TEACHING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH THE USE OF PICTURE BOOKS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' CRITICAL AWARENESS ABOUT INEQUALITY AND POVERTY

THESIS

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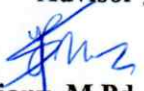
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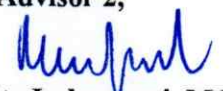
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Certify that the thesis entitled "Teaching For Sustainable Development Goals Through The Use Of Picture Books To Develop Students' Critical Awareness About Inequality And Poverty" is my work, and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethics and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, July 14, 2025

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DEDICATION

With deep gratitude and endless love, I dedicate this thesis to those who have always been by my side at every step of my journey…

My beloved husband

Widodo, whose unwavering support, endless patience, and unconditional love have been my greatest strength throughout this journey. Thank you for always believing in me, even when I doubted myself.

My beloved daughters

Aisyah Salsabila and Adzkiya Althafunnisa, my two precious daughters whose smiles bring light to my darkest days and whose presence gives my life true meaning.

My beloved parents

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My success in completing this academic journey is the result of their love, sacrifices, and unwavering prayers, which have faithfully supported me in facing every challenge. This thesis is a true reflection of their steadfast love and support

MOTTO

"Start with Bismillah, and keep going until Alhamdulillah becomes your ending."

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TEACHING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH THE USE OF PICTURE BOOKS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' CRITICAL AWARENESS ABOUT INEQUALITY AND POVERTY

ABSTRACT

In light of the global emphasis on integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into educational systems, particularly those focused on alleviating poverty and addressing inequality, this study investigates the efficacy of picture books as a pedagogical medium for fostering critical awareness among eighth-grade students. Conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya, the research uniquely combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to assess the educational impact on a cohort of 11 students, many of whom contribute economically to their families while managing their academic responsibilities. Quantitative analysis revealed significant improvements in students' reading comprehension, with a paired sample t-test yielding a t-value of -19.076 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the implementation of picture books aimed at socio-economic themes substantially enhanced literacy skills. Additionally, a motivation questionnaire demonstrated strong engagement levels amongst participants, with a grand mean score of 3.48, highlighting the motivational potential of picture book resources. Qualitative insights gathered from interviews, classroom observations, and student documentation further illuminated the transformative effects of picture books. Students articulated emotional connections to the narratives, which not only fostered resilience but also enhanced their time management skills and appreciation for family support. The stories reflected their lived experiences, thereby inspiring intrinsic motivation and aspirations for their futures. Overall, this study underscores the pivotal role that picture books can play in not only improving literacy outcomes but also in aligning classroom experiences with the principles of sustainable development, thereby equipping students with the critical awareness necessary to engage effectively with enduring social issues like poverty and inequality.

Keywords: *picture books, sustainable development goals, student motivation*

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This part discusses: (1) background of study, (2) problem of study, (3) objective of study, and (4) significance of study.

1.1 Background of Study

Education is widely recognized as a crucial factor in shaping individuals and societies. It not only equips students with knowledge and skills but also fosters values and attitudes necessary for addressing global challenges. According to Saddiqa et al. (2020), education is critical to developing human capital and promoting a sense of global citizenship, both of which are necessary for tackling today's problems. Similarly, Yar and Shaheedzooy (2024) argue that students' experiences and their capacity to interact with societal concerns are greatly influenced by the learning environment. In summary, education provides students with the fundamental knowledge, skills, and values that guide the development of both individuals and society.

In this context, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), introduced by the United Nations in 2015, serve as a universal call to action aimed at eradicating poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all by 2030. Among these 17 goals, Goal 10, which focuses on reducing inequality, highlights the need for inclusive education systems that promote equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds. Munir et al. (2023) highlight the influence of socioeconomic position on academic performance, contending that socioeconomic considerations play a fundamental role in educational disparities. According to their research, policies should be created to give all kids, regardless of socioeconomic status, equal access to education in order to reduce these gaps. This supports the findings of Jiang (2021), who points out that socioeconomic class and family history are important predictors of educational achievement and access. These findings further highlight the necessity for focused measures to close the

educational gap. In summary, socioeconomic disparity in education is a serious challenge for children from underprivileged families.

