societal roles, and become active and responsible citizens. It also aims to foster attitudes of tolerance, justice, and participation in social and national life (Musyarofah & Ahmad, 2021).*

### **Environmental Education (Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup)**

*According to (Verma & Dhull, 2017), "Environmental Education is a means to foster environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviour in students. It is possible to include Environmental Education as an independent subject in the school curriculum and integrate it into the formal education system." Environmental education serves as a means to cultivate students' responsibility toward the environment, which is reflected in their attitudes and behaviour. It is possible to include Environmental Education as an independent subject in the curriculum and integrate it into the formal education system.*

*Environmental education helps shape students and future generations to preserve the environment, making learning spaces more comfortable and conducive. Beyond the classroom, students are also expected to apply environmental education wherever they are and encourage others to protect the environment.*

*According to (Verma & Dhull, 2017), the scope and sequence of environmental education can be incorporated into the following disciplines: Arts, English, Guidance and Career Education, Interdisciplinary Studies, Mathematics, Native Studies, Science, Social Studies, Humanities, and Technological Education. Social Studies is one of the social sciences, making it highly appropriate for the inclusion of environmental education.*

### **Environmental Awareness (Kesadaran Lingkungan)**

*Environmental awareness refers to an individual's or group's understanding, recognition, and sense of responsibility toward environmental sustainability and balance. This includes awareness of environmental issues, the impacts of human activities on ecosystems, and the role of each individual in maintaining the sustainability of nature (Yamin, 2013).*

*Environmental awareness is the state in which a person becomes consciously awakened to realize something, particularly in the context of environmental concerns. This state is reflected through various actions and behaviours demonstrated by individuals. Environmental awareness is of great significance and should be embraced by every individual. This is because awareness plays a crucial role in the students' environment, and the values emerging from this awareness can be applied by students in their daily lives (Nasution et al., 2021).*

## **Method**

The type of research method used is a literature study. The literature study method is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading and taking notes, and managing research materials. This activity is not only mandatory but also plays a crucial role in the development of the theoretical framework and the practical benefits of the research (Nazir, 2014). A literature study helps researchers understand the conceptual and theoretical framework related to the research topic. By reviewing relevant literature, researchers can identify key concepts, applicable theories, and previous findings that may support or complement the ongoing research. The data analysis technique in a literature study involves collecting data from various materials found in library sources, such as newspapers, books, magazines, manuscripts, documents, and other relevant sources.

## **Results & Discussion**

### **Integration of Environmental Education into Social Studies Learning**

The integration of environmental education into Social Studies learning at the elementary school level requires a well-planned approach that aligns with the learning objectives of Social Studies at that level. This process cannot be carried out randomly but must comply with the content standards of Social Studies learning issued by the National Education Standards Agency in the 2006 school-based curriculum. In this context, integrating environmental education must consider several strategic steps:

1. Analysis of Social Studies Content Standards
2. Conduct an in-depth review of the content standards for Social Studies established by National Education Standards Agency. This includes understanding the core competencies, basic competencies, and expected learning objectives.
3. Identification of Alignment
4. Identify areas or topics within the Social Studies curriculum that align with or are relevant to environmental concepts and values. This allows integration to occur naturally and meaningfully.
5. Determining Methods and Approaches
6. Determine appropriate teaching methods and approaches for the environmental material to be integrated. These may include case studies, experiments, field trips, or environmental projects.
7. Development of Integrated Teaching Materials
8. Create integrated teaching materials that combine Social Studies content with environmental education. These materials should provide a holistic learning experience and address social, economic, and ecological aspects.
9. Teacher Training
10. Provide training for teachers so they can effectively implement this integrated approach. Teachers must understand how to connect environmental concepts with Social Studies learning without compromising the core goals of the Social Studies curriculum.
11. Evaluation and Improvement
12. Evaluate the effectiveness of environmental education integration in Social Studies learning. Based on the evaluation results, adjustments and improvements should be made to enhance the integration process continually.

Thus, integrating environmental education into Social Studies learning at the elementary school level requires not only an understanding of environmental concepts but also careful planning to achieve educational goals (Blessing, 2012) comprehensively.

