

Research Article

Eco-Edutainment: Learning Social Studies Through Fun Experiences

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Abstract.

This study examines the real-world implementation of joyful social studies (IPS) learning through an eco-edutainment approach as an innovative method to enhance students' environmental understanding and awareness. Using a qualitative research design based on the Miles and Huberman model, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Informants included social studies teachers, students, the chair of the Social Studies Subject Teacher Forum (MGMP IPS), and principals from several junior high schools in Semarang Regency. The findings reveal that the eco-edutainment approach fosters a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment and significantly enhances students' understanding of environmental issues such as climate change, natural resource conservation, and waste management. Additionally, this approach promotes a shared sense of responsibility among students to care for the environment as part of their everyday lives. The study recommends further development of eco-edutainment-based learning models to support long-term environmental awareness and sustainable educational practices.

Keywords: eco-edutainment, learning, social studies

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1. Introduction

The advent of Industry 4.0 has brought significant transformations to human life, positioning information as a fundamental basis across various aspects of life, including education (1). In the educational sphere, particularly in Social Studies (IPS) education, the demand for engaging and relevant learning experiences has become increasingly urgent. One strategy to address this challenge is the utilization of innovative instructional media that bridges the curriculum with the needs of students in the modern era (2).

In the context of Social Studies learning, integrating local wisdom plays a pivotal role in fostering contextual and meaningful educational experiences. Local wisdom, which embodies the culture, traditions, and values of the local community, can serve as a rich educational resource. It enhances the learning process by providing a deeper understanding of the social environment and cultivating students' awareness of their local

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identity (3). This aligns with environmental education approaches, which emphasize the interconnectedness of knowledge and students' direct experiences.

This study was conducted in Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, focusing on several junior high schools (SMP) located near tourist attractions. These schools include SMP Negeri 1 Sumowono, SMP Negeri 2 Banyubiru, MTs Raudhotul Furqon, and MTs Sudirman. The geographical proximity of these schools to tourist sites presents significant potential for the development of an eco-edutainment-based learning model as a relevant pedagogical approach.

However, preliminary observations indicate that the implementation of outdoor study in Social Studies education within these schools remains ineffective in integrating local potential into the learning process. Learning activities are often monotonous and fail to utilize the surrounding environment as an authentic learning resource. In fact, learning approaches involving direct experiences, such as eco-edutainment, have the potential to enhance students' interest and motivation while fostering a deeper understanding of Social Studies concepts.

This research aims to analyze the factual conditions of Social Studies learning processes in these schools, focusing on the application of eco-edutainment as an engaging instructional strategy. Through this approach, the study seeks to identify innovative solutions for improving the effectiveness of Social Studies education, ensuring it is not only academically relevant but also contextualized with the local potential of Semarang Regency.

2. Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative analysis, as stated by pastoral education, which asserts that qualitative data is organized in the form of confidential, anonymous reports regarding the activities carried out by students (4), (5). The informants in this study include Social Studies (IPS) teachers from junior high schools in Semarang Regency, junior high school students, the chairperson of the IPS MGMP (Subject Teacher Council) in Semarang Regency, and the principals of junior high schools in Semarang Regency.

3. Research Result and Discussion

Education is one manifestation of dynamic culture; it plays a role in shaping human resources that are more capable and competent (6). Joyful learning can be facilitated through experiential activities in the field (7). Education is a manifestation of culture that is constantly dynamic; it plays a role in shaping individuals to be creative, critical, and independent.

Preliminary research findings reveal that many students are not interested in Social Studies (IPS) subjects in junior high schools (SMP) in Semarang Regency. The monotonous teaching methods employed by teachers make students feel bored during Social Studies lessons. Social Studies education requires innovative approaches to effectively achieve its learning objectives. Social Studies aims to educate students to be sensitive to social issues occurring in society.

The teaching model currently used by Social Studies teachers in junior high schools in Semarang Regency remains largely teacher-oriented, relying predominantly on the lecture method. Students only listen to the material presented by the teacher, leading to passive learning. Consequently, Social Studies instruction in junior high schools in Semarang Regency has not yet reached its full potential.

Social Studies (IPS) learning in the Society 5.0 era requires students to think critically and creatively to ensure a sustainable future (8)–(13). Social Studies (IPS) learning is a form of social education that integrates human interaction with spatial aspects (14), (15). The utilization of the surrounding environment of junior high schools (SMP) in Semarang Regency can support learning, particularly in Social Studies (IPS). Many SMPs in Semarang Regency are located near tourism potential, which can be incorporated into the learning process. Tourism plays a role in education by serving as teaching material (16).

The results of this study indicate that joyful Social Studies (IPS) learning through eco-education has a positive impact on students' understanding of environmental issues and their awareness of the importance of preserving the environment through IPS learning. Therefore, teachers are expected to create a creative learning atmosphere by utilizing media and methods that motivate students (17). In this context, it is also related to spatial thinking in learning, which is an important aspect in the 4.0 era (18).

Advanced technology facilitates easier communication, which can be utilized by Social Studies (IPS) teachers in junior high schools (SMP) to enhance their teaching process and share knowledge with the IPS Subject Teacher Council (MGMP) in Semarang Regency, particularly regarding the integration of eco-edutainment into IPS learning. Students are a key component of the learning process, especially in Social Studies education. Active learning requires the active participation of both students and teachers in implementing eco-edutainment in IPS lessons at SMPs in Semarang Regency.

The school environment in SMPs in Semarang Regency also supports the integration of eco-edutainment, as they are located near tourism areas. Several junior high schools are situated close to tourism locations in Semarang Regency, making it possible to leverage eco-edutainment in IPS learning.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of integrating entertainment elements into social studies learning to enhance student engagement and understanding. The concept of eco-edutainment combines education with enjoyable experiences related to the environment, allowing students to not only learn about society and history but also their relationship with the surrounding environment. Learning that involves interactive activities, such as games, simulations, and group projects, has proven effective in capturing students' interest in social studies. In this way, students can directly experience the concepts being taught, which deepens their understanding. The use of technology in learning, such as educational apps or virtual field trips, offers a more engaging and relevant learning experience for today's digital generation, helping students connect more effectively with the subject matter. Connecting the material to students' personal experiences makes learning more meaningful, while discussions about family traditions or current issues can raise social awareness and critical thinking skills. A fun approach to teaching social studies not only boosts learning motivation but also helps students understand and appreciate both their own culture and history and those of others.

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