In Indonesia, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions such as Sekayu, junior high school students often encounter the challenge of balancing academic responsibilities with familial financial obligations. At SMP Negeri 12 Sekayu, preliminary observations and informal interviews have indicated that a significant number of eighth-grade students assist their parents after school by engaging in activities such as selling snacks, working in local markets, or contributing to family-run small enterprises, often dedicating two to three hours daily to these responsibilities. This dual burden adversely affects their capacity for study, rest, and overall school engagement. Research suggests that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to exhibit diminished levels of learning motivation, which subsequently impacts their academic performance and long-term educational outcomes (Wu et al., 2020). This observation is supported by Mokodompit et al. (2023), who argue that low-income students frequently struggle to balance their academic commitments with the necessity of providing financial support to their families. Additionally, Nguyen and Herron (2021) assert that financial limitations can undermine students' sense of belonging and academic motivation, as these individuals often feel pressured to compete with their peers in terms of educational resources and social engagement. The lack of sufficient support systems further intensifies these challenges, leaving many students feeling isolated and demotivated in their academic pursuits. Nonetheless, education—particularly in the realm of English language learning—has the potential to empower students. By integrating sustainability topics into English lessons, educators can facilitate the development of both global awareness and critical language skills, thereby creating meaningful connections to students' lived experiences. This study aims to investigate how English Language Teaching (ELT) embedded with sustainability themes may cultivate student consciousness, particularly among those who navigate the dual responsibilities of academic achievement and familial contribution

One promising strategy for increasing student motivation is the use of picture books in educational settings. Picture books combine visual elements with storytelling, making them a powerful tool to engage students emotionally and intellectually. According to Hang and Nhung (2023), integrating visual elements stimulates improved student engagement, as indicated by their active participation during lessons. Their research shows that using pictures in educational contexts positively influences student motivation and performance. Similarly, Tuerah (2021) found that the use of picture books in the classroom fosters authentic relationships between teachers and students, which is crucial for the acquisition of language and culture. Moreover, Zhang (2022) demonstrates how ethnic variety may be taught through the deliberate selection of picture books, fostering social justice and inclusivity in the classroom. In conclusion, one effective tactic for raising student motivation in the classroom is the usage of picture books. Picture books engage children both intellectually and emotionally by fusing visual storytelling with instructional material. This results in a deeper interest in learning across a range of subjects.

For junior high school students, picture books can serve as an accessible and engaging medium to introduce complex topics like inequality. The visual and narrative elements of picture books provide a relatable context, allowing students to better understand and empathize with the issues of social disparity. Huang et al. (2020) point out that picture books, with their stories that foster optimism and positive thinking, can be especially helpful for children from low-income families. This method not only helps students relate to the material more, but it also motivates them to take positive risks while discussing difficult subjects like social inequity. Additionally, picture books can help bridge literacy gaps by offering simplified yet meaningful content that resonates with students of different reading levels. According to a study by Chen et al., (2023), language picture books effectively boost students' motivation to learn English when used in conjunction with reciprocal teaching approaches. These books' captivating stories and images not only draw in students but also pique their enthusiasm in reading. Additionally, Choi et al., (2020) suggests that picture books can assist literacy development across a

range of reading skills by facilitating meaningful discourse and understanding. In summary, picture books are an effective tool for closing the literacy gap because they offer kids of different reading abilities with accessible, meaningful content that is simplified.

In the context of junior high school students, the use of picture books aligned with SDG 10 (reducing inequality) holds the potential to not only enhance students' motivation but also promote social awareness and responsibility. These books can introduce students to various forms of inequality—such as economic, educational, and social disparities—while also encouraging them to reflect on their own experiences and roles in reducing inequality in their communities. According to Niland (2023), picture books can help children develop empathy and a sense of social responsibility by telling tales that represent a range of experiences and societal challenges. Furthermore, Zhang (2023) asserts that teachers can create a more welcoming atmosphere that inspires students to value and respect diversity by including stories that represent a range of origins and experiences. In addition, Vila et al (2021) suggest that by including picture books, it can play a vital role in promoting cultural diversity and social fairness, so motivating students to focus on their roles in maintaining an inclusive society. In summary, utilizing picture books in junior high school classrooms is a viable method for raising student motivation and encouraging social responsibility and understanding.