### **Indicators of Environmental Education Achievement Through Social Studies Learning**

Indicators of environmental education achievement through Social Studies can include various aspects that reflect the extent to which students have internalized knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to the environment through the Social Studies subject. According to (Munisah, 2018), these indicators include:

1. Developing Habits of Environmental Care  
To cultivate environmental care among students, teachers can take steps such as taking students outside the classroom for hands-on field experiences. Activities like tree planting, cleaning the school surroundings, or visiting nature conservation sites can enhance students' understanding and concern for the environment. This indicator reflects the integration of Social Studies learning with environmental education, as seen in one of the basic competencies of Social Studies: maintaining the preservation of natural and built environments around one's place of residence. Encouraging such habits can involve collaboration with parents and the school community in environmental activities, thus expanding environmental awareness into the family setting (Jeramat et al., 2019).
2. Cultivating Pride and Appreciative Attitudes  
To foster a positive sense of environmental awareness in elementary school students, teachers can encourage pride and appreciation for the environment by recognizing students with innovative ideas. Acknowledging their positive contributions helps boost their confidence. Teachers may also organize exhibitions of student work related to the environment, including art projects, writings, or posters. This allows students to showcase their role in environmental conservation efforts and feel that their contributions are valued (Susanto et al., 2017).
3. Promoting the Spirit of Mutual Cooperation  
To promote mutual cooperation in environmental awareness among elementary students, teachers can initiate group projects focused on maintaining and improving the school environment, such as cleaning the school yard, planting trees, or repairing facilities. Teachers can instill this value through group collaboration in environmental tasks like designing cleanliness campaigns or recycling programs. By making these activities routine—such as weekly classroom clean-ups, waste management, or garden maintenance—students become accustomed to participating and feel part of the collective effort (Hariyadi et al., 2021).

#### 4. Building a Sense of Responsibility

To build environmental responsibility, teachers can explain how students' behaviours impact the environment. Informing them about the consequences of littering or excessive energy use helps students understand their role in sustainability. Teachers can initiate responsibility-driven projects like recycling or rainwater harvesting. Assigning roles in managing these projects enhances students' ownership and accountability (Leeuwis & Ban, 2009).

#### 5. Fostering Discipline

To cultivate discipline in environmental awareness, teachers can establish school rules and norms emphasizing the importance of environmentally responsible behaviour. Students should understand the consequences of violating environmental rules. Teachers serve as role models by demonstrating disciplined behaviour, which students are likely to emulate. Reflective activities—where students assess their behaviour and plan improvements—help foster greater self-awareness and commitment to disciplined environmental actions (Adawiah et al., 2022).

### Application of Environmental Awareness Values in Social Studies Learning

In Social Studies learning, various materials are presented to educate students on the importance of environmental awareness. These teachings should align with their real-life experiences outside the classroom. A teacher's primary task is to enhance students' value awareness so they continuously care for the school environment and contribute to a green and friendly atmosphere (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). Instilled awareness becomes an integral part of their value system, guiding their actions with the understanding that these values are essential in human life. The cultivation of environmental awareness in Social Studies should be planned and implemented continuously, with emphasis adjusted across different educational levels. At the elementary level, it is crucial to introduce the development of value comprehension. For younger students, the inclusion of play-based elements is essential, as they need to enjoy living together, social interaction, and learning how to care for their school environment (Doup, 2018). Gradually, students' self-awareness should be expanded, and values such as honesty, justice, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, love, and compassion should be introduced, practised, and emphasized. At the upper-grade level, a greater portion of understanding is needed, and selected activities should help build responsibility, order, and cooperative teamwork. Assignments—both individual and group—along with cooperative discussion and Q&A methods are practical approaches for instilling character values through Social Studies learning (Timur et al., 2013).

### Conclusion

Based on the research findings, there is a positive correlation between environmental education and Social Studies education on the environmental awareness of elementary school students. Environmental education and Social Studies play a significant role in shaping students' understanding and attitudes toward environmental issues. The continuous integration of these two fields of education can enhance students' awareness of the importance of preserving the environment. The discovery of this positive correlation indicates that Social Studies learning when focused on environmental issues, can make a meaningful contribution to increasing students' environmental awareness. Likewise, environmental education integrated with Social Studies can create a holistic and relevant learning experience for elementary school students. In this context, it is recommended that environmental education and Social Studies be better integrated into the elementary school curriculum, with an emphasis on practical and applicable approaches. Ongoing efforts to optimize the role of these two educational fields can foster a young generation with high environmental awareness, ready to become positive agents of change in ensuring environmental sustainability.

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