One pertinent study is that conducted by Sun (2020), which investigates how middle school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students can benefit from interactive picture book read-alouds. The results show that students' attitudes about reading in English as well as their word inference skills were considerably enhanced by these interactive sessions. This shows that picture books can motivate students and improve their learning experiences by being an interesting medium. The study by Wang et al., (2023) which looks at how young people in the 5–6 age range read picture books, is another important source of information. The study shows that reading responses from various ability groups may be distinguished largely based on verbal descriptions of photographs. This research highlights how picture books may be tailored to meet the needs of readers at different reading levels, which makes

them appropriate for students in junior high schools with a range of literacy and comprehension levels. Furthermore, Schoppmann et al., (2023) look into how reading picture books affects young children's ability to control their emotions. According to their research, reading picture books to kids can have a positive impact on their emotional growth, which is crucial for promoting social awareness and accountability. In summary, the earlier research offers a strong basis for the study that is being suggested, which aims to investigate the use of picture books to raise students' motivation levels and spread awareness of social injustice. These references underscore the potential of picture books as effective educational tools in achieving the goals of SDG 10.

While significant research has been conducted on educational strategies in urban settings to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), fewer studies have focused on the role of picture books in motivating students in rural schools. SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya, located in a rural area, is a school where inequality in education may be more pronounced due to limited resources and access to diverse learning materials. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how the use of picture books can enhance learning motivation among junior high school students, specifically in reducing inequality as one of the SDGs. By focusing on students' engagement with picture books, this research explores how visual narratives can serve as an effective tool to bridge educational gaps and promote inclusivity, contributing both to students' motivation and their understanding of SDGs.

This study presents a significant contribution to the field of education by examining the incorporation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into English language teaching through the medium of picture books within a rural Indonesian context, specifically at SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya. While the educational focus on SDGs is increasingly gaining traction in Indonesia, the majority of existing research has largely been conducted in urban or well-resourced educational settings. This leaves a critical gap in the understanding of how such pedagogical innovations operate in underprivileged or remote regions. Rural schools, such as SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya, are often confronted with distinctive challenges that impede educational

effectiveness, including limited access to learning materials, exposure to literacy, and economic constraints that compel students to engage in work alongside their academic pursuits. According to Mokodompit et al. (2023), students from low-income backgrounds frequently face difficulties in reconciling academic commitments with the imperative to provide financial support to their families. These challenges are further exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and the absence of comprehensive support systems in rural environments, which can significantly diminish students' learning motivation and engagement. By utilizing picture books that resonate with students' lived experiences—such as familial assistance and the navigation of hardship—this study employs a localized, context-sensitive approach aimed at enhancing student motivation and increasing awareness of social inequalities. This case study not only addresses a noteworthy gap in the current literature but also provides actionable insights for designing SDG-based interventions that are culturally and economically relevant to the educational experiences of rural Indonesian learners.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher seeks to investigate the current level of learning motivation among students at SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya, identifying the role that picture books can play in addressing educational inequalities and promoting student engagement with the SDGs.

1.2 Problems of Study

The problem of the study is formulated in the following questions:

1. How does the picture book motivate the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya to stay engaged in their studies while being involved in helping their parents financially?

2. Is there any significant improvement after teaching reading comprehension by using picture book?

1.3 Objectives of Study

Based on the problems above, the objectives of this study are:

1. **to explore** how the picture book motivates the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya to stay engaged in their studies while being involved in helping their parents financially.

2. to examine whether there is a significant improvement on students' reading comprehension achievement after teaching reading comprehension by using picture book **at SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya.**

1.4 Significance of Study

The significance of this study extends to students, teachers, the school, and future researchers. For students, the study provides an opportunity to connect learning materials with their personal experiences, particularly those who support their parents financially. By using picture books with relatable content, the research aims to enhance student motivation in studying English, making learning more engaging and meaningful. Additionally, the focus on improving reading comprehension through these materials may lead to better academic outcomes, equipping students with skills that are essential for their future educational and career opportunities.

For teachers, this study introduces a practical teaching strategy that integrates picture books as a tool for motivating students and improving their reading comprehension. It highlights the importance of using contextually relevant materials to engage students who may face external challenges. This approach can be adopted to enrich the teaching of reading comprehension, offering a way to support students academically while addressing their personal circumstances.

At the school level, the research supports SMP Negeri 4 Jirak Jaya in its efforts to foster a learning environment that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all students. By demonstrating how picture books can positively influence both student motivation and academic performance, the findings can inform future curriculum development and teaching practices that promote educational equity.

For future researchers, this study provides a foundation for exploring innovative methods in education, particularly for students who balance their studies with financial responsibilities at home. It opens the door for further research on how

literature and storytelling can be utilized as effective teaching tools to address broader issues of inequality, motivation, and academic achievement. The findings will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on educational strategies that foster both academic and personal growth among students.

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